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What is and is not happening during COVID

From the State Committee Chair

Bridge during the COVID Outbreak

The latest COVID-19 outbreak provides challenges for the bridge community across the state and the New South Wales Bridge Association supports strategies that maximise your safety while allowing you access to a game of bridge. The NSWBA seeks to support and guide the diverse range of our affiliated clubs, casual bridge groups and individual players and the following advice is based on detailed information published on the [NSW Health Website](#). Please check this site frequently to keep updated on the latest safety information to inform decision making at your particular club.

For clubs located in the Greater Sydney area, the current lockdown requires you to give up face-to-face bridge for the time being and to take advantage of the excellent online play made available by the ABF on BBO and the NSWBA on Realbridge. Please contact our [office](#) if you need assistance.

For clubs in regional NSW, many of you have recommenced face-to-face play and have COVID-19 Safety Plans in place. These plans vary according to the classification of your place of play and each club is responsible for their particular plan. Currently, the main changes to these plans are the requirement to:

- ◆ Limit the number of people to the greater of 25 people or one person per 4 square metres within each room of the venue.
 - ◆ Wear a face mask at all times whilst in the venue.
- Please continue to observe the following safety measures:
- ◆ If your club has resumed face-to-face bridge or is considering this option, please make sure your club has submitted a COVIDSafe Plan to NSW Health.
 - ◆ The range of plans, plan templates, access to QR codes, registering your club as a COVIDSafe business and other useful documents may be found at the [government website](#).
 - ◆ If you hire a venue you may need to conform to the COVIDSafe plan already in place. Obtain a copy of the venue's COVIDSafe plan and discuss it with the management of the venue you intend to use.

Regional Clubs may also take advantage of the excellent online play made available by the ABF on BBO and the NSWBA on Realbridge. Please contact our [office](#) if you need assistance.

What follows are some friendly reminders for bridge during this continuing COVID-19 period.

These are all contained in the NSW Health Safety Plans and are presented below for clarity.

For the Club Management Committee

- ◆ Have a procedure for excluding unwell people from your venue.
- ◆ Make the Conditions of Entry clear to your players and provide clear information on such things as hygiene procedures and physical distancing.
- ◆ Provide general information on COVID-19 to your players.
- ◆ Require players to bring their own face masks and/or make them available at your venue.
- ◆ Observe the limits to the number of people who may attend your venue (currently the greater of 25 people or one person per 4 square metres within each room of the venue).
- ◆ Support 1.5 metres of physical distancing
- ◆ Avoid congestion at your entry and exit and in communal facilities such as bathrooms.



- ◆ Consider using larger tables to maintain 1.5 metres of physical distancing during play.
- ◆ Maximise natural ventilation or optimise air conditioning.
- ◆ Keep records of people who attend your venue and acquire a QR code for players to register on entry to your premises.
- ◆ Support good hygiene practices and provide hand sanitisers at key points (e.g. at the entry and at each table) and soap and hand towels in bathrooms.
- ◆ Clean frequently used surfaces several times per day and encourage players to wipe down playing surfaces after each use. For example, provide sanitary wipes at each table for players to wipe the table at the end of each round.
- ◆ Reduce sharing of equipment. For example, consider dealing one set of boards per table so that only one player touches any hand of cards. You might also consider a resting time of at least 72 hours before reusing cards and boards. Players might acquire their own bidding box or the club might supply these. Nominating one player to handle the Bridgemate and wipe this down at the end of each round could also be used.
- ◆ Make contact with your NSWBA Regional Representative in the first instance if you require further advice or support.

I encourage you to be patient, considerate and understanding, and to share the responsibility of acting in a COVIDSafe manner.

Keep safe and keep enjoying bridge.

Glenda Parmenter

Chairman, State Committee NSWBA

The NSWBA Council & Committees

The Council of the New South Wales Bridge Association is elected every year and members start their term of service after the AGM, normally held in December. There are twelve members on the Council: the Chairman and Treasurer; 5 Zonal Councillors, elected by affiliated clubs from the zone they represent; and 5 Ordinary Councillors, elected by NSWBA members. All Councillors are members of the Board of Directors of the Company. The Councillors are volunteers, contributing their time and effort to advance the goals of the State body and manage the Company business because of their passion and enthusiasm for bridge.

Over the last 2 years, the way in which the Council works has been transformed, following the establishment of four major Committees which have delegated authority to undertake [specific functions](#) for the Company (more information on the linked page on the NSWBA website).

- ◆ [The State Committee](#) (chaired by Glenda Parmenter)
- ◆ [The Events Committee](#) (formerly known as the Tournament Committee, chaired by Warren Lazer)
- ◆ [The Assets Committee](#) (chaired by Agnes Levine)
- ◆ [The Operations Committee](#) (acting chairman is John Scudder)

Each Committee is chaired by a current Councillor (in the listing on the next page, Councillors are identified by their photos, Zonal Councillors are indicated in bold).



The State Committee dinner: The Committee met face-to-face on 27-28 May — an opportunity for networking (rare these days!) at which NSWBA Councillors and Regional Representatives shared ideas and experiences from across the state. L to R: Julian Foster, Alan Bustany, Karen Creet, Peter Cox, Philip Houlton, John Scudder, Glenda Parmenter, Marelle Irvine, Rakesh Kumar.



State Committee

Events Committee



Glenda Parmenter (Chairman) **Northern** and North Inland Representative



Warren Lazer (Chairman)



Rakesh Kumar (Secretary) **Southern** Representative, Insight & eCongress



Matthew McManus



Alan Bustany **Outer Metropolitan** Representative



Giselle Mundell



Peter Cox **Metropolitan** and Metropolitan East Representative



Fraser Rew

Rebecca Rogers

Far North Representative

André Korenhof

Philip Houlton

Mid North Coast Representative

David Fryda

Ronnie Ng

Central Coast Representative

Alan Bustany

Paul Rooms

Hunter Representative

Julian Foster

Karen Creet

Far South Coast Representative

Hugh Grosvenor

Steve Hurley

South Coast Representative, Events Committee Liaison

Assets Committee

Stephen Brabyn

Southern Highlands Representative, Teaching



Agnes Levine (Chairman)

Marelle Irvine

Central West Representative

Philip Halloran

Adrian Thompson

South Coast Representative

Richard Thode

Vince Cariola

Metropolitan West Representative

Operations Committee

Julian Foster

ABF Delegate



John Scudder (Acting Chairman)

Rob Ward

ABF Delegate





The State Committee Meeting

Following a series of Zoom meetings, the NSWBA State Committee finally had the opportunity to meet face-to-face at the NSWBA clubrooms on 27th-28th May, 2021.

This was a particularly useful opportunity for regional and metropolitan members to interact.

Core Business: the State Committee Meeting

The State Committee oversees all functions of the NSWBA that are concerned with State matters. Its primary goal is to promote bridge across NSW, emphasising not only the social aspects of bridge but also bridge as a mind sport.

The core business of the State Committee is therefore of particular relevance to clubs across NSW, because it includes: (a) support for club activities and club administrators (b) overall responsibility for training of tournament directors (c) support for teaching via liaison with the ABF and (d) determination of grants payable to clubs and individuals under the State Grants Policy.

Although the State Committee was established at the beginning of 2020, COVID made it necessary to meet via Zoom for over a year. A face-to-face meeting was finally held on 27-28 May 2021.

Face-to-Face vs Online Bridge

A major item of discussion at the meeting was how clubs were coping with the challenge of COVID across different regions. At the time of the meeting, many clubs had resumed face-to-face bridge, albeit with certain restrictions and COVIDSafe practices in place. It was noted that at a number of clubs, members had little interest in playing online and these clubs had either never run online sessions or had ceased their online sessions once they reopened for face-to-face bridge. However, at a few clubs, where members were open to playing bridge on line, there had been significant success running both face-to-face sessions and online games in parallel.

Most club sessions had been held on BBO, via the virtual club service supported by the ABF. Numerous State events had been run on RealBridge, an online platform that provides not only a virtual bridge table but also supports concurrent video and audio. It was noted that the introduction of RealBridge had extended the reach of State events

to bridge players across NSW. Previously, the need to travel to the NSWBA premises had restricted participation for many players. Now it was possible for State events to live up to their name. Importantly, compared to face-to-face numbers in recent years, entries for State events had increased since these began being offered online on RealBridge.

Club administrators should note that the use of RealBridge facilities is not limited to the NSWBA. For advice about how to organise a RealBridge event for your club and what is involved, please contact your Regional Representative or the NSWBA [office](#).

The new MyABF platform

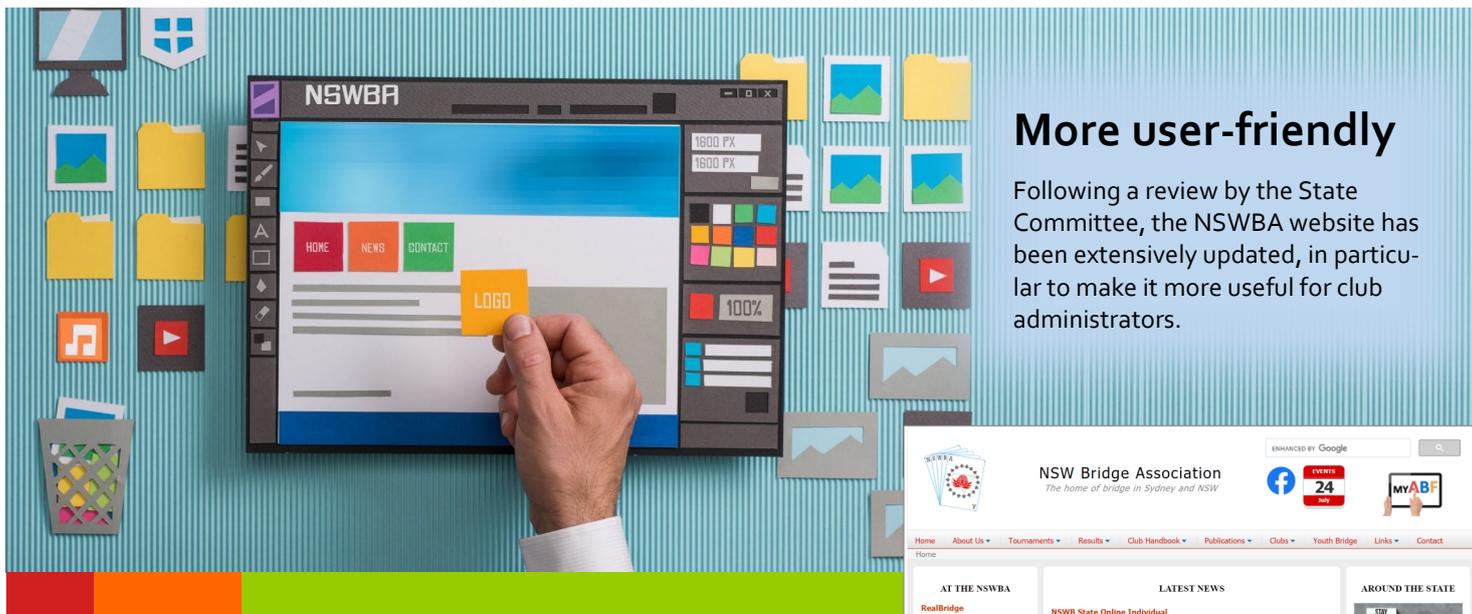
A problem for many NSWBA-affiliated clubs is that as they are run by volunteers, there may not be continuity of committee membership, which can make it difficult to ensure continuity of various functions.

With this in mind, the ABF has invested in the development of a new online platform called [MyABF](#). The platform was demonstrated to the State Committee by Julian Foster, who pointed out that it is initially geared towards individual players as end users, but will continue to be developed to provide a range of functions for club administrators. These will include entry management, payment receipt and reconciliation, group communications for specific events etc. Entry management for some national tournaments has already been run using MyABF.

Please visit [MyABF](#) to gain a better understanding of the platform.

Teacher Training

The State Committee heard from Joan Butts, the National Teaching Coordinator of the ABF, about the challenges of bridge teaching during COVID. She emphasised not only recruitment but also retention of new players. Clubs are welcome to contact Joan Butts to arrange Teachers' Workshops. 



More user-friendly

Following a review by the State Committee, the NSWBA website has been extensively updated, in particular to make it more useful for club administrators.

Update of the NSWBA Website

One result of the State Committee reviewing matters relevant to clubs across NSW was a decision to look at possible updates to the [NSWBA website](#), to make it more user-friendly for clubs. The major focus was on the [Club Handbook](#), a very rich resource that has so much information it can sometimes be difficult for club administrators to navigate effectively.

The revised version of the website went “live” at the end of the first week of July. There is now a new top menu bar in which the Club Handbook features prominently.

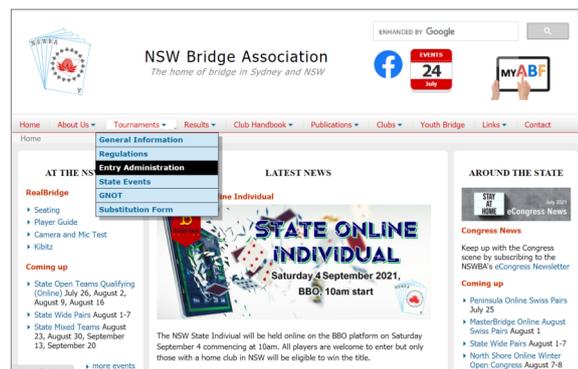
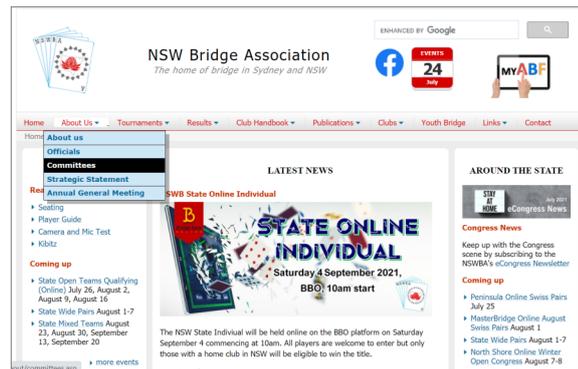
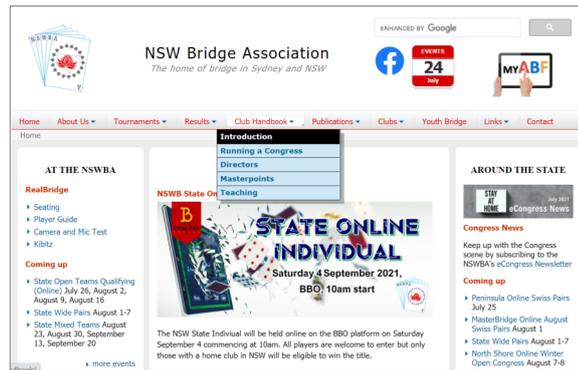
Importantly, the first page of the Club Handbook now provides an overview of the content and offers some tips to help users take full advantage of what’s on offer. This includes, for example:

- ◆ the administrative structure of bridge in NSW, with names and contact details of Zonal Councillors and Regional Representatives
- ◆ the benefits of club affiliation (or “what do we get for our fees?”)
- ◆ a model constitution for a club and advice about committee structure
- ◆ information related to club finances and obtaining grant funding from NSWBA
- ◆ information about marketing
- ◆ a link to the NSWBA’s easy-to-read Club Masterpoint Secretary’s Handbook
- ◆ a guide on how to run a Congress
- ◆ information about accreditation, training/development and resources for both directing and teaching.

The Clubs page now also includes an [introductory help page](#) so that users can more easily find contact information for other clubs in their zone or across the state.

Other top menu items have been simplified and re-arranged to make finding things easier. There is also a “quick link” button at the top of the page for direct access to the NSWBA tournament and congress calendar.

Please visit the updated website to see more!





An Interrupted Year for State Events

When COVID restrictions were mandated in early 2020 both clubs and players were faced with a choice – adapt or cease playing. Many clubs subsequently joined the ABF's Virtual Clubs Scheme that allowed them to offer bridge to their players via BBO. The NSWBA took a different approach by embracing RealBridge, a new web-based program that incorporates audio and video and thus provides much of the social interaction that people experience at a physical club. The NSWBA began RealBridge sessions in August (as part of the beta-testing of the program) and successfully restarted "normal" sessions issuing masterpoints in November. The RealBridge developers continue to make improvements and other metropolitan clubs have now introduced RealBridge sessions as a regular feature alongside face-to-face sessions. We see SARS-CoV-2 evolving in real time, but our way of playing bridge is evolving too.

Despite the rise of RealBridge, the plan going into 2021 was for all NSWBA events to be held face-to-face. The reality turned out to be very different; most of the weekend finals were able to be played as planned, but RealBridge became the mainstay of the regular Monday night sessions.

It's not just the State events that are being impacted by lockdowns and uncertainty; many national ABF events are being affected as well, with both organisers and players are getting used to last minute changes and cancellations. So what's the situation for NSW clubs regarding the major events for the rest of the year? In chronological order they are:

The Australian National Championships scheduled for mid-July have been postponed until November. This will not have any direct effect on clubs, but it has meant a rescheduling of the Finals of the State Teams. More on that below.

The State Individual was to be held on 31 July but has been delayed to Saturday, 4 September and will be played on BBO (RB does not yet handle movements for Individuals). Please encourage your members to enter.

The State-Wide Pairs was originally scheduled for the first week of August. The period in which clubs can hold their SWP session has been extended until the end of September. That may not be enough extension for the three metropolitan clubs, but will hopefully be good enough for all the others. No online sessions can be played as part of the SWP. Entries will remain open until the end of September in case your club wants to make a last-minute decision to participate.

The GNOT Metro Final is still scheduled for 18-19 September as a face-to-face event, though at the time of writing, it's looking increasingly unlikely to go ahead as planned. The Events Committee will consider contingency plans and make an announcement before the end of August.

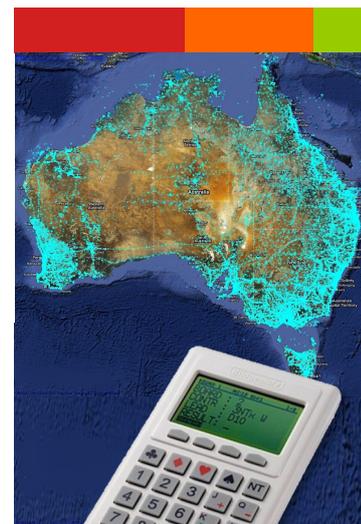
The Spring Nationals, a major ABF event, is scheduled for 13-22 October at Canterbury Racecourse. Being a national event, it is somewhat at the mercy of border closures and the quarantine restrictions imposed by other states as well as any NSW Government mandates. Online (RealBridge) alternatives are being considered if face-to-face play is not possible.

The State Teams Metro Final on 24 October will be played online (RealBridge) if face-to-face play is not possible.

The John Arkinstall State Teams Finals have been moved to 10-12 December to avoid a clash with the postponed Australian National Championships.

The State Open Pairs and Country Pairs Finals are staying on 20-21 November as originally scheduled.

This information is accurate as of the start of August. It may not be accurate when you read it. Major changes will be promulgated on the NSWBA website. Keep an eye on the LATEST NEWS. 🇺🇸



Tech Talk: Bridgemates

In the noughties, the permissible radio spectrum for indoor devices such as Bridgemates was 900-928MHz. Sensibly, the manufacturer chose the centre of this band, 915MHz, on which to base the radio transmission between the tabletop units and the server. By default, Bridgemate tabletop units use channel zero which is 915MHz (channels 0 to 63 are possible).

Then came 5G mobile phones. Their introduction led to a change in the allocation of the Australian radio spectrum, with the frequencies between 900 and 918MHz being reserved for mobile phones.

Consequently, the manufacturer of Bridgemates is recommending that clubs use channels 15-54 to avoid interference from mobile phones. Moreover, clubs could be fined if they are found to be using a frequency lower than 918MHz that causes interference to mobile phones.

The NSWBA has decided to use channels 20 & 26 for its two networks and channel 20 for its set of Bridgemates for hiring. 🇺🇸