

Quick facts

- Fifteen Pacific countries sent teams to the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, but Paea Wolfgramm from Tonga was the only Pacific Islander to win a medal - a silver in the men's super-heavyweight boxing.
- A delegation of approximately 170 athletes, coaches, administrators and team managers from the Pacific have attended each of the last two Olympic Games, and although no medals were won, three athletes were rated in the top eight of their sport.
- There are high hopes for the future success of Pacific Island athletes. Papua New Guinea is currently developing champion swimmers; Samoa and Tonga are training some strong throwers; Nauru has a Commonwealth Games medallist for weightlifting; and Vanuatu is ranked in the world's top 10 for its women's beach volleyball, as well as having unprecedented success in table tennis.
- The promotion of sport and exercise is increasingly important as some parts of the Pacific, such as Nauru and Tonga, have high levels of diabetes².
- Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) will play a key role in achieving this goal with a new tailor-made course for coaches and sports administrators delivered in partnership with Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC). The ONOC Community Educators course is being delivered in Fiji and Samoa, with assessment currently being conducted in nine other Pacific countries.
- A new ONOC Master Trainer Course will be delivered in 2014 to ensure selected ONOC and other trainers are fully equipped to deliver the Community Educators course and to develop an ongoing cycle of delivery.

² Australian Community Centre for Diabetes (ACCD) Diabetes Info, www.diabetesinfo.org.au/diabetes-epidemic



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE

IMPACT Case Study

Training for the Olympics



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Training for Olympic success

Australia-Pacific Technical College is providing valuable assistance to sports coaches and administrators to prepare athletes for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Sporting teams in the Pacific are determined to win medals at future Olympic Games, and the Rio de Janeiro games in 2016 are no exception.

Central to achieving this goal is ensuring that professional standards of coaching, sports management and administration are in place to support athletes competing at the highest international levels.

Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) will play a key role in achieving this goal with a tailored course for coaches and sports administrators delivered in partnership with Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC).

The ONOC Community Educators course is being delivered in Fiji and Samoa, with assessments being conducted in nine other Pacific countries.

“With this training we aim to have better managed National Olympic Committees (NOCs) who can deliver on their objectives with better managed teams, better run events and hopefully get better results in the long run at the highest level,” says Dennis Miller, ONOC Executive Director.

“If you look at the statistics for the last four Olympics the majority of our results are in the lowest percentile and the reasons for this are poor sports management, training and structures, despite the efforts of keen volunteers.”

Fifteen Pacific countries sent teams to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, but Paea Wolfgramm from Tonga was the only Pacific Islander to win a medal - a silver in men's super-heavyweight boxing. There was a close call at the 2008 Beijing Olympics when Samoan female weightlifter Ele Opeloge was just 1 kilogram off lifting a medal-winning weight, finishing fourth.

However, there are high hopes for the future success of Pacific Island athletes. Papua New Guinea is currently developing champion swimmers; Samoa and Tonga are training some strong throwers; Nauru has a Commonwealth Games medallist for weightlifting; and Vanuatu is ranked in the world's top 10 for its women's beach volleyball team, as well as having unprecedented success in table tennis.

Sainimili Talatoka, who coordinates the Oceania Sport Education Program (OSEP)¹ at ONOC, has worked with APTC over the past year to develop the new course in the 15 ONOC member countries.

“In the past we relied on people external to the country, but this program is building the capacity in-country, and not just coaches, but also administrators and athletes, so there is a balance.”

The course teaches important skills including how to establish a sporting club, organise elections, chair meetings, keep records, organise competitions, seek funding, plan and review training sessions, fitness, safety, nutrition and managing athletes' injuries and wellbeing.

Bridget Gray, the Coordinator of the APTC Centre for Professional Development in Fiji, sees the course as not only a productive partnership between APTC and ONOC, but also a genuine Pacific-wide collaboration.

“Part of the reason APTC has connected well with ONOC is that the goals of both organisations are similar; both organisations seek to develop the potential of Pacific Islanders and improve workforce opportunities,” says Bridget.

According to Bridget, this training is also important because while most sporting bodies in the Pacific are run by enthusiastic, volunteers, they are often untrained and that there is a need for “proper financial management and accountability”.

Maciu Koroitamana, one of the first to become an accredited ONOC Community Educator, believes that the course will also help improve athlete performance at an elite level.

“For us to come to that higher level of sports development we first need to fill the gap of more qualified sports administrators and coaches. With this program we have the first steps,” Maciu says.

In line with the work carried out by the ONOC Community Educator, graduates deliver training to others, a new ONOC Master Trainer course will be introduced in 2014. It aims to ensure selected ONOC and other trainers can deliver quality training to local coaches and sports administrators across the member countries.

With this capacity to ‘train the trainers’, ONOC will also be able to continue the program independently for many years to come.

And although there is “a lot of work to be done” to develop professional sport in the Pacific, this new training ensures that athletes will be “able to perform on the day”, according to Maciu.

“It's not just at the Olympics that matter. It is everyday leading up to the Olympics and that means sports administrators knowing their job and doing it right.”

¹ The Oceania Sport Education Program (OSEP) program is a partnership between the Australian Sport Commission (ASC), Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) and the Organisations of Sport Federations in Oceania (OSFO). It offers sport administration and generic coaching training materials and is expected to expand to other sport education areas like sport science and medicine, community social sport coaching, team manager and sport management and governance.



ONOC Community Educator, Maciu and aspiring Olympian Tailah Ah Yuk



Maciu coaches Tailah in Suva



Dennis Miller, ONOC Executive with Sainimili Talatoka

The benefits of onsite assessment

A significant aspect of the delivery of the APTC-ONOC Community Educator course has been the onsite assessment of students' training delivery. While the training program is delivered in Fiji and Samoa, the workplace assessments are carried out in the students' home countries. This has meant that APTC staff, including assessors from Australia, have travelled to nine different countries across the Pacific, including Kiribati, Palau and Tuvalu, to assess more than 20 students.

Bridget Gray, Coordinator of the APTC Centre for Professional Development in Fiji, says it is important to conduct the assessments professionally, objectively and in the proper workplace environment. “In the Pacific, people often know everybody in their local community and this can create challenges for our local assessors in terms of them remaining unbiased,” says Bridget. “This is one of the reasons we provide external APTC assessors from Australia so they remain objective and constructive as part of the assessment process.”

Sainimili Talatoka, who coordinates the Oceania Sport Education Program (OSEP) at ONOC, believes that intensive follow-up, including local assessments in real situations, by APTC staff is very beneficial. “It is important we get this process right as these people we are training will become our representatives in each of the countries, so we need them to be at a very high standard,” Sainimili says.

Having a dedicated professional assessor onsite is also an advantage for Community Educators as they can receive individualised coaching that is of significant benefit to their development. “Each educator has different strengths and weaknesses, so the individual feedback and coaching helps them to develop their own training style,” says Bridget.

In some of the more remote places like Tuvalu and Palau, assessors are able to dedicate more time towards the development of educators.

Coaching future champions

Sixteen year-old athlete Tailah Ah Yuk from Kadavu in Fiji knows that if she wants to compete and succeed in the Olympics, she has to have a quality coach and support staff.

Tailah is a member of the Fiji Youth Olympic Games Training Squad that is preparing for the Youth Olympics in Nanjing China this year. Tailah is hoping to be selected for the 400 and 800 metres running events in the Oceania Squad, which includes Pacific countries. “It's really huge for me because [it's] the first time I will represent Fiji if I qualify,” says Tailah.

Tailah's coach, Maciu Koroitamana, an accredited ONOC Community Educator who recently graduated from APTC, says coaching in the Pacific needs to become more professional and also focus on youth. “In Fiji we think we are naturally gifted in sports, but there is so much more that goes into it,” Maciu says. “There is a need for us to develop our grassroots and our community sports administrators and coaches to equip them with the necessary tools.” As a young athlete, Tailah already knows the importance of having a professional coach who knows about nutrition, psychology and other facets of training as “it can affect the way you participate in the event”.

“It's really important because it's the base of everything I do,” says Tailah. “The coach gives you advice on what to do and what not to do, on nutrition and diet, which are really important.”

Relying on community volunteer

Across the Pacific about 90 per cent of sports administrators and coaches are volunteers, according to ONOC estimates.

And although these volunteers are essential for the success of local sports, the reliance on the goodwill of people to dedicate their own time – often balancing other commitments such as full time work and families – makes it a challenge to increase the level of professionalism and structure needed for athletes to excel.

This has created a need for more investment in and co-ordination of sports managers. Recent progress in this area includes each Pacific National Olympic Committee now having an office and employed staff.

“If you see the countries that are moving forward in sport as an industry, you see professional people who are qualified and employed,” says Sainimili Talatoka, who coordinates the Oceania Sport Education Program (OSEP) at ONOC.

Sainimili hopes the new APTC-ONOC Community Educator course will help with professional development of community volunteers and sports professionals, local sports administrators and coaches, while also raising awareness of the importance of structure and management in sport to government and officials.

“Through this training we want to demonstrate to the people with the resources that there is a need to be more strategic if we want success in sport,” Sainimili says.

“We need to better coordinate our national activities with in-country partners through strategic planning, investment in quality control of our sport training and development initiatives and consider employing competent people to deliver professional [sports] programs.”

This is already happening in Papua New Guinea where there has been an increase in the number of professional sportspeople.

Sainimili also believes that being more strategic, rather than having “a lot of piecemeal approaches”, will help to better utilise the already stretched resources available to local sporting bodies.