

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN – WALKING RECORDS AND RANKINGS

Over the last few weeks, I have been focusing on the Australian men and their progress over the 20 km and 50 km distances. To complete the picture, it is time to have a look at our women.

The first time that the Australian Amateur Athletics Union Yearly Handbook listed Australian women's records was in 1978. The inaugural list showed Melbourne walkers Sue Orr and Kerrie Neville as the two record holders and I will use that year as the starting point for my analysis. Australian records had been maintained before this by the Women's Associations and there were, in the period leading up to this, many fine record breaking performances by such walkers as Anne Pembroke, Lillian Harper and Alison Nicholls. But you have to start somewhere and it's 1978 for me.

5000m Open track walk	24:21.2	Sue Orr (VIC)	16/03/1978	Brisbane, QLD
3000m Junior track walk	14:10.1	Kerrie Neville (VIC)	12/11/1977	Melbourne, VIC

By the following year, 15 year old Sally Pierson had arrived on the scene and taken the Junior record, signalling the start of her meteoric rise

3000m Junior track walk	14:05.0	Sally Pierson (VIC)	09/12/1978	Melbourne, VIC
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With women's walking finally being recognised on the international stage in the late seventies and Australia sending its first international team to the Eschborn Cup in 1979, the stage was set for times to start tumbling and Sue Orr (now married to Queensland walker Bruce Cook and competing under her married name of Sue Cook) was the early trend setter. By early 1980 she had reduced her 5000m time by nearly 1 minute. Such was her dominance that in the Australian rankings lists for 1979/1980 she had the 5 fastest 3000m times and the 2 fastest 5000m times, all ahead of Sally Pierson. That year, the 1500m and 3000m walk distances were given Australian record status and Sue became the inaugural record holder for the two new categories with times of 6:19.0 and 13:20.7. She now held all three officially recognised Australian records.

1500m Open track walk	6:19.0	Sue Cook (VIC)	08/11/1980	Melbourne, VIC
3000m Open track walk	13:20.7	Sue Cook (VIC)	08/03/1980	Melbourne, VIC
5000m Open track walk	23:32.8	Sue Cook (VIC)	09/02/1980	Ringwood, VIC

Once again it was a case of Sue and no one else within cooee as the ranking lists for 1980/1981 showed that she had 4 of the 5 fastest 3000m times and 9 of the 10 fastest 5000m times within Australia. She confirmed her international credentials in New York in August 1980, defeating Sue Broddock (USA) and Anne Peel (Canada) to win the IWF World 5,000m walk championship in 23:39 and a place in history as the first Australian walker to win a world title. It was a memorable day for Australian race walking and for the temperature (36°C).

In fact by early December 1980 Sue's name appeared 12 times in Palle Lassen's and Egon Rasmussen's World Race Walking Statistics Book. According to that publication, she held five world records at the end of 1980: the 3,000m in 13:20.7 (March 8), the 10 km road in 46:48 (May 11), the 15 km road in 73:59 (July 13), the 1500m in 6:19 (November 8) and the 1 mile in 6:57.1 (November 12, 1980).



Sally Pierson and Sue Cook – world leading Australian record holders – pictured in action on the track in 1982

The following season, now into the second year of an athletics scholarship at the newly opened AIS in Canberra, she chipped away with further records, reducing the 3000m and 5000m as shown below.

3000m Open Track walk	13:20.6	Sue Cook (VIC)	10/02/1982	Canberra, ACT
5000m Open Track walk	22:53.20	Sue Cook (VIC)	21/03/1981	Adelaide, SA

But Sue did not have things all her own way. The diminutive Sally Pierson had finally bridged the gap after chasing Sue for some 5 years. On January 27 1982, Sally recorded a world leading 22:15 for a road 5 km walk in Melbourne. Then on February 21 at Olympic Park in Melbourne, she beat Sue, recording 13:02.5 for a new Australian Open record. Then she beat Sue again to win the Australian 5,000m track title in 23:14. But Sue came back with a vengeance to beat Sally on 22 May in a 5,000m track walk in Melbourne. Sue recorded 22:32.4 for a new World record while Sally's time of 22:43 was an Australian Junior record. Then 20 hours later on May 23, Sue recorded 45:42.6 in a 10,000m walk at the Olympic Sports Field in Adelaide for yet another World record, breaking Swedish walker Ann Janson's time by 1 min 15 secs (the 10,000m track walk had been added as a further Australian record category in 1982/1983 so Sue became the inaugural record holder with her 46:42.6). Sue then won the Australian 5000m road title in July in an even faster 22:27. Two weeks later in Bergen, she was triumphant in retaining her World 5000m championship in 23:03. In December 1982 in Melbourne, in one of her very few longer races, she walked a world best of 1:36:32 for the 20 km road. Thus Sue now held three of the Australian records (1500m, 5000m and 10000m) while Sally held one (3000).

3000m Open Track walk	13:02.5	Sally Pierson (VIC)	21/02/1982	Melbourne, VIC
5000m Open Track walk	22:32.4	Sue Cook (VIC)	22/05/1982	Melbourne, VIC
10,000m Open Track walk	46:42.6	Sue Cook (VIC)	23/05/1982	Adelaide, SA

But Sally was not to be outdone and she showed her versatility in winning the 1982 Australian 10 km road running title in Sydney. This was her first major running championship and for the remainder of her career she mixed walking and running with great success. On May 8 1982 in a VRWC 10 km handicap race at Albert Park, Sally set a new World best time for the 10 km road walk with 45:38. So it is fair to say that at this time, the walking honours were pretty much evenly shared between Sue and Sally.

Sue responded superbly to the challenge laid down by Sally. First she set her third World 10,000m record of 45:47 and a World 1 hour record in Leicester in England in September 1983. She scored a comfortable win over Lorraine Young in the Victorian 10 km title that same year and then won the National 10 km title, beating Sally. Her continuing status at the top of world walking was confirmed with 3rd place in the 1983 Eschborn Cup 10 km in Bergen (45:26), one place ahead of Sally Pierson. The first 4 all broke the previous World road best time and Australia came third in the womens competition.

1984 started as usual with more records, including a world best 1500m of 6:10 in January before recording the fastest ever 5000m time in Australia to regain her national track championship in 22:04.4. Sally was 2nd as usual. The only record that continued to elude Sue was Sally's 3000m track time of 13:02.5.

1500m Open Track Walk	6:10.8	Sue Cook (ACT)	21/01/1984	Canberra, ACT
5000m Open Track Walk	22:16.3	Sue Cook (ACT)	17/02/1984	Canberra, ACT
5000m Open Track Walk	22:06.34	Sue Cook (ACT)	03/03/1984	Melbourne, VIC
5000m Open Track Walk	22:04.42	Sue Cook (ACT)	01/04/1984	Melbourne, VIC
10000m Open Track Walk	45:47.0	Sue Cook (ACT)	14/09/1983	Leicester, ENG

In the 1985 ranking lists, a new name emerged – a young NSW athlete by the name of Kerry Saxby. Sue was by this stage suffering with the effects of some long term injuries and Sally Pierson had retired, all of 22 years of age. Kerry filled the void and topped the Australian ranking list that year over 3000m (13:12.64) and was second to Sally over 5000m with 22:56.1.

Sue finally got back on the track after a long spell and set yet another record in June 1985 - the 1 Hour track walk had been added to the Australian record categories that year and Sue set the inaugural record with a distance of 12.553m in Melbourne. But just as she set yet another Australian record, Kerry signalled her impending dominance, breaking Sue's 5000m record with a sizzling 21:53.36.

1 Hour Open Track Walk	12,553.22m	Sue Cook (ACT)	29/06/1985	Melbourne, VIC
5000m Open Track Walk	21:53.36	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	12/02/1986	Melbourne, VIC

It should be noted at this stage that Sue, Sally and Kerry often set faster track times in mixed races but such times were not eligible for record consideration. For instance, in 1984 Sue recorded 12:42.1 in a mixed 3000m race Canberra, some 20 seconds faster than Sally's record. Similarly in 1985, Kerry recorded 12:49.9 in a mixed race in Sydney.

Kerry was a great all rounder as was evidenced by her 20 km road time of 1:33:29.9 in July 1986 – an Australian best by some 3 minutes. But road records were not yet recognised so this remained simply a 'best on record'.

By 1987, Kerry had taken all before her, breaking her own 5000m record and breaking Sue's 10,000m record.

5000m Open Track Walk	21:31.06	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	29/03/1987	Sydney, NSW
10,000m Open Track Walk	45:08.13	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	09/07/1986	Moscow, RUS

In mixed racing, she was even faster, having recorded 12:20.07 (3000m) in Canberra in January 1987, 21:16.0 (5000m) in Sydney in April 1987 and 44:53.0 (10000m) in Canberra in May 1987.

Never had Australia seen such a prolific breaker of Australian, Commonwealth and World records as Kerry. Seemingly, records fell every time she hit the track. Finally in February 1988, she got the one final one she had been after – the 3000m. And what a time it was – a new world record of 12:14.48. She also shattered her 5000m record a month later in March with a world leading 20:45.32.

3000m Open Track Walk	12:14.48	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	20/02/1988	Sydney, NSW
5000m Open Track Walk	20:45.32	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	27/03/1988	Perth, WA

Her road times were even faster with her 10 km road best standing at 42:52.0 and her 20 km road best reduced to 1:32:51.0.

The 1988/1989 season saw her walking even faster with a whole swag of new records. At the end of the season, the new standards read

3000m Open Track Walk	12:13.75	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	02/02/1989	Sydney, NSW
5000m Open Track Walk	20:32.75	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	19/03/1989	Brisbane, QLD
10000m Open Track Walk	42:46.45	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	14/01/1989	Sydney, NSW



1987 – Kerry races to 2nd place in the IAAF World Championship 10 km roadwalk in Rome

But once again, she had faster times that were not eligible - her indoor 3000m track time of 12:01.65, done in Budapest in March 1989, her 10 km road time of 41:29.7, done in Canberra in August 1988 and her 20 km road time of 1:29:40, done in Varnamo in May 1988.

Many of her Australian records were also World records. This was certainly the case in 1990 with her new new 5000m track time of 20:17.19

5000m Open Track Walk	20:17.19	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	14/01/1990	Sydney, NSW
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One record had sat quietly unchallenged all this time, namely Sue Cook's 1984 1500m time of 6:10. Kerry saw to it in no uncertain terms in January 1991, recording a new standard of 5:50.41. She also reduced her 3000m World Record to 11:51.36 in March 1990 and broke the 10000m world record with 41:57.22 in July 1990 in the Goodwill Games (although failing to win that particular race by 1 second – a rare loss on the international stage).

1500m Open Track Walk	5:50.41	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	20/01/1991	Sydney, NSW
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3000m Open Track Walk	11:51.26	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	07/02/1991	Melbourne, VIC
10000m Open Track Walk	41:57.22	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	24/07/1990	Seattle, USA

I well remember her 11:51 as it beat my best ever track 3000m of 11:53. It was a shattering experience!

That year, the Australian record lists were extended to include the 10 km and 20 km road walks and Kerry was, of course, awarded the inaugural records with performances as follows

10 km Open Road Walk	41:30	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	27/08/1988	Canberra, ACT
20 km Open Road Walk	1:29:40	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	13/05/1988	Sweden

Kerry now held 6 of the 7 Australian walking records on offer – 1500m, 3000m, 5000m, 10000m, 10 km and 20 km. The only one she had not broken was Sue Cook's 1 Hour track.

In 1992, one further record category was added – the 2 Hour Track walk. The inaugural record went to Carolyn Vanstan of Victoria.

2 Hour Open Track Walk	22,747.10m	Carolyn Vanstan (VIC)	20/06/1992	Melbourne, VIC
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In 1994, the 1 Hour track walk record fell, this time to another Victorian in Wendy Muldoon but this was simply a case of a record category that Kerry did not bother to attack. She still dominated the rankings over all the major distances and was still ahead of all her opposition by the proverbial mile.

1 Hour Open Track Walk	12,805.20m	Wendy Muldoon (VIC)	25/06/1994	Melbourne, VIC
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It was amazing to see Kerry maintain such a high level of performance over so many years – it was now over 10 years since she had taken her first Australian record but in 1996, at nearly 35 years of age, she showed that she still had plenty of petrol left in the tank with a new Australian 5000m track record – 20:03.0!

5000m Open Track Walk	20:03.0	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	11/02/1996	Sydney, NSW
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In 1997/1998, the 1500m, 3000m and 1 Hour Track Open Record categories were dropped. That left Kerry holding the 5000m track, 10000m track, 10 km road and 20 km road and Carolyn Vanstan holding the 2 Hour Track.

In 1999, Victorian walker Simone Wolowiec broke the 2 Hour Track walk record with a distance of 23.496.50m

2 Hour Open Track Walk	23,496.50m	Simone Wolowiec (VIC)	03/07/1999	Box Hill, VIC
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In 2000, one further record category was added with the 15 km road and it was awarded to Victorian Wendy Muldoon for her time of 1:14:49.9

15 km Open Road Walk	1:14:49.9	Wendy Muldoon (VIC)	05/05/1999	VIC
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Jane Saville had been pounding the tracks and the roads for some years now and had defeated Kerry on a number of occasions, most notably in the 1998 Commonwealth Games 10 km road walk in Kuala Lumpur. In 2000 she took her first Australian record, namely the 20 km road.

20 km Open Road Walk	1:28:56	Jane Saville (NSW)	06/05/2000	Copenhagen, DEN
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In 2002, the 20,000m track walk was also added to the record list but this time it was Kerry who was awarded the inaugural honour with her time of 1:33:40 in the 2001 Goodwill Games in Brisbane – done at 40 years of age!

20,000m Open Track Walk	1:33:40.2	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	06/09/2001	Brisbane, QLD
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The most recent Australian Open record was set by Jane Saville in May 2004 when she recorded a Commonwealth record time of 1:27:44 in the World Racewalking Cup. Her time was just over 1 minute outside the world record.

20 km Open Road Walk	1:27:44	Jane Saville (NSW)	02/05/2004	Naumburg, GER
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In summary, there are now 7 Open records for women and the holders are as follows

5000m Open Track Walk	20:03.0	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	11/02/1996	Sydney, NSW
10000m Open Track Walk	41:57.22	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	24/07/1990	Seattle, USA
20000m Open Track Walk	1:33:40.2	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	06/09/2001	Brisbane, QLD
2 Hour Open Track Walk	23,496.50m	Simone Wolowiec (VIC)	03/07/1999	Box Hill, VIC

10 km Open Road Walk	41:30	Kerry Saxby (NSW)	27/08/1988	Canberra, ACT
15 km Open Road Walk	1:14:49.9	Wendy Muldoon (VIC)	05/05/1999	VIC
20 km Open Road Walk	1:27:44	Jane Saville (NSW)	02/05/2004	Naumburg, GER



Jane Saville wins the 2006 Commonwealth Games 20 km roadwalk – her Australian record distance

And to finish off, a selection of Australian All-Time top-twenties for 3 of the key distances – 5000m track, 10 km road and 20 km road.

Australian Women All Time – 5000m track walk

1.	20.03.0	Kerry Saxby-Junna	N	20661	1	Sydney	11/02/96
2.	21.25.6	Anne Pembroke-Manning	N	131159	mix	Sydney	12/02/94
3.	21.32.26	Jane Saville	N	51174	1	Melbourne	01/03/97
4.	21:34.23	Natalie Saville	N	70978	2	Melbourne	01/03/97
5.	21.45.16	Lisa Sheridan-Paolini	N	101262	1	Sydney	20/02/00
6.	21.46.70	Kellie Wapshott	V	230381	mix	Melbourne	10/02/08
7.	21.47.6	Gabrielle Blythe	V	90369	mix	Canberra	12/03/93
8.	21:57.26	Claire Woods	S	60781	1	Adelaide	13/02/08
9.	21.59.0	Teresa Letherby	Q	50472	3	Sydney	11/02/96
10.	22.01.50	Linda Coffee	N	310777	2	Sydney	18/02/96
11.	22:04.39	Cheryl Webb	N	31076	3	Brisbane	03/03/06
12.	22.04.42	Sue Orr-Cook	V	230458	1	Melbourne	01/04/84
13.	22.05.76	Michelle French	N	10482	2	Melbourne	19/02/06
14.	22:07.50	Tanya Holliday	S	210988	mix	Adelaide	26/11/05
15.	22:08:00	Megan Szirom	V	180877	1	Melbourne	23/06/07
16.	22.08.5	Jenny Jones-Billington	Q	200467	4	Brisbane	06/03/93
17.	22.08.76	Jess Rothwell	V	180689	mix	Melbourne	10/02/08
18.	22.13.0	Simone Wolowiec	V	120274	mix	Melbourne	20/11/97
19.	22.15.0	Sally Pierson	V	100363	1	Melbourne	27/01/84
20.	22.15.5	Jane Lewry-Barbour	S	270766	1	Adelaide	16/02/94

Australian Women All Time – 10 km road walk

1.	41.30	Kerry Saxby-Junna	N	20661	Ath Aust Website	27/08/1988
2.	42.15	Jane Saville	N	51174	Eisenhuettenstadt	8/05/1999
3.	43.28	Gabrielle Blythe	V	90369	Hawkesbury	10/07/1993
4.	44.27	Anne Pembroke Manning	N	131159	Melbourne	21/01/1996
5.	45.10	Natalie Saville	N	70978	Melbourne	27/02/1997
6.	45.15	Lisa Sheridan Paolini	N	101262	Sydney	17/08/2000
7.	45.18	Jill Barrett-Maybir	NT	130764	Melbourne	27/02/1997
8.	45.19	Sue Cook	V	230458	Brisbane	28/06/1987
9.	45.20	Cheryl Webb	N	31076	World Cup 20km	2/05/2004
10.	45.22	Wendy Muldoon	V	270571	Melbourne	19/07/1998

11.	45.25	Lorraine Young Jachno	V	210959	Melbourne	19/05/1991
12.	45.38	Sally Pierson	V	100363	Melbourne	8/05/1982
13.	45.40	Simone Wolowiec	V	120274	Melbourne	14/12/1997
14.	45.45	Jess Rothwell	V	180689	Melbourne	23/02/2008
15.	45.51	Jane Lewry Barbour	S	270766	Melbourne	21/01/1996
16.	46.06	Jenny Jones Billington	Q	200467	Canberra	28/08/1993
17.	46.06	Teresa Letherby	Q	50472	Melbourne	17/12/1995
18.	46.30	Megan Szirom	V	180877	Melbourne	2/06/2007
19.	46.35	Lyn Ventris	W	21056	Canberra	8/02/2002
20.	46.50	Bev Wilkins Hayman	N	090561	Richmond	24/05/1986

Australian Women All Time – 20 km road walk

1.	1:27.44.0	Jane Saville	N	51174	4	Naumburg,Germany	2-May-04
2.	1:29.36.0	Kerry Saxby-Junna	N	20661	2	Naumburg,Germany	30-Apr-00
3.	1:31.34.0	Natalie Saville	N	70978	25	Naumburg,Germany	2-May-04
4.	1:31.43.0	Cheryl Webb	N	31076	26	Naumburg,Germany	2-May-04
5.	1:32.57.0	Kellie Wapshott	V	230881	2	Melbourne	23-Feb-08
6.	1:33.02.0	Claire Woods	S	60781	3	Melbourne	23-Feb-08
7.	1:33.00.0	Lisa Sheridan-Paolini	N	101262	1	Sydney	8-Jul-00
8.	1:34.27.0	Anne Pembroke-Manning	N	131159	1	Hawkesbury	10-Jul-93
9.	1:34.35.0	Wendy Muldoon	V	270571	1	Melbourne	16-Aug-98
10.	1:34.44.0	Simone Wolowiec	V	120274	1	Canberra	16-Jan-00
11.	1:34.44.0	Lyn Ventris	W	21056	1	Melbourne	16-Dec-01
12.	1:36.16.0	Jenny Jones-Billington	Q	200467	2	Hawkesbury	10-Jul-93
13.	1:36.19.0	Sally Pierson	V	100363	1	Melbourne	15-Jul-84
14.	1:36.23.0	Sue Orr-Cook	V	230458	1	Canberra	7-Jul-84
15.	1:36.37.0	Megan Szirom	V	180877	5	Melbourne	23-Feb-08
16.	1:36.40.0	Lisa Grant	N	260485	4	Sydney	4-Feb-06
17.	1:37.32.0	Michelle French	N	10482	3	Melbourne	2-Dec-06
18.	1:37.34.0	Jess Rothwell	V	180689	1	Canberra	27-Jan-08
19.	1:37.34.0	Teresa Letherby	Q	50472	2	Adelaide	3-Sep-95
20.	1:37.48.0	Jill Barrett-Maybir	NT	130764	1	Sydney	7-Sep-97