



ON TRACK FOR TOKYO

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS CLUB (SUAC) ALUMNI ARE REAPING THE REWARDS OF THEIR FARSIGHTED TARGET TOKYO INVESTMENT.

The Target Tokyo concept was conceived to help SUAC athletes achieve their Olympic dreams by providing athletes financial assistance to train and compete overseas.

“Our athletes have significant financial stress when trying to achieve Olympic and major championship qualifying performances,” SUAC president Phil Brennan said.

“Competing overseas is expensive and, in some cases, prohibitive; especially for student athletes.” Despite this, SUAC international representation has been phenomenal.

“The Target Tokyo program has been hugely successful with 64 athletes representing Australia at World University Games level or above since its inception. Our alumni and friends have fully funded this program in its entirety.”

SUAC’s recent rise to prominence can be tracked. The club had four athletes at the 2013 World Championships and eight each at the 2015 World Championships and Rio Olympic Games. Since the inception of Target Tokyo, 10 competed at the 2017 World Championships and 13 at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, winning three medals with high expectations for this year’s Doha World Championships and 2020 Olympics.

SUAC Director of Athletics Dean Gleeson recently accompanied 13 athletes to Belgium to the ‘Target Tokyo House’ - the training base funded by the Target Tokyo program for the third consecutive year.

Immediate success was achieved by Nicola McDermott, reaching the Olympic qualifier of 1.96m in a personal best on 20 June which moved her to equal fifth in 2019 world rankings.

As of June, two other club members – Rohan Browning and Catriona Bisset – had achieved selection for September’s Doha World Championships with the aim of qualifying for the 2020 Olympic games and a number of other athletes came very close.

“Given their times during the 2018-19 Australian season, they’re all strong chances of qualifying for Tokyo,” Gleeson said. “Their fellow Target Tokyo athletes are intent on achieving the same across events ranging from sprint hurdles (Club Co-Captain Michelle Jenneke and Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Nick Hough) to 3000m steeplechase (rising star Paige Campbell who finished 29th at World Cross Country Championships in March).”

As a portent to that ‘Australian season’, SUAC’s male and female teams were crowned UniSport Nationals Division 1 Champions. They backed up that form by fielding a record 58 athletes at the 2019 Australian Championships where the club dominated the medal tally. SUAC athletes came away with 10 National Championship titles and three Junior National titles.

During the summer season Australian records were set by Jess Pascoe in the 5000m indoor, and Josh Ralph and Catriona Bisset in the 2x2x400m medley at World Relays, winning silver behind USA – Australia’s best ever performance. And while not a record, Bisset moved to fourth fastest in the Australian women’s 800m with an astonishing time of 1:59.78 - the fastest by an Australian in a decade. Another stellar performance came from Rohan Browning, the 21-year-old Arts-Law student, who clocked 10.08 at the Queensland Track Classic to become the third fastest Australian over the distance behind Matt Shirvington and Patrick Johnson. McDermott, a Science student, ranks equal third on the Australian all-time list and will have competed in five prestigious Diamond League meets whilst on the Target Tokyo program.

Target Tokyo housemate and Medical Science student Marina Carrier, following on the heels of Rio Olympian Ed Fernon (both coached by Dean Gleeson), is also seeking Tokyo selection in modern pentathlon with upcoming qualifying events in Belarus and China.

Gleeson, who can rattle off times, distances and heights at the speed of an Eastern suburbs auctioneer, said SUAC has been enjoying a “golden run” in recent years. “Both 2017 and 2018 were hugely successful opening years on the Target Tokyo program,” he said.

“Based out of Brussels, our athletes have access to high-profile meets in Europe and access to outdoor and indoor training tracks, elite strength training facilities and transport assistance.

“They also receive race entry assistance, which is often a time-consuming and stressful task for athletes, allowing them to focus on their physical preparation.

“The European training base will certainly help us to prolong the golden run. And for that we thank our alumni and supporters who have been asked to help this ambitious and valuable program by investing in our athletes.”



The return on their investment will be franked by the happiness and enjoyment of seeing SUAC athletes achieve their Olympic and major championship dreams.



For more information visit suac.org/targettokyo

From left to right: Andrew Heil, Larissa Pasternatsky, Madeline Hills, Nicola McDermott

