

AUSTRALIAN RACEWALKING CHAMPIONSHPS MEN: 1977 - 1980

This follows on from my previous articles which detail the early Australasian and Australian Racewalking Championships (along with other particularly significant races), up to and including 1976.

- [Australasian Championships Men 1892-1920.pdf](#)
- [Australasian Championships Men 1921-1939.pdf](#)
- [Australian Championships Men 1946-1956.pdf](#)
- [Australian Championships Men 1957-1960.pdf](#)
- [Australian Championships Men 1961-1966.pdf](#)
- [Australian Championships Men 1967-1970.pdf](#)
- [Australian Championships Men 1971-1976.pdf](#)

Our story continues from 1977. The scene is set as follows:

Willi Sawall and Tim Erickson were now the dominant Australian roadwalkers. Ross Haywood was soon to disappear from the winter scene, returning to his summer walk / winter run racing regime. He was also looking towards his future and, in early 1978, opened his own sporting good store, the Ross Haywood Sports Centre, in Croydon. To his credit, he subsequently built this into a large and successful venture, which trades today as RHSports.

1977 also brought news that the men's 50km walk would be reinstated for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

Australian Track & Field Championships 1976-77

The Domain Athletic Track, Hobart, Tasmania, 11-13 March 1977

A win for **Willi Sawall** in the 1977 T&F Championships 3000m track walk was never in doubt. His summer season had been one of continuing improvement, highlighted by a time of 1:28:40 in a VAWC 20km walk in February. This was the first time any Australian had broken 1:29:00.

Sawall stormed through the 3000m walk in Hobart, setting a new Australian record of 12:05.4. **David Smith** also PB'd to take second with 12:40.4 and was definitely one to watch for the future. Followers of the sport did not have long to wait, as Smith subsequently contested his first winter season in 1977, placing 3rd in the Victorian 20km (1:35:56), 10km (47:50) and 15km (1:11:50).

3,000m Track Walk - Men - Sunday 13 March 1977

1	Willi Sawall	VIC	12:05.4
2	Dave Smith	VIC	12:40.4
3	Peter Fullager	SA	12:42.4
4	Graham Dent	VIC	12:45.2
5	Tim Erickson	VIC	13:07.2
6	Simon Baker	VIC	13:09.0
7	Rod Huxley	NSW	13:28.0
8	Terry Jones	NSW	13:46.0
9	Bruce Cook	QLD	

1977 Alexander Cup 20km Walk

Davies Park, Brisbane, Saturday 21st May 1977

The annual RWA Carnival in Brisbane on 21st May, took on more importance than usual, with the Alexander Cup 20km championship nominated as the A.A.U. of Australia trial to select up to four walkers to compete in a biennial Australia vs New Zealand match, to be held on August 20th in Sydney. The stage was set with a relatively flat 4km boomerang shaped course, with the temperature in the mid to high 20's. **Willi Sawall** adopted his usual race tactic, going straight to the front, initially shadowed by **Peter Fullager** but soon on his own. **Tim Erickson** and **David Smith** soon caught Fullager and went past him. **Peter McCullagh**, reprising memories of years past, also challenged Fullager. The last lap saw McCullagh retire and Smith fall back rapidly through the field, leaving Fullager to take third. **Frank Clark**, having his national-class 20km race for some time, fought out fourth place with **Clarrie Jack**, Jack eventually getting the better of their two man battle.

Sawall, troubled by nothing except some recurring hamstring issues, strode to an easy victory in 1:36:41.4, Erickson second with 1:41:00.4, Fullager third with 1:43:18 and Jack fourth with 1:44:32.

Alexander Cup 20km Walk, Brisbane, Saturday 21 May 1977			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	1:36:41.4
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	1:41:00.4
3.	Peter Fullager	SA	1:43:18
4.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	1:44:32
5.	Frank Clark	NSW	1:46:20
6.	Robin Whyte	ACT	1:48:56
7.	Eddie Dawkins	NSW	1:50:48
8.	John Tormey	QLD	1:51:34
9.	Mark Wall	VIC	1:51:57
10.	Bill Kirby	QLD	1:53:15
11.	Ian Jack	VIC	1:54:33
12.	F. Sawyer	NSW	1:54:59
13.	John Harris	QLD	1:55:52
14.	Peter Waddell	ACT	1:58:11
15.	David Smith	VIC	1:58:32
16.	John Lardi	QLD	1:59:51
17.	Paul Dorsett	NSW	2:03:05
18.	Mark Donahoo	VIC	2:05:19
19.	Alan Hancock	NSW	2:08:33
20.	Reg Tarte	NSW	2:10:03
21.	Sid Bray	QLD	2:15:41
-	David Gaff	VIC	DQ
-	Bruce Cook	QLD	DNF
-	Frank Overton	NSW	DNF
-	Keith Heness	NSW	DNF
-	Peter McCullagh	ACT	DNF
Teams			
1.	VIC	6	1, 2, 3
2.	NSW	17	4, 5, 8
3.	QLD	22	6, 7, 8

11th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival

Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 12th June 1977

47 entries made this the largest field so far in the LBG 20 Mile event. High drama unfolded at the 15 mile mark as **Willi Sawall** and **Tim Erickson**, well clear of the rest of the field, turned incorrectly at an unmarshalled roundabout and lost several minutes before turning back and rejoining the course. Even so, Sawall still broke his race record by 15 seconds to hold out an improving Erickson. The many unmarshalled roundabouts and the steadily increasing traffic would eventually spell an end to the various road courses and push the event onto the bike paths but that was in the future.

LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 12 June 1977			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	2:33:14
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	2:35:01
3.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	2:45:54
4.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:50:13
5.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	2:51:55
6.	Eddie Dawkins	NSW	2:52:51
7.	Duncan Faux	SA	2:53:12
8.	Stuart Cooper	VIC	2:53:39
9.	Ian Jack	VIC	2:53:54
10.	Bruce Cook	VIC	2:56:26
11.	Tim Thompson	SA	2:56:58
12.	Justin Coxhead	VIC	2:57:04
13.	John Tormey	QLD	2:59:24
14.	Mark Wall	VIC	3:00:20
15.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	3:01:25

16.	John Smith	NSW	3:02:51
17.	Don Cox	SA	3:03:21
18.	Peter Waddell	ACT	3:05:35
19.	Colin Campbell	ACT	3:05:35
20.	Bruce Dudon	VIC	3:07:21
21.	Ken Hall	VIC	3:07:21
22.	John Lardi	QLD	3:08:09
23.	Claude Martin	VIC	3:10:53
24.	Frank Overton	NSW	3:12:04
25.	Tom Daintry	VIC	3:15:21
26.	David Gaff	VIC	3:19:21
27.	Brendan Hyde	NSW	3:20:53
28.	Ron Crawford	NSW	3:23:23
29.	Keith Heness	NSW	3:23:47
30.	Claude Martin	VIC	3:27:19
31.	Ralph Field	VIC	3:30:11
32.	Bill Starr	SA	3:36:06
33.	Mike Porter	VIC	3:39:23
34.	Vin Mead	VIC	3:40:33
35.	Colin O'Brien	SA	3:42:20
36.	Gus Theobald	VIC	3:44:22
37.	Ern Geering	NCC	3:46:02
38.	Paul Francis	SA	3:47:05
39.	J Millington	NCC	3:47:37
40.	B Reed	VIC	3:56:32
41.	J Kelly	NCC	4:04:14
42.	J Hoskins	SA	4:04:28
-	F Sawyer	NSW	DNF
-	R Tarte	NSW	DNF
-	Stan Malbut	SA	DNF
-	Peter McCullagh	ACT	DNF
-	M Cotton	SA	DNF
Teams			
1.	VIC	Willi Sawall, Tim Erickson, Clarrie Jack	
2.	VIC No 2	Terry O'Neill, Stuart Cooper, Justin Coxhead	
3.	SA	Duncan Faux, Don Cox, Tim Thompson	
4.	QLD	John Tormey, Bruce Cook, Greg Sockhill	
5.	ACT	Robin Whyte, Peter Waddell, Colin Campbell	
6.	NSW	John Smith, Eddie Dawkins, Frank Overton	

Victorian 50km Championship Albert Park, Victoria, Sunday 10th July 1977

I would not normally report on State Championships in this sort of document, but one in particular deserves attention. **Willi Sawall** became the fastest road 50km walker in the Commonwealth when he recorded 4:04:54 (compared to Bob Dobson's 4:09:09) in winning the Victorian 50km championship in early July, in less than ideal conditions – a cool overcast day with harsh cold winds. **Tim Erickson** also walked a PB in this race with 4:19:20, while **Clarrie Jack** took 10 minutes off his best with 4:30:07 to lift himself above Noel Freeman on the all time rankings.

Victorian 50km Championship, Albert Park, Sun 10 July 1977			
1.	Willi Sawall	Ballarat Harriers	4:04.54
2.	Tim Erickson	Ivanhoe	4:19.20
3.	Clarrie Jack	Glenhuntly	4:30.07

1977 Australian 50km Championship Adelaide, Saturday 6th August 1977

To complete the story, the Australian 50km championship was duly held in Elizabeth, a northern suburb of Adelaide, in early August. As expected, **Willi Sawall** and **Tim Erickson** fought out the title on a tough undulating course that was

later acknowledged to be about ½ mile too long (they were still measuring it during the first lap of the race). **Peter Vysma** made it a clean sweep for Victoria, getting the bronze this time around after being given 4th place in a photo finish in 1975. Times were obviously slow, given the over distance course.

Australian 50km Championship, Adelaide, Sat 6 August 1977			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	4:14:08
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	4:17:15
3.	Peter Vysma	VIC	4:34:33
4.	Tim Thompson	SA	4:40:29
5.	Robin Whyte	NSW	4:40:59
6.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	4:41:37
7.	Jeffrey Phillips	NSW	4:51:10
8.	Stuart Cooper	VIC	4:51:49
9.	John Tormey	QLD	4:53:59
10.	Don Cox	SA	4:56:38
11.	Duncan Faux	SA	4:59:22
12.	Eddie Dawkins	NSW	5:02:39
13.	Ian Jack	VIC	5:04:54
14.	John Lardi	QLD	5:08:58
15.	Peter Waddell	NSW	5:13:16
16.	Claude Martin	VIC	5:22:54
17.	Stan Malbut	SA	5:37:18
18.	Brendan Hyde	NSW	5:43:01
19.	Russell Willis	SA	6:06:15
-	Frederick Sawyer	NSW	DNF
-	John Smith	NSW	DNF
-	Frank Overton	NSW	DNF
-	Paul Francis	SA	DNF
-	Mark Wall	VIC	DNF
-	Colin O'Brien	SA	DNF
Teams	1. VIC 6	2. SA 19	3. NSW 20

Australia vs New Zealand Racewalking Match, Centennial Park, Sydney, Saturday 20th August 1977

First a bit of history. In 1975, the Australian and New Zealand Walking Federations had finalised the concept of a trans-Tasman walking carnival, to be held in odd years. The first scheduling was set for October 1975 and the lobbying began with A.A.U. of Australia to get the event sanctioned as an official Australian / New Zealand match. Unfortunately, even though the concept was supported by the A.A.U. Walking Committee, the difficulties of finding funding and sorting out selection criteria at such short notice were not resolved and the event went ahead as a Federation event, with competitors travelling to New Zealand as self funded athletes. Peter Fullager was the only top line walker in attendance and he won the 20km walk with 1:41:41. Overall, Australia won a closely contested teams competition by one point. This meet is discussed in <http://www.vrwc.org.au/documents/RacewalkingAustraliaHistory.pdf> .

By the time the next match was held in August 1977 in Centennial Park in Sydney, the A.A.U. of A. had agreed to grant the event official status and the competitors wore the official Australian colours. Once again Australia won, this time convincingly, with **Willi Sawall** (1:35:19), **Tim Erickson** (1:36:05) and **Peter Fullager** (1:36:23) too strong for the opposition. An undulating rough course, combined with a typically warm and sunny Sydney day, meant times were not fast. Interestingly, the course in Centennial Park was a non standard 2120m in length, adding an additional layer of complexity for the walkers.

Australia vs NZ Racewalking Match, Sydney, Sat 20 Aug 1977			
1.	Willi Sawall	AUS	1:35:19
2.	Tim Erickson	AUS	1:36:05
3.	Peter Fullager	AUS	1:36:23
4.	Kevin Taylor	NZ	1:41:46
5.	Clarrie Jack	AUS	1:43:39
6.	Ross Pilkington	NZ	1:45:06
7.	Maurie Hinton	NZ	1:52:35
-	Allan Callow	NZ	DNF

Teams			
1.	Australia	6	1,2,3
2.	New Zealand	15	4,5,6

Australian Track & Field Championships 1977-78 QEII Stadium, Brisbane, Queensland, 16-19 March 1978

As the current holder of all the Australian walk titles, **Willi Sawall** was expected to continue his reign with another National T&F 3000m walk title in Brisbane in March 1978, and that is exactly what happened. The big 3 – Sawall, **David Smith** and **Tim Erickson** - took the first 3 places, but with times a little slower than expected in the humid Brisbane conditions. Erickson had been passed by Smith in the final 1000m, unable to match his finishing speed.

3,000m Track Walk - Men - Sunday 19 March 1978			
1	Willi Sawall	VIC	12:27.4
2	David Smith	VIC	12:50.8
3	Tim Erickson	VIC	12:56.5
4	Bruce Cook	QLD	13:13.0
5	Peter Stubbs	QLD	13:20.6
6	Bill Dyer	VIC	13:31.5
7	Terry Jones	WA	13:33.0
8	Mike Woods	NSW	13:39.0
9	Barrie Birtchnell	VIC	13:42.0
10	Clark Stone	NSW	13:44.0
11	Jeff Phillips	NSW	13:47.0
12	John Sheard	VIC	13:50.0
13	Peter Bethune	VIC	14:19.0
14	Duncan Knox	VIC	14:33.0
15	Mark Donahoo	VIC	15:43.0
-	Peter Brann	NSW	DQ (13:19.2)
-	Rod Huxley	NSW	DQ (13:20.6)

After a very quiet year, Ross Haywood returned for the 1978 winter season, presumably eyeing a second Commonwealth Games team selection. He showed that he was in great shape with a fighting second to Willi Sawall in a VAWC Season opening 20km walk at Albert Park in early April, his time 1:31:04. On that occasion, Sawall won with 1:30:49 and Erickson was third with 1:33:11. Ross was now expected to be one of the main contenders in the upcoming Commonwealth Games 30km trial.

1978 Commonwealth Games 30km Walk Trial Fishermans Bend, Melbourne, Sunday 14th May 1978

Held on Sunday 14th May 1978 at Fishermans Bend in Melbourne, the official Australian Commonwealth Games trial was held over the new distance of 30km. The Commonwealth Games organising committee had decided after 1974 that the day of the 20 Miles Walk was over. A new standard was needed and the 30 km distance was chosen. With a perfectly flat 3km loop in the industrial area west of Melbourne, the stage was set for some great racing.

Surprisingly, Ross Haywood was a non-starter, leaving **Willi Sawall** and **Tim Erickson** to take the quinella in what was perhaps an anticlimax. They went shoulder to shoulder for 21 km in almost perfect laps of 14:00 per 3 km (20 km split approximately 93:30) and it was only in the last 9 km that Sawall established a winning break after Erickson was forced to stop for an unscheduled pit-stop. Sawall's finishing time of 2:19:25 was a 2 minute PB and Erickson, with 2:21:22, beat Sawall's previous best but had to settle for second.

David Smith was with the two leaders at 15 km but then retired, leaving the race for third place wide open, with **Peter Fullager** and **Peter McCullagh** battling it out. The South Australian eventually proved the stronger and took third with 2:29:18 as against McCullagh's time of 2:31:26.

1978 Comm. Games 30km Trial, Melbourne, Sun 14 May			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	2:19:25
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	2:21:22

3.	Peter Fullager	SA	2:29:18
4.	Peter McCullagh	ACT	2:31:26
5.	Peter Vysma	VIC	2:32:28
6.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:32:56
7.	Bruce Cook	VIC	2:35:42
8.	Bill Dyer	VIC	2:37:55
9.	Stuart Cooper	VIC	2:38:28
10.	John Sheard	VIC	2:39:00
11.	Mark Wall	VIC	2:45:21
12.	Jim Bannon	VIC	2:46:48
13.	Bill Dillon	VIC	3:00:07
14.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	DNF
-	Ian Jack	VIC	DNF
-	Terry O'Neill	VIC	DNF
-	David Smith	VIC	DNF
-	Joe Anderson	VIC	DNF

When the Commonwealth Games T&F team was announced in early June, Sawall and Erickson were both selected. In an innovative move, the team was ranked in order of merit, with Sawall at the top of the list in number one position and Erickson inside the top 10, in 6th position.

1987 RWA Carnival and Glover Shield

Hawkesbury Agricultural College, Hawkesbury, NSW, Saturday 20th May 1978

The biennial Glover Shield 10km championship was held a week later at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College in Hawkesbury, NSW. **Willi Sawall**, **David Smith** and **Tim Erickson** went straight to the front, storming through the opening 2.5km lap in a very fast 10:35. Erickson was the first to drop off the pace, soon followed by Smith, leaving Sawall to cross the finish line all alone in a PB 43:32.2. Smith, with 44:00.5, and Erickson, with 44:43.4, also recorded PBs, as did 39 year old **John Smith**, who finished fourth with 46:15.1.

Glover Shield 10km Walk, Hawkesbury, Saturday 20 May 1978			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	43:32.2
2.	David Smith	VIC	44:00.5
3.	Tim Erickson	VIC	44:43.4
4.	John Smith	NSW	46:15.1
5.	Peter McCullagh	ACT	47:04.6
6.	Bruce Cook	QLD	37:34.2
7.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	47:50
8.	Robin Whyte	ACT	47:58
9.	Bob Mee	ACT	49:29
10.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	50:26
11.	Keith Knox	GOS	50:28
12.	Logan Irwin	NSW	50:42
13.	Fred Sawyer	GOS	51:10
14.	John Harris	QLD	51:24
15.	Mark Wall	VIC	52:13
16.	Frank Overton	GOS	52:29
17.	Bill Kirby	QLD	52:39
18.	Paul Thompson	NSW	52:59
19.	Gwyn Jones	GOS	53:09
20.	Keith Heness	NSW	53:20
21.	Peter Waddell	ACT	53:24
22.	G. Wilson	NSW	53:26
23.	Alan Hancock	NSW	53:46
24.	W. Sutherland	ACT	55:13
25.	John Lardi	QLD	56:20
26.	Paul Dorsett	NSWE	58:02
27.	T. Nicholson	GOS	65:41
28.	Ted Edwards	NSW	66:12
Teams			

1.	VIC	6	1, 2, 3
2.	ACT	20	5, 7, 8
3.	QLD	28	6, 9, 13
4.	NSW 1	30	4, 11, 15
5.	GOS	36	10, 12, 14
6.	NSW 2	51	16, 17, 18

12th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 4th June 1978

1978 saw most of the LBG Carnival events converting to their metric equivalents. The one exception was the blue riband 20 Mile event which was left untouched. The Newcastle club was replaced by the newly formed Gosford club which participated for the first time. The new timetable saw 221 entries (the largest so far) spread across multiple events.

Willi Sawall broke his own race record by some 3 minutes and **Tim Erickson** and **David Smith** also broke 2:40:00 in the fastest race seen so far. The 3 Victorians had passed the 10 mile mark in 76:07, before Sawall stormed home with a second 10 mile split of 74:38. This was Smith's first attempt at a longer race and he came through with flying colours.

Overall 15 competitors broke 3 hours in the best race depth seen so far. Victoria showed its dominance with 12 of the first 20 places and they took 1st and 2nd in the Teams event, as well as winning the Veterans Teams event. Overall 43 walkers started the 20 Miler, with 36 finishing. 67 year old **Tom Daintry** earned the award as the oldest finisher with a time of 3:20:11.

Of particular mention were the two women who finished the 20 Mile, namely **Shirley Brasher** of Tasmania (walking for Victoria) and **Elaine McFarlane** of SA, with times of 3:47:36 and 3:52:31 respectively.

LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 4th June 1978			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	2:30:45
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	2:36:47
3.	David Smith	VIC	2:38:28
4.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:46:01
5.	John Sheard	VIC	2:46:33
6.	John Smith	NSW	2:46:51
7.	Bruce Cook	VIC	2:51:29
8.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	2:51:55
9.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	2:52:36
10.	Stuart Cooper	VIC	2:53:34
11.	Keith Knox	GOS	2:54:58
12.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	2:54:59
13.	Ian Jack	VIC	2:55:17
14.	Jeff Phillips	GOS	2:58:13
15.	Joe Anderson	VIC	2:59:51
16.	Bob Mee	ACT	3:01:52
17.	Fred Sawyer	GOS	3:03:52
18.	Ken Hall	VIC	3:04:33
19.	Bruce Dudon	VIC	3:04:45
20.	Claude Martin	VIC	3:07:41
21.	Greg O'Neill	SA	3:08:48
22.	Duncan Knox	VIC	3:10:45
23.	Peter Waddell	ACT	3:11:25
24.	Jim Bannan	VIC	3:12:57
25.	Stan Malbut	SA	3:13:17
26.	Harry Jones	VIC	3:19:25
27.	Tom Daintry	VIC	3:20:11
28.	Paul Dorsett	NSW	3:20:44
29.	Brendan Hyde	GOS	3:23:22
30.	Keith Heness	NSW	3:27:26
31.	Paul Francis	SA	3:29:03
32.	Phil Hollis	SA	3:30:26
33.	Ron Crawford	NSW	3:32:34

34.	Shirley Brasher (F)	VIC	3:47:36
35.	Bill Larson	SA	3:52:31
36.	Elaine McFarlane (F)	SA	3:52:31
Teams			
1.	VIC No 1	Willi Sawall, Tim Erickson, John Sheard	
2.	VIC No 2	David Smith, Terry O'Neill, Ian Jack	
3.	GOS	Keith Knox, Jeff Phillips, F. Sawyer	

One local Victorian race deserves particular attention at this stage, namely the Victorian 20km Championship, held around Albert Park lake on Sunday 2nd July. In that race, Willi Sawall and Tim Erickson had stormed to big PBs, finishing with 1:28:03 and 1:29:54, only to find out post-event that they had both been disqualified around the 18km mark, with a second report issued against each of them at that stage by the chief judge. At that time, although it normally required 3 reports for disqualification, any report by the chief judge counted for 2.

1978 Australian 20km Championship Bendigo, Victoria, Sunday 16th July 1978

The 1978 Australian 20km championship had been allocated to Bendigo and was held on a 2km course around a number of city blocks, including the main street of the city, and past the town hall.

Once again, it was the big three, **Willi Sawall, David Smith and Tim Erickson**, who shot to the lead and fought out the medals. Sawall broke away in the second half as usual, winning with 1:29:31, while Smith, in something of a breakthrough walk, took second with 1:30:25, after getting away from Erickson in the last few kilometres. There were no questions about Smith's shorter distance walking abilities. This race result put paid to any questions about his suitability to the longer distances. With the first 11 walkers bettering 1:40:00, it was a high quality race.

Australian 20km Championship, Bendigo, Sun 16 July 1978			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	1:29:31
2.	David Smith	VIC	1:30:25
3.	Tim Erickson	VIC	1:30:49
4.	Peter Fullager	SA	1:35:51
5.	John Sheard	VIC	1:37:00
6.	Robert Mee	NSW	1:37:51
7.	Rod Huxley	NSW	1:38:37
8.	Robin Whyte	NSW	1:38:45
9.	John Smith	NSW	1:38:49
0.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	1:39:09
11.	Colin Donald	VIC	1:39:54
12.	Peter Bethune	VIC	1:40:40
13.	Bill Dyer	VIC	1:41:13
14.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	1:41:30
15.	Gregory O'Neill	SA	1:41:41
16.	Keith Knox	NSW	1:41:56
17.	Joseph Anderson	VIC	1:41:58
18.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	1:42:50
19.	Kenneth Hall	VIC	1:43:56
20.	Peter Stubbs	QLD	1:44:12
21.	Bruce Dudon	VIC	1:44:27
22.	Bruce Cook	QLD	1:45:02
23.	Stuart Cooper	VIC	1:45:05
24.	Ian Jack	VIC	1:45:17
25.	Philip Hollis	SA	1:45:52
26.	Claude Martin	VIC	1:47:01
27.	Mark Wall	VIC	1:48:11
28.	James Bannan	VIC	1:50:11
29.	John Harris	QLD	1:51:02
30.	Russell Willis	SA	1:53:30
31.	Mark Keast	SA	2:00:45
32.	Wayne Fletcher	TAS	2:06:22

-	Duncan Knox	VIC	DNF
-	Kevin Green	TAS	DNF
-	Stan Malbut	SA	DNF
Teams:			
1	VIC	16	(1,2,4,9)
2.	NSW	26	(5,6,7,8)
3.	SA	44	(3,11,14,16)
4.	QLD	50	(10,12,13,15)

1978 Commonwealth Games 30km Walk Edmonton, Canada, Tuesday 8th August 1978

Willi Sawall and **Tim Erickson** clearly led the Commonwealth walk rankings coming into the 1978 Commonwealth Games and the pair were ranked 1 and 6 in the Australian Commonwealth Games team. All of a sudden, walking was in the public spotlight and Sawall was a household name.

Sawall raced throughout the 1978 winter, recording win after win and PB after PB, and he looked an unbackable favourite for the big race. But his intense racing schedule had taken a heavy toll on his body and he left Australia with a torn thigh muscle. This combined with the heavy pressure of being ranked the number 1 Australian, placed him in an inenviable situation. The oldest member of the Australian Track and Field team, he had been rated a certain gold medallist by the national selectors and it was worrying him.

The 30 km race was held on the hottest day of the entire Games and the walk was scheduled to start at 3PM. The walkers asked for the time to be put back but to no avail.

In the blazing sunshine, the race was held on a flat open course around Edmonton. Sawall started in his usual way – fast from the gun! He surged to the front, followed by Erickson. At the 5 km mark, he led by 21 seconds and was still well clear at 10 km. However, soon after this, the leading gap started to shrink. **Ollie Flynn**, a tall and rangy English insurance broker from Essex, had started more conservatively but now made his charge, passing Sawall at the 17 km mark to assume the lead. By 20 km, Sawall was suffering badly with thigh soreness in both legs and Flynn was fading in the heat. It was a battle of survival by the two leaders with Flynn eventually crossing the finish line 130m ahead of Sawall before collapsing into the pole vault pits, dehydrated and feeling lucky to have survived the conditions.

Erickson's race was over early. After sitting in second place in the early stages, he started to fade, actually dropping to sixth place at the 20 km mark before coming good and forcing his way back to third, finishing 4 minutes behind the winner.

The quietly spoken 36 year old Sawall took his defeat badly, because of the huge pressure placed on him by media. He commented after the race *“I've been worried about it ever since the day the team was announced in June. I knew it would be very hard to live up to the Number One spot.”* The same pressure was not on Erickson who was happy with his bronze medal, but he too had trouble. *“My problem was different to the other two. I wasn't dehydrated and I wasn't injured. I just couldn't get my style co-ordinated and I couldn't handle the early pace.”*

1.	Oliver Flynn	England	2:22:03.70
2.	Willi Sawall	Australia	2:22:58.58
3.	Tim Erickson	Australia	2:26:33.97
4.	Brian Adams	England	2:29:42
5.	Amos Seddon	England	2:29:58
6.	Helmut Boeck	Canada	2:31:21
7.	Graham Seatter	New Zealand	2:31:49
8.	Graham Young	Isle of Man	2:33:15
9.	Marcel Jobin	Canada	2:35:02
10.	Elisha Kasuku	Kenya	2:43:26
11.	Rashid Chege	Kenya	2:45:13
12.	Vellasamy Subramaniam	Malaysia	2:56:08
-	Michael Parker	New Zealand	DNF
-	David Munyaio	Kenya	DNF
-	John "Allan" Callow	Isle of Man	DNF
-	Robert Lambie	Isle of Man	DNF

Australian Track & Field Championships 1978-79
Perry Lakes Stadium, Perth, WA - 22-25 March 1979

The 1979 Australian T&F Championships in Perth saw **Willi Sawall** win his third track title in a row. With David Smith and Tim Erickson choosing to bypass the expensive trip to Western Australia, it was an opportunity for the young walkers to excel, with the minor medals going to 16 year old **Michael Woods** and 17 year old **Bill Dyer**.

3,000m Track Walk - Men - Sunday 25 March 1979			
1	Willi Sawall	VIC	12:20.03
2	Michael Woods	NSW	12:41.90
3	Bill Dyer	VIC	12:55.59
4	Peter Stubbs	QLD	13:05.63
5	Bruce Cook	QLD	13:07.0
6	Mark Wall	VIC	13:12.0
7	Barrie Birtchnell	VIC	13:16.0
8	Duncan Knox	VIC	13:22.0
9	Rod Huxley	NSW	13:24.0
10	Duncan Faux	WA	13:24.0
11	Terry Jones	WA	13:33.0

Australia vs New Zealand Racewalking Match
Auckland, New Zealand, Sunday 15th April 1979

Unfortunately the 1979 Australia vs New Zealand Racewalking Match was to be held in New Zealand and this would have made it a more expensive option for the A.A.U. of Australia to send a team. Added to that, Australia was sending a team for the first time to the Lugano Cup. Consequently, the A.A.U. felt that this event did not deserve its continued support, so once again the event became a Federation event. It went ahead in Auckland in March 1979 and was expanded to include Open 20 km, Open 50 km and Junior 10 km for men. In the absence of the big guns, Australia still won again, with a number of fine performances.

50km, 15th April 1979			
1.	Clarrie Jack	AUS	4.37.15
2.	Ian Jack	AUS	4.38.24
3.	Maurie Hinton	NZ	4.52.56
4.	John Raynor	NZ	4.59.24
5.	Mark Wall	Indep	5.05.40
6.	Norman Read	NZ	5.12.58
-	Edward Dawkins	Indep	DNF
20km			
1.	Bill Dyer	AUS	1.34.05
2.	Graeme Seater	NZ	1.35.48
3.	Joe Anderson	AUS	1.36.28
4.	Kevin Henwood	NZ	1.37.40
5.	Kevin Taylor	AUS	1.41.43
6.	John Sheard	AUS	1.43.39
10km Junior Men			
1.	Ian Jacques	AUS	49.26
2.	Mark Wall	AUS	50.51
3.	Paul Herbert	NZ	52.39
4.	G. Anderson	NZ	54.20
Points:	50km	AUS 16	NZ 12
	20km	AUS 15	NZ 13

With the continuing Australian participation in the Lugano Cup, this event was discontinued after 1981. It had been a good initiative at the time, but times and needs change quickly.

13th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival
Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 10th June 1979

Willi Sawall smashed his LBG race record by an unbelievable 7 minutes in 1979, recording a time of 2:23:10. **Tim Erickson** went with him for the first 3 miles (passed in 21:16) before losing contact, and this set him up for a time of 2:33:45, a time that would have easily won in just about any other year. With 12 of the first 16 places, Victoria continued its domination of men's walking. Victoria took 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in the team event as well as winning the veterans' team event. Never before had one state so dominated the event.

LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 10 June 1979			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	2:23:10
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	2:33:45
3.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	2:41:06
4.	John Sheard	VIC	2:43:42
5.	John Smith	NSW	2:46:02
6.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	2:46:51
7.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	2:47:29
8.	Bob Mee	ACT	2:50:11
9.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:51:23
10.	Ian Jack	VIC	2:52:43
11.	Duncan Knox	VIC	2:52:45
12.	Bruce Cook	VIC	2:55:02
13.	Joe Anderson	VIC	2:56:34
14.	Harry Summers	VIC	2:58:16
15.	Ken Hall	VIC	2:59:55
16.	Alan Hancock	NSW	3:04:29
17.	Claude Martin	VIC	3:07:02
18.	Fred Sawyer	NSW	3:11:29
19.	Tom Daintry	VIC	3:14:40
20.	Roy McFadden	SA	3:15:37
21.	Bill Dillon	VIC	3:17:23
22.	Mark Donahoo	VIC	3:17:57
23.	Bill Cook	QLD	3:18:26
24.	G Martin	VIC	3:18:37
25.	Jim Bannan	VIC	3:21:17
26.	J Russell	VIC	3:24:02
27.	Bill Starr	SA	3:27:37
28.	Frank Overton	NSW	3:29:38
29.	Shiela Miller (F)	VIC	3:31:17
30.	Keith Heness	NSW	3:34:28
31.	Stan Miller	SA	3:35:43
32.	Paul Dorsett	NSW	3:37:40
Teams			
1.	VIC No 1	9	Willi Sawall, Tim Erickson, Clarrie Jack
2.	VIC No 2	14	Duncan Knox, John Sheard, Terry O'Neill
3.	VIC No 3	30	Ken Hall, Claude Martin, Tom Daintry

1979 IAAF Racewalking World Cup Trials
Fisherman's Bend, Melbourne, 15-16 July 1979

The Lugano Cup had first been held in 1961 in Lugano in Switzerland. It had been a small scale affair with 12 walkers in a men's 20 km and 12 walkers in a men's 50 km event. From these humble beginnings, this event, held every 2 years, grew in popularity and depth until, in 1979, the IAAF raised it to the status of an official World Championship. During these formative years, the event featured 20km and 50km for men but did not officially include any women's races.

In the period leading up to the 1979 event, the Amateur Athletic Union of Australia responded to calls from the A.A.U. Walking Committee and others and announced that it would send a team of 4 men in each event, with the first 3 to count in the Teams competition. The IAAF had also decided to hold an inaugural International Women's Race Walking Competition, over 5 km, in conjunction with the Lugano Cup and the A.A.U. of A. announced it would also send a team of 4 women to this event. This was the first official internationally sanctioned women's walking event ever held.

The meet was now branded as the **IAAF Race Walking World Cup**, and featured two two separate competitions: the **Lugano Trophy** for men and the **Eschborn Trophy** for women.

The A.A.U. of A. applied to the Commonwealth Government and to the AOF for assistance but this was only expected to partially fund the team and, as with the World Cross Country Team which competed every 2 years under similar circumstances, the States were asked to chip in. Victoria bore the lion's share which was set at \$5000. VAAA promptly pushed back to VAWC for assistance and VAWC came to the fore, deciding to contribute \$3000 from the following fund raising activities

- Money raised from the annual telephone book deliveries
- Money raised from club BBQs after certain of the Sunday walks
- Mini-Lotto which was instituted (with Bob Cruise as the driving force)

The main fund raiser turned out to be the Mini-Lotto which, although supported by most members in a small way, was mainly successful due to the efforts of 3 people who sold 85% of the tickets between them – Vin Mead and Clarrie and Ian Jack. In the final analysis, the trip ended up being fully funded and, from memory, I don't think any of us Victorians ended up being out of pocket.

The Australian selectors' stated policy was that the first 3 placegetters in each trial would be automatic selections and the fourth spot would be at their discretion. The weekend of 15-16 July was chosen as the trial weekend and Victoria was asked to run the events. VAWC chose Fisherman's Bend as the venue and, with the 20km event to be contested on the Saturday and the 50km and womens' 5km to be contested on the Sunday, all was in place for a big weekend of racing.

The 20km event saw the main favourite, **David Smith**, head off at a fantastic rate, only to retire at the 12 km mark, the result of persistent tendonitis in the shin which had been bothering him for some weeks. That left veteran British / South Australian walker **Peter Fullager** to confirm his second Australian representation (he had taken bronze in the 1974 Comm Games) with a fine win, with **John Smith** and **Rod Huxley** not far behind.

1.	Peter Fullager	SA	1:33:43
2.	John Smith	NSW	1:33:47
3.	Rod Huxley	NSW	1:34:50
4.	Bruce Cook	VIC	1:35:40
5.	Bill Dyer	VIC	1:40:05
6.	Duncan Knox	VIC	1:41:08
7.	Joe Anderson	VIC	1:43:41
8.	Barrie Birtchnell	VIC	1:44:49
9.	Geoff Barrow	VIC	1:54:45
10.	Roy McFadden	SA	1:57:50
11.	Bill Starr	SA	2:00:19
-	Dean Cruise	VIC	DNF
-	David Smith	VIC	DNF

The first 3 placegetters in the trial were selected in the Australian team. David Smith's brilliant wins in the Victorian 30km (2:17:51) and the Victorian 15km (1:05:25) in May, as well as a whole string of strong performances earlier in the year, meant that he was granted the selectors' discretionary fourth team spot.

The 50km trial was held in conjunction with the 1979 Victorian 50km championship and **Willi Sawall** won in convincing style in 3:56:07.2, becoming the first person from any English speaking nation to break the elusive 4 Hour mark. Willi had earlier that year set Australian track records for 10,000m (42:03.8 – Box Hill, 7 July) and 20,000m (1:30:17 – Aberfeldie Park, 12 May) and was without doubt Australia's top walker. The first 4 placegetters in the trial were selected to represent Australia.

1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	3:56.07
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	4:21.54
3.	John Sheard	VIC	4:25.27
4.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	4:27:57
5.	Robin Whyte	NSW	4:36:12
6.	Bill Dyer	VIC	4:45.17

7.	Peter Vysma	VIC	5:02:45
8.	Claude Martin	VIC	5:18:46
9.	Bill Starr	SA	6:03:25
-	Bruce Cook	VIC	DNF
-	Ian Jack	VIC	DNF
-	Clarrie Jack	VIC	DNF
-	Terry O'Neill	VIC	DNF
-	Mark Wall	VIC	DNF
-	Bill Dillon	VIC	DNF
-	Harry Summers	VIC	DQ

The women's 5km trial was a Victorian trifecta. Inspired by the chance of their own international representation, **Sue Orr, Sally Pierson** and **Lorraine Young** recorded the 8th, 10th and 11th best times in the world for 1979. Again, there were no surprises with the first 4 being selected to represent Australia.

Eschborn Trophy 5km Walk Selection Trial, Sun 16th July 1979			
1.	Sue Orr	VIC	24:37.2
2.	Sally Pierson	VIC	24:44.0
3.	Lorraine Young	VIC	24:52.0
4.	Karen Iselin	QLD	24:58.0
5.	Frances Bourke	NSW	25:34.0

The IAAF Race Walking World Cup team was duly named as follows

Men 50km Team: Willi Sawall (VIC), Tim Erickson (VIC), John Sheard (VIC), Greg Sockhill (QLD)
 Men 20km Team: David Smith (VIC), Peter Fullager (SA), Rod Huxley (NSW), John Smith (NSW)
 Women 5km Team: Sue Cook (VIC), Karen Iselin (QLD), Lorraine Young (VIC), Sally Pierson (VIC)

1979 Australian 50km Championship Canning Vale, Western Australia, Saturday 11th August 1979

The 1979 Australian Roadwalk Championships, which were held in Canning Vale, WA, on 11-12 August of that year, consisted of the following events

- Senior Men 50km Roadwalk
- Senior Women 5km Roadwalk
- Junior Men 10km Roadwalk
- Junior Women 3km Roadwalk
- Sub-Junior Women 1.5km Roadwalk

The Senior Championships were seen as wide open, being held the month before the 1979 IAAF Racewalking World Cup, and with many of the team members choosing to bypass yet another expensive Perth trip.

The Australian 50km championship was the first event to be contested, on Saturday 11th August. The results note 19 starters so it was still a big field, but it would have been even bigger, except for the Lugano Trophy clash. Missing their top guns, the Victorians were still untroubled, taking the first 3 places with **Bruce Cook, Terry O'Neill** and **Clarrie Jack**, and winning the Teams Race.

Australian 50km Roadwalk Championship, 11th August 1979			
1.	Bruce Cook	VIC	4:29:19
2.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	4:31:15
3.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	4:33:53
4.	Terry Jones	WA	4:35:53
5.	Robin Whyte	NSW	4:44:03
6.	Bill Dyer	VIC	4:54:07
7.	Harry Summers	VIC	4:56:06
8.	John Harris	QLD	5:03:22
9.	Alan Hancock	NSW	5:10:18
10.	James Smith	WA	5:11:36
11.	Duncan Faux	WA	5:17:33
12.	Perter Waddell	NSW	5:18:12

13.	Roy McFadden	SA	5:20:04
14.	Steele Beveridge	NSW	5:31:40
15.	Frank Overton	NSW	5:32:58
16.	Tony Goodluck	SA	5:33:00
17.	Paul Dorsett	NSW	5:34:35
18.	Russel Willis	SA	6:45:08
-	Peter Vysma	VIC	DNF
Teams: 1. VIC 6 2. WA 19 3. NSW 20			

1979 RWA Carnival, including Alexander Cup 20km Adelaide, 8th September 1979

The yearly Alexander Cup Federation carnival, normally held in the May school holidays, was changed to September, as a result of a postal vote of the clubs. VAWC reported with some frustration in its 1979/1980 Annual Report that SA had not distributed ANY results from this carnival. All I can do at this stage is publish the first 6 places from the 20km event, based on my own diaries.

I remember that **Willi Sawall** and I drove over together and were both quite sick. Willi shrugged it off and went on to win with a PB 1:25:25. I was not so fortunate, struggling home in third place behind **David Smith**.

Alexander Cup 20km, Adelaide, 8 September 1979			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	1:25:25
2.	David Smith	VIC	1:32:15
3.	Tim Erickson	VIC	1:34:49
4.	Peter Fullager	SA	
5.	Rod Huxley	NSW	
6.	Bill Dyer	VIC	
Teams			
1.	VIC	6 Pts	Willi Sawall, David Smith, Tim Erickson

1979 IAAF Race Walking World Cup Eschborn, Germany, 29-30 September 1979

The 1979 IAAF Race Walking World Cup was held in Eschborn in Germany on 29th and 30th of September, with 12 Australian walkers in the team. The results were an impressive first up result for Australia, with the women in particular excelling. 8 of the 12 walkers did PBs, confirming the benefits of being given the chance to compete internationally. The best male performance was by **Willi Sawall**, as usual, with yet another 50km PB, 3:51:08. **Sue Cook** (5th with 23:10) and **Sally Pierson** (11th with 24:08) also confirmed just how good they were on the world stage.

1979 IAAF Race Walking World Cup Placings				
Women 5 km	Sue Orr	5 th	23:10	PB
	Sally Pierson	11 th	24:08	PB
	Lorraine Young	15 th	24:35	PB
	Karen Iselin	24 th	25:02	
	Team place	4 th		
Men 50 km	Willi Sawall	10 th	3:51:08	PB
	Tim Erickson	25 th	4:03:29	PB
	John Sheard	36 th	4:13:52	PB
	Greg Sockhill	DQ		
	Team place	9 th		
Men 20 km	David Smith	21 st	1:25:36	PB
	Rod Huxley	42 nd	1:33:45	PB
	Peter Fullager	43 rd	1:34:13	
	John Smith	44 th	1:44:06	
	Team place	6 th		

Australian Track & Field Championships 1979-80
E.S.Marks Athletic Field, Sydney, 19-23 March 1980

From now on, the shorter distance races in Australia would be dominated by **Willi Sawall** and **David Smith**. Sawall was still the undisputed champion over all distances in Australia but for how much longer? He won the Australian 3000m track title 5 times in a row from 1977 to 1982, won the Australian 20 km titles in 1976, 1978 and 1982 and won the Australian 50 km title in 1977, 1981 and 1986. but he was now being challenged by the much younger and equally aggressive Smith. Over the next few years, titanic battles would rage on the track and road. But Smith was now aged 24, while Sawall was by this stage approaching 40 years of age. Although Sawall was still improving, Smith was improving at a faster rate and the tables were soon to turn.

The 1980 summer season had seen Smith set 7 new Australian and Commonwealth records and road bests as Australian walking entered a new era. These were as follows:

17.11.79	3000m	11:51.0	Olympic Park, Melbourne	Track
08.12.79	1500m	5:38.4	Olympic Park, Melbourne	Track
13.12.79	3000m	11:35.0	Olympic Park, Melbourne	Track
16.12.79	20 km	1:23:16	Albert Park	Road
22.12.79	1500m	5:32.0	Adelaide	Track
25.01.80	3000m	11:31.0	Adelaide	Track
02.03.80	5000m	20:15.0	Ballarat	Track
	10000m	40:54.7	Ballarat	Track

Yet by season end, he was still number 2 behind Sawall who had set new records over 1500m (5:30.8) and 3000m (11:28.5) to re-establish his number 1 position and it was Sawall who won the National 3000m track title in a slick 11:32. Smith was second with 12:04.8 while **Tim Erickson**, who had been third in the Victorian championship, filled his usual minor medal place here, with 12:22.3.

3,000m Track Walk - Men – Wednesday 19th March 1980

1	Willi Sawall	VIC	11:32.8
2	Dave Smith	VIC	12:04.8
3	Tim Erickson	VIC	12:22.3
4	Mark Wall	VIC	12:38.9
5	Peter Fullager	SA	12:40.3
6	John Smith	NSW	12:40.9
7	Graham Seatter	NZL	12:47.4
8	Peter Stubbs	QLD	12:47.7
9	Mike Woods	NSW	12:48.0
10	John Sheard	VIC	12:50.1
11	Bob Mee	ACT	12:57.4
12	Duncan Knox	VIC	13:14.7
13	Phil Hollis	SA	13:16.1
14	Bruce Cook	VIC	13:18.5
15	Rod Huxley	NSW	

Sometimes the timing is just wrong, and that was the case for Erickson. Over the past 3-4 years, he had regularly broken his PBs week by week but so were Sawall and Smith. In 1977, he lost the 1977 Australian 50km title to Sawall and finished second in the six major championships he contested that year; the Victorian 20km, 30km and 50km title, the LBG20 miles, the Federation 20 km in Brisbane and the Australia versus New Zealand match in Sydney. It was the same story in 1978 and 1979 with Erickson finishing second in 14 Victorian, Australian or Federation titles behind either Sawall or Dave Smith. The minor-medal trend continued for him in 1980.

1980 Olympic 20km Trial
Sydney, Sunday 23rd March 1980

The 1980 Olympic 20km walk trial was held 4 days after the 3000m track walk, on the final day of the Australian T&F Championships in Sydney. The result was the same as in the 3000m walk on the Wednesday, with **Willi Sawall** first (1:24:04), **David Smith** second (1:27:11) and **Tim Erickson** third (1:31:54).

Australian 20km Olympic Trial, Sydney, Sun 23 March 1980

1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	1:24:04
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2.	David Smith	VIC	1:27:11
3.	Tim Erickson	VIC	1:31:54
4.	Peter Fullager	SA	1:34:17
5.	John Smith	NSW	1:35:41
6.	Bill Dyer	VIC	1:37:18
7.	Michael Woods	NSW	1:39:43
8.	Rod Huxley	NSW	1:40:02
9.	Keith Knox	NSW	1:42:05
10.	Mark Wall	VIC	1:43:37
11.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	1:44:00
12.	John Rayner	NSW	1:46:32
13.	Barrie Birtchnell	VIC	1:47:59
12.	Fred Sawyer	NSW	1:51:29
15.	Frank Overton	NSW	1:57:22
16.	Philip Hollis	SA	1:57:47

1980 Olympic 50m Trial West Lakes, Adelaide, Sunday 6th April 1980

The Olympic 50km trial followed 2 weeks later in Adelaide, on a flat but very open 5km loop in the suburb of West Lakes. Two things conspired to make this a tough race. Firstly, the announcement 30 minutes before the scheduled 9AM start time that the start would be delayed by 30 minutes, to allow the Olympic marathon trial runners to pass that point first. Although all team managements protested, the officials were adamant and the decision stood. Secondly, it was a warm day with an increasingly blustery wind, which meant that the 30 minutes delay meant that walkers had to compete for 30 minutes more in the intensifying conditions.

It did not seem to matter what impediments were put in **Willi Sawall's** way. When he was in form, nothing slowed him. This was certainly the case in this Olympic trial, as he powered through on his own to a new Commonwealth record of 3:46:34. **Tim Erickson** was on target for a time around 4 hours, until flagging in the final 2 laps and slowing significantly. There was only one other finisher, with fellow Victorian **John Sheard**. Everyone else retired.

1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	3:46:34
2.	Tim Erickson	VIC	4:05:06
2.	John Sheard	VIC	4:29:22
-	Greg Sockhill	QLD	DNF (40km)
-	John Rayner	NSW	DNF (40km)
-	Peter Vysma	VIC	DNF (40km)
-	Bruce Cook	VIC	DNF (35km)
-	Bill Dyer	VIC	DNF (30km)
-	David Smith	VIC	DNF (25km)
-	Clarrie Jack	VIC	DNF (25km)
-	Terry O'Neill	VIC	DNF (25km)
-	Mark Wall	VIC	DNF (20km)
-	Roy McFadden	SA	DNF (20km)

In mid April, the A.A.U. of Australia nominated a team of 31 athletes, including walkers **Willi Sawall**, **David Smith** and **Tim Erickson**. This was one of the smallest Australian Olympic T&F teams selected in modern times. A total of 53 athletes had met the IAAF qualifying standards but the A.A.U. had set their own tougher standards and these 31 had all ticked that extra box.

In a worrying sign, the Australian Olympic Federation instructed all Member Associations to rank their selections in order of merit. The Australian T&F athletes were duly ranked, along with all selections from the all the other Olympic sports. When the AOF Justification Committee met in early May, they dropped their bombshell, severely pruning the team. Shooting lost 8 of their nominations, judo lost 4, fencing lost 3, boxing lost 3, modern pentathlon lost 2, canoeing lost 2, cycling lost 1 and T&F lost 8. This left a sadly depleted team of 204 competitors and 69 officials. The Justification Committee had drawn a line in the sand at ranking position number 23 for T&F. This left the following athletes out in the cold: Rick James (sprints), Bruce Frayne (sprints), Peter Gandy (sprints), Helen Edwards (sprints), Coleen Perkin (sprints), Tim Erickson (walks), Michael Hilliard (middle distance) and Peter Larkins (steeple). Erickson had ranked 28 out of the 31. Luckily Smith and Sawall had ranked above the cutoff so were confirmed in the team.

There had been criticism of the AOC Justification Committee before this but nothing of this scale had been seen before. In the past, their interventions had been minimal. I don't know when it was decommissioned but I think it did not last for long after this.

Of course, there was an even larger discussion going on about whether Australia should send a team at all. The Australian Government was supporting the USA Olympic Boycott (Russia had invaded Afganistan), did not want any Australians competing in Moscow and had withdrawn its funding. To their credit, the AOC held firm and did send their team, albeit a small one. But not all of the 204 competitors actually made it to Moscow. Some like sprinter Raelene Boyle succumbed to the pressure and withdrew from the team.

Tim Erickson was in career best form and had tried to train through the frenzied time, recording PBs for 10km (43:00) and 30km (2:15:47), but to no avail. He had taken the year off work so decided to travel to England for the European summer and train and race there, hoping that perhaps further performances might sway the AOC. He and David Smith flew out of Australia in early June, bound for London.

14th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 15th June 1980

With Tim Erickson and David Smith in England, any possible challenges to **Willi Sawall** (not that they would have been serious challenges) disappeared. It made no difference to Sawall, who produced the most amazing solo performance ever seen in Canberra. Passing the 10 mile mark in a little over 68 minutes, he produced a second 68 minute 10 mile split to produce the superb time of 2:16:48. It was one of a number of wonderful walks by him that Olympic year. The vastly improved performances of placegetters **John Sheard** and **John Smith** were overshadowed by this awesome walk. **Shiela Miller** completed the gruelling 20 mile distance for the second year in a row.

LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 15 June 1980			
1.	Willi Sawall	VIC	2:16:48
2.	John Sheard	VIC	2:35:17
3.	John Smith	NSW	2:37:34
4.	Harry Summers	VIC	2:45:47
5.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:48:18
6.	Bruce Cook	VIC	2:50:12
7.	Keith Knox	NSW	2:51:07
8.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	2:51:51
9.	Bob Mee	ACT	2:52:36
10.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	2:54:32
11.	Mark Wall	VIC	2:56:14
12.	Alan Hancock	NSW	2:57:21
13.	Claude Martin	VIC	2:58:06
14.	Roy McFadden	SA	3:09:26
15.	John Harris	NSW	3:09:38
16.	Bill Cook	QLD	3:10:31
17.	Claude Martin	VIC	3:10:48
18.	Frank Overton	NSW	3:11:32
19.	Peter Waddell	ACT	3:13:07
20.	Mark Donahoo	VIC	3:15:23
21.	Shiela Miller (F)	VIC	3:17:01
22.	David Gaff	VIC	3:19:56
23.	Ron Whitham	NSW	3:23:47
24.	Bill Starr	SA	3:33:23
25.	Tony Michelson	NSW	3:47:56
26.	John McBride	VIC	3:51:32
27.	Nigel Crew	ACT	4:10:00
H. C. Campbell Shield			
1.	VIC	Willi Sawall, John Sheard, Harry Summers	
2.	NSW	John Sheard, Keith Knox, Alan Hancock	
3.	ACT	Robin Whyte, Bob Mee, Peter Waddell	

1980 Olympic Games, Moscow, USSR, July 1980

Tim Erickson had a stellar summer in England, but it was all to no avail. Willi Sawall and David Smith remained the only two walkers in the Australian Olympic team.

Sawall was never one to rest on his laurels, and he continued to race to race fast and furiously as the winter progressed. He won the Victorian 30km title in a PB 2:10:11 and won the Victorian 12km teams race in an amazing 49:18. His victory in the Canberra 20mile in June was devastating – his time of 2:16:48 was perhaps his greatest performance in a career of great performances.

But he paid a price for these superb performances – a torn groin muscle. This effectively ruined any medal chances in Moscow and his Olympic performance was a big disappointment to him. A cortisone injection enabled him to start in the 50km and he led early, but faded to 15th before rallying to a final place of 8th in 4:08:25. We can only wonder ... what if....?

David Smith's Olympic campaign was also disappointing. After a successful series of races (4 wins out of 4 races) in Europe, he was one of many disqualifications in the 20km Olympic event, in what seemed to be a judging backlash against criticism of lax judging in the previous few big internationals. His final red card came at the 17km mark while he was in 10th place and moving up through the field. A top ten finish had seemed assured. He was then allowed to start in the 50km (this loophole is no longer available) but it was a token start. He was never going to finish it, and he retired after the first 20km.

Olympic 20km Walk, Thursday 24th July 1980			
1.	Maurizio Damilano	ITA	1:23:35.5 OR
2.	Pyotr Pochinchuk	SOV	1:24:45.4
3.	Roland Wieser	GDR	1:25:58.2
-	David Smith	AUS	DQ
Olympic 50km Walk, Wednesday 30th July 1980			
1.	Hartwig Gaiuder	GDR	3:49:24 OR
2.	Jorge Ribas	SPA	3:51:25
3.	Yevgeny Ivchenko	SOV	3:56:32
8.	Willi Sawall	AUS	4:08:25
-	David Smith	AUS	DNF

1980 Australian 20km Championship Adelaide, Saturday 27th July 1980

With Sawall, Smith and Erickson all overseas, the 1980 Australian 20km Championship was up for grabs, and it was the veteran **Peter Fullager**, racing in his home city of Adelaide, who won with 1:34:40. **John Sheard** continued what had been an excellent season with his second placed 1:35:13, while youngster **Barrie Birtchnell** took third with 1:35:49.

Australian 20km Championship, Adelaide, Sat 27 July 1980			
1.	Peter Fullager	SA	1:34:40
2.	John Sheard	VIC	1:35:13
3.	Barrie Birtchnell	VIC	1:35:49
4.	Bruce Cook	VIC	1:36:51
5.	Michael Woods	NSW	1:37:56
6.	Keith Knox	NSW	1:39:07
7.	Harry Summers	VIC	1:39:10
8.	Robin Whyte	ACT	1:40:07
9.	Duncan Knox	VIC	1:40:15
10.	John Smith	NSW	1:41:00
11.	Mark Wall	VIC	1:41:13
12.	Philip Hollis	SA	1:41:58
13.	Rod Huxley	NSW	1:42:43
14.	Michael Harvey	VIC	1:42:52
15.	David Cash	VIC	1:43:52
16.	John Cust	VIC	1:44:15

17.	Bruce Dudon	VIC	1:45:01
18.	Dean Cruise	VIC	1:45:43
19.	George White	SA	1:46:12
20.	Logan Irwin	NSW	1:47:59
21.	Frank Overton	NSW	1:49:05
22.	Daniel Reavey	SA	1:50:26
23.	Greg Rowe	NSW	1:51:04
24.	Roy McFadden	SA	1:52:14
25.	Andrew Leggett	QLD	1:53:14
26.	David Bryson	SA	1:53:17
27.	Peter Waddell	ACT	1:55:48
Teams			
	1. VIC	16	2. NSW 29
			3. SA 33

**1980 RWA Carnival, incorporating Glover Shield 10km
Monash University, Blackburn (Melbourne), Sunday 30th August 1980**

With Willi Sawall resting his torn groin and with Tim Erickson still racing in England, **David Smith** strolled to an easy win in the 1980 Glover Shield, which was held at Monash University in Blackburn, one of Melbourne's eastern suburbs, at the end of August. His winning time of 44:13 saw him finish nearly 1 minute ahead of 42 year old **John Smith** with 45:11, and 32 year old **John Sheard** 26 secs further back with 45:37.

Glover Shield 10km Walk, Melbourne, Sunday 30 August 1980			
1.	David Smith	VIC	44:13
2.	John Smith	NSW	45:11
3.	John Sheard	VIC	45:37
4.	Bruce Cook	VIC	46:25
5.	David Cash	VIC	46:31
6.	Keith Knox	NSW	47:02
7.	Mark Wall	VIC	47:09
8.	Rod Huxley	NSW	47:17
9.	Robin Whyte	ACT	48:03
10.	Greg Sockhill	QLD	48:41
11.	Harry Summers	VIC	48:52
12.	Phil Hollis	SA	48:59
13.	George White	SA	49:00
14.	Clarrie Jack	VIC	49:07
15.	Terry O'Neill	VIC	49:52
16.	Ian Jack	VIC	49:54
17.	Frank Overton	NSW	50:44
18.	John Cust	VIC	50:59
19.	Alan Lucas	VIC	52:43
20.	Geoff Barrow	VIC	54:07
21.	Bob Gardiner	VIC	54:07
22.	Paul Thompson	NSW	54:43
23.	Peter Waddell	ACT	54:54
24.	Tim Thompson	SA	55:49
25.	Bill Dillon	VIC	56:19
26.	Kevin Finn	SA	56:49
27.	Paul Moritz	SA	57:13
28.	Murray Brown	VIC	57:12
29.	D. Handley	VIC	58:35
30.	Jim Short	VIC	58:52
31.	Tony Andrews	ACT	59:04
32.	Bill Starr	SA	59:43
33.	Ralph Field	VIC	60:35
34.	John McBride	VIC	60:38
35.	Phil Donelan	NSW	64:26
36.	Tony Michelson	NSW	65:58
37.	Nigel Crew	ACT	67:58

Teams		
1. VIC 1	8	D. Smith, J. Sheard, B. Cook
2. NSW	15	J. Smith, K. Knox, R. Huxley
3. VIC 2	28	D. Cash, C. Jack, T. O'Neill

This marked the end of what had been a tumultuous year in Australian athletics.