

20 December 2017

**Re: Change to the Calendar of Events Announcement**

Dear Member Clubs,

Gymnastics New Zealand (GNZ) has reviewed the survey feedback and are now in a position to present the community with a summary of this information. We now enter the last consultation phase before a final decision is made.

Unfortunately, due to the volume of work this has created along with the summer close down period, we will not be in a position to inform the community of the final decision until the end of February 2018. We have adjusted the timeline accordingly towards the end of this document.

To ensure transparency and allow the community to be well informed, the following information has been included in this document:

- 1) Outline of the process
- 2) Summary of community feedback
- 3) Addressing concerns
- 4) Next steps

**1. Outline of the process**

*June 2017* – proposed date change raised at the Trampoline Sport Development Committee (TRA SDC) meeting and example revised calendar created. It was requested that the TRA SDC liaison raise this topic with the GNZ CEO. On presentation to the GNZ CEO, it was decided that the change should be revisited.

*August 2017* – Internal working group formed and discussions held regarding whether a proposal should be put forward. A review of the documentation from the 2014 survey when the topic was initially discussed took place. The working group consists of GNZ staff from business units to be significantly impacted by a change, specifically:

- Rebecca Weber, Event Manager
- Danielle Halliday, Community Sport Manager
- Margaret Wilton, Programmes Manager
- Christine Reed, Education Manager
- Belinda Randall, Relationship Team Manager

*Late August/early September 2017* – Discussions held with key community leaders for each code to inform them of the proposed changes and look to add this as an agenda item to the code forums at NZ Gymnastics Championships 2017. This included Gareth Brettell (MAG), Michele Hawke (WAG), Keita McGowan (RG), Cath Thomson (AER) and Tony Costley (TRA).



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*Late September 2017* – Memo regarding the proposed change to the calendar of events sent to clubs with an accompanying ‘white paper.’

*October 2017* – Date change proposal process presented at all five code forums during the NZ Gymnastics Championships.

*November 2017* – Survey conducted with the intention of providing the wider community an opportunity to feedback and raise any specific concerns regarding the proposed change.

*December 2017* – Community feedback presented to the GNZ Board. Board members provided with a thorough overview of the survey’s outcomes.

## 2. Summary of community feedback

Findings from the survey are summarised below. Considerable time has been spent addressing the challenges raised. Responses set out in 3) Addressing concerns are captured from page 8.

### Survey

A total of 519 responses were submitted for the proposed change to the calendar of events survey. While an overall rating of the agreeableness to the proposed change was gathered, the intention of the survey was to bring to the surface the opportunities and challenges a change would present. An option to select a specific code was not given, as it is not financially viable to move the NZ Gymnastics Championships for some codes and not others.

The overall rating is based on a weighted average of responses to the question – *To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed change to the calendar of events?*

Weightings were:

- 1 – strongly disagree
- 2 – disagree
- 3 – neutral
- 4 – agree
- 5 – strongly agree

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Aorangi 1.00	Taranaki 3.00	<b>Overall 3.05</b>
Top of the South 1.44	Hawke’s Bay/Poverty Bay 3.00	Otago 3.22
Northland 2.20		Waikato 3.25



Wellington 2.41		Gymsport 3.47	Manukau
Canterbury 2.64		Wanganui 3.67	Manawatu
Southland 2.78		Auckland 3.76	
Bay of Plenty 2.91		Harbour 3.77	
		Independent members 4.00	

Respondents were broken down into the following groups:

	% of Respondents	Overall Rating
Club Administrator	24.86%	2.98
Coach	31.6%	2.96
Judge	19.65%	2.96
Parent	64.16%	3.21
Athlete	3.85%	3.13
Other	2.31%	3.82

Survey commentary is summarised below and divided into three areas (high, medium, low) based on the volume of respondents that raised a particular issue.

*1) What opportunities do you anticipate the proposed change to the calendar of events to present for the Competitive space?*

#### High

- Allows for development training, camps, clinics and squads during terms three and four. More time to learn new skills/prepare for the following competition season. Better lead up for routine changes.
- Better fit with international competitions. Greater opportunity to train and compete overseas.



#### Medium

- Less conflict with end of year exams.
- Opportunity to run GFA events (e.g. TeamGym) and other fundraisers after the competition season. New programmes. Competitive gymnasts could participate in these.
- Warmer temperatures is better for athlete performance/reduces the likelihood of injury and illness.



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- More spread out calendar, preventing burnout and injury. Shorter competition season. Athletes will have an off season for recovery. Safety.

#### Low

- Allows competitive gymnasts to be involved in other activities.
- Greater focus on conditioning and technical training in the off season.
- Will no longer clash with winter sports. Better fit with other sports/better life balance.
- Reduced pressure on volunteers. Increased opportunity for volunteers to help across competition and GFA events. Spreads the load.
- More education for coaches, athletes and judges.
- More opportunity for skilled GFA gymnasts to transition to competitive.

#### 2) What challenges do you anticipate the proposed change to the calendar of events to present for the Competitive space?

#### High

- Training through the Christmas and New Year break. Clubs often close down for summer holidays, giving everyone a break. People normally take their breaks at this time of year so athletes and coaches are often away. Staffing issues – particularly with university student/volunteer coaches. No time for socialising/down-time – not good for mental state. Summer break is an institution. Could potentially disadvantage smaller clubs the most. Young gymnasts need time off to be with families and friends over this time. Gymnastics will not be available for training. Increased costs of gyms needing to operate in January.
- Keeping competitive gymnasts motivated/interested in the sport. Retention will be an issue – mainly due to having to train over summer. Drop in membership as most people aren't taking up a new sport mid-year. Might see a decrease in gymnasts progressing through the levels too. Nothing to aim for in term 3 (and 4).
- Condensed competition season. Too difficult for coaches, families and gymnasts. Health and safety concerns – shorter season could increase risk of injury. Not enough time to fit everything in.
- Time for adjustment in first year of change. Need to learn new routines in a shorter space of time. Issues around retention over this period as a lot will need to repeat their level.

#### Medium

- Training through the hot summer months.
- Clash with summer/winter sports. A lot of College Sport Feb/March.
- Minimal time to increase fitness after the summer break/competing commitments. Takes a few months to get gymnasts back into it. Term 1 is busy with other things like settling into school, school camps etc.



- No down time. Term 4 is normally down time, but would need to be used for preparation.
- Reduced revenue for clubs who are no longer able to run qualifiers. Clubs may not attend non-qualifying competitions if there is no need to.

#### Low

- Lack of opportunities for competitive gymnasts in second half of the year.
- July is mid-Winter. More illnesses this time of year and harder to travel.
- Athletes moving up would be learning new routines during their exam period.
- Can't fit judge/coach education. Minimal time to change with the COPs every four years.
- Competitions will be over the Easter and ANZAC long weekends, with a lot of athletes away on holiday so not able to attend competitions.
- People resistant to change.

### **Responses to challenges are set out in 3) Addressing concerns (p.8 onwards).**

*3) What opportunities do you anticipate the proposed change to the calendar of events to present for the Gym For All/Recreation space?*

#### High

- More competition opportunities, including fundraising, TeamGym, fun events and displays. Would need more support and structure from GNZ. A competition season/pathway for GFA gymnasts would result in better engagement amongst this group.
- NA – GFA and competitive programmes run alongside each other.
- Will mean more attention is paid to the GFA space – greater recognition; GFA won't be overshadowed by competitive. Open up club schedules for more recreation classes. More opportunities to get new gymnasts involved throughout the year.

#### Medium

- Provides the opportunity to give them something to aim for i.e. a national event.

#### Low

- Athletes could do both recreation and competitive/multiple codes. Sharing of competitive coaches.
- Increased membership through offering a bigger variety of classes.
- Greater retention.
- Easier for gymnasts to represent their schools as school competitions are usually in the latter half of the year.
- Better integration for GFA gymnasts into the competitive programme.



*4) What challenges do you anticipate the proposed change to the calendar of events to present for the Gym For All/Recreation space?*

High

- Clubs already running recreation programmes completely independently of competitive so a change has no impact. Clubs like having recreation competitions spread throughout the year.
- Less coach, judge and volunteer involvement at the end of a long season due to burnout. Retention in these areas a challenge. Everyone is worn out after the competitive season.

Medium

- Some clubs already run recreation competitions and a new structure could clash with these. Competition clashes – a lot of competitions close together. Recreation competitions are currently spread throughout the year.
- Difficulty in attracting new members mid-year. Most kids take on new activities at the start of the year.
- Clash with both summer and winter sports, especially other activities in term 4. Most people in this space do other sports.
- Less focus on GFA for the first half of the year. Some clubs won't have room for their GFA programmes if Nationals was mid-year.
- Pressure on clubs to run more events. More administrative hours.

Low

- Difficulty in moving from recreation to competitive – would need to move mid-year which is before the GFA season.
- Fine line between doing gym for fun and being competitive, even in the GFA space. Do these kids even want competitions?

**Responses to challenges are set out in 3) Addressing concerns (p.8 onwards).**

*5) What solutions do you think could be implemented to address the challenges you have raised?*

High

- Clear communication. Introduce changes with a long lead time e.g. in 2019. Emphasise timeframe when communicating change.
- Leave the calendar as is.
- Proactivity from clubs – lots of planning. Time management and prioritisation. Greater collaboration between clubs with setting dates.
- Support from national body in implementation. More information regarding new events and how everything will work. Strategic plan for implementation. Strategy and planning around qualifying competitions. Systems/processes to encourage participation of non-competitive gymnasts.

Medium



- Relax qualifying criteria/grade change rules for 2019. Give gymnasts enough time to learn new routines/respond to changes.
- Judge development. GNZ could run GFA judging courses. Need clear rules across GFA to ensure continuity between competitions.
- Greater consultation before a decision is made.
- Changes to coaches' coaching strategies

#### Low

- Use long weekends to give more time to solve travel challenges.
- Avoid having competitions in long weekends.
- Plan a mixed in house GFA/competitive class fun event.
- Keep age groups/younger gymnasts competing in October. Only change for international. Split junior and senior competitive seasons.
- Created a tiered system for Nationals based on amount of time spent training.
- Introduce optional skills in senior routines to offer choices that may be easier to master.
- Continue upskilling coaches and judges – hold courses at the end of the year. Employ coaches who can work over summer.
- Remember that Gym for All means just that, not just gym for those who want to be involved in events.
- Increased clinics and training opportunities.
- Start qualification period after Nationals e.g. with a Clubs competition.
- Hold camps over the summer holidays. They are fun, educational and motivating.
- Move Nationals to outside the school holidays.
- Parent education with respect to commitment to competitive sport.
- Make the change a staged approaches, bringing the event forward 1 ½ months in 2019 and then another 1 ½ months in 2020. Longer rollout – 3 or 4 years.
- Hold Nationals in April.
- Senior GNZ mentors to help facilitate gymnasts transition from recreation to competitive stream.
- Don't run any additional events.
- Prizegivings/end of year displays could be moved to term 3 so reduce pressure in term 4.
- Create a GFA volunteer planning team.

### 3. Addressing concerns

We believe that the responses below alleviate some of the concerns and challenges expressed in the survey.

#### *Training through the summer holidays*

Athletes competing at a National Championships level, particularly Senior athletes, do not normally take more than three weeks away from training during the summer holidays. Having six weeks shut down and no



training for Senior athletes is not recommended, even with the National Championships in October. Elementary athletes, who form the majority of competitive athletes, can still take time away during the summer as their competitive season will not be too different to what is currently in place.

Under the proposed change, athletes would have their skills and routines almost ready for competition by the start of the Christmas school holidays. January would be the equivalent of April in the current calendar. Many clubs already have initiatives in place during the school holidays to ensure athletes maintain fitness and coaches are able to have time off. For example, during time away, coaches give strength and conditioning programmes to the athletes. Additionally, there are a number of clubs offering camps during this period, providing athletes from smaller clubs somewhere to train. We expect the number of camps to grow as a result of the change.

#### *Keeping competitive athletes motivated/retention*

Opening up the latter half of the year provides opportunities to develop alternative competitions, events and camps for competitive athletes. Clubs may also look to do an overseas competition or camps as something different for their athletes. Furthermore, this time will actually be used to work on developing the skills and routines for the following competition season.

In addition, reducing the length of the season could also be seen as a tool for keeping athletes motivated. Competitive athletes will have access to a range of new opportunities/programmes and this variety should improve retention.

#### *Condensed competition season*

A long qualifying competition season, with 34 qualifying competitions, for Artistic Gymnastics has been identified as an injury/burnout risk and a new structure is to be implemented in 2019, regardless of the whether the date change proposal proceeds. The new structure has been discussed with SDCs, but delayed a number of times due to other projects taking priority.

#### *Time for adjustment in the first year*

We appreciate there will be an initial adjustment period, however, it is a one off. Announcing the change in February 2018 allows an 18 month lead in time. These changes will affect everyone equally. Survey respondents cited proactivity from clubs with respect to planning and greater collaboration between clubs as solutions to this challenge. Early next year, thorough planning will be undertaken to ensure clubs are fully supported through this process. Planning will include a focus group with direct input from the community.



### *Recreation runs independently of competitive*

Due to limited resources, it is not possible to run another national competition with the National Championships in October. A national recreation event has been identified as an initiative to achieve the retention strategy outcomes over the next cycle. July offers a better fit for the National Championships (competitive pathway) as it aligns with international calendars. October holidays are a better fit a National Clubs (participation event) which includes Gym For All and competitive athletes. Gym For All have a shorter training cycle and longer summer break and, therefore, need longer lead in to regional and national events.

### *Lower involvement from coaches, judges and volunteers later in year*

It does not necessarily need to be the same coaches, judges and volunteers who will be involved in the competitive and recreation event seasons. In fact, previous judging surveys have revealed that new judges feel intimidated by the pressure of judging competitive gymnastics so having specific GFA judges may attract a wider pool of volunteers. Developing more recreation coaches and judges rather than relying on those in the competitive space will help avoid burnout. Greater revenue streams from new programmes and events could support additional coaches and judges.

### *Recreation competition clashes*

Few recreation competitions are held from February to May and, therefore, there should not be too many clashes. In creating a dedicated space for recreation events, and in reconstructing the competition calendar, the avoiding of clashes between recreation versus competitive events, will be a guiding factor in the final determination of the qualifying event calendar.

### *Difficulty attracting new members mid-year*

Most clubs actively attract new Gym For All/Recreation members throughout the year and we expect this to continue with the change. Competitive member recruitment will not be affected, as the effected Junior and Senior athletes will have already been in the sport for a minimum of five years.

### *Less focus on GFA in first half of the year*

Coaches should be fully focused on the class they are teaching regardless of whether the competitive season is in progress. If this statement is accurate, then it would suggest there is currently little focus on Gym For All during terms 3 and 4.



### *Pressure on clubs to run more events*

New event opportunities are the focus, but there is no expectation that clubs already running competitions take on more. Clubs may choose to hold alternative events and clubs not currently running events will have the opportunity to start hosting competitions as there will be something suited to everyone.

### *Training through the hot summer months*

Many clubs need to purchase heating throughout winter for training, providing air conditioning is no different. Gymnastics NZ has developed a funding resource available to clubs that can support funding applications to gaming trusts, this is available on the member only page of our website [www.gymnasticsnz.com](http://www.gymnasticsnz.com). Clubs can also contact their Relationship Manager for further information.

### *Clash with summer/winter sports*

Regardless of when the National Championships are held, there is always going to be a clash with other sports for competitive athletes. Participating in gymnastics from a young age develops a wide range of skills and strength that means many of our gymnasts will be (and are) successful at many sports that they try. As they progress through their gymnastic sport levels, they not only need to train many more hours to achieve the skills required, but they also have to do this with other sports they may be competing in at a high level. Ultimately, there will be compromises in training and competitions.

In saying that, athletes should be encouraged to keep participating in other sports for as long as they can, particularly at Elementary and Junior levels. As decisions on which sport they wish to pursue are made, some athletes may consider a pathway to another gymnastic sport that do not require as many training hours. This would enable them to stay in gymnastic sports as well as their 'chosen' sport.

In addition, Gymnastics NZ celebrates the fact that many successful New Zealand representative athletes across a range of sports have come from a gymnastics background.

### *Short lead in time to competitions at the start of the year/busy Term 1*

As previously mentioned, fitness for National Championship level athletes can be maintained through the summer holidays. Sport having to compete with the busyness of term 1 is not new. Each school holds activities like camps, mid-year exams and balls at different times and, therefore, there is always going to be something going on.



### *Lack of down time*

The 'down time' period is changing, rather than disappearing. July and August would be the new 'down period', with September and October, particularly the October school holidays, a productive skill development time before the busyness of term 4 and exams take over.

### *Reduced revenue for clubs not able to run qualifiers*

As previously communicated, the qualifying competition structure is changing regardless of this proposal. Currently, clubs run qualifying competitions as a source of revenue generation. This has resulted in there being too many competitions and a significant variance between the quality of these competitions. The new structure will introduce competition guidelines to ensure consistency between these events.

Furthermore, the date change will allow for new event opportunities. Clubs may choose to take up these new opportunities rather than continue to run qualifying competitions. Recreation members make up a significant portion of our membership and we need to service their needs for events too.

### *Mid-winter illness and travel*

Under the current structure, athletes are already competing in Winter at qualifying competitions so there is no change with respect to this. In 2016, flights to Invercargill for Nationals were cancelled due to fog, showing that regardless of when the event is, there is always a chance of weather playing a part.

### *Learning routines during exams*

No different to what is happening now. In fact, once exams finish, December presents the perfect opportunity to learn new routines as school is either finished for the year (for year 11-13) or is winding down.

### *Space for judge and coach education/change in Code of Points*

Changing the calendar will be beneficial for coach and judge education. Currently, coach and judge education courses are crammed into the beginning of the year. If the National Championships was moved to July, August to November would be opened up for coach and judge education and allow for courses to be held in February/March prior to the start of the season. Additionally, Gym For All judging courses can be introduced, as suggested in the survey.

As outlined in the 'Calendar Review – White Paper', the change will make managing the new Code of Points easier. Four yearly changes in the Code of Points are communicated after an Olympic Games. Currently,



there are only six months for the Gymnastics NZ education team and technical volunteers to incorporate any changes into national resources. Bringing the competition season forward will allow an 18 month period to develop, consult and implement any changes. This is already in place for Trampoline and Aerobics and has proved successful.

### *Competitions over long weekends*

Many clubs favour long weekends to run competitions to cater for the number of entries and allowing time for people to travel. This was reflected in the survey, with a suggested solution being the use of long weekends to hold competitions. However, even if clubs choose not to offer competitions over long weekends, there is still plenty of space to fit competitions into the competitive seasons.

### *People resistant to change*

Change is inevitable and we must adapt to these changes if we are going to progress. Clear communication, a long lead in and support from Gymnastics NZ will ensure the change takes place as smoothly as possible. Adapting to a changing environment is nothing new for any sport.

### *Difficulty in moving from recreation to competitive*

As the Elementary competitive season is unlikely to be too different to what is currently in place, the timing of athletes moving from recreation to competitive will not need to change.

## **In summary**

In reviewing all the feedback received to date, throughout the various consultation opportunities, the view of GNZ is that a proposed change to the date of nationals, on balance, is in the best interests of the sport. This view is based on seeing the challenges presented to date, as opportunities for growth in a number of areas.

- Nationally, retention is an issue for gymnastics and if we don't adjust the way we offer opportunities for on-going participation, we will continue to lose people from our sport.
- The global recognised trends around sport membership indicate that the current opportunities model servicing these members, is increasingly failing to meet the participant need. The needs and wants of our members, let alone the future participant, are changing, and we need to adapt to these changes or we risk being left behind.
- Clubs will be able to introduce new programme and event opportunities for a wider range of existing, and new members. This will not only create opportunity, but also a 'buzz' in the wider sport community that will raise the profile of our sports.



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- New programmes and events offer an alternative revenue opportunity for clubs. Diversity in revenue streams, and the sustainability of these, is the corner stone on which any successful entity is built on. The sports sector's reliance on traditional membership income, and gaming funding and sponsorship, places it in a vulnerable position. The sport of gymnastics is no different.
- The competition calendar needs to change, no matter where nationals is scheduled during the year. In restructuring the calendar, this presents an opportunity to better align the nationals date with these changes.

The final consultation phase is now open and we urge you to have your views considered in the final decision making process. Clubs are offered a 'right to reply' through an email process outlined at the end of this document. This is not a re-litigation of arguments for or against the change, already articulated in the feedback provided throughout this document. We have heard these loud and clear and considered them thoroughly, in arriving at our stated positive view for change. We do, however, welcome feedback from members of the community who have read the responses thoroughly, and can bring a new, or wider, perspective to the responses, that we have not yet considered.

#### **4. Next steps**

*December 2017/January 2018* – Final community consultation takes place, ends on Wednesday January 31<sup>st</sup> 2018.

*February 2018* – Feedback analysed and considered. Final decision announced by the end of February 2018.

*March-May 2018* – If a change is announced, internal project planning will take place by the Community Sport leaders and Events Manager, with the outcome of finalising a project plan. Community based focus group will be formed to input on planning.

Communication to clubs regarding new event structures and timelines will be released.

Roll out would include:

- Event guidelines
- Club toolkit, including templates e.g. budgets, health & safety
- Relationship Manager toolkit
- Event application process
- Event funding application
- Club Manager forums





## Contact

After considering the responses in this document, if you do have a fresh perspective and would like to respond, please do so by midday on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

Please state the club you represent and highlight which particular point you would like to respond to. Please do this in a constructive way and provide as much detail and evidence as you can to support your view.

If you would like any kind of clarification please contact Event Manager, Rebecca Weber directly on 021 494 449 or [rebecca.weber@gymnasticsnz.com](mailto:rebecca.weber@gymnasticsnz.com).

Many thanks,

Gymnastics New Zealand



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