



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

**makar**

'ma-kar'



All school-age groups (K–12)

Post-school age

### Background

Various types of toy boats and canoes are found in parts of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. On Sunday Island in northern Australia, small models of the raft (*kaloa*) were made for children to play with. In other areas of Australia small replicas of dugout canoes were fashioned.

In parts of the Torres Strait simple boats were made of half a coconut husk. An upright stick with a leaf to represent a sail was attached. Miriam children in the Torres Strait played in the sea with the spathes of the leaves of coconut palms, pretending they were small canoes.

Toy sailing boats are still raced on various islands in the Torres Strait. These move along at great pace. They are usually only sailed parallel with the shore and quite close to it. The canoes vary according to location and are often rigged in the same manner as their own canoes. In some places this included mainsail, foresail and jib.

### Language

In Torres Strait Creole a toy racing boat was called a *makar* or *wagwag* in pidgin.

### Canoe belong play

*Toy canoe*

### Short description

Players make and then play with toy boats.

### Equipment

- One or more toy canoes or boats

### Game play and basic rules

- Either conduct a series of sailing races or play with the boats in the water. The players can decide on any special conditions to be associated with any races.

### Comment

The special day for sailing in the Torres Strait is the first of July (the Coming of the Light) or other ceremonies such as tombstone openings.

### Suggestion

Attempt to obtain or make a racing canoe like those of the Torres Strait Islands.

A piece of wood is shaped like a canoe and planed on the side and the top. Two holes are drilled for a mast. The sails are attached and the outrigger is added with weights attached to it. The boat is painted in individual colours such as red and white on the side and green and white on the top. The best time for sailing is in a moderate to strong wind.