



Continental Vice-President's Report to WSF 2023: Oceania Squash Federation.

Over the past twelve months our Member Countries have continued their rebuilding of programs after the Covid pandemic. As squash in most of the smaller Member Countries is a club-based activity it has been a struggle for some to get back to pre-Covid numbers with the focus being on caring for family and getting themselves back to 'normal.'

With travel restrictions eased and borders reopened there has been an increase in events across our Region, attracting both local and international participants.

The Oceania Junior Championships, held in Sydney, Australia, in December 2022 was the first of our official events held since the lifting of travel restrictions. The event, offering Under 11 to Under 19 age groups attracted 160+ players from 10 countries, with 6 of our 9 Member Countries represented. Both Australia and New Zealand held very successful major national and international events in the later part of 2022 and in 2023 which is very encouraging and a positive sign for squash in the region.

The Oceania Open was a highly successful event held in New Zealand in May 2023 in conjunction with the Auckland Open. The event attracted 180+ players from six countries, over 16 divisions. The Oceania Closed Championships will be held in Fiji in early October 2023 incorporating team and individual events for both male and female players. Preparations are well in hand and Member Countries have implemented training programs and selection trials for their teams.

The 2023 Oceania Junior Championships will be held in New Zealand in December 2023 as part of New Zealand's Squash Festival. It is anticipated that most of the Member Countries will be sending players to compete.

The following is a brief overview of our Member Countries:

The **Cook Islands** are steadily growing player numbers and holding regular business competitions to attract new players. They have an enthusiastic committee working hard to grow squash, but it is a challenge on limited resources.

Norfolk Island has had a great revival of their programmes and are regularly holding competitions for their members and trying to encourage more. Their junior program had a great boost with the supply of Squash Australia Oz Squash Kits and new players going to live on the island.

Fiji is continually active, holding numerous local tournaments throughout the year and continuing with the Business Competitions in Suva. As hosts of the upcoming Oceania Championships, they are looking forward to highlighting their country and great competition over the tournament.



New Caledonia continues to hold regular local and international tournaments and events. Local player, Brice Nicolas, has continued his progress through the squash ranks and they have several promising juniors looking to emulate him. There is concern that Padel Tennis is growing swiftly in their country and several tennis venues have installed new Padel courts.

Papua New Guinea has had little domestic competition over the last 2 years and no overseas travel having a negative effect on Junior development, which prior to COVID was very strong. 2022 saw a positive resurgence with the best ever PNG squash results at Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and at the World Squash Juniors in Nancy, France. Junior development is going strong in Port Moresby, making effective use of the Oz Squash kits received in 2022, with an average of 20 juniors attending weekly junior coaching at elite, intermediate and beginner. PNG was well represented at the 2022 Oceania Juniors and looking forward to the 2023 Oceania Juniors in New Zealand. 2023's focus is a corporate sponsored Elite Girls Squad towards the 2027 Tahiti Pacific Games. Two elite players (previously juniors) will attend the Oceania Closed in Fiji which will improve rankings for future Team PNG representation and the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Samoa has re-established their regular tournaments and trying to attract more junior players to the sport. Competition with other sports is exceedingly difficult and the search for a local based coach is ongoing.

Tahiti continues to make substantial progress under the direction of a French coach who has been living in the country for two years now. They are looking to send players to New Zealand in December to compete in the Oceania Juniors and the World Team Event. The first time Tahiti has competed in a WSF event since it took up full membership several years ago. Tahiti are still greatly confident that squash will be included in the 2027 Pacific Games and working hard towards that goal.

Australia and New Zealand continue to lead the region and have had significant increase in competitions and tournaments over the past 12 months. These two countries are self-sufficient and rather than need Oceania's resources, very happily provide support and resources to OSF and the smaller Member Countries across the Region. This is very much appreciated by Oceania and the Member Countries.

Communication continues to be a major issue. With the vast distances between countries and travel expenses communication is primarily by email with e-meetings included as required. Face-to-face meetings are rare so the upcoming Oceania Championships in Fiji will give us a wonderful opportunity to meet with representatives of Member Countries participating and source vital information that sometimes is not forthcoming.

The Oceania Squash Federation is committed to supporting our Member Countries to grow our sport and showcase squash as a vibrant and exciting recreational activity in the region. We are grateful for the support and encouragement we receive from our members and from the World Squash Federation and we look forward to a positive and rewarding year ahead.

Jim O'Grady

President
Oceania Squash Federation