



Top VLAA Centre – 2001/2002 & 2005/06

Keilor Little Athletics Centre

Keilor Park Athletics Track,
Stadium Drive, Keilor Park

PO Box 4084, Keilor Downs, 3038
President: Sam Barbuto – 0419 901 707 ☎
Secretary: Kerry Ware – 0421 068 786 ☎

30 June 2008

Board of Management
Victorian Little Athletics Association
Locked Bag 1011,
Port Melbourne, VIC, 3207

Subject: Appeal – Region Restructure Season 2008/09

I refer to the Board of Management's (BoM) memorandum emailed to region/centre secretaries on Thursday 26th June 2008 regarding the decision of the Board to redistribute centres to a new 2008/09 regional structure effective from 1 September 2008.

The purpose of this letter is to appeal against that directive and request that the Board rescind that decision.

Prior to elaborating on the grounds of our appeal, firstly I would like to express our extreme disappointment at the manner in which this decision was conveyed to affected centres and regions. Non existent consultation aside, (reflecting the absence of natural justice) the Board and the VLAA office should have had the common courtesy of informing our centre of the impending change. In the end this is symptomatic of the poor process followed from the time the regional restructure was first proposed by the Board in December 2007.

Appeal Grounds

1. The Board does not have the power or right under the constitution to make such a decision. According to section 7.1 (d):-

“Regions: shall consist of Ordinary and Honorary Members and Affiliated Centres as allocated from time to time to such Regions by the Association for administrative and competition purposes, and such Regions shall:....”

Throughout the Constitution clear distinction is made between the BoM and the Association's powers and how the authority can be exercised. In respect to section 7.1 (d) it is clear that the Association allocates centres to the regions. The BoM could recommend regional centre allocations but the final approval remains with the Association.

2. At the January 2008 RAM meeting the BoM tabled a proposed regional restructure that received significant opposition. An undertaking (consistent with sections 7.1 (d) and 14.1 & 14.2 of the constitution) was given at RAM that further consultation would continue and RAM would have ultimate sign-off on the regional structure on behalf of the Association. The regional restructure

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was not discussed at the May 2008 meeting of RAM and therefore the RAM on behalf of the Association has not approved a new regional structure.

3. Further to section 14.2 of the constitution the BoM was to present the strategic plan to RAM at the first meeting following the Christmas break. It is noted that the draft strategic plan 2008-2013 was only recently circulated to regions for review in May 2008. The late provision of the draft strategic plan provides insufficient time to review properly. The timing and process as described in the constitution allows for more than a six month time frame between the issue of the Plan and the tabling at the Association's Annual General Meeting.

This is of significance to the 2008/09 regional restructure as Objective 9 (Optimize the effectiveness and access to venues and equipment) of the draft 2008/09 Strategic Plan has stated goals & strategies (refer 5.2.9 [5] & 6.9[5] & 6.9[6]) to "Develop a Centre placement and new Centre establishment policy based on research of changing demographics, surrounding Centre numbers, distance to travel between centres and Local Government activity". Further strategy 6.9[5] stipulates that the centre placement policy will be carried out through "*pro-active coordination/management with the Membership Director, Regions and local Centres*". In this instance, this has clearly not occurred.

It appears that the BoM has completed its review of the allocation of Centres to Regions ahead of the strategic plan being endorsed by the Association at the AGM.

4. The relocation of centres from NMR to WMR is inconsistent with the proposed December 2007 regional structure. In fact the December 2007 structure in relation to NMR stated "Currently NMR has only eleven Centres and whilst we have some of the largest Centres in this Region this is much smaller than other Metropolitan Regions.....". The June 2008 regional structure has further diminished the size of NMR something the BoM had stated previously was a reason for not moving larger Centres (presumably such as Keilor and Sunbury).
5. Given Keilor and Sunbury (and many other Centres) weren't identified as being targeted for relocation in the December 2007 regional proposal, our Centres were not aware that we should put a case to the BoM and the Association as to why we believe we should remain in our current region.
6. The stated criteria for the centre relocations do not stack up. Distance to travel is one criterion. How does sending Sunbury and Keilor to Geelong or Seymour to NMR improve travel times? The size of a region is yet another criterion. The changes to NMR has further reduced its size by almost 500 athletes to 2900 whilst increasing WMR athlete numbers to levels greater than those NMR currently enjoy.
7. Keilor enjoys strong relationships across NMR and has inter-region events as part of its calendar. In addition, Keilor and Sunbury have the collective majority of athletes competing at NMR division one cross country each week.

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Without our two clubs division one cross country will probably be no more. NMR is unique in that it is the only region that runs a regional multi-event championship. Our Centre in particular actively participates in that event and has won the last 3-4 regional trophies. In 2007/08 we hosted this event.

8. We have no doubt that the relocation will diminish Keilor's participation at WMR championships which will in turn impact on athletes' enjoyment ultimately resulting in reduced membership. We also anticipate loss of athletes to Centres that remain in NMR. We don't believe this is the way the BoM should treat a Centre who has worked tirelessly to increase its membership and a dual *Centre of the Year* recipient.

In summary, and with all due respect, the Board should in the interest of the Association rescind its regional restructure decision now to allow centres and regions to carry on with their 2008/09 seasonal planning. For Keilor, our planning process for the new season was completed last month. By not acting now the Board will place itself in a position of conflict with the Association which will impact on the conduct and effectiveness of the AGM. Judging by the mood of the Association on this issue the Board's actions will be reviewed and overturned at the AGM. In the process, if it hasn't already, the Board will have lost the support of the Association.

Sam Barbuto
President
Keilor Little Athletics Centre

cc: NMR President; Secretary

