



13 April 2022

Newsletter No: 3 for 2022

Hi Everyone

## BACK TO BRIDGE

Back to bridge is our core message, core focus, core action over the next 12+ months.

It is hard to envisage a disruptor that could impact our sport and recreational activity more than Covid-19 has done. We and I mean the royal 'we'- NZ Bridge, Regional Committees and Clubs- need to be open minded, courageous, and willing to try new things if we want to get players back to bridge. Over the last 2 years nearly 1500 players have left the game. The departure is understandable when you consider our demographic, closures, contrasting views on vaccination and mask wearing to name a few factors impacting our membership.

To be successful the royal 'we', need to come together and develop plans that meet the requirements of each, and every club. That means we need to engage so we understand what is required at a local level and then provide/facilitate services and resources. If Covid-19 has taught us anything is how the game will be played in the future. It is likely to be different from what historically we were used to.

The Board met last week to start think about what we might be able to do. We concluded our focus is

1. Return of players to the game
2. Increasing the level of participation
3. Pursuing new members

It is apparent whatever we do we need to remove actual and perceived barriers to players returning to the game and to player participation. As a precursor to the work ahead we have initiated some work streams. The first is to ensure our regulations are current, relevant and reflect our practices. Second that the manual is current, easy to follow, and aids the easy running of sessions and events. Next our directors must have delegated authority (according to their experience) to arrange, facilitate, manage and, rule. We also need to appreciate Masterpoints should be valued and earned, but we should not be afraid to award more Masterpoints if it encourages greater participation.



Over the last 2 years bridge has been bolstered by online bridge. It has allowed club sessions and tournaments to take place. Even though we have seen a relaxation in Covid-19 controls we have a cohort of players who are now committed to playing online and are unlikely to return to face-to-face bridge. We equally have a large cohort who will only play face-to-face. The challenge is how we avoid a conflict between face-to-face and online bridge and how best to devise a process where these forms of the game can be played concurrently. This might involve clubs running different sessions- say a session on a given day where players meet face-to-face and, on another day where play is arranged online. An opportunity may also exist for a hybrid solution where some players play face-to-face, and others play online with the results scored across the fields.

We appreciate some clubs may feel exposed to members electing to only playing online. We need to accept that players will dictate where and how they will play. To ensure clubs have an exciting proposition there may be a requirement to undertake a marketing programme. With that in mind we are working with Fish Digital to develop the framework of a marketing programme that can be used by clubs.

It has been brought to our attention that even before Covid-19 many sporting and recreational clubs were suffering from membership decline as savvy generations took quick-satisfaction opportunities- not appreciating or understanding the long-term benefits of club community and loyalty. A club's success is dependent on their people, and their participation. Experience tells us people respond best to inclusion, learning and being challenged, being acknowledged, and being rewarded, and above all having a positive experience.

The marketing plan can be used to encourage players back to bridge, to share the value of a club environment, and to encourage new players to the game. As part of our marketing collateral Anna has commissioned some bumper stickers and some business cards that are available to all and to those who might be interested in lessons. Contact your club for a supply. I already have a sticker on my car.

The plan is to continue to support the growth of new players to the game. You know over the last few months we have built a new website- [www.playbridge.co.nz](http://www.playbridge.co.nz) and marketing collateral. We have also expanded our social media footprint.

Beyond playing club sessions we need to consider how tournaments are going to be played in the future. Again, there is a wish for events to be played face-to-face and another call for more to be played online. There are conflicting interests, so we need to find a solution that supports local clubs and meets the demand of players. We have given thought to how this might happen and hopefully in the coming weeks we will release a discussion document seeking your feedback.

## **New Player Levy**

To help Clubs with retention of new players we are putting in place a levy exemption for new players registered from 1 May 2022. This concession will remain in place for 12 months until the end of April 2023.

## **Learner Lesson Material**

Following a good suggestion from the Wellington Region we are arranging for the learner lesson material to be available in hard copy. This will assist those Clubs who don't have access to a good printer and for those taking classes in schools etc. An A4 booklet is being produced will comprise the student notes, the quiz, and the answers for all 10 lessons.

## **Ukraine**

We wish to commend the Auckland Bridge Club and all those players who supported the fundraising initiative. The club raised \$7300 which I am sure will be put to good use.

## **System Cards**

We have arranged for our 2-sided and 4-sided system cards to be undated. Supplies will be forwarded to all clubs.

## **The Incorporated Societies Act**

Many know there are planned changes to the Incorporated Societies Act which will increase the responsibility of officers and committees. We are preparing a toolkit that clubs will be able to use.

## **Regional Committees**

Pre Covid-19 we undertook a review of the Regional Committees. Over the years the committees have undertaken a valuable role and very much have a role to play in the future. We want to ensure the work undertaken by the committees is aligned with the objectives of the Board.

We are at that time of the year when nominations to join your regional committee are happening. If you feel you have the skills and time to help the development and administration of the game, please contact your local regional committee. To help we would like to see people coming forward in Auckland Northland and Canterbury. To help clubs and to support the regional committees our intention is to expand the regional bridge mate resource. Everything we do must be about **getting players back to bridge** and growing player participation.

## **National Conference**

The annual national conference has been set for the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June. You will not be surprised to hear that the focus will be about **getting players back to bridge**.

## **Youth Weekend**

Paul Coleman is in the process of arranging in August (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>) a youth weekend. This will be held at the Auckland Bridge Club. In the past these have been well received by youth players. If you can help, I am sure Paul will welcome your involvement.

## Changes to the Traffic Light System

From 11.59pm tonight (13 April) the traffic light system shifts to Orange. This must be seen as a positive step, removing another barrier to people returning to bridge. We must however remember Omicron is still in the community so everyone should continue to be cautious and think about the health of others.

Under Orange there are no indoor capacity limits and the seated and separation have been lifted. Also, there is no requirement to wear a mask. However, the wearing of a mask is an important part of managing risk and protecting those who maybe immune-compromised.

Please refer to the government Covid-19 website for more information.

Stay safe, stay well, and enjoy your bridge

Cheers Allan

