



Commonwealth Masters Games

Initial Concept Proposal

- 1. Introduction.** This concept note has been prepared by CommonAge for consideration by the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) and the Commonwealth Sports Ministers meeting in 2022. It follows an initial conversation between the Chairman of CommonAge and the CEO of the CGF on 24.1.20. The paper is intended to provide a basis for the opening of a dialogue between CommonAge, the CGF and the Commonwealth Sports community with the aim of bringing to life the idea of Commonwealth Masters Games (CMG). CommonAge has been advocating for the introduction of CMG since its formation in 2014.
- 2. About CommonAge.** The Commonwealth Association for the Ageing – CommonAge was founded in Australia in 2013 and first registered as an Australian charity in 2014. The organisation’s purpose is to work for an all age friendly Commonwealth in which no group in society is disadvantaged or marginalised on account of age. CommonAge challenges ageism and age-related inequality, and works to support older people throughout the Commonwealth to maintain their health, to enjoy a high quality of life, and to contribute to civil society and the lives of their communities for as long as they are able.
- 3. Commonwealth Sport.** It was heartening and encouraging to see recognition of the potential of CMG in the recently launched revised strategy document for Commonwealth Sport: Transformation 2022 Refresh - Strategic Plan (2019-2022)
https://thecgf.com/sites/default/files/2019-10/CGF_TRANSFORMATION%2022_BROCHURE_FINAL_16-08-19_LOW%20RES.pdf
The document identifies the future strategy for Commonwealth Sport in delivering on the vision: *“Through sport, we create peaceful, sustainable and prosperous communities across the Commonwealth.”*
Specifically on Page 24 of the document the following proposed action is stated:
*“Innovate and Create New Commonwealth Sport Properties:
By 2020, develop proposals for possible new Commonwealth Sport properties (e.g. Sport-Specific Commonwealth vs Non-Commonwealth Nation Events; Commonwealth Championships, Commonwealth E-Sport Opportunities; **Commonwealth Masters Games**; Commonwealth Urban Sports Festival; Commonwealth Mass Sport and Leisure Opportunities”*
- 4. Healthy Ageing.** CommonAge believes strongly in the importance of the promotion of Healthy Ageing. As longevity increases through modern healthcare and medical interventions that challenge chronic disease, it is important, for the wellbeing of societies and their populations, that citizens are supported and enabled to live healthy and fulfilling lives that keep them engaged with, and contributing to, their communities. Healthy citizens are less costly to support than those whose abilities are reduced by the ageing process. Keeping ageing populations healthy reduces the burden on state support in health systems and ensures that the capacity for economic contribution amongst elders is maintained. The World Health Organisation (WHO) will launch in 2020 its programme for the “Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030”.
<https://www.who.int/ageing/decade-of-healthy-ageing>. CommonAge is committed to

supporting the principals and practical implementation of strategies for Healthy Ageing at national, regional and community levels.

5. Veterans Sport. Masters athletics is a class of the sport of [athletics](#) for older athletes in [track and field](#), [road running](#) and [cross country running](#). Competitors are bracketed into five-year age groups beginning at 35 for track and field and 40 for distance-running events. Men as old as 105 and women in their 100s have competed in running, jumping and throwing events. Masters athletes are sometimes known as "veterans" and the European Masters Championships, for instance, is known as "Eurovets." This and other events cater largely to former elite-level athletes, but many masters athletes are newcomers to their respective sports and enjoy the camaraderie offered by masters' competition at the local, national and international level. Many national governing bodies for track and field host annual masters' events, and prestigious meetings such as the Australian Masters Games are regular fixtures in national sporting calendars. CommonAge would suggest that the introduction of veterans' sport to the Commonwealth would be entirely consistent with the aspirations for integrated and multigenerational civil society development envisaged by the Sustainable Development Goals being pursued by the countries of the Commonwealth.

6. World Masters Games. The World Masters Games is an international multi-sport event held every four years which, in terms of competitor numbers, has developed into the largest of its kind. Governed by the International Masters Games Association (IMGA), the World Masters Games is open to sports people of all abilities and most ages – the minimum age criterion ranges between 25 and 35 years depending on the sport. Auckland, New Zealand hosted the event's ninth edition from 21 to 30 April 2017.

Anyone can participate in the games so long as they are over the age of 35 though some sports will allow athletes who are younger than that. Participants compete for themselves – there are no country delegations. Beyond the age requirement and membership in that sport's governing body, there are no competition qualification requirements.

7. The International Masters Games Association (IMGA). The recognised international governing body for masters' sport is the IMGA. The stated mission of the IMGA is:

- To strengthen and to grow the Masters sports movement in partnership with its members, the international federations and other partners.
- To promote and encourage mature individuals, generally known as Masters, from all over the world to be active, with the awareness that competitive sport can continue throughout life.
- To promote friendship and understanding among mature sportspeople, regardless of age, gender, race, religion or sport status.
- To work with the IOC to explore possibilities to encourage International Sports Federations to focus on the development of masters' sport.

8. 2017 World Masters Games Sports. The following sports were included in the most recent World Masters' Games:

Archery	Golf	Shooting
Athletics	Hockey	Softball
Badminton	Lawn Bowls	Squash
Baseball	Netball	Surf Lifesaving
Basketball	Orienteering	Swimming
Canoe	Rowing	Table Tennis
Cycling	Rugby	Tennis
Football	Sailing	Touch Football

Triathlon
Volleyball

Water Polo
Weightlifting

(The author would also hope to see his preferred sport of croquet included as it was when he competed in the Australian Masters' Games croquet tournament in 2015 in Adelaide)

9. **Governance.** The organisation and administration of large-scale international sporting events is a major undertaking for the relevant sport governing body. In the case of the Commonwealth there is a professional core organisation in the form of the CGF that would need to take on responsibility for the CMG. There could be staffing and executive capacity issues to be addressed.
10. **Volunteering.** As is the case in other major sporting events considerable reliance would need to be placed on the engagement of a large body of volunteers to provide officials, administrators, stewards and other support staff. The governing bodies of individual sports would need to be engaged. There is capacity amongst older and early retired people in likely host cities to provide the voluntary staff resources required. Universities also regularly support the local Masters games, particularly physio, sports science and physical therapy professionals.
11. **Participation.** Through the existing international masters' games communities, it would be expected that participants in the various sports would be relatively easy to identify and to encourage to participate. The support of the Commonwealth institutions and accredited organisations would be needed to promote and support the events.
12. **Financial.** The cost of staging international sporting events would depend on the contributions of host cities. It could be expected that a high-profile sporting event such as the CMG should be able to attract commercial sponsorship. Older people keen to pursue their sport through international competition are more likely to be able to support their individual costs of travel, accommodation and participation than younger athletes. Seniors, and especially over 65s, are a fast emerging consumer demographic that is being recognised on an international scale. There will be ongoing sponsorship opportunities to align with brand and initiatives that are exploring this market.
13. **Hosting.** It is understood that there are a number of potential host cities across the Commonwealth that would find the prospect of hosting the CMG attractive. The CGF would have knowledge of such cities. It is assumed that there could be a number of cities interested in bidding to host the CMG in a competitive process. The CGF has experience in inviting and assessing bids, and making appropriate decisions. Victoria, Australia, the host state for the 2026 Commonwealth Games has great experience in the hosting of the Australian Masters' Games.
14. **Timing.** The CMG would need to be timed to fit into the broader international sporting calendar. The event could be staged in the immediate aftermath of the Commonwealth Games, as the Para-Olympics follow the Olympic Games. This would offer the advantage of the sports infrastructure already being in place in the host city. Alternatively, the CMG could be timed at the two-year interval between the main Commonwealth Games. The next Commonwealth Games to be hosted by Victoria are scheduled for 2026. A possible scenario could be to use the time from now to 2024 to undertake the necessary concept development and to plan for 2026.
15. **Partnerships and Project Steering Committee.** CommonAge would be keen to be involved in the development of the CMG. Other national, international and accredited Commonwealth Organisations, such as the University of the 3rd Age, Age UK, Age International, HelpAge International, the Council of the Ageing (Australia) could be interested in participating. It would

be envisaged that the CGF would take on the lead role in co-ordinating and producing the CMG, in partnership with the host country.

- 16. Next Steps.** CommonAge would like to engage with the CGF and Commonwealth Sports Ministers to discuss the way ahead and would like to request an early meeting to explore the concept in greater depth. From that point, provided the CGF is willing to take the lead role, it could be appropriate to invite interested bodies to form a steering committee to take the project forward.

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