



**PACIFIC GAMES COUNCIL (PGC)
CONSEIL DES JEUX DU PACIFIQUE**

X PACIFIC MINI GAMES: Vanuatu 2017
XVI PACIFIC GAMES: Tonga 2019
XI PACIFIC MINI GAMES: Northern Mariana Islands 2021
XVI PACIFIC GAMES: Solomon Islands 2023

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Withdrawal by Tonga from Hosting the 2019 Pacific Games

The Pacific Games Council (PGC) has been advised today, 17 May, of the Tongan Government's "withdrawal from hosting" the 2019 Pacific Games, citing financial concerns.

In the Tongan Prime Minister's letter to the PGC President, Vidhya Lakhan, he stated that "*At the same time, the Government is convinced of the benefits of hosting the Games, not only in upgrading the level of high-sports performance and sporting infrastructural facilities in Tonga, but also the desired benefits to the economy that the sport will bring*".

The PGC was not consulted in this decision and no attempt was made to seek the PGC's assistance to address the Government's financial concerns with respect to staging the Games.

The Tonga Pacific Games Association (TASANOC) was awarded the right to host the 2019 Pacific Games in October 2012. At that time, it joined the PGC and the Tongan Government in signing a Host Contract to deliver the Games. TASANOC and the Tongan Government have been working towards this goal for almost five years.

As far as the PGC is concerned, preparations were on track for staging the Games despite interference by the Prime Minister in the workings of the independent Games Organising Committee (GOC).

The Tonga 2019 GOC had been progressing well with its planning and keeping the PGC membership regularly updated. A Chinese Government technical team just completed the design of the Tonga High School sporting facilities, with construction due to commence later this year and be completed by early 2019. Teufaiva Stadium is being upgraded to host Pacific Nations Cup

Rugby internationals this year. Atele Stadium just hosted the Oceania Judo Championships and last year Nuku'alofa hosted the Oceania Archery Championships as a qualifier for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. With Loto-Tonga's FIFA Football complex, plus Queen Salote Hall and other venues in Nuku'alofa, Tonga stood ready to have all of the venues needed to host the Games.

President of the PGC, Vidhya Lakhan, said in a statement:

“This is an extremely disappointing and confusing decision which robs Tonga's youth and its future generations of the golden opportunity to receive badly needed sport and recreation facilities as well as the chance to develop their human resource capacity through being involved in a nation building event. Tonga's citizens and businesses will also now miss out on the many vital employment and commercial opportunities associated with the heightened economic activity around the Games.

The PGC Executive Board will convene in the very near future to fully assess the implications of this letter of withdrawal.

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