

ABF's Teacher Accreditation Program

This initiative was launched at the **2014** Summer Festival of Bridge (SFOB). The goal is to support and acknowledge bridge teachers who strive for continuing professional development in the teaching methodology and materials they use to teach bridge. The program is conducted and managed by the ABF's National Teaching Coordinator, Joan Butts.

At this year's SFOB the first round of accredited teachers were awarded their **Certificate of Recognition** as an accredited teacher under the program. These bridge teachers have attained the required number of points to demonstrate their commitment to continually updating their skills and knowledge. Many more teachers are well on the way to achieving this status!

Congratulations go to:

1. Cath Widdon, Peninsula Bridge Club, New South Wales - Cath started playing cards with her grandmother and loved playing 500 and Hearts at University. She learnt in Sydney but when her husband's work required a move to Korea she did not play for a few years. A move to Singapore enabled Cath to take up bridge once again with a group of expats and things have progressed from there.

Peninsula Bridge Club has a comprehensive education program for its members, including *Teams of 3* events, *Pro-Am* tournaments, a mentor service etc. The education team at the club is a collection of teachers, directors and experienced players who have agreed to follow a uniform system agreement as supervisors and an approved syllabus as teachers.

More recently the NSWBA Council has invited Cath to be the bridge education representative for NSW along with being the Metropolitan representative for all bridge clubs in Sydney. On top of these responsibilities, Cath works as a bridge teacher and director on a couple of cruises each year.

2. Stuart Packington, Randwick Bridge Club, New South Wales - If he had completed his homework, Stuart was allowed to kibbitz at his father's Friday night bridge game with friends. At 14 his father taught him basic ACOL and he was eventually allowed to join their regular Friday evening when a guest was unable to attend.

Stuart played bridge at University but played only sporadically once he started work. He again started playing bridge when posted to Jamaica as a number of other teachers were bridge players. With a move back to England and a job involving lots of travel bridge again took a back seat.

A move to Australia in the mid-90s saw Stuart take up bridge once again and upon his retirement in 2005 he became interested in directing and teaching bridge.

Stuart also has taught bridge on cruise ships.

3. Sandra Mulcahy, Toowong Bridge Club and Beenleigh-Logan Bridge Club, Queensland
At the invitation of a friend Sandra learnt bridge in the mid 90s but due to work commitments did not play for 13 years.

Upon her retirement in 2009 she took up the sport once again to keep her brain active and to have fun. In 2011 she was successful in her application for the ABF's National Marketing Officer position and this also keeps her busy.

Sandra has a strong commitment to best practice in all administrative endeavours and has been teaching bridge in recent years at the Beenleigh-Logan Bridge Club and more recently at the Toowong Bridge Club.

As a competitor at the last two North American Bridge Championships she has had the luxury of attending workshops conducted by Audrey Grant. She considers Audrey Grant and Joan Butts best practice in teaching bridge.

Sandra is impressed with the ABF's methodology and materials for teaching.

4. Trish Thatcher, Port Stephens Bridge Club, New South Wales – Trish’s mother taught her bridge in the 90s and she subsequently taught her husband. They eventually joined the Bathurst Bridge Club and started playing in Congresses, did a bridge holiday with Ron Klinger, purchased lots of bridge books and tried to learn ‘everything’.

In 2008 they joined the Port Stephens Bridge Club and Trish was asked if she would teach beginner classes. She always strives to make lessons ‘fun’, with anecdotes of her own and experts’ disasters, stressing that making mistakes is normal and part of the experience of the game. Trish emphasises the importance of the partner relationship and understanding, and that players should be prepared, and be allowed, to play with many partners, not just one.

In 2012 she joined a colleague conducting bridge on a cruise ship where she provided the lessons.

The ABF Teacher Accreditation Program is viewed by Trish as an opportunity to improve her teaching and to gain official recognition for what she has been doing. She has enjoyed both being part of the program and the people she has met while doing it. The ideas on modern bidding and recommended topics for intermediate lessons was just what she had been looking for to incorporate into her lessons.