

Running aids my life



In focus

With Christine Oldfield

TASMANIAN born Karyn Gower moved to Perth in 1977, the same year she married Alan. Soon after that, she developed a keen interest in the WA flora. She later took that interest further and, in 2009, graduated from Murdoch University with a BSc in biological sciences and, in 2010, with an honours degree in environmental science. Nowadays, although running is fundamental to her way of life, the 'bush' is her first passion and she is heavily involved in conservation and restoration.

She played netball at school and some social squash. Then in 1991, when taking her eldest son, Ron, to Little Athletics cross country training, she decided that, after sitting in an office all day, she should return to a bit of physical activity too. So she put on a pair of joggers and slunk off to do a couple of laps out of sight at a nearby oval. She obviously enjoyed this and developed into a very handy distance runner. That year she (and also Ron and Alan) joined Northern Districts AAC and they became a 'running family', competing mainly in cross country meetings and relays, always with their two younger children in tow. Karyn was awarded a service medal by Northern Districts after carrying out the roles of committee member, auditor and treasurer over the years.

Karyn has been a member of the WA Marathon Club since 1991 and her first ever track run was at Capel in

1992. She also joined the 'Vets' for a while in the mid-90s and she competed in the nationals in Perth in 1996, taking silver in the cross country. After developing Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in 1998 it was a couple of years before she returned to running and about ten years before she achieved a good level of recovery. CFS taught her "*to be happy just to be able to run*", whether she was running well or not.

In 2003 she re-joined Masters and, in addition to running cross country and relays with AthleticA, became a frequent competitor at the Tuesday night track sessions and state championships. She has had a go at most T&F events but her preference is for the 1500m, 3000m and 5000m distances. In the 2012 nationals in Melbourne she missed out on placings but acquitted herself well – as she did in the recent Patron's Trophy competition. She is aiming to compete at the world championships in Lyon in 2015, when she will just have entered the W55 age group, and in Perth in 2016. As yet she has no specific targets – except to run the best she can.

Karyn runs for fitness and health and is inspired by the achievements of athletes at all levels of ability. She hopes to keep running as long as possible and says "*The athletic community, particularly Masters, are a great bunch of people, so taking part in competition is a joy*".