

After much ribbing and stirring about the lack of excitement at these conferences, I must say I enjoyed the experience immensely. I guess the level of interest you take into the conference will ultimately dictate how much you get out of event like this. I am enthused to help take Queenborough forward, and many of the things discussed around the conference table, a table full of like minded people, were interesting indeed. I will state right now, I am more than happy to put my name forward to attend again next year.

As explained previously to me that motions rarely get up, I now, after bearing witness to not one getting up, would have to agree. 23 votes were needed to get a motion up, we did once get to 22 and once to 19, but in the end nothing got up. If you want to get something through, you need to research and present a very strong case, strong enough to convince 75% of the delegates.

Regardless of motions getting up or not, it was interesting to be involved in discussions regarding the motions. Timing was an interesting topic, with some centers converting to electronic timing gates (more later) wanting to change to 100th of a second timing. This was seen as not very useful or logical by the TLAA and also, not possible at all centers either.

Scheduling of state meets was a well discussed topic, the TLAA trying to even out the level of travel involved for these meets. In the long run, it's not possible to stretch the five major state events out to far over the calendar, availability and date clashes at venues pretty much force the hand of TLAA with these events.

An interesting discussion around early cancellations of state meets came to the conclusion that due to extensive preparation and effort put into these meetings, including things like catering etc last minute cancellation is the only fair method. While this may affect those traveling, a thought must be spared for those who may have travelled and booked accommodation leading up to the event. It was also noted that only two events have been cancelled in recent memory. Whilst on cancellation discussions, it was mentioned by Launceston LA that they had purchased a mobile phone with a one cent text plan, they use this phone to bulk text message a group of 300 contact numbers of members when a cancellation occurs, this costs them around \$3.00 a turn, great idea I think.

The timing gates, a set of portable finish line gates that with the gun, time each race of eight lanes automatically, electronically and accurately but last of all expensively. The cost of the complete set up is around \$12000. Certainly out of our budget at this point. I see no reason though, that we could not work towards something like this in the future. Launceston's gates were completely funded by canteen receipts from one year, the down side, their meetings finish two hours earlier and canteen receipts are now down a bit. There were plenty of bonus points though, the gates only need a starter and a chief timer to operate, freeing up others parents who may have been looking for a way to get out of timing to look to get out of something else! The gates are in operation at two clubs, it sounded like Hobart Districts and Devonport also ordered them.

TLAA would like centers to use our sponsors more for our canteen purchases. Robbies Confectionary who supply play water etc have noticed low orders from many centers. McDonalds will be offering equipments grants this season, and there was talk of McDonalds also supplying each centre with a shade tent. I noticed other clubs collecting large cheques (up to \$1800) from IGA for being involved in the docket promotion, something we missed out on.

Paul Street gave some interesting insights into how he goes about selecting the U/13 state team, a large amount of work and thought are put into these teams. I don't envy the task of selecting these

kids, knowing some will miss out. Ross Burridge, Australian president, formally Tasmanian and before that Claremont president, provided some background info on what's happening at national level and some detail on the development of the new logo. Ross also touched on the standardisation of events throughout Australia, the hope is program 3 at Queenborough will mirror program 3 if you attend an event in any other state. This may mean we have to offer events we are not normally used to, but we'll look at that when the time comes eg 200m hurdles for older age groups.

There was a media kit available and it was noted that ALL the media articles included were from the examiner in Launceston. Rhonda stated that the TLAA just can't get the Mercury to run pictures or stories! Do any of us have any contacts at the Mercury? Maybe we could lobby for some coverage this year.

The dinner was interesting! They party pretty hard, I left at 10 but heard the next day that some of them wound up about 4am!

Whilst at the conference I was engaged in a discussion with Huon Valley and South East centre's about a possible combined event at the Domain in early December, something to think about when we work on the calendar. A Multi-Event day should also be seriously considered, these events are new inclusions on many club calendars and kids enjoy the point scoring format and standard event completion on the day very much. Events like these can add to kids enjoyment. Whilst we don't hold a centre championship, this could be an annual event that gives us something outside of the standard competition days...variety to our calendar.

Peter McConnon gave a talk on his SLAM software for athletic centers, it's a very exciting package and ongoing benefit of reducing the amount of time spent by records, ranking and results members of committees. The software is already in use by quite a few centers and Clarence gave it a glowing review. I believe with our current limitations as far as tech support and PB errors go, we should look at changing over this season. I believe we should be experimenting with this software right now with an aim to implement it this season. Peter is passionate about this product, and greater use in centers will help him to make this product all it can be. Another bonus is, it's free. Further development will see centers and the TLAA all sharing information at the touch of a keystroke...PB's, athletes results, state event entries all centralised for easy access.

After seeing and hearing the work that goes on behind the scenes to run each season, I believe the TLAA do a fantastic job – a board consisting of a handful of dedicated people who run what is known Australia wide as a very professional organisation. From our committee right up to the top levels of Little Athletics Australia, we should all be very proud of the way we provide the opportunity for kids to have fun, be active and engage in social events on a regular basis.

In closing, all clubs noted they need to maximise parent help, too often it's the same faces doing the same things. Lets aim to qualify a few more officials this year, lets aim to bring in and help new parents attending, help them gain confidence to become regular and competent helpers around the club.

Scott Boucher
President

QUEENBOROUGH LITTLE ATHLETICS CLUB