

The History of DLAC

In 1977, Doonside Little Athletics Club was started by Marion Morris, a former teacher at Doonside Primary School, to fill the void for summer sport in the district. In that season 80 children became members, competing as part of the Blacktown Centre.

The following season a committee was formed to run the club, and with a series of raffles, street stalls and functions the future of the Centre was assured. There evolved a great enthusiasm in the district, with the first thoughts of becoming a separate centre being aired by parents.

The following season 1979-1980 saw Doonside's first State medal winner, when Mark Hawkins won a silver medal in the under 12's 400 metres. The 1980-1981 season saw no less than 13 children reaching state level competition, 29 Regional competitors and over 40 zone competitors. Under 8 runner David Paabo, won a bronze medal at State in the 400m. It was time to make a move!

Blacktown City Council had developed Kareela West Reserve at Doonside, and with Rita Channells as our first secretary, a steering committee was formed to develop the rules and raise finances for the Inaugural Season as a Centre. The road was rough, and the late completion of Kareela West Reserve meant starting the new centre off at Doonside High School's oval. But the Centre survived and moved to Kareela West Reserve midway through the 1981-1982 season. A poor choice of Sunday afternoon competition, along with a low re-enrolment from some less confident sceptics, gave the Centre just over 100 members for this season, compared to 220 the season before at Blacktown.

This disappointment added further determination to the desire of Greg Quirk (U/8B), Michelle Gomes nee Channells (U/9G), David Paabo (U/9B), Hazel Webb (U/11G) and Jenny Randall (U/12G) reach State level, with David Paabo becoming Doonside's first ever Gold Medal winner, after winning the u/9 Boys 400 metres.

At the start of the 1982-1983 season the Centre started to compete on Friday nights under lights, which quickly became popular. Our treasurer of 30 years Ron Keys helped steer the club through this transition and made sure that the Centre was financially sound.

Over the years Doonside Little Athletics Centre has been at the fore front of many community based events, each year they assist with the Blacktown City Councils "Run for Fun" and the "Cities Marathon".

During the Olympic year in Australia in 2000 Darryl Channells had the honor of carrying the Olympic Torch, and other members of the committee were volunteers for both the Olympic and Para Olympic Games. So it was only fitting that in 2002/2003 season the Doonside Centre was awarded the Little Athletics Association of NSW Gold Award for Volunteers Administration.

In 2017, 40 years on, the Centre is still one of the largest in the State providing an outlet within the district for children to display their athletic skills. After 40 years, one thing is for sure, Doonside Little Athletics centre has grown from those early days to one of the largest and most respected Centres in the State.

Dane Sim
Life Member Secretary 1992-1998