

## Fifth International Gymnastics Federation Continental Union targeting 2020 for full recognition

By Liam Morgan (<http://www.insidethegames.biz/writers/24079/liam-morgan>) at the Hilton Tokyo Odaiba Hotel

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**A development programme has been established in order to create the fifth Continental Union within the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) - with those behind the scheme targeting full recognition from the worldwide governing body before the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.**

Gymnastics Australia and Gym Sports New Zealand, with funding from the FIG, are spearheading a drive to establish an Oceania Gymnastics Union (OGU).

The body would mirror that of the other Unions - in Asia, Europe, Africa and Pan America - and would have their own elections and Congresses once formally approved by the FIG.

The project gathered pace here today with the addition of American Samoa, the Cook Islands and Fiji as full members of the organisation.

It means Gymnastics Australia and their counterparts in New Zealand now have the five members required to form a "development group", considered the first step towards becoming a fully-fledged Continental

Union.

They are also hopeful of forming federations in Guam, Tonga and Papua New Guinea - considered one of the better developed Pacific Nations who are thought to be preparing a bid for the 2026 Commonwealth Games having hosted last year's Pacific Games - before the end of the year.

The decision to grant the three Pacific nations membership of the FIG comes after a meeting was held between the relevant stakeholders in Suva in Fiji last month.

There, it was agreed to press ahead with the continental plans, though it remains unclear where the newly-formed organisation would be based or who would be in charge of it.



*Australia and New Zealand were the only two Oceania members of the FIG until three more from the region were added at the Congress ©Getty Images*

Further meetings are expected over the course of the next few months while attempts will be made at growing the sport in other countries in the region in order to prepare for a bid to become recognised by the FIG.



Australia and New Zealand are not currently affiliated with a Union.

"We're really excited about the development programme," Gymnastics Australia President Jacqui Briggs-Weatherill, the first-ever female head of the organisation, told *insidethegames* here.

"It's great to take the sport to these countries, some of which don't have many women playing sport.

"Our aim is to be endorsed by the FIG by Tokyo 2020."

Gymnastics Australia chief executive Mark Rendell praised the "vision" of the scheme and also thanked the FIG for their "faith" in the project.

Under the plans, the development funds will be used to help send coaches from Australia and New Zealand to less-developed parts of Oceania in a bid to develop the sport of gymnastics.

Should they be successful with their aim, they would "complete the fifth Olympic Ring", according to Rendell.

It would allow them a seat on the Executive Committee - all Continental Union Presidents are granted a place at the top table - and could have an effect on future Presidential elections.

Unions have been known to conduct meetings ahead of an elective Congress to potentially decide on who they might choose to support for the various positions.

This has certainly been the case in Asia in recent years, with the Asian Gymnastics Union holding its Congress in Incheon in South Korea last month.

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Since joining insidethegames.biz, in 2015 Liam Morgan has covered a variety of international multi-sport events and conferences, including the Baku 2015 European Games, the Lillehammer 2016 Winter Youth Olympics, the 2015 Pacific Games in Port Moresby and the 2015 Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa. He has also reported from the FIFA Extraordinary Elective Congress in Zurich. He graduated from Southampton Solent University in 2014 with a BA First Class honours degree in Sports Journalism.

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