



New Zealand Secondary Schools  
Athletics Association



Canberra was the host for this year's Australian Schools Cross Country Champs and it proved to be a very successful meet for the NZSS team, with 21 of the 24 athletes medalling over two days of racing.

The individual events were raced in warm afternoon sun, over a reasonably flat fast course at Stromlo Forest Park. With the very dry air making it harder to breathe, and kangaroos bounding across the course, it was a new experience for many of our athletes and spectators. Highlights came in the form of our 4 individual medals. Elliott Pugh ran strongly for bronze in the U18 men, George Wyllie and Caleb Wagener worked off each other to pick up gold and silver in the U17 men, and Catherine Lund ran bravely for silver in U20 women. With a strong team behind these individual performers, NZ picked up silver in the men's U18 team and gold in the women's U20.

The day of the relays the weather had turned cold and drizzly, but our athletes adapted well to the conditions, and finished with gold to the U18 Men and U20 Women, silver to the U20 Men, bronze to the U18 Women and an outstanding gold to Lucy Jurke in the U20 time trial.

This trip was not only about the racing, but also about developing the athletes independence, providing some educational and learning experiences, having fun and fostering friendships. We were treated to some wonderful educational experiences at the Australian Institute of Sport and the Australian National Museum, and spent a fun afternoon exploring at the Canberra Zoo. A real highlight for the athletes was getting to know athletes from another country. The NZ team pins were hot property, and it was not uncommon to see our kiwi kids surrounded by Aussie kids wanting to trade pins or clothing. There were firm friendships fostered within our team, and as one of our athletes said "I will remember this trip forever!"

Huge thanks to our Lead Manager Brad Smith, whose exceptional organisation and planning made sure the athletes were in an environment where they could perform at their best, and were happy and supported. It was fantastic to have our Chairman of the Exec, Tony Rogers, with us also as manager, his own international racing experience invaluable to our next generation of athletes. Finally, from me, this was a real highlight, it is wonderful to see our athletes having the opportunity to compete internationally, to gain experience, learn and have fun. The future of our sport is in a good place!

Sonia Waddell  
Assistant Manager