

= Little Athletics =

Little Athletics is an Australian activity program that involves modified athletics events for children aged 5 to 15 (or 16 in ACT , NSW , Qld and SA) . More than 100 @, @ 000 young Australians competed in the sport in the 2013 / 14 season .

The competitions were founded by Trevor Billingham , a young Australian athletics enthusiast from Geelong , Victoria , in 1964 . By 1967 , there were more than 35 Little Athletics clubs in Victoria , and the decision was made to start the Victorian Little Athletics Association (VLAA) .

Soon after the formation of the VLAA , other states expressed interest in Little Athletics . In February 1968 , a year after the formation of the VLAA , Western Australia held its first Little Athletics meet at Perry Lakes Stadium . In 1972 , the states of Victoria , New South Wales , Northern Territory and Western Australia became the founding members of The Australian Little Athletics Union (ALAU) , which was formed in Perth . By 1974 , Tasmania , Australian Capital Territory , South Australia and Queensland had all joined the ALAU .

= Events =

Available Little Athletics events vary between age groups and from state to state . The following represents the range of events available .

= Structure and governance =

Under the independent governing body Little Athletics Australia (LAA) , each mainland state and territory has its own association , responsible for running Little Athletics in that state . Each state body controls the relevant centres and events in their state or territory . Clubs are the lowest level of the Little Athletics structure . Clubs are sections of centres , often have separate training sections and inform athletes of upcoming events .

= History =

In October 1963 , three young boys turned up at a senior athletics meet in Geelong , Victoria . They approached official Trevor Billingham , but Billingham turned them away citing their youth as a reason for them not to be allowed to compete . A few months later , Billingham held a coaching camp for secondary school students . His camp had a lot of primary school students in attendance .

Billingham decided to set up a Saturday competition for younger children . The first competition was on 3 October 1964 , in Geelong . Billingham had advertised the event in the Geelong Advertiser by saying :

" Also starting this Saturday , will be the special morning meeting for boys and girls . These will commence at 10 : 30 a.m. each Saturday and will be open to any school age competitor . It is intended that boys and girls not old enough to compete in the afternoon will take part in these special meetings . Anyone interested in the sport may attend , including parents , while the one @-@ hour of athletics is conducted . All of the standard athletic events will be conducted and boys and girls will be graded in each event . "

After the event , he wrote a one @-@ page article titled " Junior Athletics in Wet Conditions " , which appeared in the Geelong Advertiser on 5 October 1964 . He wrote that more than 80 boys and girls attended . He also wrote that there was a considerable need for such junior athletic competitions at the time , that the event was a success , and more events of the same type were to be held in the future .

By 1965 , Billingham had still not convinced the Geelong branch of the Victorian Amateur Athletics Association (VAAA) . In January 1965 , Billingham acquired lights for the Geelong senior athletics oval , Landy Field , which was also where the Little Athletics competition were . The lights were originally erected at Kardinia Park for the 1956 Olympics ; Billingham asked the Geelong Football Club if he could use the lights , and they allowed him . Billingham invited Ron Clarke to the now

lighted Landy Field to break the 20 @,@ 000 meters and one hour run world records , and Clarke accepted . In January 1965 , Billingham also thought up the name " Little Athletics " ; previously the events had been called " Junior Athletics " . He took his two proposals to the VAAA , and both were accepted .

On 9 October 1965 , the 1965 / 66 Geelong Little Athletics season started . 14 meets were held , with a fee of three shillings for the season .

Billingham was the sole preparer for the Ron Clarke visit . When Clarke came , he broke both world records and brought fame to the Geelong Centre of the VAAA at Landy Field .

Despite his success with Clarke , Billingham still could not get support for Little Athletics from VAAA ; instead , they suggested he drop the junior competition and focus on the rapidly expanding senior one . One of the delegates , Jack Frewin , encouraged him to push through with his idea , so he published a notice in the Geelong Advertiser announcing that he needed to start a formation of Little Athletics clubs . There was a meeting of interested parents , and Billingham told them that he thought an organisation should be set up based on his experience from the seniors competitions but he need some parents to help him . On 27 November 1965 , six clubs were formed . They were run by parents with Billingham as an overall manager . By the end of the 1965 / 66 season , more than 200 boys and girls were competing regularly across nine clubs , and more than 500 had tried out at least once . The first Geelong championships were held in March 1966 over the long weekend .

There was another meeting in March 1966 . John McGlynn , an executive from the Ford Motor Company , suggested that there was a need to encourage other clubs from areas outside Geelong to start up . By September 1966 , there were clubs in Geelong , Belmont , Newtown , Lara , Corio YMCA and St Thomas . They were all based around local high schools .

In May 1967 , the Victorian Little Athletics Association (VLAA) was formed . By 1969 , there were 39 clubs in the VLAA . The first Western Australian meet was in February 1968 at Perry Lakes Stadium . In March 1968 , a Western Australian association was formed . Competitions in New South Wales started in October 1968 . In 1972 , the Australian Little Athletics Union (ALAU) was formed in Perth . Victoria , New South Wales , Northern Territory and Western Australia were the founding members . Tasmania , South Australia , Australian Capital Territory and Queensland joined shortly afterwards .

= = Current = =

In the 2013 / 14 season , Little Athletics had more than 100 @,@ 000 athletes and approximately 500 centres . Every year , there is a national championship for athletes under 13 years old , in which each state has a team of its best athletes .

In July 2014 , Jetstar Airways announced a two @-@ year sponsorship deal with Little Athletics Australia (LAA) , which saw the Australian airline becoming the first naming partner of LAA .