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## Chairman's Corner

### Reset and restart

After a very long interval, here is another issue of *Insight*. I'm sure I don't need to tell you why it has been so long since the last issue! With club closures since mid-March, there has not been a great deal NSWBA could tell club administrators that might actually be useful to them. However, we did finish the project to create a club masterpoint secretary's manual. It can be found on the NSWBA's website [here](#).

During this trying period, I have communicated through the NSWBA's website to keep clubs abreast of the situation. The Council (Board) has remained active throughout, meeting regularly and looking at how best to respond under the COVID-constrained circumstances. One thing that we have been doing, which I urge you to do as well, is to examine our processes to see if there are better ways for us to achieve our aims.

At the beginning of this year, Council devolved many of the day-to-day operational aspects of what the NSWBA

does to a set of committees: of these, the State Committee would be of particular interest to our clubs.

Membership of this Committee includes Zonal Councillors, Regional Representatives and our ABF delegates. The Committee handles all relations between NSWBA and its affiliated clubs, as well as liaison with the ABF. It is currently chaired by Neil Badger, the Zonal Councillor for the Northern Zone.

Should you wish to raise any issues of interest or concern, you can do so via your Regional Representative (full list [here](#)) or directly via your Zonal Councillor (listed [here](#) along with other members of Council).

As a few clubs have re-opened and others are considering doing so, the State Committee recently had a detailed discussion about the issues associated with this. In this issue of *Insight* you can read a summary of the key points that emerged,

which may be useful if you are wondering whether it's feasible for you. The summary might also be a useful checklist for those clubs that have already re-opened.

At the time of writing, forthcoming State and National events have mostly been cancelled; getting three or four hundred people together indoors is something that the government cannot countenance. We all look forward to the return of face-to-face bridge in the near future, but I fear that congresses are still 6 months away. Meanwhile, enjoy what online bridge has to offer – there is information in this issue about how that is faring in Australia, as well as about at least one promising new development.

*John Scudder*

Chairman NSWBA



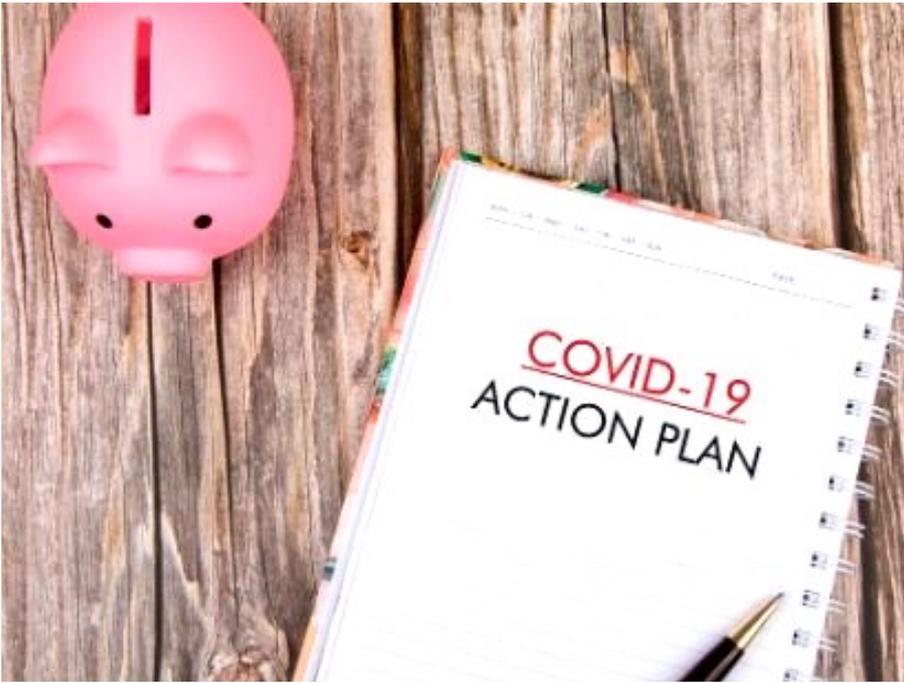
Thanks to Blue Mountains Bridge Club for this image

## Are you re-opening/thinking about it or have you recently re-opened?

### Restarting Face-to-Face Bridge

There are quite a few considerations worth keeping in mind for re-starting face-to-face bridge. At the September meeting of the NSWBA State Committee, several important points were raised:

- ◆ When seeking to re-open a bridge club, it is necessary to develop a COVID-safe plan that complies with one of the NSW Government templates – at this time, the template that appears to be most relevant is the one for community centres and halls, available [here](#) (that for indoor recreation facilities is essentially identical, the template for community sporting activities does not appear to apply to bridge)
- ◆ NSW regulations still state that indoor group activities may have no more than 20 participants, plus the instructor or facilitator and any assistants, per space that complies with one person per 4 square metres
- ◆ However, there is provision for multiple classes in a room if there is sufficient space to accommodate this *and the classes remain separate*
- ◆ In practice this means no more than 5 (possibly oversized) bridge tables per room of the premises in which you play (i.e. unless your premises has multiple rooms of sufficient size, you are limited to 5 tables) but you may be able to have more than 5 tables in a large room if there are *separate* non-overlapping movements
- ◆ Note that if you are using your own premises but you also let the hall to some other group(s) for occasional use, you need to ensure that your COVID-safe plan covers both bridge and any other activities
- ◆ Note also that if you use a community hall, the local government (Council) regulations may limit you to a maximum of 20 persons *including* the director and/or any assistants (so you may need to have a playing director)
- ◆ While these limitations have an obvious impact on the running of viable sessions and may be unacceptable to larger clubs, it is certainly possible to get going again – for example see the plan that has been implemented at Armidale Bridge Club, on the next page
- ◆ However, compliance with regulations does not cover all of the relevant safety aspects that should also be of concern to club officials as part of their duty of care to members – particularly in relation to *fomites* (a term that refers to objects or materials likely to carry infection, which could include everything from pens to coffee tins)
- ◆ Playing cards are of particular concern as fomites – it is highly desirable to be able to provide a full set of boards per table (so that each hand on every deal is touched by only one player) and to ensure that boards are "rested" for at least 72 hours prior to next use
- ◆ All players need to be reminded that when a club re-opens, individual players have personal responsibility to minimise the possibility of spread by staying home if unwell and complying with all procedures when they visit the club. 🇩🇪



An example from Armidale Bridge Club

**Armidale Bridge Club Inc**

  
**Armidale**  
BRIDGE CLUB

**Covid-19 Safety Plan Community Centres and Halls**  
**Return to Play Readiness Plan**  
**17 June 2020**  
**Updated 2 July 2020**

The NSW Government COVID-19 Safety Plan for Stage 2 easing of restrictions allows for gatherings of up to 20 people for non-contact indoor community events. The COVID-19 Safety Plan for Community Centres and Halls allows for bridge sessions to be played on five tables with the following precautions in place.

**Wellbeing of Members and Visitors**

- All people on entry to the club will be required to complete and sign a health declaration.
- All people on entry to the club will have their temperature checked with a hand-held scanner. The person checking temperatures will wear an approved face mask.
- Entry to the club will be granted only if these health checks are satisfactory.
- A sign will be displayed at the main entrance to the club indicating that entry to the club is prohibited if the person is unwell and that the Armidale Bridge Club has the right to refuse entry if a person appears unwell.
- A conditions of entry sign will be displayed at the entrance with the maximum number of people allowed and social distancing rules.
- The protocol set out in the "Procedures Required for Entry to and Play at the Armidale Bridge Club until Further Notice" will be provided to all members, displayed at the club and posted on the club's website and Facebook sites.
- That document encourages members to download the COVIDSafe app.

**Physical Distancing**

- Physical distancing requirements will be met at the entrance by placing crosses on the floor at a distance of 1.5 metres.
- Physical distancing requirements will be met at the card table by playing around four standard card tables pushed together. This will guarantee physical distancing of more than 1.5 metres between players.
- A maximum of 20 players plus the Director, will be allowed at any one bridge session.
- The Armidale Bridge Club has an unobstructed floor area of 150m<sup>2</sup>. If a minimum area of 4m<sup>2</sup>/person is applied, the club can comfortably hold five enlarged card tables and 20 players.
- The location of chairs around the enlarged card tables will indicate where members must sit to ensure adequate separation.
- To reduce contact time between members, the number of boards played in any one session will be limited to 28 and the movement will be a Howell Barometer style.

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- The use of communal facilities (male, female and disabled toilets) will be limited to two people in the male and female toilets and one in the disabled toilet at any one time. The doors to the toilets will be propped open to eliminate the need to use door handles.
- The kitchen facilities will be off limits to all except designated members.
- Signs explaining these restrictions will be placed at the entrance to these facilities.
- To minimise crowding, there will be an exclusive entry door at the front of the building and an exit at the back.

**Hygiene and Cleaning**

- A sanitising station will be set up at the entry with compulsory use by everyone on entry.
- After completion of the Health Declaration members will be required to clean their hands using the sanitiser available at the entry.
- Table fees will be paid via EFTPOS located near the entry door. Cash payment of the exact fee (no change will be available) will also be accepted and placed in the box located near the entry door. Players must sanitise their hands after depositing cash. The cash box will be dealt with by the Treasurer, or designated person, only at the end of the session.
- Hand sanitiser dispensers and sanitary wipes will be available on each playing table and must be used by each member at the conclusion of each playing round. At the end of each playing round, if the players have to move for the next round, each player will sanitise the card table in front of them and the arms of the chair on which they have been seated (if any) using the sanitising wipes provided. The wipes are then placed in the bin beside the table.
- The Bridgemes will be handled by only one person at each table and sanitised after each round, or as necessary, using the sanitary wipes provided. The wipes are then placed in the bin beside the table.
- Bidding boxes will be used. Each player will be designated their own bidding box, marked with their name, used for the duration of the restrictions, sanitised after each session and stored at the club.
- Players must bring and use their own cup and drink. No food will be allowed.
- Toilets will be well stocked with hand soap and paper towels.
- Signs will be displayed in toilets to remind people of effective hand washing practices.
- There will be posters displayed in the playing area reminding players of the risks of COVID-19.
- Supplies of detergent/disinfectant of an appropriate strength will be supplied and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Cleaning of surfaces in the playing, office and toilet areas will take place after the end of each session, first using detergent and water followed by disinfectant. Disposable gloves will be available for use in this cleaning and hands will be washed and after.

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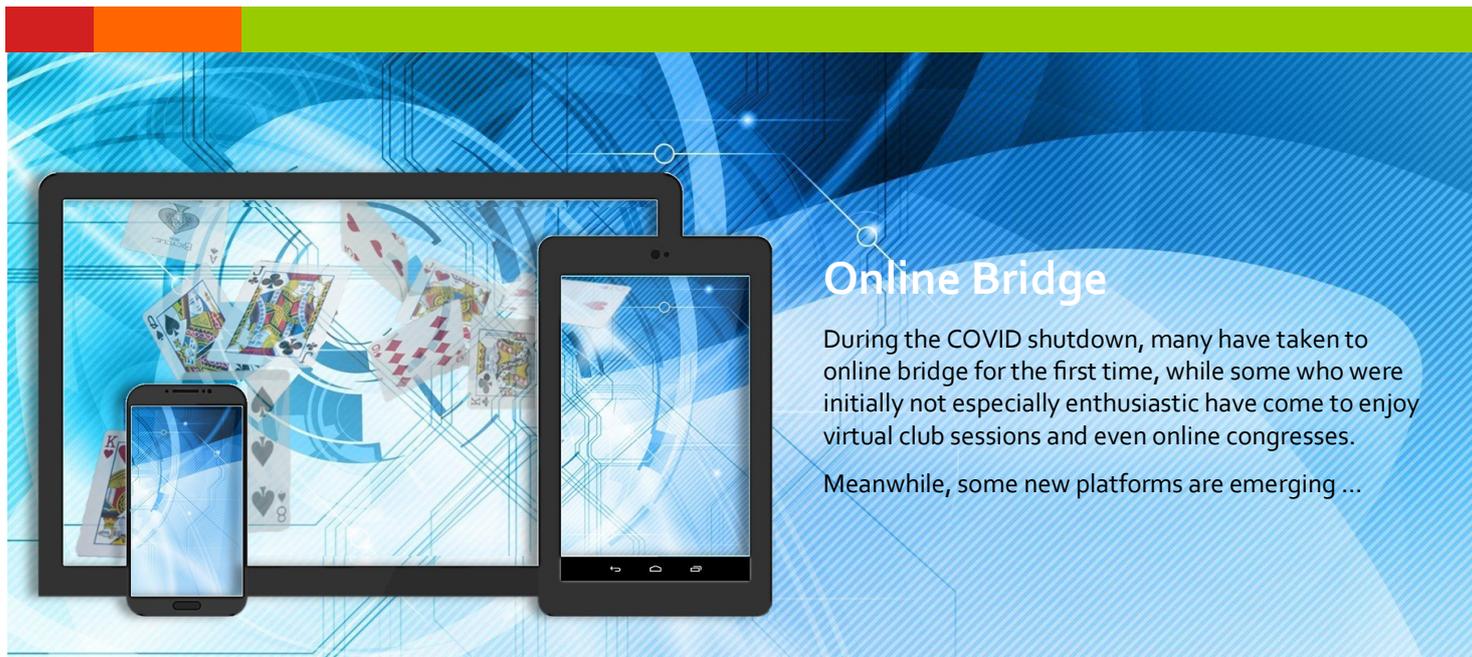
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## Online Bridge

During the COVID shutdown, many have taken to online bridge for the first time, while some who were initially not especially enthusiastic have come to enjoy virtual club sessions and even online congresses.

Meanwhile, some new platforms are emerging ...

## Developments in online bridge

The ABF arrangements with BBO have proved to be very successful – in August, over 5,000 individual ABF players participated in ABF BBO games, including over 1,300 who were active members of a NSW home club. With respect to income generated via BBO, the latest figures indicate that over US\$70,000 (A\$96,000) was returned to Australian clubs for that month.

Meanwhile, some club congresses have now moved to being run online. The Blue Mountains Congress was the first such successful congress, but several others have been run since and many more are in the pipeline. If your club is wondering how to make this happen, one possibility is to outsource the task. MasterBridge Online is running congresses for 3 such events in October/November.

A potentially important new development being trialled by NSWBA is RealBridge, which allows you to see and talk to your partner and the opponents – some have described it as a fusion of BBO and Zoom. It is currently in beta testing but is expected to enable many more types of movements, teams events and multi-session events. 🇩🇪

## Teaching on BBO

*Some notes from Mardi Svensson, Regional Representative, Southern Highlands*

Bridge clubs as we know them are unlikely to be able to have much (if any) face to face teaching in the immediate future. However, there are facilities on line for teaching any number of students from 1 to 100+.

BBO has had inbuilt teaching facilities since its inception and these are all excellent in their set up.

It is possible to have a teaching table with re-deals, where the teacher can see all cards and have her/himself on all 4 places showing her/his students in that particular “room”. Alternatively, the teacher could have 4 students playing the cards while she/he watches and offers advice. At such tables, the students are able to switch seats or give up their seat and watch while another student takes their place at the table.

Each of the students can have their chat log turned on, so that all the chat is recorded and they are able to have another look at the cards that they played plus read what was said on each deal. They can turn this log off when playing if they wish to.

There is also an area called partnership bidding where the teacher can help 2 students in a partnership, or 1 student with her/himself. The deals at this table can be set for any minimum or maximum number of points, so that the partnership can practice anything from partials to slam bidding.

For all such teaching, communication via Skype or something similar could be added, but personally I think typing into the chat bar at the table works better as the students are all able to read the information (as well as re-read later and make notes). And of course you will have been able to email notes for that lesson in advance if you wish to.

*(Note that BBO allows voice communication directly within the website, if that is what a teacher would like to do. NSWBA can provide detailed instructions for setting up teaching tables on BBO if anyone requires these.) 🇩🇪*