

## **PRESS RELEASE DATED 11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2008**

ATHLETICS Southland is about to receive a major funding boost that could lift its performance to a world-class level. That's the feeling from Athletics Southland sport manager Lance Smith following news his organisation would receive \$69,500 in funding from the ILT Foundation and the Invercargill Licensing Trust.

The ILT Foundation has confirmed a grant of \$54,500, with the ILT providing an additional \$15,000.

Smith said the funding handout would allow Athletics Southland to invest heavily in the vital area of coaching and coach development. He believed it was essential that Athletics Southland's coaching base was increased to match the emergence of so many gifted young stars. "Absolutely," Smith stressed. "Where there is a good coach, or where there is a good coaching base, there is a strong centre of athletics. So we've got to increase the number of coaches here but we've also got to upskill the coaches we have. If we've got international, and I really mean international-class young athletes, then we've got to have international-class coaches. Unfortunately, we don't have those sorts of coaches coming through to the same degree that the kids are coming through. But this funding will help address that."

ILT president Alan Dennis said Athletics Southland had been one of the province's quiet sporting achievers for some time and deserved extra support. "They've regularly produced top performances and I'm sure our increased funding assistance will lift everything to a whole new level, from coach development, to athlete performance and participation numbers."

Smith admitted that Southland had "raw potential everywhere" among in its young athletes and that one of his organisation's long-term aims was to have an indoor training facility to develop that talent even more. He also said some of the funding money would be invested into Athletics Southland's successful high performance development squad for its elite 12 to 19-year-olds.

This year, a record 12 members of that squad would represent New Zealand at various international age-group events.

"We've never had that many make New Zealand teams before," Smith said.

"This has been brought about by the support that the ILT and the ILT Foundation has given to the development squad and to Athletics Southland over the past few years.

"Every year, we've just got a little bit better. So this extra funding will make an even bigger difference."

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**