

Australian Athletics 2024 Selection / Nomination Policy Review



Introduction:

Australian Athletics (AA) conducted a review of the 2024 Selection and Nomination Policies to inform the formulation of its 2025 policies. The review considered key themes and feedback, aiming to refine the selection process and enhance its effectiveness and alignment to AA's High Performance strategic goals. Following is a summary of this work which AA is releasing as part of its commitment to transparency.

Themes and Aims of the 2024 Selection/Nomination Policies:

AA's policy framework in 2024 emphasised inclusivity by prioritising athletes who met World Athletics' qualification standards. This principle of selecting larger teams was strongly supported by both the AA Board and the athletics community.

However, the distinction between major global events (e.g., World Championships and Olympics / Paralympics) and other competitions like Indoor Championships, Road or Cross Country (XC) is an important consideration. Teams for all other events must be evaluated differently to avoid diverting finite resources and focus from the main annual Benchmark Events. While we would always wish to have fully inclusive teams that follow WA Guidance and other organising criteria for events, the strength of potential teams and the resources which need to be committed requires that from time to time a different approach may be taken for these teams.

Conclusion: AA will retain a philosophy of 'large teams' for future policies for Olympics/Paralympics/World Championships.

A key aim of the policies is to strengthen the domestic season. AA recognises the need to reward athletes who consistently support domestic competitions with early selections while ensuring that those who do not have the same opportunities are not unfairly excluded. This must be balanced with the need to be able to select the athletes who will perform the best at the Championships, rather than those who are ready in March / April.

Conclusion: AA selection policies will retain incentives to compete in the Australian domestic series.

Specific Areas of Focus:

The policies and results in 2024 also highlighted the importance of relays as a growing opportunity for Australian Athletics. A long-term strategy is being developed and invested in to enable success for relay programs, which enables a broader number of athletes an opportunity to achieve success at the highest level, but this must be supported by an alignment with selection philosophy and focus.

Conclusion: AA selection policies will include a focus on optimising relay performance at international events.

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Through the selection policy review process, it was identified that there is a need for improved documentation regarding the appeals process. AA is in the process of updating this aspect of the appeals process for all future selection and nomination policies, particularly considering the AA By-laws and the expected future use of the National Sports Tribunal.

A learning from 2024 was that AA's selection processes would benefit from more comprehensive feedback mechanisms to provide clearer guidance to athletes in challenging selection scenarios by providing the detailed reasons for non-nomination / selection.

Conclusion: Where feasible, AA will provide greater feedback mechanisms for non-selected athletes (where discretion has been exercised) to make a selection decision - with a focus on the key annual Benchmark event.

An additional step under consideration is a proactive email from the Chair of Selectors to all athletes (and their coaches) who could be considered 'comparably eligible' for selection / nomination in events where discretion by the selection panel will need to be applied. The intent would be to provide an opportunity for written submission regarding their circumstances to the selection panel for it to consider.

While this would entail more work, it would have the benefit of enabling athletes on the cusp of selection an opportunity to present their case.

This would become more difficult in the non-Benchmark Event teams such as World U20 teams, Road, Cross Country or other teams and even more so for the Oceania U18 team. Given the profile and limited interactions from these athletes, the intent is that outside of the major benchmark event, teams submission is still available and communicated as such in the policy release information session (as is already the case) and proactive engagement as described above would be limited to a major Benchmark event only.

Based on team performance over the past four years and the number of appeals more generally, it is considered that current selection policies are for the most part operating well. The Benchmark Events' policies are inclusive and enabling the selection of the best, largest teams with a focus on high quality performances at the Benchmark event. The retention of the World Athletics Qualification standards being a differentiator between athletes who have achieved the standard over those who have qualified by World Ranking places within Field size is useful but not determining.

Conclusion: for the annual Benchmark event selectors will take a more proactive approach where there are more qualifiers than team places available. This proactive approach will provide athletes (and coaches) an opportunity to provide relevant information to the selection panel to inform the selection panel's deliberations.

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The ability for the selection policy to apply discretion in the case of events where there are four or more qualified athletes is important; it enables the panel to consider who is going to perform best at the championships using a variety of measures, their knowledge and experience and to select those athletes who would be expected to perform best in the Benchmark Event. It is recognised that there are some strong views in the athletics community that selection policies should not include any discretion, and that the top three performances of athletes (provided they meet WA quotas) should apply.

AA considers that a policy that allows some limited discretion is more consistent with the many variables that can inform a decision and that the effect of removing this discretion would be to negate the need for a high - quality selection panel at all, and conversely, could lead to other negative outcomes

Conclusion: AA will retain the existing discretionary aspects of the Selection Policy, noting that this may in the future see some athletes who have a top three performance not selected due to other variables.

Form and Fitness After Selection Processes:

Regarding the proof of fitness after selection, the 2024 policies read:

(An athlete must)...Prove their fitness to compete in the Competition by the achievement of pre-Australia departure standards to be set by the General Manager - High Performance if requested to do so;

(An athlete must)...Undertake any medical assessments and testing requested by the Athletics Australia (*now Australian Athletics*) Chief Medical Officer, or their delegate, and disclose to the Athletics Australia (*now Australian Athletics*) Chief Medical Officer, or their delegate, any relevant medical history and known medical condition or issue that may be or become relevant to participation in the Team;

Consideration was given as to whether this should be amended or changed, with the decision being made to retain the current approach. One reason to maintain the current process and not move to a formally required and stated pre-departure / pre-camp standard is that it risks being counter- productive and potentially compromising performance preparation, particularly if an athlete is recovering from an injury.

Furthermore, it can lead to distracting an athlete from focusing on competing at the upcoming Championship - instead requiring an athlete to perform prior to a Championship. AA considers that a change in the current practice would lead to a 'ruling athletes out' approach rather than allowing selected athletes the opportunity to optimise their preparation and compete at the championship. The current policy does allow for athletes to be ruled out, if necessary, but in a more collaborative manner based on communication between the athlete, coach and AA HP team.

Conclusion: AA will maintain the existing process for considering form or fitness and not introduce a formal, required pre-departure standard or proof of fitness procedure.

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Conclusion:

The 2024 Selection/Nomination Policy successfully prioritised the aim to select the most successful teams for each championship through a focus on the international qualification process, athletes supporting the domestic season, and embraced the opportunities we have in relays. However, lessons learned regarding policy documentation and appeals must inform future policies. With better structure, communication, and stakeholder engagement, the 2025 policies can build on the successes of 2024 and further strengthen the alignment between selection processes and AA's HP strategic goals.