



Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring



Terms of Reference

1. sporting bodies increasing opportunities for Indigenous participation, including opportunities for Indigenous women

Qld Oztag - The sport of Oztag in Queensland has a State Governing body. Queensland Oztag is itself an incorporated association that oversees all Oztag operations within the state of Queensland to ensure any Oztag programs implemented adheres to strict performance guidelines. If you require any more information please feel free to contact Queensland Oztag:

Phone: 1300 4 69824 (1300 4 OZTAG)
 Address: Qld Oztag, PO Box 1637, Buddina, Qld 4575
 Website: www.queenslandozttag.com.au

Figure 1 provides the structure of Qld Oztag. Contact details of Qld Oztag head office staff and their specific roles are identified in table 1 below. Each region identified in figure 1 consists of zones and each zone consists of venues. Each of the venues has a Venue Coordinator that coordinates each Oztag competition across the state. Table 2 provides the contact details for all current Venue Coordinators throughout Queensland.

Figure 1: Oztag Structure

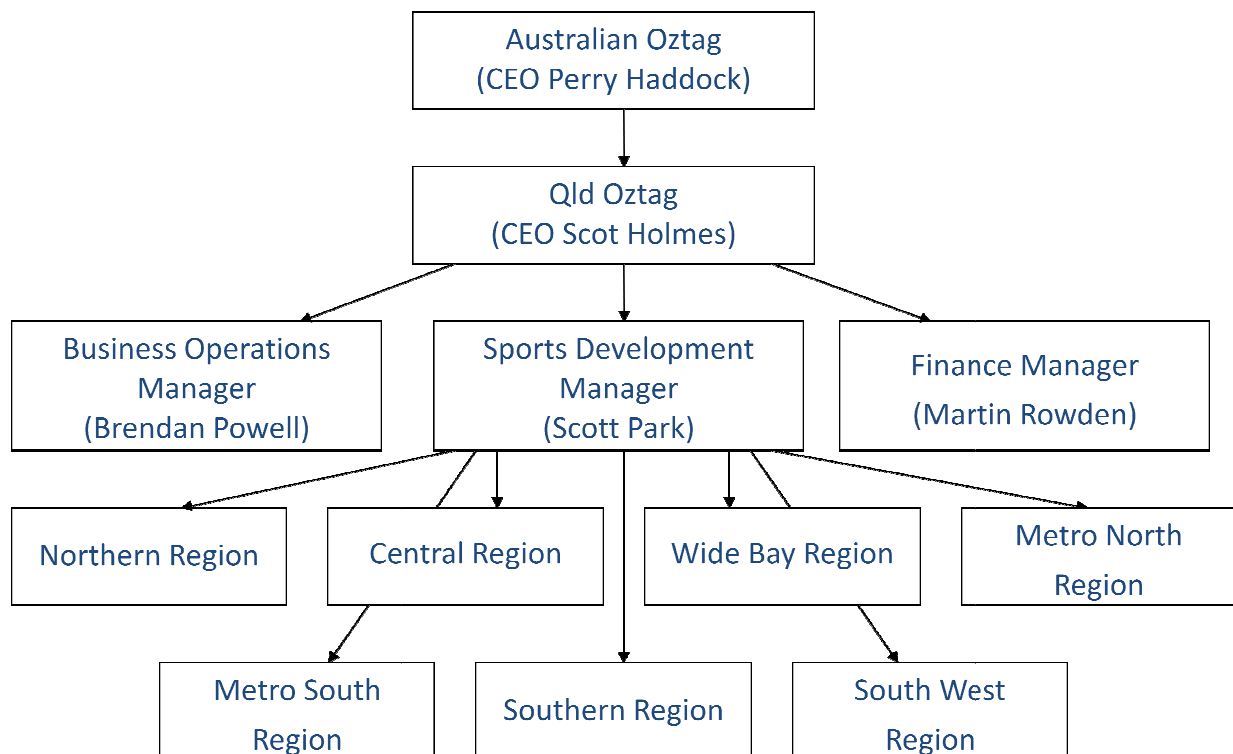


Table 1: Qld Oztag Management contact details

| Name | Role | Email | Phone |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
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| Martin Rowden | Finance Manager | accounts@oztag.com | |
| Scott Park | Sports Development Manager | scottp@oztag.com | ██████████ |
| Leigh de Jersey | Sports Development Officer | leigh@oztag.com | ██████████ |

Table 2: Qld Oztag Venue Coordinator contact details

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|-------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sue Salmon | Albany Creek | ██████████ | www.albanycreekoztag.com | albanycreek@oztag.com |
| Sue Salmon | Ashmore | ██████████ | www.ashmoreoztag.com | ashmore@oztag.com |
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| Chris Sachlikidis | Bray Park | ██████████ | www.brayparkoztag.com | braypark@oztag.com |
| Chris Sachlikidis | Caboolture | ██████████ | www.cabooltureoztag.com | caboolture@oztag.com |
| Geoff Byfield | Cairns Central | ██████████ | www.cairnscentraloztag.com | cairnscentral@oztag.com |
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|-------------------|------------------|------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Scott Park | Nambour | ██████████ | www.nambouroztag.com | nambour@oztag.com |
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2. non-government organisations utilising sport as a vehicle to improve outcomes for Indigenous people, and

Qld Oztag has written and implemented an Indigenous focused program known as the **Mooroo-Mooroo program** (program manual attached). Mooroo-Mooroo is Gubbi Gubbi (Sunshine Coast) language for “full of life” which is the philosophy this program was written and is conducted for. This free program increases health awareness and sport participation levels of the Indigenous population, ultimately to close the gap between the Indigenous Australia and the rest of society. The program offers several weeks of clinics to its participants culminating in a round robin tournament. As well as physical activity other aspects of health are also addressed including nutrition and mental health.

Additional to increasing participation in Oztag, the program empowers participants through providing job opportunities. This includes qualifying identified participants to become Oztag referees to be able to referee at local competitions and representative tournaments, and where possible the opportunity of coordinating an Oztag venue within the community is also on offer. This is done within areas that a local Oztag competition is not currently run and ensures that the effects of the program are long lasting and continue to assist/benefit the community. Therefore not only does it increase activity levels addressing physical health, but also provides training and experience in areas that allows the participants to develop life skill transferable to other areas of their life, thus addressing mental health also.



Winning opens mens team - Caboolture Mooroo-Mooroo tournament.

The primary aim of the Qld Oztag Mooroo-Mooroo Program is to develop Oztag programs within Indigenous communities as a vehicle to promote awareness in participation, health and physical well-being and with a view to be self sustaining. It provides opportunities for Indigenous children, teenagers and adults to become involved in playing, coaching, refereeing, and administration of Oztag in Qld

To realise the primary aim the following objectives are achieved:

1. Improve the health and physical well-being of Indigenous Australians by increasing the levels of sports (specifically Oztag) participation of Indigenous community members in Oztag clinics, competitions and tournaments.
2. Improve the education and employment of Indigenous Australians by training Indigenous community members in the skills of Oztag refereeing to be employed in local Oztag competitions and tournaments as referees.
3. Improve the education and employment of Indigenous Australians by training selected Indigenous community members in the skills of Oztag management to become Indigenous Development Officers, and potentially coordinate their own Oztag venue.
4. Contribute, through the development of Oztag within Indigenous communities, to social benefits for participants, referees, officials their families and communities.

The program objectives are realised by:

1. Increasing the active participation of able and disabled Indigenous Australians in sport and physical recreation activities. This is done through five primary methods:

- Through our development officers conducting clinics on Oztag skill development to Indigenous Australians (primarily youth) involved with Indigenous organisations and within Indigenous communities
 - Through the training of identified Indigenous people to provide ongoing training in the skills of Oztag to Indigenous Australians (primarily youth) involved with Indigenous organisations and within Indigenous communities
 - Through increasing participation by members of the Indigenous community in Oztag regular season competitions at their nearest venues. This is a natural progression from the clinics mentioned above. Incentives to participate will also be available (such as free/reduced fees and merchandise) and ultimately we envisage whole teams entering from with the clinic program. If the communities are too remote to participate in competition at the nearest existing venue, then we will assist and support the community to develop and manage its own Oztag competition.
 - Through increasing participation in Oztag tournaments. This is a natural progression from the regular season competitions mentioned above. Incentives to participate will also be available (such as free/reduced fees and merchandise). Tournament participation will include a dedicated Indigenous tournament in which we envisage whole teams entering from with the clinic program, and representative participation through our Mainstream tournaments hosted by Qld Oztag and AOSA.
 - Through referee participation at regular season competitions and at tournaments.
2. Encouraging and increasing community ownership and management of sport and physical recreation activities, including through skills development. This will be achieved through two primary methods:
- We approach key indigenous community organisations or community representatives to nominate people whom we will train to conduct Oztag clinics, organise teams to participate in regular season competitions and to participate in tournaments, and organise Oztag competitions (if applicable). This will be done in conjunction with the completion of a TAFE certificate at the end of which the identified people will have formal qualifications and demonstrated skills in sports management. The qualified person/s can now conduct the Oztag clinics and competitions (if applicable) without our assistance needed. We will however continue available to provide support and assistance.
 - We will train other indigenous community members to become referees, who will provide support and assistance at any community programs the people identified above conduct, but also eligible to referee at local Oztag competitions and at tournaments.
3. Encouraging drug-free participation and respect for players, officials and spectators. Any participation in Oztag must be done within the code of conduct (Policy Manual section 2). Within the code of conduct a player, spectator, parent and coach must abide by all rules of the code and are subject to penalties if they do not do so (including suspension and life bans- section 13 of Policy Manual). Contained within the code are areas that specifically address drug and alcohol free participation and respect for all involved with Oztag.

More specifically the Qld Oztag Mooroo-Mooroo Program is broken into the following aspects:

1. Healthy Lifestyles through Oztag
2. Life Skills through Oztag

Healthy Lifestyles through Oztag

This project will focus on increasing sports participation of Oztag through regular and ongoing participation by Indigenous community members in:

- Oztag clinics
- Regular season competitions
- Representative tournaments

Whilst thousands of families from mainstream society have benefited from participating in Oztag, our feedback has been that members of Indigenous communities often lack the resources and the confidence to attend mainstream local programs. We propose to engage Indigenous communities in Oztag clinics with a view to entering competition and tournaments.

The major benefits will be:

- The development of healthy lifestyle choices to achieve better health outcomes
- The fostering of self esteem, self efficacy, self responsibility and internal motivation.
- The nurturing of skills in Oztag providing a platform for lifelong involvement.
- The building of confidence and understanding to be able to assimilate into mainstream activities.

Our outcomes will be:

- Growth in the number of indigenous participants involved at Oztag activities.
- The number of Oztag venues servicing Indigenous communities will increase.
- The number of Indigenous participants involved in the coordination and development of Oztag will grow.

Life Skills through Oztag

This project will focus on strengthening Indigenous families and communities by increasing the life skills of selected community members through training community members to be:

- Oztag referees to referee at Oztag competitions and tournaments
- Qld Oztag Indigenous Development Officers to coordinate and manage Oztag activities within their communities and potentially become Venue Coordinators to manage their own venue.

Qld Oztag qualified Sports Development Officers will provide training to Indigenous community members to become qualified referees and Indigenous Development Officers. The training received will be done in conjunction with conducting Oztag clinics within the community and initiating the community Oztag program.

Once the training is received the Indigenous Development Officers will be encouraged and supported to continue the Healthy Lifestyles through Oztag program in the community in line with the three Oztag seasons each year. Ongoing assistance and communication will continue between the Indigenous Development Officers, the Sports Development Officers and Qld Oztag to ensure all needs are being met by the Indigenous Development Officers and therefore the community to ensure the Healthy Lifestyles through Oztag program continues.

3. the contribution of Indigenous sporting programs, as supplied by:

- the sporting codes
- the private and NGO sectors, and
- federal government assistance to Closing the Gap targets.

The Mooroo-Mooroo program was conducted as a pilot in Far North Queensland in mid 2011-mid 2012. The program was met with great enthusiasm and tremendous results (as indicated by the attached letters of support and newspaper clipping) and therefore following this success an additional program was also conducted in the Moreton Bay area (specifically Caboolture).

The program has been recently expanded into a 3 year program in the Far North Queensland starting in September 2012. Another program in the Moreton Bay region will also be conducted in the very near future, however it is the aim of Qld Oztag to be able to offer this program through the entire state.

To date the following statistical data can be supplied as a result of the programs being conducted thus far:

| Program | Areas/Communities the program has been conducted in | Participation Rates |
|-------------|--|---------------------|
| FNQ - pilot | Doomadgee Normanton Mornington Island Cairns Cooktown Wujal Wujal Hopevale Yarrabah | Approx 1100 |
| Moreton Bay | Caboolture | Approx 180 |

Attached are reports produced by our Development Officer that conducted the pilot program in FNQ. They provide anecdotal results and evidence on the success of the program also.

The following targets have been set for the newly started 3 year program to be conducted in Far North Queensland, and the new Moreton Bay program:

| Program | Areas/Communities the program will be conducted in | Expected Participation Rates |
|-------------|---|------------------------------|
| FNQ | Cairns South Normanton Mareeba Innisfail Bamaga | Approx 1800 |
| Moreton Bay | Caboolture Albany Creek | Approx 600 |

Additional to this information we have had a number of other success including:

- Indigenous representative teams participate at our State Cup carnival as a direct result of this program.
- Indigenous players selected to represent Qld at National Titles and State of Origin carnivals as a direct result of this program.
- Community members trained as Development Officers trained continuing Oztag programs within communities post our direct involvement.
- Referees qualified and participating within the program and outside of the program.

FNQ OZTAG REPORT FOR QLD OZTAG MOOROO-MOOROO Program

The introduction of Oztag to remote Indigenous Communities has proven to be a revelation. Each community has adopted Oztag as one of their preferred sports which is a phenomenal feat considering that main stream sports flow through the areas on an intermittent basis.

I believe Oztag's strength in the Communities is that we provide an opportunity for people to participate in a sport that can be played all year round, is appropriate for both sexes of all ages and that we establish a framework whereby the sport is administered within the community which establishes pride through local ownership.

It is important to establish a solid base within the local population as there is a large itinerant workforce within these areas. It is a bonus to have professional people overseeing the process such as police, teachers and health workers, however they come and go.

I've taken considerable time in establishing committees in Doomadgee and Normanton which is working to a degree. These consist of Indigenous locals that are established within the community. I do find however, that if I'm not regularly visiting these areas, they seem to lose momentum and competitions falter.

I'm conducting a Certificate 2 in Sport & Recreation at Yarrabah with the which is an Indigenous Community situated approximately 80 kilometres South of Cairns. 30 students (all mature aged) have registered for the program which has been an amazing response from a small population. The final outcome of this course is for the students to conduct an Oztag competition which will be conducted over a weekend (date to be decided) for Yarrabah residents.

On completion of this course Yarrabah residents will then be able to formerly register their own Oztag Competition with Queensland Oztag and conduct competitions inline with all other areas within Queensland.

Once this course is completed I will then offer other communities the same opportunity. This will assist with the permanency of Oztag within remote localities throughout Far North Queensland (FNQ).

The skills acquired by these students will enable them to organise, administer and participate in a wide variety of sport, recreational and social activities within their communities and hopefully give them the encouragement and confidence to seek advancement within Sport and Recreation and enrol in further education.

Activities conducted in Remote Areas

Normanton

Initial visit to Normanton was in November 2010. Conducted meetings with Normanton Council, Police, Stingers Rugby Leagues Club officials, ATODS, Qld Health, Schools, PCYC and others.

Conducted a Town meeting which was attended by 22 people. It was unanimously decided that an Oztag competition would commence in 2011.

Oztag games were conducted at Normanton State School and Gulf Christian College. All grades participated throughout the 3 day's.

After School Oztag was conducted with an average of 46 children participating with 75% indigenous children.

During the weekend I conducted 8 clinics for Juniors with an average participation rate of 36 children. Ages ranged from 5 years to 15 years.

Female participation was minimal initially, however after the completion of the final session, 35% of children playing were female.

A 14 year old indigenous boy (Jessie) offered to referee and excelled. He has completed his practical and knowledge exam and passed with flying colours. He is now officially the first Oztag referee to be appointed in Normanton and referee's in both the Junior and Senior Games.

Due to the longer than average wet season I didn't return to Normanton until June 2011. The PCYC were still running Oztag for their Active After School Program but a formal competition was not in place.

I arranged another Town Meeting with 18 people attending. The consensus was still to form a committee and conduct Oztag as their preferred sport. Elisha Maher (indigenous lady who works for Qld Health) was appointed as President with other people reluctantly filling executive positions.

I conducted training clinics at both schools, at the Active After Schools Centre, from 6pm to 8pm each evening and over the week end. On Sunday evening I conducted a Community barbecue which was attended by over 100 people.

Average participation of children had increased from my initial visit up to 67 children with approximately 85% indigenous children. Female participation had also increased with up to 40% during some sessions.

Adult participation had also increased with 36 playing at a mini round robin competition. 50% were indigenous with overall 30% female participation.

It was decided to advertise for both a Junior and Senior competition to commence in August. I returned to Cairns feeling very positive however problems arose.

Committee members stood down and Elisha was left to organise both Junior and Senior competitions. With her heavy workload within the community she could not find time on her own to organise the competitions. I decided to drive to Normanton from Cairns (8 hours) to assist her.

I met with Senior Sergeant Amos from the Normanton Police and we discussed the issues that prevented the competition to commence. He is a staunch supporter of Oztag and sees it as a valuable tool to assist with the social issues that are prevalent in Communities.

On this visit I conducted coaching clinics for both Juniors and Seniors, attended schools and After School programs, met with business people and support groups. I conducted a fun afternoon and played a teenager versus adult game which was conducted in great spirits. Snr Sgt Amos played which the kids thoroughly enjoyed.

An informal Junior Competition has been running for approximately 6 weeks with up to 60 children participating; 85% indigenous with 35% female.

I am travelling to Normanton on Wednesday, 23 November to set up both Junior and Senior competitions and to hopefully reignite the Committee. I hope to qualify 3 more referee's and I will also conduct coaching clinics at both schools.

I also plan to nominate an Under 14 boy's team from Normanton to compete in the Oztag Junior State Titles in 2012 and to nominate Jessie as a referee for this event.

Doomadgee

Initial visit to Doomadgee was in September 2010. I met with Community Leaders, Police, Qld Health and ATODS officials to discuss the implementation of Oztag within the Community.

This proposal was well received with all in attendance displaying their excitement and enthusiasm. I conducted a training seminar for referee's with 4 people in attendance (all indigenous).

A come and try afternoon was arranged for both Juniors and Seniors. This was well attended with 66 children under 14 years, 23 youth between 15 and 18 years and 36 adults (95% indigenous).

I returned to Doomadgee in November to find that the committee had disbanded. I set about reestablishing the committee however people were reluctant to accept any official position. I met with Sai Matainavora from the PCYC and he said that he would keep the momentum going forward. He has conducted Junior Oztag in an unofficial capacity in his After School Programs.

I met with Troy Fraser (Captain Coach of Doomadgee Dragons Rugby Leagues Club) who offered his support with establishing a competition for both Juniors and Seniors. Unfortunately, Troy was relocated to Mt Isa and the momentum subsided once more.

Due to the wet season I wasn't able to return to Doomadgee until June 2011. Sai was still running Oztag for his After school Program with an average of 65 children participating (95% indigenous). 65% male and 35% female.

The Senior competition hadn't commenced due to adults not wanting to pay to play. This is a real problem within the Communities and I am addressing this issue with Community leaders. Funding may be able to be obtained from

Century Mines as a last resort.

My last trip to Doomadgee was added to my Normanton trip (12 hour drive). Unfortunately I arrived to find that it was "Sorry Day" as a popular member of the Community had passed and it was the day of her funeral. The Community shut down at lunch time and I was unable to conduct business as usual.

The second day I was able to make contact with Sai and arrange for Junior Oztag to commence as a formal competition. The competition is conducted on Tuesday evenings with up to 60 children participating (95% indigenous). The age of the children range from 6 to 14 years with 70% male and 30% female participation.

I will be returning to Doomadgee on Monday 21 November to attempt to resurrect the Oztag committee and to hopefully set up a Senior Oztag competition.

I have arranged to meet with Qld Health and ATODS officials, Police, School Teachers, Councillors and Community Elders to try to establish a solid support base.

Doomadgee is an extremely remote Indigenous Community with very little happening. The PCYC has introduced their After School Programs and there is a splattering of other sports from time to time. My main focus is to set up Oztag so that both Juniors and Seniors of both sexes have a permanent sport to play which will lead to improving the social problems that are entrenched in these areas.

I am also hoping to nominate an Under 14 boy's team from Doomadgee to attend the Qld Junior Oztag State Titles in 2012. This would be a great achievement for this area and it would demonstrate to everyone living in Remote Areas that opportunities for self advancement are available to everyone.

Cooktown/Wujal Wujal and Hopevale

Oztag is conducted at Cooktown on Monday evenings. This competition has been running for 2 years with teams travelling from Wujal Wujal and Hopevale to participate. It is a Mixed Competition with between 4 and 6 teams participating. Indigenous player ratio is 60% with 75% male participation.

I have conducted 4 training sessions for Referee's with 6 people qualifying (2 x Indigenous Referee's).

This area has proven to be a stronghold for representative player's with 10 player's representing Far North Queensland at the Qld State Titles and 4 player's selected for Qld State of Origin Teams.

We are presently conducting a "Come and Try" competition for Juniors with up to 45 children participating, 75% Indigenous children with 80% male participation.

This is being overseen by Teneille Nuggins who is an Indigenous lady from Hopevale. We are hoping to maintain the interest and to formalise an 8 week competition for the Christmas School Holiday's.

I will be travelling to Cooktown in December for their Grandfinals (4 hour drive) and to establish a Committee to run Oztag in 2012.

I will be conducting the Far North Queensland (FNQ) Oztag Titles in Cooktown whereby teams will be selected to represent FNQ at the Qld Oztag State Titles in 2012. Teams will travel from Cairns, Yarrabah, Wujal Wujal, Hopevale and surrounding areas to compete. In Open Men's, Open Mixed, Over 30 Men's and Under 20 Men's.

Mornington Island

I flew to Mornington Island in August and conducted a meeting with Qld Health officials, ATODS, Police, PCYC, School Teachers, Men's Group representatives, Mornington Island Rugby League Club officials, Mornington Island Council Officers and Elders to discuss the implementation of Oztag on the Island.

The response was very positive with Lomas Amini from ATODS agreeing to oversee the process (Lomas is a well respected local indigenous man who has played Oztag in Cairns for a number of years).

Whilst there I conducted 8 sessions at Mornington Island State School, 2 x Active After School sessions and 2 x "Come and Try" afternoons. Each session was well attended with 95% Indigenous participation. Of this 70% were male.

I hope to return to Mornington Island prior to the wet season to establish formal competitions for both Junior and Senior player's.

Cairns.

I have run Oztag in Cairns since 1999. Oztag is conducted at West Barlow Park on Monday and Wednesday evenings. We fluctuate from 24 to 36 teams due to our transient population and recently have suffered due to the economic difficulties within our region.

Our Indigenous participation rate is 45% with 80% male. We have 6 Indigenous referee's and 3 coaches. Our first ever Lifetime member is James Gigiba (Indigenous man) due to his exceptional service to the sport as a player, referee, coach, manager and mentor.

Over the years Cairns player's have represented their Club, City, Region and State with extreme pride and performed well at all levels. Our Indigenous players have dominated the representative scene with 60% participation.

Oztag was one of 4 sports to be conducted for Naidoc Week this year. The event was attended by children from 6 years to adults of all ages. Oztag referee's officiated for 16 games during this time with over 200 people participating.

To promote Oztag in Cairns we have had stalls at the Combined Sports Sign On Day, Kick Start Cairns Trade Fair, in shopping centres and have participated at School Fete's, School Sports Competitions, Street Parades and other community events. Each time we have had a strong contingent of Indigenous participation.

Due to losing our home field and an early wet season our Junior Oztag competition has met with lower than anticipated attendance. These issues have been addressed with 2 Junior Development Officers appointed.

The Mooroo Mooroo program is underway with games being conducted on Tuesday afternoons. This is growing in popularity with a formal competition being considered for February 2012. We will also be conducting the program over the Christmas holiday's. We hope to have an 8 team mixed competition which will run for 8 weeks.

The Indigenous participation in Oztag in FNQ is very high. Oztag is now a preferred sport for the Active After School Program and is played throughout the Torres Strait and Gulf Country.


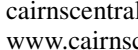
I propose to formalise competitions within each of the regions and, once a solid base is gained, introduce representative Oztag for both Junior and Senior player's.

I am also planning on introducing "All Black" competitions to the Torres Strait, Gulf Country, Mid West Regions, Cairns and the Tablelands.

Programs such as Mooroo Mooroo will assist with delivering a much needed opportunity for Indigenous people in remote areas. Oztag is a sport that can be played by both sexes on equal terms and permits positive interaction within communities on a social basis. It can also open pathways for individuals from remote areas to travel and experience life outside of their communities.

The major obstacle I endure is the cost of flying from Cairns to the remote areas. A return flight from Cairns to Doomadgee can cost over \$900.00. If I drive to Doomadgee it takes approximately 14 hours. Distance and cost is something that prevents more interaction between the communities and myself.

Kind Regards
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FNQ OZTAG
REPORT 2 FOR QLD OZTAG
MOOROO-MOOROO Program

The development of Oztag in Far North Queensland is progressing but not without issues.

The sport has been well received in all areas with participation rates on the incline. However, the major problem is that I'm finding it extremely difficult to locate individuals who have the confidence to organise and conduct official competitions.

The people who are capable of doing so are already busy with other projects in the community and do not have the time to take on other ventures; which is totally understandable.

As previously discussed I am conducting a Cert II in Sport and Recreation at Yarrabah, in conjunction with Itec Employment, with the primary focus on Oztag.

On the completion of this course students will be capable of conducting an Oztag competition from within their Community. They will form their own Committee and will be responsible for the organisation and conduct of Senior and Junior competitions. They will register their association with Qld Oztag and then comply with policies and legislation governing the sport.

On a lesser scale I would like to introduce a similar course to those communities within Far North Queensland who have shown interest in conducting Oztag. To do so would give participants the confidence and knowledge to successfully conduct competitions for Seniors and Juniors and would ensure that Oztag secured a solid base within the region.

Obviously the cost to implement this project would need to be sourced from various departments but the benefits to regional and remote areas would be well worth the effort.

Not only would these remote areas have an opportunity to play the most progressive recreational sport in the Country but also local people would obtain skills that would contribute to the betterment of themselves as individuals and to the community as a whole.

Another major hurdle that is experienced in the Far North is the cost of travel. Flights between remote areas are extraordinarily high with the cost of a return trip from Cairns to Mornington Island in the vicinity of \$932.00.

To travel by road from Cairns to Normanton takes up to 10 hours one way on a sealed surface. Many of the roads leading to remote areas are unsealed and can only be reached by 4 wheel drive. This poses a major obstacle throughout the wet season. Flights into these centres are a must.

Another problem that does arise is that some people do not expect to pay to play. We have strict guidelines within Oztag that fee's must be paid. A culture has developed whereby some people feel all sport should be free or that funding can be obtained to cover costs.

I do not have the answer for this but I stand firm that our policies and procedures must be met.

Since November Oztag within the communities has slowed down due to Christmas and the onset of the wet season. Roads are cut between towns and many of the roads are unusable.

Doomadgee has maintained playing Oztag during their Active After School program at the PCYC. All reports state that the kid's can't wait for the start of their next official competition. Attendance varies on a daily basis from 15 to 80+.

Normanton has been the stand out remote area with an Under 14 Boy's Oztag team travelling to the Sunshine Coast to play in the Queensland State Junior Titles.

This project commenced last year on one of my field trips to the Gulf Country whereby I told the kid's if they attended school, stayed out of trouble and attended training that I would nominate them for the State titles.

There attendance rate at school climbed from 35% to 75%, not one of the kid's got themselves into police trouble and they all attended training twice weekly.

They assisted with expenses by conducting raffles from goods obtained from local businesses and were rewarded by many local businesses and organisations donating funds to enable them to travel.

The boy's travelled 12 hours by bus to reach Cairns where I met up with them. They stayed overnight and we flew the next morning to Brisbane. I hired a bus and drove the boy's to our accommodation in Caloundra. We trained for 1 hour that afternoon and travelled to the competition venue for our first game at 8am.

The boy's won their first game, drew the second game and made it into the quarter finals. We were comfortably beaten in this game by a much better team but the boy's didn't give up. They represented themselves, their families and community with pride and were rewarded with 2 of the boy's gaining selection in the Queensland Under 14 Boy's team to play in Sydney later on in the year.

The boy's have now returned to Normanton proud as punch and can't wait for next year. They are all so positive and have assured me that they are going to tell all their mates how good the trip was and how they want to get the best competition going in Normanton so they can take more teams away next year.

Oztag has changed the lives of these boy's so much. We now can only hope that other kid's see what these kids have achieved by doing the right thing and follow suit.

Elton Thompson (Youth Development Officer for Carpentaria Shire Council) accompanied us on the trip and he has experienced first hand the benefits of what this sport can do for communities. He is extremely excited and is very keen to take on an Official Role to establish a permanent competition at Normanton.

The Oztag Course at Yarrabah is going well with all course members passing their referee's level one certificates. They are now conducting games at Yarrabah Primary and High Schools. This is going really well with the local kid's eager for us to commence after school competition.

It is anticipated that the Senior and Junior competition will commence in Winter so as to correspond with all other areas within the State.

The Cooktown competition, which takes in Wujal Wujal and Hopevale, will not commence until after the wet season. It is hoped that a Junior competition will commence in Cooktown for the first time in September. This will include Wujal Wujal, Hopevale and surrounding districts.

Due to the work being conducted in so many communities to date, interested people who would like Oztag to commence in their communities e.g Napranum, Lockhart River, Kowanyama, Bamaga and Saibai Island have contacted me.

To be able to facilitate programs at these communities additional funding would be needed.

Cairns Central Oztag has been asked to conduct an Oztag tournament for Naidoc Week. This will be conducted at Barlow Park and we are looking at inviting all regions within Far North Queensland to participate. It is hoped that we can conduct both a Senior and Junior Competition but the outcome will be determined by the funding and assistance obtained.

Once the wet season has passed competitions will be conducted in Doomadgee, Normanton and Cooktown for both Senior and Junior players.

A new centre will be established in Yarrabah for both Senior and Junior players with Cairns continuing its competition at West Barlow Park.

An All Black carnival has been programed for Far North Queensland and will be conducted in Cairns.

For Additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Regards
Geoff Byfield

FNQ OZTAG
REPORT 3 FOR QLD OZTAG
MOOROO-MOOROO Program

As with most areas of Queensland, FNQ Oztag suffered a slow start to 2012 due to the unusually long wet season. Many of the remote areas North of Cairns were cut by road and air due to floods and continual rain. This prevented anticipated visits to regions such as Doomadgee, Normanton and Mornington Island which have now been planned for June.

I have concentrated a lot of effort in Yarrabah which has yielded positive outcomes. The Yarrabah Yulu's Oztag Association has been established with Senior competitions conducted on Monday evenings and Juniors playing on Monday and Friday afternoons.

A committee has been established from Yarrabah residents to ensure that competitions are conducted in compliance with Qld Oztag Policy and Procedures. Eight (8) people are now certified as Level 1 Oztag referee's with a Junior Referee clinic to be conducted on Friday 25 May 2012.

The Senior competition comprises of eight teams (8) with 96 junior players attending coaching clinics. I have appointed two (2) Oztag development officers who are attending both the Primary and Secondary Schools on Tuesday and Thursday's during lunch times. The game has attracted that much interest during School hours that we have to play twelve a-side just to give each child a turn.

Yarrabah entered an Open Men's team into the Cairns competition and are due to play in the Grand final this Wednesday evening. It is testament to their commitment to the sport to travel one (1) hour each way to play a forty (40) minute sport.

Far North Queensland (FNQ) entered an Open Men's team into the Queensland Oztag State Titles with seven (7) representatives coming from Yarrabah. This team made the Quarter Finals with three (3) of the team selected for Queensland. Of these player's, two (2) were from Yarrabah.

FNQ Oztag is conducting a major Oztag competition in Cairns on 9 – 11 June 2012. This competition is a Teams Challenge with teams travelling from New South Wales to compete. Yarrabah have entered four (4) teams into the competition which is once again testament to their passion and commitment to the sport.

Once again I have been asked to conduct Oztag for Naidoc Week in Cairns. It has been suggested that fifteen (15) teams will nominate from around the Cairns Region. Oztag has definitely gained popularity in Indigenous Communities and is one of the preferred sports at these celebrations. We now compete strongly with main stream sports and are seen as a leader in providing professionally run events.

I hope to travel to Normanton, Doomadgee and Mornington Island within the next four (4) weeks so I can re-establish their competitions within their regions. I am also meeting with Normanton Shire Council to discuss a proposed Oztag All Black Carnival for the Cape Country in September.

Due to the wet season Oztag failed to commence in Cooktown during the Autumn season. I am travelling there next fortnight to meet with interested persons to re-establish their competition. Wujal Wujal and Hopevale players have indicated that they are keen to play in the competition once more.

This time there will be a concerted effort to establish a Junior Competition at Cooktown which will be conducted at Johns Oval on Monday and Friday afternoons. The fields have been booked and a Junior Development Officer appointed.

The Mooroo Mooroo funding has been a blessing for the promotion and development of Oztag in Indigenous and Regional areas of Far North Queensland. Without this funding many areas would not have experienced this wonderful sport and individuals would not have been given the opportunities that they have been presented.

This funding has contributed to well over one thousand (1000) people participating either as a player, referee, official or supporter. The benefits of this program have been enormous from player participation to community involvement. Competitions have been established for both Junior and Senior players, players have been selected to represent their communities and State at Junior and Senior levels and these remote areas have been recognised throughout Australia for their efforts on and off the field.

The major negative to providing support to the remote areas is the cost of travel. A return flight from Cairns to Mornington Island can cost \$932.00. People in the Southern regions do not understand the vastness of this Great Land and the costs associated with air travel and the distances from one Community to the next by road.

Thank you once again for providing this monetary assistance and I look forward to working with you in the future.

For additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Kind Regards
Geoff Byfield
FNQ Development Officer



cairnscentral@oztag.com

**FNQ OZTAG
REPORT 4 FOR QLD OZTAG
MOOROO-MOOROO Program**

The 3rd reporting period of this funding program saw the completion of planned activities for Oztag in Far North Queensland.

Overall, the program was very successful and achieved positive outcomes in all locations. The involvement of community members from players to interested spectators was extremely pleasing with favourable comments offered from all quarters of the population.

Children from the age of five (5) to elders in their twilight years were united on the Oztag field with their raucous laughter and enjoyment. Quite often, after hours of play, I had to insist that we stop due to the ball becoming invisible in the darkness of night. People would leave the ground saying that it was “the best” and “see you tomorrow” and showed their disappointment if I told them that I had to return to Cairns the following day.

For the first time people from communities in Far North Queensland were selected to represent their area in Oztag representative fixtures. These competitions included Junior and Senior State Cups and Junior and Senior State of Origin Teams. Teams have also competed in domestic competitions and major events such as the Top End Cup which is a National Teams Challenge conducted in Cairns annually.

Individuals have gained accreditation as Oztag referee's, administrators and coaches and assist with the conduct of competitions in their area at both Junior and Senior level.

Due to the nomadic lifestyle of some community members the Oztag brand has been spread far and wide with numerous phone calls received from Remote and Regional Centres such as Lockhart River, Kowanyama, Coen, Mt Isa, Badu Island and Pormpuraaw.

The Mooroo Mooroo funding has been a blessing for the promotion and development of Oztag in Indigenous and Regional areas of Far North Queensland. Without this funding many areas would not have experienced this wonderful sport and individuals would not have been given the opportunities that they have been presented.

Thank you once again for providing this monetary assistance and I look forward to working with you in the future.

For additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Kind Regards
Geoff Byfield
FNQ Development Officer


cairnscentral@oztag.com

Oztag helps troubled Cape men

Murray Wenzel

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

© The Cairns Post

"SHAUN" used to spend his afternoons drinking, smoking and generally causing trouble, but he has found a new way to spend his spare time.

The 18-year-old is one of 12 young men being counselled for drug and alcohol abuse turning out to play Oztag in the Gulf and it's putting their lives back on track.

The sport has captivated the Aboriginal community of Doomadgee from the moment Cairns Oztag's Geoff Byfield arrived on November 2.

They played until 8pm that night and left Byfield full of inspiration when he left for Cairns three days later.

"It has been such good fun and I never thought it would be," said Shaun, whose real name has been protected for privacy reasons. More and more of us are getting along now and we can't get enough of it."

The modified rugby league concept was such a success that an annual 10-team competition is being organised to start in 2011, taking in Mornington Island, Burketown, Normanton and Doomadgee.

"They turned up in their droves because they'd never had anything to look forward to," Byfield said.

"They took me on board and just didn't want to go home; we were playing in the dark.

"You always hear about the doom and gloom, but this was just absolutely positive; I had that warm and fuzzy feeling."

Doomadgee drug and alcohol officer George McLean said the sport was bringing the community together like nothing before it.

He said more than a dozen teenagers and young adults had tried their hand at Oztag in an attempt to escape the lure of drugs and alcohol.

"They'd take drugs – whatever they can get their hands on really. They've never taken to a sport like this one; it's given them something to do," he said.

"I was surprised to see a lot of the kids I'd been referred to through work turn up for a game of Oztag. I was very proud to see that.

"The community is very happy now."

The Oztag converts sure can play too – there is no shortage of speed and hand-eye co-ordination in the region.

"They were a bit frightened at first because they didn't know the rules. But now they are playing naturally and it's great to watch," Byfield said.

Running around on dirty clay-based fields isn't the best, but it's all they have at the moment.

"The conditions are pretty bad. It's really hard to describe what they have to deal with day to day," he said. These sort of setbacks are minor speed bumps for McLean and Byfield though.

"We've got to keep it going, we just have to. They are just having too good a time for it to stop now and it's up to us to keep it going," McLean said.

Byfield has overseen the sport in Cairns for 11 years. "It's expanded ever since and I wish we had got to the Gulf country sooner," he said.



Hope: Traye Hodge takes part in Oztag action in Cairns. The game has taken on major importance in the Gulf as wayward young men turn to the sport as a way to beat drugs and alcohol abuse. Picture: JAKE NOWAKOWSKI

Normanton Crocs Make their Mark

It's not an everyday event when a group of Normanton youth have the opportunity to travel to the Sunshine Coast and represent their region in a sporting event. This is exactly what happened in February with 14 boys aged between 11 and 14 representing North Queensland at the Oz Tag Queensland Junior State Titles.

The trip can only be described as a resounding success with the boys being great ambassadors for Carpentaria Shire and the Gulf region. All the boys had to attend many weeks of training before the trip, and they should all be commended for their willingness to participate and the high level of enthusiasm and commitment. Many of the boys had never travelled on a large plane or been to Brisbane, so this in itself was a reason for much excitement. To the delight of the boys, and the adults as well, there was a brief photo opportunity with some of the Melbourne Storm players at Brisbane airport en route to the Sunshine Coast.

Over the weekend the boys had as much success off as on the field. With 74 teams comprising 1000 players in the competition the boys made it to the quarter finals. Isaac Owens was named Best and Fairest player for Saturday and Sunday games. Jesse McPherson and Isaac were selected to represent Queensland in the under 14's Oz Tag Team in June 2012.

Many favourable comments were received in relation to the boys' behaviour over the weekend. The trip and the lead-up time provided new sporting skills for the boys; gave them an opportunity to contribute and commit to a team; support their fellow players and gave the boys an opportunity to experience a major sporting event outside North Queensland.

The trip would not have been possible without the support of many businesses, government agencies and community organisations in Normanton and the wider Gulf/Mt Isa region. All contributors must be mentioned, and they cannot be thanked enough as many were asked at very short notice and were able to work small miracles to provide funding. A very big thank you to the generosity and support of: Cape PCYC Indigenous Business Unit; Mt Isa Public Health Unit; Carpentaria Shire Council; MMG Century; Save the Children; Lamberr Wungarch Local Justice Group; Albion Hotel; Purple Pub; Kurtjar Aboriginal Corporation; Bynoe CACS Pty Ltd; Central Hotel; Hawkins Transport; and Yippippi Gulf Indigenous Health.

Volunteers and workers who put in many unpaid hours including training, preparation, and supervision whilst on the Sunshine Coast must also be recognised for their contribution and commitment to ensuring that Normanton youth were provided with this experience. The boys were provided with a safe, caring and supportive environment through the efforts of Katrina Rapson, Elton Thompson, Shirley McPherson, Geoff Byfield, Lance Owens and Stephanie Owens.

It is hoped that this is the first step on the path to establishing an OzTag competition in Normanton and the wider Gulf region and providing other youth with opportunities to also play at high levels of competition. If you would like to know more about any aspect of this trip or OzTag please do not hesitate to contact Katrina Rapson at the Normanton Sports Centre – [REDACTED].

Congratulations to the Normanton Crocs: Gasmun Kampf; Jesse McPherson; Renee Turner; Carl Casey; Nicholas Casey; Rakeem Rainbow; Juwan Fraser; Zachary Gilbo; Troy Kumsing; Isaac Owens; Collis Casey; Kelean Logan; Raymond Dalton; and Isaiah Callope.



Getting ready for training.



The boys playing on Sunday morning



The boys looking professional in their uniforms.



Having some down time between games



All the teams at the opening ceremony of the Junior Oztag QLD State Cup



The Crocs with one of the teams that they played