

# 09

## NSWBA Insight



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2022-23 Councillors and Committee members

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News and priorities for next year

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An often overlooked but very useful resource

## Chairman's Corner

# The Future of Bridge – An update on the Strategic Review

The second phase of the NSWBA Review, a survey sent to all Affiliated Clubs and all NSWBA members, concluded in early October. The response rate was an excellent 48% from clubs and 45% from members, which is well above typical survey response rates. The NSWBA Council is immensely grateful to see this keen interest in the future of the game and thanks all who contributed.

What did we learn? Here is a key statistic, which sets context and is often not appreciated enough. When asking respondents to self-assess their level of play, the following distribution emerged:

- ◆ 15% Expert player
- ◆ 26% Experienced player
- ◆ 44% Intermediate player
- ◆ 16% Learner/Novice player

Importantly, only 25% of respondents consider

themselves to be competitive players, while 75% said they are more social players.

Other interesting statistics included

- ◆ 79% of players are over 65
- ◆ Half of the clubs in NSW have fewer than 50 members
- ◆ Fewer than 20% of clubs have increased their membership since COVID arrived and 55% have lost members.
- ◆ Membership losses were greatest, more than 60% of clubs, in the Metropolitan and Northern Zones which suffered more restrictions due to COVID than elsewhere in the State.
- ◆ 60% of clubs reported reduced activity amongst their members
- ◆ Nearly 70% of clubs are digging into reserves to cover operating shortfalls.

While the input and feedback were diverse,

clear themes emerged. Let me share some of the key issues and causes of frustration:

- ◆ *There is a conflict between running a state body and also running a bridge club:* Some clubs assume that because the Sydney Bridge Centre and the NSWBA share premises, preferential treatment is/was given to the SBC.
- ◆ *The NSWBA is Sydney-centric:* A key complaint from Affiliated Clubs was that they have no vote on the matters decided by the NSWBA. This is a complex issue and only partially correct. Zonal councillors have full voting rights on the Council, but through 2021-22, only one of five positions had been filled (suggested to be related to governance concerns because the NSWBA also runs a club).
- ◆ *Clubs are not being consulted or heard:* A clear majority of Affiliated Clubs believe

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this to be the case. This was particularly strongly felt by smaller clubs i.e. those with 50 or fewer members.

- ◆ *More, and better targeted, communication is needed:* This was a strong theme across all phases of the review. This is also felt by the NSWBA Council themselves itself. It is a two-way street, and an area that we must focus on immediately.
- ◆ *Are the Goulburn Street premises still appropriate?* This was questioned both by Affiliated Clubs and by SBC/NSWBA membership, with the message to 'renovate or relocate' as a minimum. Issues with the facilities, environment, catering and lack of parking are actually dissuading players from using the club. Did you know that only 19% of the 162 affiliated bridge clubs in NSW own their premises?
- ◆ *Is a NSW state body actually needed or useful?* Requirements have changed a lot over recent years, highlighting that more focus must be given to increasing activities and support across the regions, particularly in the areas of teaching and promoting bridge. More is expected and should be done by the state body, otherwise clubs might as well affiliate directly with the ABF. The exception here was the running of State events which received much praise.
- ◆ *Disruption caused by online bridge:* There is an urgent need to find a constructive model that does not limit a bridge player's ability to participate in the game, while also ensuring the social interaction that face-to-face bridge brings (two thirds of respondents wanted a return to face-to-face bridge, less so those who consider themselves experts). This is a challenge that is currently being worked on in NSW, in Australia, and globally. The ABF has established a working group to address this specific issue.

I am glad to report that there were also many suggestions and input as to what we should and could do better. In summary, plenty to get to work on. Thank you again for being part of the conversation.

On 12<sup>th</sup> November a large group, consisting of members of all stakeholder groups, participated in an all-day strategy workshop, to work through some of these issues.

The group achieved consensus and made key recommendations as to premises, and the separation of state body and club. Many other topics, such as what makes a good duplicate, resourcing requirements, digital communication and strategy, marketing approach and target audience (pre-retiree audience versus youth initiatives) were also explored and will be part of formulating the strategic roadmap.

At this moment Council is waiting for the final report and draft action plan, which will be subject to review and ratification. In the meantime, we have set up a working group to analyse the operational detail, risks, and necessary steps to be taken to transition into the 'new' NSWBA.

It suffices to say that designing the roadmap of 'what' and 'how' will continue over the next three to six months. So please bear with us, designing a strategy has proven to be a far harder task than was envisaged.

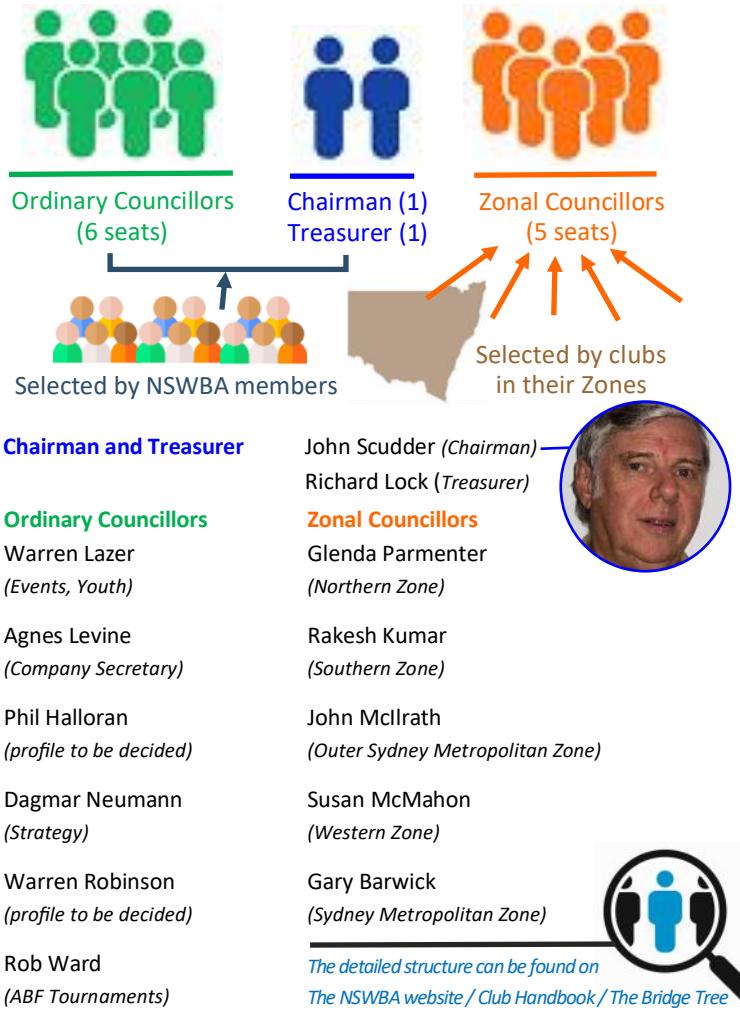
  
John Scudder  
Chairman, NSWBA



## Welcome On Board! The NSWBA

### THE NSWBA COUNCIL

The NSWBA Council is formed by 13 people — a Chairman, a Treasurer, 6 Ordinary Councillors and 5 Zonal Councillors. Currently the Chairman, Treasurer and the 6 Ordinary Councillors are selected by the NSWBA members. The 5 Zonal Councillors are selected by the clubs in their zones.





Nurturing the young and the wise in the Under 100 MPs Championship



The NSW Seniors Team won in the 2022 Australian National Championships

## Council and the Committees

### THE COMMITTEES

These 13 Councillors then share the task of running the Company via 4 Committees. It's not unusual that they wear multiple hats in the bridge community!

### THE STATE COMMITTEE

Chaired by Glenda Parmenter, the State Committee includes the Zonal Councillors and Regional Representatives, who have local knowledge. They are:

	<b>Gary Barwick</b> Zonal Councillor, Metropolitan also Metro North Regional Rep	Metro North (27 clubs)
	Ian Lisle (Regional Rep)	Metro South-East (19 clubs)
	Vince Cariola (Regional Rep)	Metro West (14 clubs)
	<b>John McIlrath</b> Zonal Councillor, Outer Metro	<i>Vacant</i>
		Hunter (16 clubs)
	Ronnie Ng (Regional Rep)	Central Coast (4)
	<b>Glenda Parmenter (Chair)</b> Zonal Councillor, Northern Also North Inland Regional Rep	North Inland (10 clubs)
	Rebecca Rogers (Regional Rep)	Far North (11 clubs)
	Phil Houlton (Regional Rep)	Mid North (12 clubs)
	<b>Rakesh Kumar</b> Zonal Councillor, Southern	
	Stephen Brabyn (Regional Rep)	Southern Highlands (4 clubs)
	Marie Pickering (Regional Rep)	South Coast (4 clubs)
	Karen Creet (Regional Rep)	Far South Coast (7 clubs)
	<b>Susan McMahon</b> Zonal Councillor, Western	
	Marelle Irvine (Regional Rep)	Central West-Blue Mountains (18 clubs)
	<i>Vacant</i>	South West (7 clubs)

### THE EVENTS COMMITTEE

Chaired by **Warren Lazer**, The Events Committee organises all State Championships and all other events run by the NSWBA. It also negotiates the parameters for events conducted by the State body on behalf of the ABF, including tournaments such as the Spring Nationals and Coffs Coast Congress, as well as state-wide events such as the GNOT. In addition, the Committee selects NSW Representative Teams and Pairs as required.

#### Co-Opted State Committee Members:

- Cath Whiddon (Teaching)
- Alan Bustany (Online Pairs League)

#### The Committee members include:

Warren Lazer (Chairman)  
Matthew McManus  
Giselle Mundell  
Fraser Rew  
Andre Korenhof  
David Fryda  
Alan Bustany  
Julian Foster  
Ronnie Ng



### THE ASSETS COMMITTEE

A workgroup headed by **Agnes Levine** with Phil Halloran and Richard Thode takes care of the NSWBA premises and all equipment for tournaments.

### THE CLUB OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

A workgroup guided by John Scudder (Acting Chair) to share hands-on experience and tested materials made available to other affiliated clubs.



## Priorities 2023 – News from the State Committee

**A**t its November meeting, the State Committee of the NSWBA discussed and agreed on its priorities for next year. For those whose reaction is "remind me – what does that committee do?" the State Committee is responsible for promoting bridge across NSW. It also aims to provide support for club activities and club administrators across the state.

Within the limitations of available funds, among the activities the Committee agreed to prioritise were the following:

### Ongoing support for the Online Pairs League

This initiative has proved quite successful in its first two seasons. The number of pairs participating is still not sufficient for the League to achieve its optimal format (3 divisions of 16 pairs) but those who have played have been very positive about it. The event has been developed by Alan Bustany – who is also the Director – and has a number of unique features. Importantly, it matches pairs against others of more-or-less similar skill; offers a shorter (12-board) session; is a truly state-wide competition that makes effective use of RealBridge; and returns significant revenue to participating clubs. Please encourage your members to play in the Summer season – registration is now open on My-ABF.

### Ongoing support for Zonal Championships

The first Southern Zonal Championship was held this year at Mollymook, with clubs from Wollongong to Batemans Bay to the Southern Highlands sending teams to compete. In 2023, similar championships are planned for the Outer Metropolitan Zone (= Hunter + Central Coast) and the Northern Zone. Keep an eye open for announcements!

### Providing CompScore training as part of Director Training

The Committee recognises the need for support for Directors using CompScore. See the article elsewhere in this issue, but also note that this is a component of Directors' Workshops – have a look at the previous issue of Insight if you missed how to organise one for your area.

### Increased support for Teaching

A number of plans for increasing support for teaching in clubs – both of beginners and improvers – are in development. To facilitate this, the appointment of a Teaching Co-ordinator for the NSW was considered to be a high priority. Subsequent to the meeting, **Cath Whiddon** agreed to take on this role. You can be sure that you will be hearing from her!

### Redevelopment of the NSWBA website

The Committee has for some time been keen to make the website more useful – and more user-friendly – for club players and officials. This is now especially relevant in the context of the matters discussed in the Chairman's Corner. A web developer has been selected and a prototype of the new website will be evaluated in the near future. 

### Support for State-Wide Participation in the State and Country Teams

**C**lubs from outside the metropolitan area may sometimes find it difficult to send teams to play in the State Final of the John Arkinstall State Teams and Country Teams Championship. The Events Committee of the NSWBA therefore plans to trial **the finals of the 2023 State Teams and Country Teams on RealBridge**, so that players from across NSW can more readily participate. That means you really can and should encourage more involvement by your club members – if they do really well they won't have to travel to Sydney to compete in the final!



## What's in that Club Handbook?

Many club officials have never looked at the Club Handbook that's available on the NSWBA website. If your reaction to that statement is "What handbook?" then it's possible you have overlooked what some would describe as the most useful collection of information for bridge clubs that has ever been assembled. And more keeps being added!

The latest addition to the Club Handbook is a pair of "cheat sheets" for Directors to correctly set up both Pairs and Teams sessions in CompScore. These have generously been provided by Howard Jeffrey, previously Head Director at Ballina Bridge Club, and are excellent step-by-step guides. They complement the Teams session guides provided last month by Ronnie Ng. Both sets of guides can be found at NSWBA> Club Handbook> Templates and Movements.

While you're there, you might want to browse what else is on offer. Another gem that's available via the site is the Club Masterpoint Secretary's Handbook, which demystifies all (well, almost all) of the arcane manipulations involved in getting masterpoint submissions just right. You can find it at NSWBA> Club Handbook> NSWBA Handbook for Club Masterpoint Secretaries.

Have you seen all the useful information at NSWBA> Club Handbook> Running a Congress? Yes, believe it or not, this is a collection of useful resources that might help you with the running of your next Congress.

There's a great deal else ... you really should check it out.

## An annual Bridge Teachers' Conference?

The ABF recently asked for feedback on options for supporting bridge teachers. In response, the NSWBA State Committee has suggested that one good option might be to jointly support an annual Bridge Teachers' Conference, rotating around metropolitan and regional areas across the country. This could bring together teachers of all levels of bridge, to exchange ideas and strategies as well as receive information on the latest developments in teaching bridge to beginners. Would bridge teachers at your club be interested in going to such an event?

As at most conferences, the interaction outside the formal sessions would probably be the most useful for the participants – nothing beats swapping ideas and observations in conversation. To get you thinking about the sort of conversations that might develop, here's an interesting observation from Wing Roberts, who teaches beginners at the Sydney Bridge Centre:

"In a bridge class, a new player is not only taking in the content of the lesson and the energy of the teacher, she is also absorbing the 'vibe' from other people in the environment. Because we have very little say in who else will be present at the class/session, it's possible that the others can unintentionally create a negative experience for the player."

A recent classroom experience gave me some insight. It happened after a new player made a mistake. Her partner made some comments and the other two players at the table joined the conversation with reference to the lesson that had just been given. The others weren't rude and didn't deliberately talk down to her, they were simply excited because 'they got it'. However, the student was clearly unhappy because they had made her feel foolish.

This sort of subtle microaggression can be difficult to recognise, because it isn't obvious 'bad behaviour'. However, if we don't take care of the student's experience, she may not come back.

Does that mean we should ask students not to discuss at the table at all? I don't believe going to the other extreme is the answer. But it does mean we need to keep our antennae up, to sense how our students are experiencing their classroom environment and to help them recover when things don't quite go to plan."