



THE SPARTAN

CLUB PATRON – Robert de Castella

March 2025

Email: spartans.team@hotmail.com
Website: www.melbournemarathonspartans.com
Postal : PO Box 162, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

FROM THE PRESIDENT JAY FLEMING (S1012)

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2025 as we enjoy Melbourne's magnificent autumn palette. It has been great to get back into Club routine for 2025 with our first Committee Meeting in February and to rub shoulders with the usual suspects as well as meeting several lovely new faces at our first couple of Club Runs.

Insurance

As our Spartan numbers have continued to grow organically, we have had to take a more professional view of our standard operating procedures that simply would have been considered unnecessary when the club was first formed nearly four decades ago. From April onward, the Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club will be affiliated with Athletics Victoria. (Recreational Runner Group Affiliation, Tier 3). This will ensure that our Club, like many clubs of similar size, will be afforded protection in the event of incidents or misadventure at any of our organised club events.



Spartan Parkrunners

For the significant number of Spartans who are not able to attend our monthly Club Runs at The Tan, we are actively looking for any Spartans who regularly attend a parkrun near them to take the lead and attend wearing your Spartan singlet as this may well encourage other Spartans to don their Spartan singlet at the parkrun. Please let us know if you would like to be a *Spartans Ambassador* at your closest parkrun as we would love to have a greater Spartan presence at parkruns. Currently there are numerous Spartans who run parkrun regularly, but this is not widely known as the Spartan singlet is not visible.

As a committee, we always strive to increase the 'connectedness' and 'belonging' of existing and incoming Spartans to a warm and welcoming club. The parkrun has been a worldwide phenomenon at all points of the compass and has fostered similar 'connectedness' and 'belonging' at its events, so we see a significant alignment between us. We would like to extend this feeling of 'connectedness' and 'belonging' to Spartans unable to join us monthly at The Tan due to living on the other side of Melbourne or perhaps in regional Victoria or even interstate and overseas. Spartans who either run regular parkruns or perhaps have never even been to a parkrun would most likely feel more welcome to attend.

We also see some opportunity for cross-pollination as I'm absolutely certain that there are current regular parkrunners in Australia who aspire to one day achieve Spartan status and would be inspired to start conversations with parkrunners wearing a Spartan singlet. Please email the club or phone me personally on 0418 374 783 so we can have greater visibility of this initiative and work more closely with parkrun organisers.

Storage Space

Occasionally we receive correspondence from Spartans or their families (sometimes from deceased estates) informing us they would like to donate Spartans memorabilia and merchandise of historical significance.

Like most Committees of Clubs our size, there is a significant amount of stock and resources at hand that is simply stored in spare rooms of members' houses.

Along with merchandise stock, there are also various resources associated with staging of the AGM, Expo Tent, Photo Podium and Race Day Spartans Tent. This has not only impacted members' personal space at home but has also been inconvenient when stock has needed to be shuttled between members at various times of year. Additionally, when members leave Committee, it has meant absorbing the stock stored at their premises among current Committee members.

This will change over the next couple of months as the Club plans to invest in a modest space at a storage facility central to all members. Stock will also be safe and dry as this has been a significant issue for members living in regions of significant weather events like storms, fires and floods. If you have any familiarity/expertise with storage facilities, please drop us a line.

Spartans Photo Podium

IMG have kindly given us the nod to further enhance our photo podium at the Finish Line on the MCG turf. The podium has had small but noticeable enhancements every year since the first one in 2021 and we have been very mindful of adhering to strict safety protocols along the way.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Spartans Vice President, Paul Basile, this year's podium will be the best yet, and along with the trusty team on Race Day led by Membership Secretary, Felicity Doolan, we are delighted to celebrate your Spartan achievements at the Finish Line by adding to the collection of triumphant and relieved Spartan faces on our website. The latest idea was submitted as a rough drawing by a Spartan to Committee member, Kai Ooi ... so if you have any suggestions of your own for the Photo Podium, please drop us a line!

People and Culture

While it's true to say that Spartans are a Club that verifies, acknowledges and celebrates the records of individuals who have successfully completed the Melbourne Marathon, we are so much more than that. If we were solely about the narrow hyper-focus on numbers, we would simply publish finishing times and run totals ... and anything else would be deemed off-topic and irrelevant.

Our club finds extreme relevance in celebrating the mind, body and spirit of the human story *behind* the Spartan number. This could also be about personal interest activities that are part of your personal 'happy place' ... that help to keep you grounded and replenish your energies to keep you running ... for example, gardening, water activities, music, travel, energising rituals, doing things as a family, inspirational arts, and other sports that have helped your running. This option is made available to those who wish to contribute as I'm well aware that many Spartans are very private people and just like doing what they enjoy but don't necessarily feel the urge to talk about it ... and conversely ... not everybody going through their dark night of the soul or through a difficult time recovering from cyclones, floods or fires ... or ... rehabilitating from a medical procedure feels like talking about it ... but we also recognise that we are a very broad church, so for those who would like to share and inspire others, please contribute to the *People and Culture* space, and attention your email to People and Culture Secretary ... or phone me personally on 0418 374 783.

Call for Expressions of Interest

We are actively recruiting for Spartans, aspiring Spartans (completed at least 7 MM's) or their family members with modest expertise and some time and inclination to assist with volunteering their time and skills for either of the roles below:

- **Newsletter Editor:** Spartan Legend David Foskey has been the Webmaster of the Spartan website (he created and launched it back in 2011) ... along with being Newsletter Editor for well over a decade. David is happy to provide mentoring during a progressive handover of the Newsletter

- **Interviewer/Editor for Spartans Channel 'Spartan Stories' on either Spotify or YouTube:** Record the occasional brief interview of 20-30 minutes or so with an individual Spartan on Spotify or our own You Tube channel.

If you have any experience with either recording podcasts or hosting interviews, or if you perhaps have a natural bent for facilitating a safe and chatty space where people feel encouraged to tell their story, please email us or call me personally.

The Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club on the World Stage

Given my recent trips to China and the South Pacific with work in the vocational education space, I have made a concerted effort to forge links with similar milestone clubs linked to the Beijing, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Great Wall Marathons. I have utilised the translation skills of Chinese colleagues on campus for these communications.

We will again try to kick-start previous attempts from a decade ago to establish contact with similar milestone clubs around Australia, Europe and elsewhere. Difficulties previously encountered with these initiatives have reached dead ends mainly due to lack of defined roles to contact at those clubs. We have previously had mutually rewarding associations with Lake Kawaguchi Marathon (Mt Fuji), which was eventually interrupted by COVID.

Lately, we are exploring links with the Kosice Peace Marathon (third oldest marathon in the world) and what such links would look like going forward. At the very least, we would like to link back to other such marathons on our website and have them linking back to us, along with potential ongoing learning from each other's set-up and logistics as well as periodically welcoming each other's members to our shores. Though we may be separated by distance, we can grow together as we are bound by the simple unity of running marathons, which effortlessly surpasses barriers of culture, country and religion.

The 2025 AGM

After some ongoing and spirited correspondence with MCG events and catering, Committee has determined to absorb some of the rising costs associated with staging our AGM at the MCG. This has been challenging as we always endeavour to get the right balance between getting maximum bang for buck with members' funds without compromising Spartans' experience on the night of their significant milestone event.

Therefore, the 2025 Annual General Meeting and singlet presentations will again be held at Australia's home of sport, and Collingwood's home ground 😊 ... the magnificent MCG. We are planning for some exciting innovations on the night and have organised an exciting guest speaker to share our special night. We will announce further details as the event draws nearer.

Entries for 2025 Melbourne Marathon

Entries for the 2025 Melbourne Marathon opened at 9am on 27 November last year and sold out by 2pm that same day. IMG emailed an individual link to all Spartans who had missed out on entering, and that individual link expires in around a fortnight at **11pm AEDT on 31 March**.

This has been a tremendous privilege extended to Spartans by our friends at IMG as unlike other entrants, we have been able to delay entering by 4 months to incorporate into our decision-making rehabilitation from injuries, medical procedures and plan other events in Australia and globally into our running calendar.

Just repeating, if you have been emailed a link by IMG and you still haven't entered the 2025 Melbourne Marathon, please remember that your individual entry link will not be valid beyond 11pm AEDT, 31 March.

Committee is not able to assist with any guarantees of entry beyond this date as IMG have been more than generous with their entry allocations, which will then be released to the general public Wait List.

In addition to the above call for contributions from all Spartans, please feel welcome to contact us with any proposals you believe would add in any way to the Spartan experience. Obviously, we may not be able to adopt all suggestions or initiatives, but at Committee Meetings any proposed initiatives via 'correspondence in' always generate healthy discussions which may morph into other doable initiatives, so please do drop us a line with any of your great ideas!

The whole world is a series of miracles, but we're so used to them we call them ordinary things.
Hans Christian Andersen



RECIPE (from *Running on Real Food*)

I made this delicious Kale and Cauliflower Soup recently. The few simple ingredients pack a lot of punch!

[Kale and Cauliflower Soup - Running on Real Food](#)

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY FELICITY DOOLAN (SF80)

Hello Spartan Community

I am your Membership Secretary. When you email us to apply to become a Spartan, or are reaching a milestone singlet (15, 20, 25 etc), I answer your email and progress your enquiry. I enjoy this volunteer role immensely and consider it a privilege to be a part of your journey to this moment in your life. However, as our numbers grow, I thought it might be timely to re-confirm the process and explain why it's needed. When aspiring/incoming Spartans contact me, I ask for three things:

1. Full name
2. Years and times of successfully completed full Melbourne Marathons; and importantly
3. Date of Birth



Why do I do this? I have over 45 years of Melbourne Marathon records to search and if your name is, for example, 'John Smith', you can imagine there are many results to search through. The above details, help me identify you 100%. We have excellent access to the Melbourne Marathon records, thanks to the relationship we have with IMG, the Melbourne Marathon organisers.

I also strongly encourage all Spartans to make sure **you check your result is published and correct**, shortly after completion of your Melbourne Marathon (this is very easy to do on the Melbourne Marathon App). If there are any anomalies, it is the individual runner themselves who is best placed to contact IMG, as unlike the Spartan Committee, only the individual runner has the full story of their event on that day, the bib, chip, timing mats and any irregularities that may have occurred during their individual run.

Over the last decade, I have had a handful (a handful...) of runners who have tried to claim a Melbourne Marathon result, which, well...they may not have achieved.

They either 'thought' they had run one year and ...kind of didn't...or they entered the full but ran the half ... ran with another person's bib ... and they are now busy/injured/aging/running out of time to reach Spartan status.

While we recognise that these enquiries can be very emotional for runners, we are bound by the official results as recorded by the event organisers, which is why we are asking you to assist us with this process.

It is important to note that finishing an official Melbourne Marathon is not the same as being officially deemed as a finisher of the Melbourne Marathon. For us to verify you have successfully completed a Melbourne Marathon:

- You must have registered - in your name - for the full Melbourne Marathon distance
- Run the full distance wearing only your bib on the day of the event and finished within the cut-off time (currently 7 hours)
- Your 'finished' result must be available in the results that year.

The Spartan achievement and brand is widely recognised and highly regarded due to the stringency and integrity of the process. Spartans are focused and determined individuals who set themselves a goal which very few people achieve. Whether you have completed 10 Melbourne Marathons, or 'just' 12 (like the Membership Secretary...) or all of them like our three extraordinary Legends, you will always be a Spartan and I look forward to continuing to serve you in this role.

Thanks for reading and happy running.

SPARTAN STORIES

Our Summer Marathon Diversion

Robe, South Australia Saturday 8 February 2025

ROBYN FLETCHER (SF84) & FRASER FAITHFULL (S1529)

The Cadbury Marathon in Hobart is well known as one of the first events on the annual marathon calendar. Robe Marathon, hosted by the Adelaide Trail Runners, also pops up early and this year was held on Saturday 8 February.



We left Melbourne two days before the marathon and cruised down to delightful Portland not too far from the South Australia border for our overnight stop.

The water was amazingly warm for a refreshing splash in the afternoon and later on a fish and chip van pulled into our caravan park for a very pleasant community dinner.

We made it to Robe the next afternoon following shopping and picnicking stops in Mount Gambier and Millicent. Robe itself is a delightful seaside resort town with plenty of cafes and eateries and a couple of pubs too. Mind you, the wind did not let up through our entire stay!

The marathon comprises two loops around the township. Highlights include a 4k section each lap down Long Beach on the Eastern side of town and a peek at Robe's noted Obelisk (you know, one of those red and white stripey triangular navigation things...) at the town's rocky Western extremity. The Robe Marathon was inaugurated in February 2023.



Fraser ventured to Robe for the first event and Robyn joined in for 2024 and again this year.

The field is typically fairly small, with 29 finishers in 2025. By contrast the 21k (one lap) and 14k events are very popular with around 160 finishers in each category this year. The 2026 event is already being advertised, with the date set for Saturday 7 February.

We've included a photo or two of us at the start of Long Beach on the first lap. There's also a shot of Robyn on the beach with our generous Pacer, Tim Horton. Robyn is doing her best to negotiate a comfortable finishing time... 'C'mon Tim, 5:30 sounds good. What do you reckon??

At the end of our jaunt along the beach we met three delightful volunteers (see photo) who, as well as handing out drinks and snacks, are occasionally called upon to chase after runners who have slipped into a state of giddy transcendental seaside bliss and simply breezed on by the direction arrow, heading towards Adelaide far, far away.



We headed to Victor Harbor, about an hour south of Adelaide, the next day for a few days of relaxation at a favourite tourist park. There's plenty going on in South Australia! More info at: [Robe Run | AdelaideTrailRunners](#)



My Journey in the Last Desert ANNE ZIOGOS (SF45)



In my forty years of running, I have done some memorable and educational runs, but then there is a pinnacle that nothing can match.

Doing most of the mountains in Victoria and some around other Australian states was a lot of fun. Travelling overseas to do the different continents from North to South was very exciting. Places that only feet could travel through to witness the wonders of nature. Mother Earth is full of pleasant surprises. Greenland with its own magnificent wonders, The Sahara Desert full of rocks, different coloured sand and a reminder that it once was full of water and at the bottom of the sea. Japan and its neat as a pin trail tracks, to Mongolia and Cambodia full of natural wonders and man-made disasters. America also had its own array of beauty depending on where you were running in Washington State or Utah.

Last year I had the opportunity to run in a place I could only dream about. When I knew my dream was about to become a reality, I couldn't wait for the venture to start. It was the pinnacle and most pristine place on this planet. ANTARCTICA!

It was a long journey, but worth it. I flew into Santiago then to Buenos Aires and finally into Ushuaia. From there we got on a small liner ship Plancius. Crossing the Drake Passage was an experience in itself. No wonder it has a bad reputation, which it earned on this occasion. Whilst crossing the Drake, the staff introduced themselves and gave us a briefing on their expertise area and how to look after our very pristine part of the earth. After each disembarkation, boots, running shoes and poles had to be disinfected when we rejoined the boat.

The number one rule was to stop the spread of any kind of infection, so, all our clothes had to be cleaned and vacuumed, removing any foreign material. When we landed on any island or the mainland, there were strict rules about belongings and food. All items were to be placed on a tarpaulin.

Food that produced crumbs was not allowed and all food items had to be unwrapped and placed in a container. Food could only be consumed on the tarpaulin and nowhere else. The running routes were only planned on the day, depending on the weather and the terrain. They were normally 2km-5km loops and runners were given a time limit to achieve as many kms in the time. Depending on the weather conditions, sometimes, the running time had to be shortened.



The first running day was at Half Moon Island, which was very hilly, rocky and with fresh snow. Just mesmerising. Running past seals and sealions and lots of bird life of all sizes. The water and sky were blue and pure and the icebergs in the far distance set a spectacular scene. Very distracting, but it was Antarctica, and I was not fussed about running good times. As soon as the run was over, the ship set sail for the second destination. Portal Point and Damoy.

Second day, due to the weather, the running loop was only 1.3kms up and down a steep hill with a few penguins in the background. At the top of the hill there was a mandatory stop to take in all the sites. Once again, different to the previous day but so beautiful. The blueness of the sea and the pure white of the snow was indescribable. I became hot and had to take a layer off and then, it started to snow, and the feel of the snow on my back was very welcoming. The icebergs in the background set a gorgeous scene. We saw lots of wildlife but not any whales, however, there were a few dolphins dancing around. Once we boarded the ship, it moved to the next destination.

The third running day was at Port Lockroy. This was one of the best days as we had the opportunity to camp out with the penguins if we wanted to. We made a bed out of snow and set up our sleeping bags which had a waterproof outer lining. During summer the sun does not set in Antarctica, so we had sunshine all day long. We also had some visitors checking us out and wondering what new species were invading their territory.

There were numerous penguin colonies everywhere and other bird life also came close and had a good look. The day was perfect as it was so still and completely euphoric. It was like a dream. After the run, we got the chance to go sightseeing in the Zodiac and just when we thought things could not get any better, we had an extraordinary show put on by two whales. Their graceful jumps and then their water entry and the flick of that magnificent tail. The scene was so unreal.

The icebergs reflecting in the still sea and the whales put on their best show while the colony of penguins were feasting nearby, this could not compare to anything humans put on in any theatrical show. That is what dreams are made of. So, we then embarked on our beloved ship, the *Plancius*, and continued on our way to the next destination.

Day four was Danco Island. Another glorious day. A nice zig zag course up and down a hill with glorious views and loads of penguin highways. This day was full of fun. The penguins were busy travelling up and down the highways, always having the right of way, and the runners were more than happy to let them go first.

We also had the opportunity to go kayaking, which was another extraordinary experience. Watching the sea life and billions of krill was breathtaking so I could see why there were so many whales there. Finally, the ship was headed for the last destination.



The fifth day of running was at Deception Island, Telefon Bay and Whaler's Bay. The run was at Telefon Bay which was an extinct volcano, and this day was extremely windy, so much so that it numbed your lips. (Now I know what they mean by the term, *the weather in Melbourne is coming straight from Antarctica*). Immediately after the run, we boarded the ship and headed for Whaler's Bay. This was an old whaling station with lots of sad history and still evidence everywhere of the slaughter that went on many years ago.

The sand was extremely warm which made the water also very warm but, unfortunately, due to this, there were a few cooked sea animals. There was an active volcano on this island which erupted in the 70s and it is due to erupt any time now, so we underwent safety procedures in case it did while we were there. That was the final journey of our Antarctica trip. As soon as we got back on our ship, *Plancius*, we would be turning around and heading back to Ushuaia through the Drake Passage and hopefully the journey would not be as turbulent as on the way in.

What an experience. There are no words to describe this amazing journey into this magical place.

Once back in Ushuaia, disappointingly, I missed a trip to one of the nearby mountain ranges. However, I was reassured by one of the other competitors who said, 'It was just another mountain with grass, water and dirt. The same as you have in Australia, and we have in Germany! IT WAS NOT ANTARCTICA'.

That summed it up!



EVERY SPARTAN HAS A STORY

Do you have a story about your path to becoming a Spartan, or would you like to write a tribute?

We prefer articles in the range of 500 to 1000 words, but that is a guide only. Contact us to discuss at djfoskey@ozemail.com.au. If you have missed a deadline, there is always the next issue. If you have some photographs that you would like to add to our [photographs collection](#), please send them in.

We hope you are inspired by the Spartan Stories in this issue.

SPARTAN MERCHANDISE

Merchandise is available for Spartans to purchase. Many members have come to enjoy the many [items available](#) which can all now be ordered online through [this link](#).

SPARTANS CLUB STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To advance the sport of marathon running to athletes of all ages and abilities and to encourage and assist all runners to achieve Melbourne Marathon Spartan status.

To provide a platform and environment for runners to receive and to build upon their achievements enabling progression through the various Spartan milestone singlet colours.

Assist in the promotion and publicity of the Melbourne Marathon and the charities it supports.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW DUE FOR 2024-2025

The Spartan financial year is 1 July to 30 June, so fees for 2024-2025 are now being accepted. The membership fee is now \$45. Current financial Spartans are listed [here](#).

\$45 via EFT: Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club BSB: 633-000 Account No: 139201743 Please include name and/or Spartan Number	Cheque for \$45 via Post: "Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club" PO Box 162 Rosanna Vic 3084 Please include name and/or Spartan Number
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You can also pay through our on-line Square site, using [this link](#).

If you are a current member, you do not need to fill in a Membership Form* but please advise of any changes to your contact details via spartans.team@hotmail.com OR download the [membership form](#) and email or post it in.

BENEFITS OF BEING A SPARTAN

The Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club is a club that comprises marathon runners from all walks of life, ages and abilities that have achieved Spartan status by completing ten Melbourne Marathons.

The benefits of membership include [regular newsletters](#), being presented with a Spartan singlet after ten years and subsequent milestone Spartan singlets every five years, and the opportunity to attend our AGM to hear a top-line guest speaker.

Our [monthly Sunday runs](#) enable members to do a lap or two of the Tan at their own pace and enjoy a social coffee afterwards.

We have a stand at the pre-marathon expo to meet with members, exhibit some of our memorabilia and sell merchandise.

On marathon day we have a tent where bags can be stored securely. After running refreshments and free massages are provided as well as the opportunity to rest and chat. In 2021 we began photographing Spartans just past the finish line to create a [gallery of finishers](#).

COMMITTEE		
President	Jay Fleming	0418 374 783 flemi230727@myyahoo.com
Vice President	Paul Basile	0439 718 281
Treasurer	Vicky Chung	
Secretary	Pamela Young	
Membership Secretary	Felicity Doolan	0411 405 529 spartans.team@hotmail.com
Committee	Kai Ooi	
Committee	John Zeleznikow	
Webmaster	David Foskey	0432 146 747
Committee	Candida Baskcomb	
Committee	John Kaparelis	
Committee	Peter Seal	
Committee	Gavin Criddle	

LIFE MEMBERS
<p>Paul Basile, Peter Battrick, Rod Bayley, John Dean, John Dobson, Felicity Doolan, Peter Feldman, Jay Fleming, David Foskey, Jack Fredrickson, Christine Hodges, Ken Matchett (Dec'd), Conor McNeice, John Raskas, Peter Ryan, Colin Silcock-Delaney, Maureen Wilson, Ron Young (Dec'd), Shirley Young (Dec'd)</p>

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

If you would like to be added to our mailing list or if you know someone who might like to join, [please use this link](#)

We have lost contact with many of our older members. If you know a Spartan who does not receive our emails and is on email, please encourage them to use the above link. We deliberately limit the number of emails we send, and all have an unsubscribe option.



Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club
ONCE A SPARTAN ALWAYS A SPARTAN