

MCMAHON MAKES LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

Earlier this month 18-year-old weightlifter Aydan McMahon took the big decision to quit year 12 high school.

He didn't take the decision lightly, and he admits his hand was forced a little by the school itself.

Because he lives in rural NSW he is forced to spend long periods of time in Sydney training and getting coaching.

"It took a big toll on my schoolwork, and started showing up in my test results," McMahon said.

"Because it's HSC this year I wasn't doing my school any favours. I'm not that academic, so my parents were supportive.

"And now I'm working at my dad's gym, so I'll see how that works out."

Schoolwork has been the farthest thing on his mind recently, as he prepares for next months Junior World Weightlifting Championships in Poland.

McMahon has struggled with nerves at major competitions The first national competition I went to was in New Caledonia, and I was a wreck.

"The stress killed me," he said.

"But I learnt from that, and was able to apply what I learnt when I went to China (for last year's Youth Olympics). I didn't lift that well there, but I did better than I did in New Caledonia, and that's what I'm looking for."

Part of the process is being realistic about what he might achieve in a major competition.

"I know straight up I'm not going to win," he said.

"I'm not going to win World Championships. You look at the numbers they're pulling, and the numbers I'm pulling, it's completely different.

"I'm not going to win a gold medal, I know that. I'm going to be pushing to beat my own personal best. So I'm competing against myself basically, and I want to represent my country and do my country proud.

"I just don't want to embarrass myself and drop the bar on my head."

McMahon's long term goal is to represent Australia at the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics.

And while many would see quitting school as a drastic step, McMahon has done his homework.

Long term he wants to do physiotherapy.

"I've contacted lots of universities to make sure I haven't blown my chances of studying it down the track," he said.

"And they all assured me the door would still be open. So in the short term, I think this is what I need to do.

"Every part of my life revolves around this."