



September 2021

Oceania Squash Federation Report to WSF

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 Oceania Region. Strict border controls have been in effect since early 2020 in the South Pacific with only minimal travel between Australia and New Zealand, and most other island nations 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 the tourist trade to survive.

Uncertainty of international travel has again forced the cancellation of several international events planned within the Region in 2021. Our Oceania Championships (Junior, Masters, Open and Closed) have been cancelled along with the rescheduling of the Men's World Team Championships that was to be held in New Zealand in December.

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 which are 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 Chief Executive Officers in the past twelve 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.

The Cook Islands have been fortunate to evade the pandemic as their borders have been closed now for some 17 months allowing only essential workers and government officers access. People have gravitated to sport in their free time and squash attracted an influx of interest from new players and returning players. Their squash numbers are the best in over 8 years and they are super excited to see people on the courts again.

Fiji has put in an enormous effort to raise the profile of squash in their country, even with several lockdowns implemented. They have introduced several new tournaments which were a big success, especially their first ever standalone Women's Open which attracted over 50 entries. The introduction of Business House Leagues has also been popular and bolstered player numbers. The consequence of this has been the calling of tenders to

construct new glass back courts to double the capacity of the Nadi facility - a perfect venue for an international tournament when borders re-open.

New Caledonia squash, and sport in general, had been relatively unaffected by the pandemic until just recently. They have been able to play squash, socially and competitively, throughout except from a couple of short periods of lockdown.

Papua New Guinea has suffered quite dramatically from the pandemic and squash has been in limbo since March 2020. Port Moresby, which has the largest squash population, has not been able to access facilities until just recently. This has meant all competitions and development programs came to a halt. Over the past couple of months squash activities have resumed in several communities but with the prolonged shutdown of the sport the decline in player numbers has been very significant. The PNG Squash Executive is currently working towards a 5-year strategic plan to lift the profile of squash to make it more economically viable and attract junior players back into the sport.

Samoa have been relatively unscathed by the pandemic and has been fortunate to be able to continue as normal throughout the year, but Tahiti have suffered with continual lockdowns and exclusion from their facilities for great lengths of time.

A positive outcome of the pandemic travel restrictions was the introduction of the Oceania Squash Federation's first electronic AGM. 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 last year's 'Zoom' AGM held in December 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 the OSF Constitution was undertaken, with considerable input by Member Countries throughout the process. The new Constitution was unanimously adopted at the 2020 AGM.

Thankfully the pandemic situation is beginning to improve in the Region. With the recent push to increase the level of vaccinations it looks promising that borders may re-open in the Region sometime 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 Oceania Squash Federation is committed to supporting our Member Countries to grow our sport 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 and we look forward to a much brighter 2022.



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President
Oceania Squash Federation