

Taking our ideas to Singapore

Nelson Coach Nige Burgess got exposure to a whole new world of Special Olympics, when he accompanied Graeme Porter to his first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Athlete Input Council in Singapore earlier this year.

The meeting was held alongside the Special Olympics Asia-Pacific Conference and was an opportunity for the nine athletes on the Committee to provide their ideas and feedback about the direction of Special Olympics.

Graeme's mentor Alex McManus was unable to accompany him, so powerlifting coach Nigel stepped up to the plate.

"It was a pretty awesome and inspiring experience," Nigel says. "I'll have to admit I was slightly underprepared! But once I got past that it was really great to be part of the international movement and hear more about everything that is happening with Special Olympics all over the world."

As part of the conference the Athlete Input Council, as well as the Youth Input Council had to present back to all of the delegates, who included CEOs, General Managers, Coaches and volunteers from other Special Olympics countries in the region. The conference also included a celebration of the 50-year anniversary of Special Olympics and the plans for the year plus celebrations and a sharing of ideas from each country.

"It is a really exciting time to be part of Special Olympics," Nige says. "The future heading forward is to have much more athlete and youth involvement, not just at a sporting level but in the overall direction. It's all about what we are doing with the athletes, rather than for the athletes, which is great to see. Unified Sports will also play a big part in the future."

Nige has been a volunteer powerlifting Coach with Special Olympics since 2001. He joined just prior to the National Summer Games so was thrown in the deep end slightly! He's been to every National Summer Games since and was also part of the New Zealand delegation to the 2003 (Ireland) and 2011 (Greece) World Summer Games events.

"It's quite rewarding working with the Special Olympics athletes, and challenging as well as they all require some unique coaching. I love watching their accomplishments and enjoy the sense of humour our athletes have – it's great fun."