



# Delegates on track to protect children

DELEGATES from Dubbo were among those who attended a child protection workshop this week designed to keep kids involved in Little Athletics safe.

Cameron Porteous and Peter Bass from Dubbo Little Athletics attended the NSW Supporting Hands workshop in Cessnock, a joint initiative run by Bravehearts and Little Athletics NSW.

Developed by a team of police, criminologists, psychologists and education professionals, it was rolled out at the Little Athletics NSW state conference to provide education and training to Little Athletics NSW staff, board members and volunteers.

The initiative aimed to address myths surrounding child sexual assault and misconceptions about offenders. The workshop looked at child sexual assault facts and figures and taught those who worked with children how to deal with disclosures or reporting concerns.

More than 180 volunteers from across NSW attended the workshop with thousands more set to benefit when representatives took back their knowledge to share with coaches, volunteers and the wider community.

Little Athletics NSW CEO Kerry O'Keefe said the safety of children in Little Athletics was paramount.

"The training provided to our team was invaluable and it provided each of our staff members and volunteers the information and skills to enable them to be better equipped to mentor and protect our kids," she said.

"They will now go home and share this information with their own centres, which is fantastic."

Bravehearts Founder and CEO Hetty Johnston said the program

was the culmination of 16 years of evidence-based research working directly with survivors of child sexual assault and learning from their experiences.

"Every organisation that works with children has a duty of care and responsibility to protect them," she said.

"Supporting Hands provides general information on child sexual assault, addresses risk factors and how to avoid them, what predatory behaviour looks like, how to respond to disclosures, how to identify indicators of harm in children and much more."