

6<sup>th</sup> December 2022

## NEW ZEALAND BRIDGE ONLINE STRATEGY: NOTICE TO CLUBS & REGIONS

On behalf of clubs and players the Board wishes to thank the Working Group, Thinktank and subject matter Hubs for their report "A Future Strategy for Online Bridge".

Guiding principles that influenced the work over the last six months included:

- Providing an environment for the game to grow and flourish whether in-person or online
- Nurturing and protecting in-person bridge
- Recognising the social connection and community of club bridge
- Preserving the integrity of the game and minimising the possibility of cheating

Over the last six months there has been consultation with clubs, regions and players with over 125 formal responses to the consultation document. We wish to thank all those parties for taking time to contribute.

It is recognised that "online bridge" will continue to evolve over time and, therefore, our strategy needs to be flexible and adaptable. We must remain open to learning from experience and what happens elsewhere.

On 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December the Board and members of the Executive met formally to review the draft document. The final report will now be refined and then made available on the website. In the New Year the Board will initiate a series of webinars to formally present the findings and recommendations to all Regions and Clubs.

Summary:

1. The final report is the result of deep thinking and constructive efforts to develop a strategy which enables the game of bridge to prosper and acknowledges the importance of different forms of the game
2. Online play is only part of the mix. It is recognised that some clubs don't and will not want to offer online bridge
3. 2023 will include the opportunity for trials and testing of the online strategy. Regions and clubs will receive communications about this in the next few days.
  - Club online sessions will continue to be eligible for masterpoints. Masterpoints will not be awarded for hybrid events scored across the field, they can be awarded separately for in-person and online sections.

- There will be one weekend per month where clubs will be invited to run their tournaments online or in-person.
  - Existing midweek tournaments, not on public holidays, may be run online or in-person.
  - Regions will have the option to run their regional 20A or 15A events in-person or online. The seven events are the North Island Pairs, North Island Teams, South Island Pairs, South Island Teams, National Pairs, National Teams and National Swiss Pairs.
  - A plan for the 2023 Interprovincials is being developed and will be shared in due course
  - The National Congress will be held in-person.
4. The Board acknowledges that there needs to be work on rules for online bridge. While these are formalised there remains an expectation that players will comply with the conditions of play, behave in an ethical manner and demonstrate good bridge etiquette.
  5. New Zealand Bridge has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to cheating. We will be working with RealBridge on the development of diagnostic tools to monitor online play and flag any concerns.
  6. The Board recognises the importance of teaching and learning. New Zealand Bridge will look to increase capability in this area to complement the teaching and learning offered by clubs. This may include online taster sessions, supervised play, beginners and improvers lessons (working with regions and clubs to understand specific needs) and a review of existing teaching materials.

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