



## Draft Heat Policy for Mornington Little Athletics Centre

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### PREAMBLE

Heat illness is a serious and potentially life threatening condition. The risk of heat illness is increased with higher ambient temperatures, higher humidity, high intensity of activity, reduced access to cooling mechanisms and younger age. Heat illness is more common in endurance sports.

Fortunately, Mornington Little Athletics Centre is located on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria and this area has a relatively cool climate. This geography means that the chance of having to activate any of the cancellation clauses in this heat policy is low.

This heat policy does not specifically address fire risk, but MLAC undertakes to cancel any athletics meets on days of Extreme or Code Red Fire Danger as the track is located amongst many trees with dry combustible undergrowth, in an area classified by the CFA as a High Fire Risk Area.

Little Athletics contains few endurance events, but does have a number of high intensity events and can require prolonged periods of waiting for events.

Of particular concern are the athletes in under 10 age groups and below. These athletes are more at risk of heat illness as they do not have sweating mechanisms to allow them to cool down. Their surface area to body mass ratio means that they actually ABSORB heat in these conditions.

MLAC also recognises the increased risk of heat illness to older adults and overweight adults, including officials and spectators.

Ambient temperature is not accurate for assessing the risk of heat illness. Wet bulb globe temperature is required. MLAC does not have direct access to WBGT data specific to the Mt Martha area. This means that recommendations in this document are accurate to the best of our abilities, but will tend to err on the side of caution.

MLAC also understands that this policy is likely to be more conservative than the LA Vic policy. This is based on the fact that acclimatisation can improve children's ability to tolerate heat. It is therefore not sensible to follow a "one size fits all" policy as the temperatures in many northern parts of Victoria are generally much higher than on the Mornington Peninsula. Adults will require 7-10 days of 30- 60 minutes exercise in the heat in order to acclimatise. Children take significantly longer than this.

### PREVENTION OF HEAT ILLNESS

MLAC will provide shade in the form of canvas gazebo tents at multiple points around the ground.

Athletes are encouraged to wear protective, sun smart clothing and sunscreen. They are to be encouraged to wear hats while waiting in between events and to seek shade and water regularly.

Officials and committee members will wear protective sun smart clothing and hats and direct children to wear hats and rest in shady areas between events.

Athletes will be encouraged to have regular drink breaks and to have a drink bottle with their competition group at all times. Athletes are able to access the ice in the drinks bins at the barbecue at any time to aid in cooling.

Any athlete complaining of feeling unwell in the heat or any child not wanting to continue to participate will be encouraged to rest. No unwilling athlete will be required to continue competition.

On days forecast to be over 30 degrees (ambient temperature), MLAC will also have spray bottles available to be filled with water and used by all team managers.

### **SPECIFIC ACTIONS REQUIRED**

1. When the ambient temperature is forecast to be 30 degrees or above, events will go ahead as scheduled with the above heat prevention mechanisms in place. Spray bottles will be placed in all team manager's trolleys. Parents of children who are younger than 10, who are overweight or who have other medical issues are requested to consider their child's special circumstances in making the decision whether to compete.
2. When the ambient temperature is forecast to be 33- 36 degrees, events will go ahead, but the committee will make a decision 24 hours prior to the event regarding start and finish times. Where required and possible, meet start times will be made earlier. Parents of athletes under the age of 10 are encouraged to consider withdrawing from the meet. Parents who do allow their children to compete are advised to adhere to heat risk management guidelines and to ensure that their children are able to rest in a cooler environment for the remainder of the day. MLAC undertakes to have trained medical/ first aid personnel in attendance who are able to recognise and treat heat stress.
3. When the ambient temperature is forecast to be 37 degrees or over, the committee will cancel the meet .
4. If fire ratings are Extreme or Code Red, regardless of temperature forecast, the meet will be cancelled.
5. Parents will be notified of cancellations via the website, Facebook and Twitter as per the wet weather policy.
6. This policy will be reviewed on a triennial basis.