



PACIFIC PATHWAY TO BRISBANE GAMES 2024-2032



UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Executive Summary

Australia has a comparative global advantage in high performance sport knowledge/expertise and sports facilities. The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Brisbane 2032) have the power to leverage this to bring together all of Oceania through shared values, and meaningful partnerships. This will leave an enduring legacy of successful systems to inspire multiple generations of successful athletes and citizens of the region.

Goals

To achieve these diplomatic outcomes, the purpose of this DFAT initiative was to produce a [\[proposed plan for a\] Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032](#) using a sustainable and phased approach, which is culturally sensitive and highly actionable. The primary goal is to maximize the representation of Pacific athletes—across women, men, and para-athletes – at Brisbane 2032, while also establishing enduring systems that support elite athletic development and success in the Pacific region.

Consultations

To achieve this goal, consultations were conducted directly with 167 stakeholders from Pacific National Olympic Committees (NOCs), National Federations (NFs) and Oceania federations as well as Australian governing bodies (e.g., Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), Commonwealth Games Australia (CGA), Australian Sports Commission (ASC), Paralympic Australia (PA)) and international organisations (e.g., Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC)).

Strengths and challenges

Many strengths were identified throughout the extensive consultations such as:

- ✓ Significant, international achievement (e.g., medals) despite limited and fragmented resources
- ✓ A passion for, and support and desire to use, sport to share culture and stories of success
- ✓ Devotion to community engagement, and in some locations, an impressive physical sporting infrastructure
- ✓ Strong desire for sustained engagement with Australia.

Six main challenges were identified through the consultations:

- ✓ Complexity, cost, and constraints of the current available visas to Australia
- ✓ Lack of governance capacities
- ✓ Lack of expertise - human capacities (e.g., lack of accredited coaches, few international officials, poor access to sport scientists)
- ✓ Low quality training and competition environments
- ✓ Lack of sustained relationships with international stakeholders
- ✓ Lack of or poorly maintained infrastructure and material (such as gyms and sports facilities).

Consistently we heard that to design an effective Pacific Pathway, it must be culturally responsive.

Is Australia a desired partner to address these challenges and leverage these strengths?

Australia was identified as a preferred partner for the Pacific sport stakeholders because of its recognised sport expertise, shared values, prominent Pacific diaspora, and geographical proximity; this positions Australia strategically to use sport for soft diplomacy in the region.

Principles guiding a culturally responsive pathway

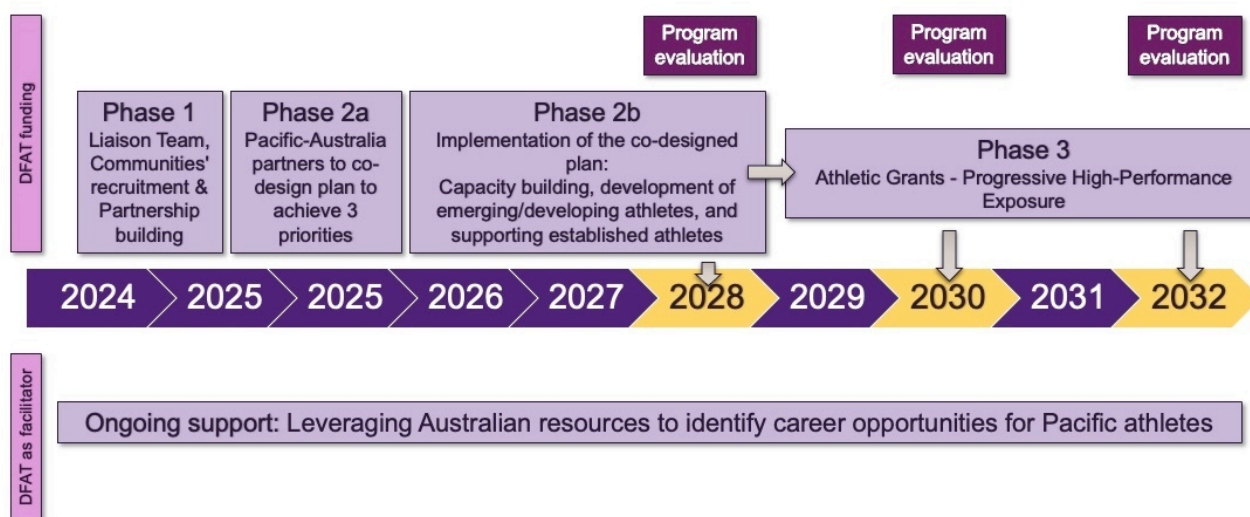
From these consultations, developmental and engagement principles have been developed to orient the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032* and guide recommendations and investments. Specifically, the strong connection of the Pacific peoples to their respective communities highlights the need for a pathway that is

oriented towards **collectivism** rather than individualism; in other words, the pathway must have a community (cultural) focus, not an exclusively individual one.

To respect Pacific stakeholders' desire for community engagement, we recommend the adoption of a **co-design approach**. Co-design is highly a participatory approach, where community members are equal partners in all phases of design. This approach has the power to leverage the many existing strengths and support high levels of self-determination in the region.

A co-design approach also requires the establishment of a **collaborative network** to facilitate relevant, meaningful, and long-term partnerships between Pacific and Australian stakeholders. Importantly, the outcomes of these partnerships cannot be reduced to medal counts in the Pacific (i.e., outcome-oriented perspective). Sport has the potential to be a difference-maker in the region (i.e., pride, social change, empowerment, economic growth). Therefore, we recommend **focussing on processes** that allow the establishment of sport systems that are **sustainable beyond 2032** to support the growth of multiple generations of successful athletes and communities. The implementation plan of the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032* presented next builds on those principles so Australia can further enhance its standing as a culturally responsive partner in the Pacific.

Implementation plan of the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032*



With the participation and legacy goals extending beyond 2032, the proposed implementation plan for the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032* includes ongoing support and three iterative phases. These phases will have benchmarks centred around the Commonwealth Games (2026 and 2030) and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane 2032), where the benefits of the recommended actions should become evident.

Phase 1 – 2024-2025 – Liaison team, communities' recruitment, and partnership building

High performance in sport does not happen accidentally, it happens by design. In the Pacific, recruiting, developing, and rewarding sport expertise is a challenge that is currently negatively impacting the likelihood of developing high-level performance. To address this challenge, we recommend the creation of relevant and meaningful partnerships between Pacific and Australian stakeholders.

Liaison Team

To support and oversee these partnerships, as well as the subsequent phases, we propose the establishment of a **Liaison Team**. This team will consist of a team lead and Liaison Team officers, with potential to leverage assistance from DFAT's existing programs including *PacificAus Sports* as well as the *Team Up* sports for

development initiatives. The members of the Liaison Team will play pivotal roles in the deployment of the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032*, acting as administration support, connecting agents, event organisers, and community high-performance managers. The Liaison Team will report to DFAT and be associated with an **advisory board**.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board should be composed of stakeholders from the Australian Olympic Committee, Paralympics Australia, Commonwealth Games Australia, Oceania National Olympic Committees, and DFAT. The role of this board will be to assist the Liaison team through the provision of advice on key decisions, such as the funding of partnership projects and selection of athletes for athletic grants.

Recruitment of sport communities

We recommend recruiting communities from across the Pacific region that are known to be already effectively supporting the development of athletes from grassroots to youth level, but that are struggling to take the next step towards high-level performance. Examples of “communities” could be at a sport level (i.e., sport federation), at a geographic (place-based) level, or an amalgamation of different organisations (e.g., new alliance). What is essential is that those “communities” be self-identified, self-organised, and in the case of new alliances or partnerships, willing to work together toward a collective goal. The communities will be invited to a Networking Event to form alliance with Australian partners.

Partnerships building through Networking Events

A call for collaboration will invite Australian sport communities to collaborate with Pacific nations, leveraging their expertise to support sport development and foster regional unity ahead of Brisbane 2032. The call will extend to various organisations and institutions, with an invitation to attend Networking Events for exploring potential collaborations.

Phase 2 - 2025-2028: Co-designed pathways towards capacities building and athletes’ development

Phase 2 is the crucial phase of the *Pacific Pathway towards Brisbane 2032* as it provides time to focus on both the systemic and developmental foundations of sports across the Pacific. Following the Networking Events, Pacific-Australian partners will co-design a plan to achieve the following priorities:

- I. Develop youth athletes by progressively exposing them to high performance environments to nurture their performance and well-being.
- II. Build internal capacities (administrators, coaches, officials, sport practitioners) through meaningful partnerships with Australian stakeholders (e.g., sport organisations, institutes, federations, clubs, individuals, and universities).
- III. Sustain established athletes to ensure continuity and diplomatic outcomes.

Once approved by DFAT, the progressive attribution of funding to implement activities will be managed by the Liaison Team, who will also provide guidance and support. These are estimates to inform projection.

Phase 3 - 2028-2032: Athletic grants – Progressive high-performance exposure and dual-career opportunities

[Selected] Athletes will be offered an athletic grant to benefit from a high-performance training environment in Australia while having the option to develop professionally. This grant presents two unique features:

- ✓ Athletes will be guided through a broad range of professionalisation options (e.g., certificate, TAFE, colleges, and universities).
- ✓ [A portion] of its value [may also be provided] to the [relevant sport] community. This feature aims at ensuring continuity in the funding allocated to the communities to sustain the development of future athletes.

The Liaison Team will support the funded athletes in addition to supervising the communities in the design and implementation of their plan.

Ongoing support - 2025-2032: Leveraging Australian resources to be ready to offer Pacific athletes dual-career opportunities.

The program will identify, but not directly fund, opportunities to support Pacific athletes' dual-career development by leveraging Australian resources. The goal of this ongoing support is to gather and coordinate resources that guide athletes in either academic or professional development, ensuring a sustainable future beyond their sports careers. Given the barriers to traditional academic pathways, the initiative will also explore vocational training through partnerships with Australian universities and TAFE institutions.

Specific Challenge

To successfully engage with the Pacific in the lead-up to Brisbane 2032, investigating possibilities for an affordable visa stream for Pacific sport stakeholders is recommended. An adapted visa tailored for sport would facilitate increased access to high-performance training camps and competitions, which are crucial for nurturing the development of Pacific athletes. Additionally, a flexible, formal arrangement that allows athletes to move between their host country and Australia would encourage Pacific sport stakeholders to forge fruitful and sustainable connections with Australia. While it is beyond the scope of this program to change Australian visa policy, it is important to be aware of the challenges it creates for Pacific stakeholders.

Evaluation

Evaluation of processes and impacts will be conducted using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including economic (cost versus benefit; broader economic impact) analysis.

Collaborations

While emphasizing the uniqueness of the collectivist, process-oriented, and co-design approach of the *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032*, we highly recommend collaborating with existing initiatives such as those developed by the Oceania National Olympic Committee and the Australian Olympic Committee. We also recommend drawing on existing resources associated with DFAT's *Team Up* and *PacificAus Sport* programs to facilitate outcomes where program priorities overlap.

Diplomatic outcomes: "A win-win scenario"

The *Pacific Pathway to Brisbane 2032* aims to action what Dr Robin Mitchell, President of the Association of National Olympic Committees, stated following the announcement of the host city for the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics: "*In many ways, a win for Australia in the Olympic Movement is a win for Oceania, especially its Small Island Developing States*". In keeping with the old adage that 'a rising tide lifts all boats', investing in sport in the Pacific region will allow the whole of Oceania to thrive.