



# MARKETING REPORT

with Peter Cox



## The Tyranny Of Distance

As the theme of this ABF Newsletter is Teaching, I am going to look at the performance of our clubs, as they are the heart of our bridge life.

Bridge in the USA has been in decline, with the number of clubs falling from about 3,500 in 2000 to 2,500 today. The number of tables played in clubs has fallen 10% in the last 10 years, but tables on the Internet have grown in the same period to now be about one third of all club tables played. COVID-19 has changed the balance, with now obviously more tables being played in 2020 on the internet than in the clubs.

### International Bridge Comparisons

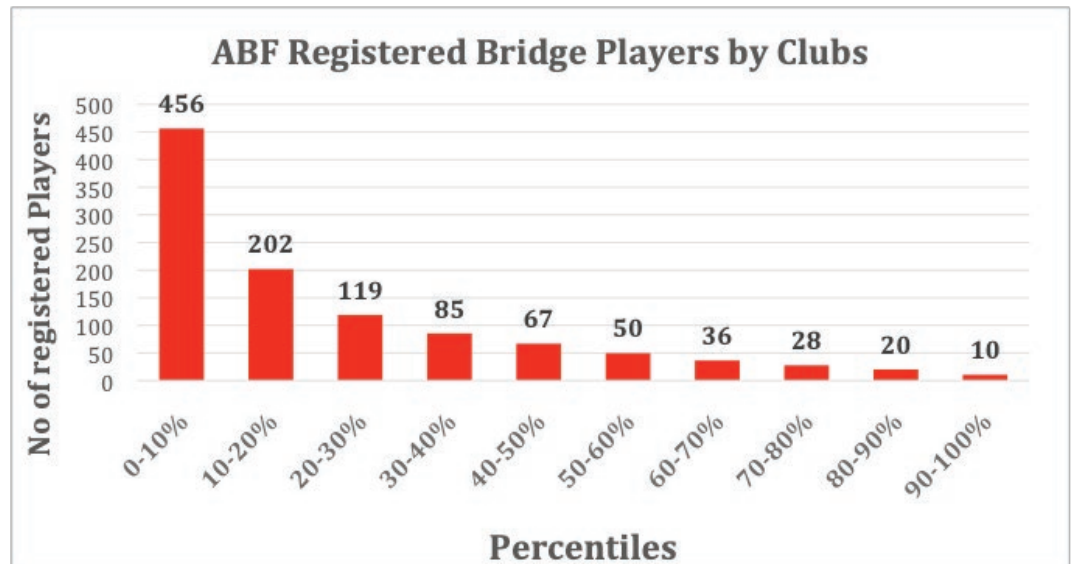
	US	UK	Aus	NZ
No Of Members	165,000	54,000	34,000	14,000
Bridge Clubs	2490	620	330	119
Members per Club	66	87	103	118
Members Per 10,000 pop	5.0	9.6	13.6	28.6

Bridge in Australia has a higher market penetration per head of population than the USA and the UK, but is significantly lower than New Zealand. Though Australia has a large land mass, the population is largely concentrated in the coastal regions, and is well serviced with about 330 playing bridge clubs. As a result we have a higher average number of members per club. However, if you look at a map of the location of clubs, they tend to be concentrated in the more affluent suburbs, such as the eastern suburbs of Sydney

and Melbourne. This leads to a very high concentration of players in a small number of clubs; as you can see in the chart, the numbers of players per club are heavily skewed with only 10% of clubs having an average of 456 members, and 70% of clubs having less than 100 members each, and 50% having less than 50 members.

The problem is that for many clubs, particularly in the country, with few members, is how to have good experienced teachers and enough beginners to make a class and play supervised bridge. Fortunately, the volunteer ethic is still often strong in Australia, certainly in the older bridge playing generations, and many teachers have been able to gain the benefit of Joan Butts' teaching skills and her very substantial library of lessons and videos.

Further, COVID-19 has closed bridge clubs large and small across Australia, and many of our players are hesitant to return to f2f bridge in clubs.



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## Paul Marston's Free Beginners Lessons

As a result of the loss of most bridge teaching this year due to COVID-19, and a drop in club memberships, Paul offered to include ABF introductions into his four week free Zoom beginners lessons online. As many would know, Paul is a champion player with over 50 national and international titles, has written a weekly bridge column for 40 years which is in the Australian every Saturday, has sold over 500,000 copies of his bridge books, and loves teaching bridge.

ABF marketing gave it promotion, and between his reputation and contacts and our members recommendations to friends, the first course was sold out in hours and about 1,000 people applied.

Over the last month I have been able to observe the four free lessons that Paul has provided on Zoom. He has put in a huge amount of work teaching hundreds of people to use Zoom, to be able to play on BBO let alone teach bridge. He and Nevena have built a web page for every participant and created videos for every lesson, produced notes and conducted practice sessions on BBO plus an extra session each week for players to practice with a team providing online supervision.

The first series had 320 starters and he is limiting the next course, already underway, to 500 people. Paul is providing the list of all the participants that came through the ABF to be able to continue their online lessons with ABF clubs and teachers. In South Australia and WA they will be able to go to clubs and continue their lessons and supervised play.

## Online Teachers Wanted

However, with Victoria in lockdown and few clubs in NSW open for f2f bridge, there is a need for teachers to provide national online teaching. Paul is providing continuing online lessons for a fee, and Joan Butts has her subscriber online bridge club that offers a wide variety of videos and lessons.

Now the reason I raise this, is that after all his hard work creating highly motivated students, he does not want them to be lost. Paul has set the bar very high with the people he has taught, who will have similar expectations in a future teacher. If you are an experienced, technology savvy teacher prepared to provide high standards of live and video presentations on Zoom and BBO, then please contact me before this great opportunity is lost.

## The Future

I have over 40 years' experience lecturing senior executives in seminars and international conferences on the future for the media, communications and leisure industries. COVID-19 has changed many aspects of our working, studying, learning and life-styles.

I believe that teaching bridge online to beginners en masse by great teachers is THE FUTURE. Then they can go and play in their local clubs and congresses, with sound learning and supervised practice, even when we all go back to playing in clubs. This will help overcome the tyranny of distance in Australia, and hopefully introduce new generations to the wonderful game of bridge.

**Bridge Lounge Online**

Hi Peter  
Welcome to your personal web page with  
Notes Videos Links

Home

Introduction to Bridge

- Lesson 1 play hands
- Lesson 4 videos
- Lesson 1 notes
- Zoom before BBO practice 3
- Lesson 3 videos
- Lesson 3 notes
- Zoom before BBO practice 2
- Lesson 2 videos

Change Password  
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**Introduction to Bridge with Paul Marston**  
Four FREE online lessons  
25 Aug, 1, 8, 15 Sep 2020, 2 pm (GMT +10)

Introducing the course

**BBO**  
BridgeBase.com

Thank you for submitting your BBO name

You entered:  
**oze**

If it is not correct, please change it below  
(usernames are case sensitive).

Submit

Contact us at Bridge Lounge - Introduction to Bridge





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## THE COVID EFFECT ON CLUBS

**We are all in this together**

COVID-19 and the closure of bridge clubs has raised concern about whether bridge will return to normal or will it be a NEW NORMAL. However, there were concerns before the pandemic. The chart below shows that 70% of the top 10 clubs by number of members were down in 2019. Even half the clubs had fewer members in 2019 than they had in 2012. Of course, there has been a further fall in the year to August, due to a clean out of membership lists in March, and from the pandemic since. The decline in number of tables played is far more severe despite all the efforts to get people playing online through the ABF Club games, Nationwide events and the use of BBO and Stepbridge.

It seems that about one third of ABF registered players have played Online but that leaves about 20,000 who have not been playing in club or online. The question is how many may not return?

The experience of clubs reopening in SA, WA and some in Qld and NSW attendances have been down on pre-virus times with a few exceptions. Some old-

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er people have felt technology-challenged to play online and health-wise have been particularly hesitant to return to f2f bridge. ABF Marketing has been working with some clubs and providing workshops, and on the next page are some of those experiences.

### The Way Back: Bathurst Bridge Club, Regional NSW

Over the last year I have worked with the President and Committee after they had a lost a number of members to a non-affiliated club. I provided artwork, a Facebook Advertising campaign, photos, teleconferencing to the committee, an online Zoom Marketing Workshop and an ABF Marketing Grant. Here are some of their comments:

**Top 10 Ranked Clubs by ABF Registered Players 2012-2020**

Rank	No	Club	Number of ABF Registered Players							Chge		Chg %		Aug-20			
			2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2018-19	2012-2019	No	Chge	%		
1	2120	North Shore Bridge Club Inc	1473	1509	1585	1505	1512	1565	1663	1651	-12	-1%	178	12%	1578	-73	-4%
2	5701	South Australian Bridge Association	832	971	1098	1183	1203	1233	1295	1179	-116	-9%	347	42%	992	-187	-16%
3	6795	West Australian Bridge Club	983	993	979	957	965	977	998	958	-40	-4%	-25	-3%	922	-36	-4%
4	2001	NSWBA/Sydney Bridge Centre	688	742	746	804	843	786	794	850	56	7%	162	24%	686	-164	-19%
5	3480	Waverley Bridge Club Inc	794	823	838	846	843	844	879	787	-92	-10%	-7	-1%	679	-108	-14%
6	2259	Trumps Bridge Centre	861	897	871	857	826	757	715	743	28	4%	-118	-14%	642	-101	-14%
7	4572	Toowong Bridge Club Inc	809	753	736	766	737	726	729	708	-21	-3%	-101	-12%	655	-53	-7%
8	1851	Canberra Bridge Club Inc	605	608	618	660	660	687	687	684	-3	0%	79	13%	604	-80	-12%
9	2210	Peninsula Bridge Club	360	396	443	508	522	557	552	588	36	7%	228	63%	545	-43	-7%
10	4545	Northern Suburbs Bridge Club Inc	630	665	672	615	611	590	579	563	-16	-3%	-67	-11%	512	-51	-9%
			10047	10370	10600	10716	10738	10739	10909	8711	-180	-2%	676	7%	7815	-896	-10%

Over the 18+ months since December 2018 we have used a range of promotional tools. They have included newspaper advertisements, newspaper editorial, Facebook advertisements, Facebook posts, a redesigned website, a banner, attending functions for new arrivals to Bathurst, flyers distributed around the CBD, radio interviews, demonstration bridge games in shopping centres with an advertising placard, promotional stalls in farmers markets, and asking existing members to invite friends and associates.

Overwhelmingly, the most successful tool has been to use existing members to promote the club. However the other methods of promotion still need to be employed as they reach potential members outside the club's family. They promise growth in attracting members, exponentially, from other groups in the region.

The workshop you presented to our club was excellent in showing us what needed to be done, and what was available to us to achieve a stronger club. It focussed our minds on the issues and demonstrated to the active attending members the importance of marketing and membership growth.

*Bill Kierath, Teacher*

We had a very successful marketing campaign for our beginner's lessons, resulting in 18 new beginners attending [after 2-7 people starting in earlier campaigns].

*Alan Sims, President*

Thanks for your time and expertise today for Bathurst. We met quickly and are moving ahead with some ideas immediately.

*Barb Woolfe, Teacher*

### **The Way Forward: Mackay Bridge Club, North Queensland**

I worked with the President, Secretary and committee over a substantial period, providing marketing advice, a Facebook campaign, artwork, New Player survey and an ABF Marketing Grant.

In the second half of 2019, Mackay Club began to build a new marketing strategy for the 2020 Beginners intake and the good news is that of our initial intake

What's on your Bucket List?

## **EVER WANTED TO TRY BRIDGE?**

BRIDGE is like going to a MIND GYM

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414 SHAKESPEARE STREET

### **COST**

\$35 TOTAL including refreshments in air con comfort.  
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### **NEW COURSES**

Beginning Tuesday 4 February 9am – 11 am or  
Thursday 6 February 6.30 – 8.30pm

### **TO RESERVE/ENQUIRIES**

Vic 0419 729 996 Lorna 0439 411 705 mcbc@mackaybridgeclub.org.au

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- Boosts your immune system
- Meaningful social interaction

of 30 students, we have welcomed 14 new financial members into the club from the 2020 intake. This number has not only exceeded all new enrolment conversions, by number or on a percentage basis, from Beginner Lessons in living memory, but it has yielded an enthusiastic burst of energy into the Club. Anecdotally, we know that were it not for COVID-19, the numbers of new members would have been even greater, and we are hopeful that a few more can be re-recruited in coming years.

*Lorna Shuttlewood, President*

Last year, when times were considered normal and no one had heard of COVID-19, we submitted an ABF Marketing Grant application. You acknowledged receipt a day later. That initiated our most successful campaign to encourage new members, with 14 of the original 30 beginners now being gradually merged into club play. We are very pleased with the outcome of our efforts and thank you for your encouragement and support in our endeavours.

*Vic Mason, Secretary*

Peter is conducting Marketing Workshops around Australia on Zoom to help Clubs grow members, and would like to do one with your club members.

Please fill in the [Expression Of Interest](#) form to make your booking.

If you have any further questions contact Peter at [petercox@ozemail.com.au](mailto:petercox@ozemail.com.au) or on his mobile on 0413 676 326.