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For immediate use

Athletics NZ U-16 and U-18 Championships to be held as part of NZSSAA Track and Field Championships in December

Athletics NZ and the New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics Association (NZSSAA) wish to announce a New Zealand U-18 Championships will be held in conjunction with the NZSSAA Track and Field Championships on 3-5 December in Inglewood, Taranaki.

A New Zealand U-16 Championships will also be held for the first time and incorporated into this year's NZSSAA Championships on a trial basis.

As in previous years, the country's finest U-18 athletes were originally scheduled to compete for national honours at the 2021 Jennian Homes New Zealand Track and Field Championships, held in Hastings in March, but were not able to take part due to logistical challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In consultation with relevant stakeholders, Athletics NZ and the NZSSAA have since been working hard to provide an opportunity for U-18 athletes to compete at a national championships this year.

Many options were considered, including a stand-alone national U-18 Championships, but the most feasible option for 2021 is for the event to be held as part of the NZSSAA Championships.

Athletics NZ Chief Executive Peter Pfitzinger says a number of factors had to be taken into account during an extensive period of consultation and is pleased to be able to provide an outcome that suits the majority of athletes.

"There is a huge amount of young athletics talent in New Zealand and we are looking forward to seeing them all compete on the national stage," he says.

"The introduction of an U-16 Championships is also particularly exciting as this has been discussed for a number of years and it is pleasing to see our athlete development pathway become more inclusive."

In regards to the U-18 Championships, Pfitzinger says the original intention was for a stand-alone event to be held but this was unfortunately not possible due to the already busy October to December time period for these athletes, plus cost considerations for families.

"I wish to thank the NZSSAA and other stakeholders for their support and understanding during this process," he says.



Tony Rogers, Chairman of the NZSSAA Executive, is delighted with the collaboration with Athletics NZ to create this opportunity.

“This initial ‘one-off’ will provide a quality experience for our schools and youth athletes,” he says.

“After many athletes losing opportunities over the last 15 months due to the Covid-19 issues, under the circumstances the most logical step is to stage a dual championships,” he adds.

“The NZSSAA Executive appreciates the importance our young athletes place on the status of national championships, yet understand the complexity of the school year, especially for our senior students. We encourage all under-18 school athletes to register with their local clubs to make them eligible to compete in both championships being offered at the December 2021 event.”

While the decision to stage the U-18 Championships and inaugural U-16 Championships as part of the 2021 NZSSAA Championships has now been confirmed, there are a number of factors still to work through. A working group, featuring representatives from relevant stakeholders, has therefore been established to ensure a great experience will be provided to all those taking part.

Further information will be provided in due course and made available on the NZSSAA and Athletics NZ online platforms.

For further information

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