

OPENING THE 2012 AUSTRALIAN LITTLE ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, DOMAIN ATHLETIC CENTRE, SATURDAY 21ST APRIL 2012.

What a great pleasure and privilege it is for me to be here this morning and on behalf of all Tasmanians extend the warmest welcome to the competitors, the coaches, parents and all the other volunteers who have travelled from all over Australia to be here in Hobart for the 2012 Australian Little Athletics Championships; something like 182 young athletes ready to compete to the death - in the friendliest possible way of course!! But seriously, the big thing about Little Athletics is, as it says on your web site, that “[t]he focus is not about winning, but about having fun and being involved in a healthy, active lifestyle. The emphasis is on participation and improving on one's own performances. We are very family orientated, and are one of few junior sports where everyone can get involved.”¹

Well you can't get better than that! But it seems to me that Little Athletics Australia is about even more than just living a healthy active lifestyle and having fun. Taking part in Little Athletics competition helps to develop:

- a) General motor skills;
- b) Communication skills.
- c) Interpersonal skills

¹ <http://www.littleathletics.com.au/>, accessed 7 March 2012.

- d) Sense of community values
- e) Knowledge of healthy lifestyles; and
- f) Tolerance of other people and their customs, religious beliefs, language and disability needs.²

In short, this friendly and family orientated competition does a great deal towards the development of tomorrow's leaders. It has rightly been said that that a country's greatest asset is its youth and what better job can you do than that to help develop and improve Australia's greatest asset?

Now, I am well aware that this investment in our young people calls for a huge input from many dedicated parents and other volunteers. So many have so willingly given a great deal of their time and their skills into making Little Athletics Australia what it is today - a uniquely Australian organisation of something like 100,000 young people engaged in the business of developing their physical skills, their health, their self-esteem, and their attitude to the communities in which they live. I say thank you to all those volunteers. It's a great job that you do. Please keep it up.

In conjunction with today's national competition five executive members from Little Athletics Australia together with 3 delegates from each state and the ACT will meet together to see how the Organisation can be improved even more to the benefit of our young

² <https://assets.clubsonline.com.au/assets/console/document/documents/2011%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>.
Page 7 accessed 7th March 2012.

people. I welcome each of those executive members and delegates and wish you well in your work.

Last, but certainly by no means least, I would like to thank the sponsors without whose generosity it would not be possible for Little Athletics Australia to continue. All States have the valued support of many sponsors which greatly assists with the running of Little Athletics, for example in keeping registration costs to a minimum. It is not possible to refer to all of them individually but I would like to make particular mention of the two major national sponsors IGA and Asics, and here in Tasmania thanks to McDonalds, the Xerox Shop, Bodysystem, and Bunnings.

And now I have much pleasure in declaring open the 2012 National Little Athletics Championship open and to borrow an expression from another sporting arena, May they be the "Best Competition Ever."