

Organising a Congress in NSW

1.1. Introduction

As an introductory remark, it should be noted that the Club is responsible for all aspects of the Congress; the director is only an employee of the Club in that respect.

The first thing to do, obviously enough, is to decide on a date for the Congress and on a format for the event (how many days, how many events, which type). Check for conflicts such as Mother's day, Father's day, long week-ends and all such non bridge events before you decide on a date. Then book this date, as early as possible with the NSWBA so that it can be published in the NSWBA Calendar:

The NSWBA will notify each club to complete the [online congress application form](#) for Congress date approval and this form should be completed as early as possible for inclusion in the following year's Calendar.

Do not forget to prepare a back up date in case your first choice conflicts with an already established Congress in your area. The information about the exact deadline and the name of the person responsible for the Calendar can be obtained from the NSWBA (present co-ordinator is Pauline GUMBY c/- NSWBA, 162 Goulburn St, East Sydney NSW 2010. Ph (02) 9744 1555, Fax (02) 9744 1655, e-mail calendar@nswba.com.au).

1.2. Preparation

1.2.1. General

If your Club has a tournament committee, the preparation and running of the Congress will be the responsibility of this committee, however, whether you have a tournament committee or not an Organiser must be chosen who will be in charge of all operations regarding this Congress.

In order to preserve his/her sanity, this Organiser will work with a de facto tournament committee.

The essential points to be addressed at this stage are:

- Exact programme of the event and any limits to the number of entries plus date at which latest entries are accepted. The entry fees will also be decided at this point. These tend to be fairly standard at \$25.00 to \$35.00 per player per day.
- As far as the prize money is concerned, a figure of \$100.00 per winning player is standard with 50% of that for the runner up and 25% to 30% for the third place getter. These are prizes per player, so a team event will have prizes of \$400.00, \$200.00 and \$100.00 per team for the first three places whereas a pair event will have prizes of \$200.00, \$100.00 and \$60.00 per pair for the first three places.
- Venue and booking; when considering the venue, you must have regard to size, but also to public transport, light, heating/cooling, car park and ease of access for handicapped players.
- Budget: a detailed budget must be drawn and decision taken on entry fees. If a sponsor is ready to participate, the extent of their involvement and the exposure given by the Club to their activities have to be documented at this stage.
- Director: a Congress level Director is chosen, his/her availability confirmed as soon as the final Congress date is approved, fees are agreed and a letter of engagement prepared to be sent 4 to 6 weeks prior to the event. Email is the best medium for these negotiations. Note, however, that if you use a director who is popular on the congress circuit he may have a standing arrangement for the chosen date so **BOOK A DIRECTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

Then comes the second phase of the preparation:

1.2.2. Advertising.

The committee will design flyers (or engage somebody to do so), printers will be asked for quotes although it is cheaper to print them yourself, especially if you use non-proprietary ink cartridges. If applicable, the Club will arrange for the sponsors logo to be available. The distribution of these flyers is to be arranged, through club members playing at other clubs and Congresses and direct mailing.

The best way to advertise Congresses is at other Congresses, so check with your members who attend other Congresses and ask them to take a supply of brochures with them for distribution at the tables (obtain permission from the Organiser beforehand). It may be possible to ask the Director to make an announcement to the effect that someone is available to take entries.

There exists an agreement that all clubs will advertise congresses for other clubs (usually by displaying flyers), and it is in the long-term interest of all clubs to respect this agreement.

Note that you should send at least a copy of your brochure to the NSWBA (so that queries from interested players can be answered) and that it is a requirement that your Congress be advertised to all clubs in your area (for instance a metropolitan Congress should be advertised to all metropolitan Clubs).

As far as the timing of the distribution is concerned, you might want to send flyers out to clubs in your area 2 to 3 months prior to your Congress. Note that the NSWBA can provide you with mailing labels for all clubs in the State. It should be noted that the wording of the flyers must include such as "under the auspices of the NSWBA" and "the ABF has approved the issue of red masterpoints at X level", depending of the MP status of your Congress. If in doubt, check with the NSWBA before the print run starts.

Contact the local press and write a few paragraphs or take an ad, contact Australian Bridge and the ABF Newsletter for a wider coverage. Email a copy of the brochure to the webmaster at webmaster@nswba.com.au to have it displayed on the NSWBA website. Generally, the brochure should include the following information:

- Venue (with a map if necessary)
- Date
- Time (it should be highlighted if the normal 10:00am or 1:30 pm is not used)
- Entry fees
- Prizes (at least the first prize should be given)
- Organiser's name, address and contact phone, fax, e-mail
- Director's name
- Any limit in numbers and closing date if number limited
- System restrictions
- Sponsor information
- List of accommodation and restaurants

1.2.3. Housekeeping

The venue may need to be cleaned prior to the event (without forgetting the windows) and the committee will want to make sure that a supply of clean table covers is available.

If a professional cleaner is retained, it needs to be booked; anyhow, arrangements are to be made regarding cleaning of the rooms BETWEEN SESSIONS and at the end of each day. If no professional cleaners are retained, a supply of large garbage bags is to be on hand and two to five persons designated for removal of cups, used bidding pads and other rubbish generated by bridge players and placing these bags in exterior bins.

If you hold your Congress in a club (RSL for instance), these details must be agreed upon with the management of the club.

Flowers: a florist in your area might want to take advantage of your Congress to display their skills and versatility; give them some publicity in return for some flower arrangements.

The preparation of the rooms and the arrangement of the tables should ideally be done the day before the event; if this is not possible, everything should be in place at least one hour before scheduled start of play. Note that you will need at least one notice board to pin or stick results and information.

You will need an extra table and chair for the Director and you will want to ascertain that there are enough power points for a computer on top of those used for urns and all other catering implements. You will also need extra tables and chairs for the people handling registration at the front desk.

Note that you will need to consult the director for the arrangement of the tables as the movement chosen and the number of entries will influence the number of sections and the setting of tables in the room(s). Prepare a floor plan of the playing area(s) with a grid showing the placement of the tables allowing the minimum space requirement for each table (2.5m² x 2.5m²).

A microphone will be necessary as soon as the room has more than 10 tables and the proper operation of this microphone has to be checked beforehand.

1.2.4. Catering

Catering will have to handle three different tasks:

- Continuous supply of coffee, tea, milk, water, biscuits, fruit juice and so forth (available before start of play). Note if this is your first congress: you will use 30% more juice and biscuits than you have planned;
- Lunch, with decision to be taken whether to provide lunch or not, and, if you opt to, then you will have to decide on the following:
 - prepare one standard plate per table or
 - have the players ordering in advance and then getting their own lunch (Note that the entry fees quoted in 1.2.1 do not include any cost for lunch.)
- After play refreshments – consider wine, cheese and jatz biscuits as being appropriate.-

As for the housekeeping, the type of the venue will largely determine the lunch arrangements: if you hold your Congress in a licensed club, this club will usually have facilities to handle all the catering requirements and may insist that you use their facilities. The only task left is to decide on the level of service you need and advertise this both in your brochure and in the announcement at start of play.

In past Congresses held in RSL clubs, it was found useful to provide the players with lunch vouchers; this simplifies the work of everybody concerned. Whether the vouchers are given or sold to the players is a decision to be taken in light of the budget figures.

If you do not provide for lunch, have someone talk to the neighbouring restaurants and obtain menus (and possible discounts) and pin them on the notice board. You will do this especially if your Congress lasts for more than one day; you may also want to include a list of restaurants in your brochure.

There is room here for sponsorship arrangements. A restaurant may contribute to the event's prize money in exchange for advertising their business to your players.

If you organise your own catering and if you do not retain a professional caterer, the committee will need the assistance of volunteers and a list of such people is to be prepared in advance and updated two weeks before the event, with an apportionment of the different tasks.

If you provide lunch, you may want to insert a line in your entry form for special dietary requirements of players.

1.2.5. Prizes

The scale of prize money quoted in 1.2.1 is intended for a normal Congress. For a Super Congress, the prizes are likely to be higher. Also, if you run a large Congress, you may want to introduce special prizes for categories (best local, best restricted, etc). Overall, it is important that a club does not acquire the reputation of being mean with its prizes and a great deal of help will come from the sponsors. The additional prizes do not have to be cash prizes and a local bottle shop, florist or gift shop can provide help, especially if it can attract some business for lunch and/or dinner.

Note that if you decide to give prizes for categories, players should be able to note their eligibility on envelopes or table slips as early as possible. Mention should be made of this in the welcoming speech.

1.2.6. Technical

The director will be the main source of information on these points and most of the decisions in that respect will be taken by him/her or in close consultation with him/her.

1.2.6.1. Entries, processing, dealing with late or incomplete entries

The entries should be collated and processed by one person only.

The recommended way of collecting the money is to have envelopes on each table at the start of the day. Someone needs to be organised to collect the envelopes, count and collate the money and provide change where

needed. The envelopes should be made available to the director at some time so that they can check any changes to the original entries which may not have been notified.

The NSWBA website provides a facility for online entries. Contact the webmaster for a userid and password to manage the entries. Alternatively, you may use your own website's facilities.

Late entries should be accepted only at the discretion of the Organiser or Director (consulting each other) in case they help or hinder the planned movement.

Two weeks before the event, it may be useful to phone the players who would have been expected to play and who have not yet entered (a database helps) as well as the clubs who have not sent any players.

The final list of entries will be given to the Director and it would be helpful to include home club membership and MP ranking to facilitate any seeding, especially if you are running a qualifying session of 2 or more sections. This list should also note any special requirements (as in "must sit NS") for players in a wheelchair for instance.

If you run a swiss teams event, give some thought to entering a house team so as to avoid a triangle. The director will decide on the particular form of scoring applicable to this house team.

If you run a swiss pairs event, you must have a standby pair available. (If you have two swiss pairs events running at the same time – eg. Open and Restricted – you will need two standby pairs.)

1.2.6.2. Supplementary regulations

A copy of the NSWBA Regulations should be available to the players on the day. Note that any system restrictions should be advertised on the entry form and repeated on the notice board. The Committee should determine the procedure for awarding prizes in the event of a tie and advise the director accordingly.

1.2.6.3. Appeal committee

Some players (say 3 to 5) should be approached and asked if they would accept being part of an appeals committee. This should be done early enough so that the names of the members of this committee can be displayed on the notice board. The existence of this appeals committee will be mentioned in the announcement before start of play.

1.2.6.4. Cards & boards, bidding pads or boxes, caddies

The decision on the number of boards (and the number of sets) will depend on movement and table numbers. Allow 2 boards per table. Divide by the number of boards per match and round up. If more than 30 tables, add another set.

The decision between bidding pads and bidding boxes is for the Organiser (or the full Committee of the Club) to make; if choosing bidding boxes, ask for 5 more than required, the Director will need them to replace the one knocked about by the players. If choosing bidding pads, order them well in advance, this will allow your sponsor to have them printed with their name and to pay for them.

At least one caddie will be needed if there are more than 30 tables and two or more will become necessary if you have more than 50 tables. They will especially pick up results and bring them to the Director, collect the boards and put them back in their boxes and generally speed up the Director's work, making the overall running of the event more efficient. Caddies can also be used to regularly clean cups and discarded bidding pads to keep the place looking tidy.

1.2.6.5. Pre-dealt hands, hand records, security

If you decide to use pre-dealt boards, you will need to use a dealing machine linked to a PC or you will need a team of dedicated persons to flush and deal all the boards. It is obvious that these people cannot participate in the events for which they dealt. By the same token, a playing Organiser should scrupulously avoid the dealing room.

However, you can obtain pre-dealt boards from some clubs. The NSWBA, and the North Shore Bridge Club provide this service for a fee (calculated per board) and you only have to arrange delivery. Your Director may offer this service also.

The Director will need one copy of the hand records and the arrangements for photocopying the other records will depend on the availability of a copier on site. The Director may need a digital copy of the dealing file so as to post results with hand records on the web. Think about using a sponsor (whose name will be acknowledged in a header or a footer) to carry the cost of this copying.

If the boards are delivered prior to the event, organise a locked room to store them and KEEP A SPARE KEY with you.

1.2.6.6. Scoring & Grading

A computer (PC or laptop) will be necessary and the responsibility for providing this computer has to be resolved early: the Director may want to use his/hers or the Club may have one on site that can be used for scoring and printing. If the computer is used in the main playing room, a table and chair and a dedicated power point have to be provided.

Note that the Director should be placed near the microphone.

It is assumed that all license fees for proprietary software have been paid.

The scoring sheets on the tables are another opportunity for a sponsor to advertise if arranged well in advance. You may want to use different colours if you run multi section events, so you will have prepared the travelling score sheets and the teams score sheet and you will keep a supply of paper to run more copies if needed.

If using electronic scorers (bridgemates or similar), the organisation of these units must be performed in consultation with the director.

1.2.6.7. Choice of movements, number of sessions, qualifying sessions

This will be decided by the Director and the Organiser in consultation.

1.3. Running the event

1.3.1. The day before

Go through the checklist for the cleaners, the catering team, the boards and their storage or delivery, the hand records, the caddies, call the director and ask if there are any last minute requirements, confirm the number of entries, check the playing rooms. Also check with the treasurer that all cheques have cleared properly and that the envelopes for prizes are ready.

1.3.2. Registration

On the day, if registration is to take place at or near the front door; a list of entries will be made available to the person in charge of the front desk. A list of delayed or missing players has to be given to the Director as soon as the information is available.

a) Before the start

When the Director arrives, go once again through the checklist, take the boards out of storage, check that the microphone is working properly.

Have a cup of coffee and relax for ten minutes.

b) Start

Welcoming speech (KEEP IT SHORT), announce any catering or other arrangements, the location of the toilets and introduce the Director.

c) Collecting envelopes or table slips

Organise someone to collect envelopes or table slips. If there is money to be counted and numbers to be reconciled, it may be better if a organising committee member be in charge of this task. In any case, the envelopes or table slips need to be given to the director at some stage to process any changes from the original entries and to organise for any special category

prizes. The director must be made aware beforehand whether his/her responsibilities extend to money collecting.

The collector will need bank bag, rubber bands, recapitulative sheet and either a cash box or access to a safe or to a bank night safe envelope.

1.4. The Closure

At the conclusion of play, try to arrange the prizegiving as quickly as possible to ensure maximum attendance: bridge players have a habit of leaving early or of getting impatient.

Arrange for a photograph of the winners. When announcing the winners, try to get the full names and their clubs. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar names.

Thank all the players for coming and invite all of them back next year.

1.5. The Follow up

1.5.1. Masterpoints

Masterpoints are to be sent to the State masterpoint Secretary (masterpoints@nswba.com.au) – usually done by the Director. You need to include a statement on the movements employed as well as a copy of the final results.

1.5.2. Congress Report

Within two weeks send the congress report and the licence report to The Office of NSWBA. The report template can be found at www.nswba.com.au/clubs/congressforms.asp

1.5.3. Results

Immediately send links to the NSWBA Webmaster for uploading the results to website webmaster@nswba.com.au. Also send the photo of the winners.

1.5.4. Other

- Publish the results, by sending them to:
 - the local paper.
 - Ron Klinger, for the Sydney Morning Herald.

- the NSWBA Bulletin editor editor@nswba.com.au. Make a note of some interesting hands
 - wing.roberts@nswba.com.au for the NSWBA's eCongress newsletter.
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- Return all equipment hired or borrowed, including the boards.
 - If you succeeded in getting some press coverage, send a cutting to all players mentioned and another one to their clubs.
 - Update your database with all the details of the participating players and write your Organiser report for the Club's committee (and for next year's Organiser) after consultation with all the members of the organising committee.
 - Send thank you letters to all your sponsors and inform them of the number of people who were exposed to their advertising

Equipment Checklist for Director

Boards

Bridgemates

Table Numbers

Bidding Pads – Bidding Boxes

Pencils – Pens

Travellers – Team score sheets

System Cards – Personal Scorers

Teams Result Pick up Slips (if not using Bridgemates)

Envelopes / table slips for names, ABF No, Entry fees, categories

Movement Guide Cards

Requirements for wall display of results

Extension Cords, Power boards

Timer

Projector & screen

Equipment Checklist for Organiser

Scissors

Sticky Tape

Blu Tack

Paper

First Aid Kit (or equivalent supplies)

Name Tags / Stickers

Marker Pens

Prize money envelopes

Extension Cords, Power boards

	ACTION	TIME
1	Decision to run a Congress; check date approved decide upon a Director, confirm booking of Director	18 months
2	<u>General Planning 1</u> :., Decide upon a venue, make booking, establish a budget, appointment of Organiser; selection of Congress Committee	18 to 6 months
3	<u>General Planning 2</u> : confirm Congress Committee, define area of responsibility, work out and check instruction for all members of committee; Decide upon catering (if professional caterer, need booking)	6 to 2 months
4	<u>Preparation 1</u> : Design flyer, organise printing, organise distribution of flyers. If using professional cleaners, booking If need extra tables & chairs, arrange now	4 to 2 months
5	<u>Preparation 2</u> : Press release in local press , contact the ABF Newsletter, distribute first round of Flyers	4 to 2 months
6	Equipment: organise the boards, decide on pre-dealt hands, organise the dealing or the hiring	8 to 6 weeks
7	Entries: collate	4 to 1 weeks
8	Phone calls: ring around to boost numbers	2 weeks to 4 days
9	Prizes: prepare envelopes	1 week
10	Equipment: have all scoresheet, bidding pads or boxes ready and stored away.	1 week
11	Director: seeding field and sections Pick up boards and store, copy hand records	3 days
12	Catering: final check Pick up extra tables & chairs	3 days
13	Playing rooms: set up	2 to 1 day
14	Registration area set up	1 day