



Report

Always moving forward



ICF Congress, Pattaya, Thailand

3-5 November 2022

Oceania Canoe Association

NAME: Maree Burnett and Danielle Woodward

ICF Position: Oceania President and Secretary General

1. Major Meetings since last Congress

- Oceania Canoe Association Board meeting – via Zoom.
- Oceania Canoe Association Congress – via Zoom.
- Meeting with the Chief Executive of the Pacific Games Council and key personnel from the local organising committee for the 2023 Pacific Games – via Zoom.
- Pacific Games Canoeing/Va'a event organising committee meetings – via Zoom.
- Oceania National Olympic Committee General Assembly and personal meetings with various NOC Presidents/staff – Nadi, Fiji.
- Olympic Sports Federation of Oceania General Assembly and strategic planning forum – Nadi, Fiji.
- Olympic Sports Federation of Oceania High Performance Sub-Committee meetings – Nadi, Fiji and via Zoom.
- Attendance at various ICF meetings and associated events – ICF Board of Directors, ICF Executive Committee, Fit for Future working groups, Secretary General recruitment panel, etc.

2. Tasks undertaken for this period

- Establishment of relationship with the Solomon Islands Outrigger and Canoe Federation. Their application for membership to the ICF is pending to be ratified at this congress.
- Establishment of joint OCA/International Va'a Federation (IVF) committee to organise the canoeing/Va'a events in the 2023 Pacific Games; and deliver collaborative development support for the Solomon Islands Outrigger and Canoe Federation in preparation for the event and to foster legacy outcomes post-event.
- Ongoing liaison with the Pacific Games Council and local organising committees on the successful inclusion of canoe sprint in the Pacific Games program in the Solomon Islands in 2023 and Tahiti in 2027.
- Preparation and delivery of the OCA Congress.
- 2023 Oceania Championships calendar established and hosts for the 2024 Oceania continental Olympic qualification events allocated.
- Review of the current status of development in the region and development program/budget created for post-Covid restrictions implementation.
- Continued support for the Oceania canoe slalom development program hosted by Canoe Slalom NZ at WERO (Auckland, New Zealand).
- Continued targeted support for identified athletes from Cook Islands and Samoa aiming to qualify for Paris 2024.
- Engagement with the Northern Mariana Islands regarding possible future membership application to the ICF and OCA.
- Ongoing liaison and networking with the Olympic Sports Federation of Oceania and Oceania National Olympic Committee including attending and reporting to their congresses.

3. Issues and Main Points of Report

COVID-19 caused many Oceania nations to close their borders early in 2020 which has significantly curtailed OCA's competition and development program for the past two years. Travel between Australia and New Zealand was almost nonexistent until the second quarter of this year, when significant relaxation of border restrictions occurred. Travel from and between Pacific Island nations generally took longer to be re-established. These restrictions have significantly impacted the ability of many Oceania athletes to participate in continental and world championship events since 2020. Despite these challenges, OCA has continued to progress the development of canoeing in the region with a particular focus on the regional games and strengthening relationships with NOC and continental organisation partners.

CONTINENTAL COMPETITION

Oceania holds continental championships each year for the Olympic canoeing disciplines of canoe sprint and canoe slalom. Non-Olympic discipline championships are typically held biennially (in odd years). The Covid-related uncertainty and changing policies of governments' have made event organisation enormously challenging. During 2022 we were able to host the following Oceania Championships, however both of these events had limited participation from Oceania athletes outside the host nation due to border closures preventing easy travel within the continent. The 2022 Oceania Canoe Slalom Championships (January) were held in Penrith, New South Wales, Australia. Similarly, the 2022 Oceania Canoe Sprint Championships were hosted by Australia at the Sydney International Regatta Centre in April.

We are excited by the prospect of delivering a full program of continental championships during 2023 with hosts and dates already confirmed for canoe slalom, canoe sprint, canoe marathon, SUP, and canoe polo.

DEVELOPMENT

Canoe Slalom Continental Training Program



The Oceania Canoe Slalom Continental Training Program continues to be based at the WERO white-water facility in Auckland, New Zealand, where Canoe Slalom New Zealand provide coaching support for a development program targeting local Pacific Island communities. Importantly, this program provides opportunities from recruitment of new paddlers through to support for current elite athletes.

As with OCA's other programs, this initiative was significantly impacted by the New Zealand Government's Covid restrictions during 2020 and 2021, but has been able to resume during 2022.

Paracanoe

OCA encourages all members to identify potential athletes with a disability who are interested in participating in Kayak or Va'a sprint events, and we can provide support with athlete/coach support where needed. Currently successful paracanoe programs are run in Australia, New Zealand, and Tahiti.



National Federation Activity

Fostering local programs in our island nations is an important priority for the Oceania development program. National federations are invited to request support for equipment donations, as well as athlete, coach, and officials' development. OCA meets these requests as funding allows. During 2022 we have been limited to providing support for targeted athletes on the pathway to qualify for Paris 2024 and we have secured a commitment from the ICF development program to supply an equipment donation to the Solomon Islands. In early 2023, we expect to resume running local coach/official/athlete development courses.

PACIFIC GAMES

We are delighted to have kayak on the program of the Pacific Games for the first time in 2023 in the Solomon Islands. As the kayaking program will be delivered in conjunction with the Va'a events, we will be working in close collaboration with our friends at the International Va'a Federation to ensure a successful event. Our intention is to design a program that encourages athletes to "double up" across Va'a and kayak sprint and distance events.

Event planning is underway with the local organisers, and development plans are in place and budget allocated to work with the local national federation in advance of the Games.

Inclusion in this regional multi-sport event is strategically important for OCA. Pacific Games success is a key objective for most Oceania NOCs, so we hope to leverage the inclusion of canoeing in the program to drive more effective development across the region. Engagement with the government of Tahiti via the Tahitian National Federation is also beginning as we look ahead to the 2027 edition of the Pacific Games. We hope to see the inclusion of paracanoe events in 2027.

GLOBAL EVENTS IN OCEANIA

At the March 2020 International Canoe Federation (ICF) Board of Directors meeting in Barcelona, Spain, New Zealand successfully bid for the 2022 Ocean Racing World Championships. Regrettably the hosting rights for this event were returned due to uncertainty around COVID restrictions. This followed the loss of the 2021 Junior & U23 Canoe Slalom World Championships which were scheduled to be held in Auckland, New Zealand. Fortunately, Oceania can look forward to the Ocean Racing World Championships being held in Mandurah, Western Australia in late 2023.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SUCCESS

Despite limited opportunity for Oceania nations to compete at world cups and world championships during 2020 and 2021, our athletes have performed on the world stage with great credit across multiple disciplines this year. Performances of significance at 2022 World Championships have included:

- Jessica Fox (AUS), World Champion extreme slalom
- Mark Crosbie (AUS), World Champion U18 MC1 canoe slalom
- Lisa Carrington (NZL), World Champion K1 200 and K1 500 canoe sprint
- Jackson Collins & Aly Bull (AUS), World Champions Mixed K2 500 canoe sprint
- Aly Bull (AUS), World Champion WK1 1000 canoe sprint
- Ben Sainsbury (AUS), World Champion MVL1 200 paracanoe
- NZL U21 Women's Canoe Polo Team, World Champions
- Michael Booth (AUS), World Champion long distance SUP
- Jemma Smith (AUS), World Champion open women's ocean racing

It has also been pleasing to see Oceania officials represented at world championship level across a range of disciplines during 2022.

MEMBERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The OCA's 8th Congress was held via Zoom in April of this year. The meeting provided an opportunity for Oceania national federations to reconnect, discuss the challenges faced due to Covid restrictions, and consider opportunities for collaborative development and regional competition as these restrictions ease going forward.

The Congress elected Maree Burnett (NZL) and Danielle Woodward (AUS) for a further term as President and Secretary General respectively. The OCA board members remain as Sue Natoli (AUS), Ron Rolleston (COK), Phillippe Le Poul (NCL), and Matt Warren (NZL). In most cases the OCA board members are also very actively involved in the delivery of canoeing programs in their own nations. We gratefully acknowledge the significant role they play in progressing canoeing locally and regionally, and thank them for their ongoing support of OCA.

As in previous reports, we again acknowledge the continued support OCA receives from the ICF executive and board, Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC), and Olympic Solidarity. The strategic support and financial assistance offered by these organisations directly to OCA, to our national federations, and direct to athletes, is foundational.

While the last three years have proven to be challenging years for all, OCA recognises the continued engagement and collaboration from our national federations and their national Olympic committees. We are grateful for the resilience and continued enthusiasm of our athletes, officials, and administrators across the Oceania Region despite the challenges. As we now begin to see borders opening between Oceania nations, we can be hopeful that meaningful development of canoeing in the Oceania Region can continue.

4. Future Initiatives and Tasks

- Delivery of the 2023 Pacific Games canoeing programme.
- Overseeing the delivery of the 2023 Oceania Championships calendar and begin planning for the continental Olympic Qualification events to be held in early 2024.
- Delivery of the Oceania Continental Development Programme including:
 - coaching, officials, athlete development, and equipment support for new federations;
 - support for identified athletes from developing nations on a pathway to qualify for Paris 2024; and
 - continued support for the regional canoe slalom training centre.
- Supporting the organisation and participating in the 3rd World Paracanoe Conference to be held in Tahiti during late 2023.