

In Memory of Don Chadderton

One of our founding members of the New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics Association and President and Chairman of the Executive through the 1980's Don Chadderton died on Friday September 18 2020. Don was an absolute enthusiast for our sport and will be fondly remembered by all the athletes he coached and assisted over many, many years beginning in Southland but for most of his time at Burnside High School in Christchurch. A highlight he recalled recently was Burnside, back in 1978, winning the Junior Girls NZSSAA Cross Country Teams race followed up by the Junior Boys doing likewise in their race with the perfect score of 6 points for a 3 person team (1st, 2nd and 3rd)! In 1973 Don and his fellow original Executive members, Murray McRae, Mike Lindross, Graeme Daly, Allan Bennett, Warren Jowatt and Father John Mori were responsible for establishing a Secondary Schools Track and Field championship that was to have a lasting impact on athletics in New Zealand and followed that with the Cross Country championship in 1974 and the Road Race championship in 1975. For everyone who has been involved ever since we owe Don and his like minded colleagues a lasting debt of gratitude for their foresight and endeavour in achieving such a successful outcome.

Prior to 1973 most inter-schools athletics championships were separate single sex occasions and with a restricted range of events for the girls. Don and others worked to change that situation firstly with the NZSSAA championships that catered for both boys and girls at the same meeting thereby setting an example for regions to follow and then over the next few years extending the events available for girls to match that available for boys. As a consequence girls were able over time, to compete in the 1500m, 3000m, Steeplechase, Track Walk, 4x400m relay and the Triple Jump, Hammer and Pole Vault. An additional positive outcome of these changes was the preparedness of Athletics NZ to provide similar opportunities with a separate Junior grade for young women and gradual adoption of the new events.

Don was passionate about providing international competition opportunities for secondary school age athletes and right from the start there were annual athletics and cross country competitions between teams from NZ against Australian State teams. Don was often selector and team manager and many of NZ's prominent athletes remember their inclusion in these teams with fondness and gratitude for the early experiences granted them.

Don has been highly respected for his ability, his vision, his meticulous planning, hard work, skills, warmth and enthusiasm for our sport as an athlete, coach, official and leader. Don will be very much missed by everyone associated with him.