

Little Athletics: An Overview

History of Little Athletics

The Beginning

Little Athletics evolved, like most voluntary community organisations, through the mind and conscience of one man. Trevor Billingham following the pattern set by many pioneers in the field of community service, recognised a need and introduced an idea designed to meet that need.

On an October day in 1963 three boys turned up at an athletics meeting in Geelong. They were ready to compete. On approaching an official they were told that they were too young to take part. The official was Trevor Billingham.

This disappointment, evident in the boys, left a marked impression on his mind.

The thought was temporarily forgotten. It came alive again several months later. At a coaching clinic designed for secondary school students it was noted that the majority of children were of primary school age.

Reminded of his earlier experience, Trevor Billingham had the gem of an idea. The answer to the need expressed in the children could be a simple Saturday morning competition.

On the first Saturday of October 1964.... he met with a small group of children on a Geelong oval. They took part in a short program of running events.

From that simple beginning, athletics for boys and girls developed at a phenomenal rate...

LITTLE ATHLETICS WAS BORN.... AND ON THE MOVE.

Little Athletics created tremendous interest. By 1967 the Victorian Little Athletics Association was formed. Within five (5) years there was an Australia Little Athletics Union.

Today, more than 150,000 children regularly participate at Little Athletics Centres in every State in Australia.

What is Little Athletics?

Little Athletics is a uniquely Australian sport for children aged 5-16 years. As the name suggests, it is based upon the sport of athletics (track and field) and the events are specially modified to suit the ages and abilities of children. A wide range of running, jumping, throwing and walking events is conducted.

Little Athletics is the Foundation for all Sports. It offers young people activities and skills that will stand them in good stead for their sporting future.

Each year across NSW, approximately 40,000 boys and girls enjoy the activities that Little Athletics has to offer.

The track and field based competition is conducted throughout the summer sports season. Events are conducted on a weekly basis by one of our 200 individual centres, and include:

Track

Sprints – 50m, 70m, 100m, 200m

Distance - 400m, 800m, 1500m, 3km

Hurdles - 60mh, 80mh, 90mh, 100mh, 110mh, 200mh, 300mh

Walks – 700m, 1100m, 1500m

Field

Jumps - Long Jump, Triple Jump, High Jump

Throws - Shot put, Discus, Javelin

During winter many centre's operate cross country.

Tiny Tots

Centres may offer the Tiny Tots Program for children between the ages of 3 and 5. Tiny Tots will participate in games and activities designed to develop gross motor skills. They will not engage in competition. This program is optional, and no centre is compelled to offer the program.

Mission Statement

Little Athletics NSW's mission is to maximise the enjoyment, development and potential of each participant, be they an athlete, coach, official or parent/guardian.

- We encourage development by providing opportunities for personal and athletic growth.
- We promote education, good administration, sportsmanship, self-esteem and the development of life skills through engaging in athletics.
- We provide a safe, healthy, inclusive and positive environment in which our members and interested participants of our community can learn the fundamentals of sports.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Little Athletics movement is summed up in the slogan:

"LITTLE ATHLETICS... FOR... FAMILY... FUN... and... FITNESS".

Family

One of the basic reasons for the continued development and enthusiasm generated by Little Athletics, has been the attempt to meet the needs of children as part of the family unit.

Little Athletics is more than a sport. It is a community-oriented organisation which enables the entire family to do something together.

Parents are involved in the program as voluntary helpers or officials. They share in many experiences with the children.

Little Athletics provides a vital communication bridge between parent and child. This link can have benefits far beyond the years spent in the centre. Society has, increasingly, produced subtle and damaging pressures on family and community relationships. The FAMILY CONCEPT approach to programming counteracts those pressures.

Fun

All children like fun...all children need fun. The weekly competition provides fun through participation in an enjoyable sport, with friends in the same age group.

Fitness

The community has become increasingly aware of the value of physical fitness, particularly in the fight against obesity. A fit body can mean an alert mind and a decrease in the incidence of many physical ailments.

Combined with FAMILY involvement... FITNESS can be...FUN in the happy environment of a Little Athletics centre.