

AUSTRALIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION LTD

2022 MID-TERM MEETING MINUTES

Pullman Airport Hotel, Sydney NSW: 19 November 2022

The President declared the meeting open at 9.30am.

1. Identification of Attendees

1.1. Roll Call

ACT:	Ian Thomson (Treasurer), Stephen Fischer (Secretary)
NSW:	Rob Ward (Board Member), Julian Foster
NT:	Mairead Kelly
QLD:	Richard Ward (Board Member), Charles Page
SA:	Barbara Travis, Adel Abdelhamid (via Zoom)
TAS:	Sue Falkingham, Hugh Grosvenor
VIC:	Christopher Leach, Jenny Thompson
WA:	Allison Stralow (President), Chris Mulley
Supplemental Councillor:	Peter Reynolds
General Counsel	Phil Markey
Observers:	Peter Cox, Dagmar Neumann

The President welcomed Chris Mulley and thanked Robina for her time on Council.

Christopher Leach noted that he will be retiring from Council in the near future.

1.2. Bona Fides of each person present voting or observing

No proxies were submitted for the meeting.

1.3. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Rosemary Mooney (NT), Laurie Kelso (Supplemental Councillor) and Jane Rasmussen (Secretariat).

2. President's Report

The President spoke to her report and highlighted:

- Joan Butts has retired from the role of National Teaching Coordinator at the end of September, although she is continuing until the end of 2022 to help smooth the transition.
- Attracting and retaining new players will be the major challenge over the next couple of years as we emerge from the disruptions caused by Covid-19.
- Australian players have had significant successes in international competitions this year, and the President congratulated the players who won medals in Poland and Italy.

- There is continuing decline of women interested in Women's tournaments. Many of these players are migrating to either open or mixed competition, and tournaments will need to consider how to cater for the changes.
- The Board is continuing to look at the ABF's organisational model. The current structure of ABF is not well understood by players and clubs, which means effective communication will be important during this transition.

The President thanked Council for their efforts this year.

3. Secretary's Report

Progress on action items from AGM:

Item	Status
Ask Geoff Schaller to hold introductory sessions on the ABF Microsoft environment.	Not yet done.
IT and RobW to prepare an options paper on accounting requirements for ABF.	Board has engaged an external firm to set up and assist with management of Xero accounting software for the ABF.
Board to circulate information on the James O'Sullivan Trust, circulate it to clubs and put it in the ABF newsletter.	Done.
IT to provide historical information and recommendations for changes to masterpoint structure.	Covered in item 4.
Review by-laws relating to cheating considering proposed WBF changes.	Recommendations to be presented at 2023 AGM.
Board to review vaccination policy.	Board agreed that vaccination would no longer be required. Change was publicised to event coordinators and to bridge community.
Board to discuss support for Youth Coordinator.	Done. Support has been, and is continuing to be, provided.
ABF President to meet with the ABDA to clarify relationship between organisations.	ABF President and Board met with the ABDA Secretary. ABF is waiting for further information from ABDA.
Board to consider ABF response to WBF statement.	Concerns were raised in Zone 7 meeting. Zone 7 President to raise with WBF Executive.

4. Treasurer's Report

4.1. Financial statements

The Treasurer presented mid-term financial statements. Key points to note include the increased expenditure relating to international events and decreased revenue due to reduced player numbers in face-to-face events.

4.2. Draft budget and forecast

The Treasurer presented a proposed budget for 2023, with a forecast for 2024/2025. Key points as part of the presentation include:

- Capitation fees are still reduced, but hopefully they will pick up over the three-year period.
- Masterpoints fees are well down from pre-pandemic levels, with about 2/3 of the number of gold points awarded compared to 2019. The Treasurer is hoping for an increase in 2023 to 75% of 2019 numbers.
- Players appear to be entering later to be more flexible due to Covid. Event organisers could increase early bird discounts to make it more attractive to enter earlier. However, costs of accommodation and flights have increased, which impacts people's decisions and may limit the impact of early bird discounts.
- Overall, it is a troubling budget, which requires discussion of options for future revenue.

4.3. Funding options for future operations

The Treasurer spoke to a discussion paper outlining options for funding to cover future operations. The paper introduced the drivers leading to higher ongoing costs:

- Support requirements for MyABF
- New management model for the ABF
- Introduction of Mixed Teams at international events

It then presented options for funding it. A census of table numbers showed 6,200 tables played in the week surveyed, of which about 400 were online.

The three main options for raising money are:

- Charge per player per session
- Masterpoints
- Capitation fees

To implement changes, the ABF must be able to put together a convincing story for what benefits the clubs will see as the result of the changes. The role of MyABF will be critical to this communication.

RESOLUTION 1: Introduce a mix of the options to increase revenue as required.

Council provided general approval for the resolution. Specifics will be addressed in future Council meetings.

ACTION: Finance Committee to provide detailed modelling and proposals, for consideration at 2023 AGM. (Treasurer)

ACTION: Ask steering committee for specifics of MyABF funding, to inform Finance Committee deliberations. (Secretary)

Council discussed other possibilities for the ABF to raise revenue, including:

- Significantly increase participation in the ABF Online Knockout teams.
- Significantly increase cost of gold masterpoints (discussed in item 4.4).
- Attract new sponsorship to the ABF.

Council viewed greater sponsorship a key component and suggested several potential options for sponsors, including:

- Hotels
- Cruises
- Retirement homes
- Travel organisations
- Our own community

ACTION: Finance committee to consider ways to attract sponsorship and present to the Board for consideration. (Treasurer)

4.4. Fees for 2023

RESOLUTION 2: Increase the cost of gold points to match the cost of red points, starting in 2024.

Moved I. Thomson Seconded S. Fischer

CARRIED

ACTION: Communicate upcoming changes about increase in gold masterpoints to the states and organisers. (Treasurer)

RESOLUTION 3: Reduce subsidy for teams by 2024 to about 75% of current level, with 25% available for performance bonus.

Proposal deferred for future discussion.

5. General Counsel Report

General Counsel addressed the following topics.

5.1. Reciprocity of disciplinary matters

This topic is following up on a prior commitment by States & Territories to adopt changes allowing disciplinary sanctions imposed in one State or Territory to be automatically enforced by others.

Some States & Territories have amended constitutions to implement this change. Other states are in the process of modifying tournament regulations or processes to achieve the same outcome.

Club disciplinary matters were not to be automatically included in the reciprocity agreements.

ACTION: General Counsel to write to State & Territory Presidents to assist with implementing this topic.

Council raised the requirement for a process for notification of suspensions.

ACTION: General Counsel to coordinate this process and to work with state secretaries to implement it.

5.2. Status of MyABF credits upon death of a member

General Counsel received advice on options. The legal advice from an Estate Lawyer was that ABF credits are analogous to frequent flyer points, which are retained by the airline upon death. As such, the ABF can simply retain the credits and distribute them as it sees fit.

The alternative possibility is that ABF Credits are money, which creates an asset class for the ABF, with impacts on its tax return and the requirement to contact estates when notified of a player's death.

Council provided general support for treating MyABF credits in the first manner. The amounts of money are relatively insignificant, and this interpretation does not restrict the ABF in transferring money as appropriate.

ACTION: Board to discuss the advice and implement a policy.

5.3. MyABF data privacy

The MyABF project team raised questions about privacy of data held in MyABF, particularly players' email addresses, to General Counsel.

General Counsel advised that:

- MyABF is too small to fall under the Commonwealth Privacy Act.
- MyABF does have to comply with Spam Act.
- An individual becomes a registered ABF player (and member of the ABF Masterpoint Centre) once they join a club, so they are part of the ABF.

Council agreed that players have the following expectations for how their email address is being used:

- The ABF can use it to contact them for ABF business.
- The ABF should not give email address to any other entities.

ACTION: Write to States & Territories to advise clubs that they should inform members of how the information is being used. (Secretary)

6. Status Reports from Key Officers

6.1. ANC 2023

Report received and discussed.

- The MyABF site will be published and start accepting entries soon.
- Flyers have been approved by NEC and distributed to States & Territories.

6.2. Head of Marketing

Report received. The Head of Marketing confirmed that the information in the report can be used by States & Territories as they wish.

Council agreed that the focus needs to be on how to attract new members.

6.3. MyABF project update

The 7,000th user just registered today. Penetration still relatively low, but this will change when the Club Administration module is released and clubs begin using the system.

ACTION: JF to send links to videos to States & Territories for dissemination.

6.4. Youth Committee

Council recommended the ABF to use some of the budgeted underspend on Youth bridge to support players for Youth Week. The Treasurer proposed a reduction of \$200 per player for youth players, to help with costs.

Council raised concerns about the late publication of information about the 2023 Youth Week and the viability of the event. The Treasurer discussed the possibility of running Youth Week in conjunction with the Summer Festival of Bridge, to save costs.

ACTION: Treasurer to liaise with the Youth Coordinator on the above topics.

ACTION: Secretary to thank the Youth Coordinator for report.

7. **Tournament Committee Report**

Peter Reynolds spoke briefly to the main points in the report:

- Regulations and policies are out of date. Over the next year, the Committee will coordinate an update of all policies relating to tournaments.
- The Committee is very concerned with cheating online and will work with the review of Online Bridge to address it.
- If ABF is serious about support viewgraph on BBO, more effort is required to locate and train operators. Currently, tournament organisers are left to find suitable operators themselves.

ACTION: Board to discuss the topic of BBO operators.

8. **Review of Online Bridge and the ABF**

Jenny Thompson (JT) introduced the expected timing for the review:

- Initial findings will be presented at the 2023 AGM
- Final report will be presented at the 2023 Mid-Term meeting

JT has spoken extensively to Kate Terry from NZ Bridge, who is leading their review into the same topic. JT discussed NZ Bridge's approach to the review. The ABF committee will shape its approach considering the lessons learned by NZ Bridge. Consultation is expected to include online surveys and in-person discussions, with the aim of capturing a wide cross-section of views.

While this review focuses on online bridge, it will address all aspects of the future of bridge in the findings.

Expected topics include:

- Changes to rules
- Online cheating
- Choice of platforms

The existing ABF arrangement with BBO was discussed. Since most clubs have moved to RealBridge for online competition, Council agreed there is little value in continuation of this agreement.

ACTION: Treasurer to write to clubs who still run BBO games to advise them to make their own arrangements with BBO.

ACTION: Treasurer to work with BBO to end the overarching arrangement.

9. ABF Strategic Plan

RobW presented an overview of progress against strategic plan.

- Several initiatives are in place to implement elements of the plan
- Culture is still managing us rather than us managing it

The question of KPIs to assess success of the strategic plan was raised.

ACTION: Report on KPIs in future discussions on the Strategic Plan. (RobW)

10. TBIB presentation

Presentation by Steve Weil and Sean Bemrose.

TBIB to put together something for:

- The ABF newsletter
- Summer Festival bulletin
- Short video for the ABF website, which can be publicised to States & Territories

ACTION: Secretary to let Newsletter Editor know to expect article.

11. ABF Foundation (before lunch)

RESOLUTION 4: Appoint Kim Frazer and Sophie Ashton as Trustees for the ABF Foundation.

Moved A. Stralow Seconded Richard Ward

CARRIED

ACTION: Ask ABF Foundation trustees for article for ABF newsletter, to clarify and promote the purpose of the Foundation and its role in the bridge landscape. (Secretary)

12. ABF Role in Teaching

The President introduced the topic of the ABF's role in teaching. She highlighted Joan Butts' work as she retires after 12 years in the National Teaching Coordinator role, a decision which was taken in consultation with the Board. The President mentioned the misinformation surrounding Joan's departure and reminded Council about importance of accuracy in communications on these matters.

Joan and Allison met before this meeting to discuss the way forward. Key discussion points were:

- There is an ongoing need for an accreditation program and an overarching approach to teaching.
- A structure which has a coordinator in each State and Territory working to a national plan could be beneficial.

- The most successful clubs all have teaching teams, with more than one person responsible. These teams may not need to be linked to one club or even one jurisdiction.

Richard Ward then facilitated Council discussion about teaching, noting the submissions provided by States and Territories beforehand.

ACTION: Richard to compile feedback and present the findings to the Board for further discussion.

13. International Tournaments

Council discussed the possibility of hosting upcoming international tournaments:

- 2026 Commonwealth Nations Bridge Championships
 - Proposed by the VBA to run in conjunction with the Commonwealth Games.
 - Council recommended the VBA come up with a definite proposal for the Board to consider.
- 2024 Asia Cup
 - At the recent Asia Cup Delegates meeting, Australia was requested to consider hosting the Asia Cup in 2024.
 - The Board needs to clarify the request before deciding.
 - Once we have the information, the Board will consider its options.

ACTION: Write to APBF to clarify request.

ACTION: Board to decide whether to host tournament.

- Future WBF World Championships
 - Jan Kamras is attending the 2023 GCC and is expected to raise the option of Australia hosting an upcoming World Championship.
 - Council agreed we are not interested under the current business model, but we are open to the concept

ACTION: President to raise the option of a different financial model with Jan Kamras at GCC.

14. Structural Review of ABF

Rob Ward introduced the proposed organisational model and discussed the alternatives considered.

There was extensive discussion about the role of CEO, the risks and benefits of engaging one, and the impacts on other aspects of ABF operations.

Rob will incorporate the feedback from the discussion and present an updated version of the paper and a draft of changes to the constitution at the Presidents' meeting in February. Copies will be sent to Councillors. A final version of the proposal will be presented at the 2023 AGM.

Council approved current direction with a show of hands.

15. General Business

15.1. ANC Trophies

After the 2022 ANC, the trophies are being shipped to ABF headquarters. The tournament organisers pointed out that transport is expensive and damages the trophies, and recommended an alternative solution be found.

Council proposed that the ABF develop a virtual trophy presentation, with acknowledgement of previous winners.

Agreed by a show of hands.

ACTION: Board to initiate development of a virtual trophy presentation, to be implemented at the 2023 ANC.

15.2. Points transfer for overseas players

PR talked to the question of recognition of prior points earned by players who have played bridge elsewhere before moving to Australia. The major problem with developing such a solution is there is not a consistent measure of quality across countries. We, and many other countries, use masterpoints as a measure of strength.

Council agreed the primary issue to be resolved is eligibility for restricted events, rather than accurate recognition of prior accomplishments.

ACTION: Ask Tournament Committee for recommendation for simple solution to assessment of eligibility for restricted events.

One potential solution discussed was that players from overseas should by default not be eligible for restricted events. If they wish to be compete in these events, they would have to submit a case for their eligibility, to be considered on an individual basis.

16. Additional business

- Christopher Leach thanked Councillors and Board members over the past seven years for their good work during his time on Council.
 - The President thanked Christopher for his valuable efforts.
- Sue Falkingham asked for reduction in fees for ANC Tasmanian teams, due to the significant burden being placed on the small bridge community. The President asked for a formal request with details about what is requested, and the Board will consider the proposal.
- Hugh Grosvenor expressed concern about the lack of progress in development of laws for online bridge.

ACTION: Secretary to write to Laurie Kelso to inquire about development of online laws, and what can be done to provide clarity for online directors in the ABF.

17. Next Meeting

17.1. 2023 AGM Date

The 2023 AGM is at 9.30 AM May 3, 2023, in Adelaide, venue TBD.

Meeting Closed 4.45 pm

Stephen Fischer

Secretary, ABF