

2021 President's Report

No-one could have foreseen the dramatic turn of events that unfolded in 2020 with the Coronavirus pandemic and the continuing impact on squash in the Region. Strict border controls have been in place since early 2020 in the South Pacific region with limited travel between the OSF member nations, and most effectively closed down. This has put a great strain on the economy of all Member Nations, but in particular the smaller islands who depend on tourism for their survival.

Uncertainty around international travel has again forced the cancellation of several 2021 international events planned within the Region. All Oceania Championships were cancelled along with the Men's World Team Championship, that was to be held in New Zealand in December, but was moved to Malaysia.

The announcement of the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane has reinvigorated sport across the Region and presents a great opportunity for squash to potentially launch a bid to be included in the games while looking at new initiatives to grow the sport over the coming years.

Our larger member countries, Australia & New Zealand, have been able to navigate their way through the challenges presented by the pandemic. On occasions squash centres have been closed and competitions cancelled whilst dealing with outbreaks and lockdowns, having a significant impact on local communities and the sport generally. Through strong communication and marketing programs they have been able to maintain a level of squash activity that has kept the enthusiasts engaged. Both countries have appointed new CEO's in the past 12 months, bringing a fresh approach and new initiatives to reinvigorate the sport.

Several of our smaller island nations have been extremely lucky to remain Covid free, but others have been greatly affected which has had a major impact on our participation in those nations.

A positive outcome of the pandemic travel restrictions was the introduction of the Federation's first electronic AGM last year. With travel costs increasing over the years several Member Countries struggled to have physical representation at our AGM's and it had been some time since all Members were present. However, at the 2020 'Zoom' AGM all Member Countries were represented giving them the opportunity to network and have input into the Federation's future planning.

During 2020 an extensive review of OSF's Constitution was undertaken, with considerable input by Member Countries. The new Constitution was unanimously adopted at the 2020 AGM.

Thankfully the pandemic situation is beginning to improve in the region as vaccination rates increase and it looks promising that borders may re-open sometime early in 2022. It is hoped that travel restrictions will ease over the coming months so that events planned during 2022 will eventuate. These include the Oceania Doubles Championships, as a lead in to the upcoming Commonwealth Games, scheduled in Australia; and the Oceania Junior Championships scheduled to be held in New Zealand.

The Federation is committed to supporting our Member Countries, helping them to grow our game and showcase squash as a vibrant and exciting sport in the Region. We are grateful for the support and encouragement we receive from our member nations. We look forward to a much brighter 2022.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim O'Grady".

Jim O'Grady
President, Oceania Squash Federation