

Leongatha Little Aths Members well at the Australian All Schools Championships

Leongatha Little Athletics members, Eleanor Patterson & Angela Byrne performed exceptionally well representing Victoria at the recent Australian All Schools Track & Field Championships held in Hobart from December 8th to December 12th.

The Australian All Schools Track & Field Championships feature the best athletes for each age group from each state with each athlete having to reach a very high standard of qualification to compete. For school aged children this is by far one of the most, if not the most competitive athletic event held each year. To make a final let alone feature in the medals is quite an achievement. The amazing thing is our local athletes train with no proper facility within either the South Gippsland Shire Council or the Bass Coast Shire Council's area. Our athletes have to shuffle training between joint use facilities such as Recreation reserves, school grounds and local ovals. Most of their competitors find it hard to believe that it is so far away for them to train and to compete at a venue without proper facilities.

Eleanor Patterson competed in the Under 14 years High Jump in a very large field of 21 competitors. Being the last to start the competition at a challenging starting height of 1.50m Eleanor easily cleared 1.50m & the first few heights. The only hiccup for the day was with the bar at 1.58m mark, taking Eleanor 3 attempts to clear that height. From then on as the bar moved up in 3cm increments, Eleanor was quite dominant, despite the pressure at a national event. When the bar reached 1.67m there were 3 competitors left with Eleanor, an ACT athlete and a Queenslander left to battle it out. With Eleanor clearing 1.67m with her first attempt the Queensland girl took 2 attempts to make it and the ACT girl was under extreme pressure on her 3rd attempt managing to go scrape over the bar and stay in contention. Eleanor was now in the lead on count-back. The next height to clear was 1.70m and Eleanor unfortunately missed her first attempt with the ACT girl going straight over. The Queenslander failed to clear the height while Eleanor cleared 1.70m with her second attempt, which was a PB and giving herself every chance to win the competition. With Eleanor and the ACT girl left to battle it out the bar was moved to 1.73m which was an Australian All Schools record height. Both Eleanor and the ACT girl failed to go clear at 1.73m ending the competition. Eleanor won the silver medal jumping 1.70m the same height as the winner and only losing on count-back. In jumping 1.70m Eleanor has now equaled the Victorian Country Record for U14 Women's High Jump, quite an achievement.

Angela Byrne's first event was the U16 4 x 100m relay and with Victoria going in as favorite, all was set for a great finish with Angela selected to run last and bring the team home. Unfortunately the unthinkable happened and the baton was dropped at the first change with the Victorian team in a great position. As we know and have seen at the Commonwealth & Olympic Games once the baton is dropped the race is virtually over and despite Angela running well to finish, Victoria had no hope of making up lost ground.

Angela Byrne's next event the following day was the U16 years 100m where she would go in as favorite being the only Australian girl in her age group to run sub 12 seconds for the event with her recent Victorian Country record breaking performance at the Victorian All Schools in Melbourne. In her heat

Angela finished equal 1st in a triple dead heat to easily qualify for the final into a headwind. In the final Angela got off to a flyer and broke away from the field leading by up to 1.5-2.0metres for most of the race, however a NSW girl who was closing from around the 75 metre mark lunged for the line and after a delay for the photo finish she had managed to beat Angela by a mere 0.03 seconds. Angela won the silver medal for the event and was the first placed Victorian in the field improving from a 3rd place the year before.

The following day and the last event of the championships Angela competed for Victorian in the U16 4 x 200m relay. Angela was selected as the last runner and Victoria was in a battle with NSW for the gold. The Victorian team were unable to lead at any stage, despite applying pressure to the NSW girls and finished a creditable second comfortably winning the silver medal.