

Presidents Report to OMA General Assembly

January 2021

What a year it has been!

After starting the year planning to be staging the next Oceania Masters Champs on Norfolk Island in January 2021 and hoping to advance the arrangements with OAA for a possible joint championship at some time soon, the closing of borders in the region in March/April of 2020 due to the worldwide pandemic changed these plans dramatically.

With the changes that were made at the AGM in Mackay in July 2019 to allow online meetings your Council has meet more times in the last 18 months that in the past. In the past, the Council would meet once a year, but since Mackay the council has meet on the following dates:

1. 30 August 2019-Mackay
2. November 2019-Google Meets online (courtesy OAA)
3. February 25th,2020-Google Meets online
4. May 11th, 2020- Zoom meeting (courtesy OAA)
5. October 20th, 2020-Zoom meeting (courtesy OAA)

The first meeting was held in Mackay on the last afternoon of the Champs. The other four meetings were held using technology with 6 countries, 6 time zones and both sides of the dateline. All the online meetings were facilitated by OAA (Thanks Yvonne & staff) using initially Google Meets and latterly Zoom.

The first two meetings had as their primary focus the planning for the Norfolk Islands champs and setting out a suitable program to fit the time period available due to flight schedules etc. This was achieved and a compact 5-day program was agreed to and published.

Change of Treasurer.

We had to deal with the initial unavailability of the elected Treasurer David Benjimen (Vanuatu) particularly in the process of organizing the revised bank mandate in NZ and the setting up of a new account in Australia. David subsequently resigned as Treasurer in early May citing personal reasons. Fortunately for us the previous Treasurer Stewart Foster (NZ) agreed to fill the vacancy and Stewart was confirmed the Treasurer at the October meeting. Thanks Stewart.

A challenge that that faced us with our bank accounts was getting signing authority when members were in different countries. Also, the previous Australian imprest account was set up as a personal account by the previous Secretary because of the difficulties setting up a business account. Through much perseverance we managed to set up Internet banking business accounts in both countries with the Australian account signatories being the President, the Secretary (Hazel) and council member George and the NZ Account has the President, the Treasurer (Stewart) and council member Joan.

Next OMA Championships

The May meeting discussed the situation in the region with the border closures and asked the Norfolk Island Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Chair and OMA council member Tim Rogers to consider the options available for a possible postponement. As we are now all aware the LOC after consultations decided that they would postpone the champs for one year till January 2022. We will hear from Tim latter in the meeting as to the current situation.

Strategic Plan

All our meetings have had the OMA Strategic plan as an agenda item. Council member George White has put considerable time into this over the last couple of years however we have not been able to draw up the detail for all parts of the plan. Sometimes what is required for a task like this is a brainstorming session around a table however that has not been possible in these times. However, we have set out the strategic direction for OMA and have the basis of a particularly good strategic plan and in these changed times we will need to tweak the details as we go forward over the next couple of years.

Virtual Champs

At our meeting in October, we discussed what opportunities existed for master's athletes in our region to participate in a region competition. Noting the World Masters Ranking World Challenge and the NZMA Oceania Throw pentathlon as examples we discussed what we could do for the region's athletes. The result was the idea of a Oceania Virtual championships in January 2021 (this month). The reason for January was a replacement for the postponed Norfolk champs. We were fortunate in that OAA through CEO Yvonne Mullins and competition director Tom agreed to collate the results for us.

We would be interested to hear (possibly in each affiliates report at the AGM) on your views on the virtual meeting and the possibility of a future virtual meeting later in the year.

World Masters Athletics

As the Oceania Delegate on the World Masters Council, I took part in my first WMA council meeting in late December 2020 using Zoom technology. I was surprised at how badly the pandemic was affecting the rest of the world in the staging of master's athletics events. As a result of these circumstances the WMA council had no option but to agree to the further postponement of the next WMA Stadia champs from July 2021 to July 2022 and for the next WMA Indoor champs to be postponed till March 2023.

Looking Forward

In our region we can still look forward to some competition with the NZ Masters Champs scheduled for late February in Inglewood, Taranaki and the Australia Masters in Canberra in early March.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of Council for their contributions over the past year and in particular thank the work that George White has contributed both with the Strategic Plan and also with the work on the Associations Constitution.