

UPDATE FROM OLD BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

20 AUGUST 2021

Back in March 2020 we were advised to close all bridge clubs and the QBA announced that as at 21st March all bridge clubs would close until further notice and they did.

During a 3 to 4 month period, lots of discussions were held with the Qld Sports Federation and the Department of Health because there was confusion as to where bridge in fact came under. The State Government does not regard bridge as a sport however we are members of the Sports Federation of Qld because they think we are or should be. How the disease was going to be spread via the cards seemed to be the only problem stopping players from actually playing. There was and is still no answer for cards.

During this time, clubs turned to online bridge either with Stepbridge, BBO, Real Bridge or RealDeal. As we were allowed 20 people in our homes but not in clubs, players met in other members homes.

Some clubs built larger tables to suit, some clubs purchased plastic screens and On the 21st July, some bridge clubs reopened with larger tables, Screened tables or 4 tables joined together. Sanitising became the norm and bring your own coffee and cup was also the norm.

Some bridge clubs decided to come under the Business Proposal of Smaller venues up to 200m² – 1 person per 2m², up to a maximum of 50 otherwise they could not operate – other clubs had to play under 1 player per 4 square metres.

This was relaxed late in 2020 and we were reduced to 1 player per 2 square metre because we (bridge clubs) decided that we were a sport so we could come under the Field of Play proposal which meant we did not have to social distance whilst playing on the field.

During the 18 month periods we have gone into snap lockdowns, reduction of space requirements, mask wearing – this has caused lots of stress for bridge clubs due to stock items, cancellation of congresses or having a cut-off as to who can and cannot play.

In July 2022, we went into another snap lockdown and when we came out of this lockdown we were told NO COMMUNITY SPORT so bridge clubs decided we were not a community sport but a recreation.

We have been told that we could not make it compulsory to wear masks but if there was a concern, call the police. This has also now changed with Businesses including sports being told that there should be 100% wearing of masks and only those carrying a medical certificate should be exempt however those players should be encouraged to play online bridge. The ABF recently made an announcement that all players attending and playing in Gold Point events MUST BE fully vaccinated. The first congress has not been tested as yet.

I have spent an enormous amount of time on the telephone trying to establish where Bridge belongs and we or they don't have an answer. Department of Health has visited three bridge clubs in Queensland and we (bridge clubs) are doing mostly everything right.

At present there is an argument about mask wearing and the question has been asked if we can sit at tables of 1.2 square metres and sit back, can we not wear masks. THE ANSWER IS NO.

We have asked can we open Kitchens so that players can have something to drink and nibble. THE ANSWER IS OK but ENSURE NO FOOD UNLESS PACKAGED and one person doing the Tea/Coffee. IT IS PREFERABLE THAT PLAYERS BRING THEIR OWN SUPPLIES.

We have had the police visit 4 clubs in the 11 affected zones. Most have passed with some words of advice from the Police to make things safer however one bridge club got warned for not insisting that their members wear their masks correctly. Once the advice to members is completed on a regular basis, it is the members responsibility to wear the mask correctly and they will be issued with the fine. One of the police visits coincided with a bridge clubs members birthday – the members had got a cake as it was a special birthday. They in fact got some gloves and cut the cake for the members and handed it out but they don't recommend that it is a regular occurrence.

Some rules were lifted yesterday and the 1 per 4 square metres will be lifted next Friday which is 8 days. The mask mandate has NOT been lifted and from meetings I have attended this week, it is unlikely to be lifted whilst playing bridge so please do the right thing by other bridge clubs and obey the rules. The last thing we need is for bridge clubs to be singled out and be told that we can no longer play the game that we love.

We are a very lucky sport/community sport/business or recreation or whatever section we call the game we love. Let's keep it that way

Kim Ellaway

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Queensland Bridge Association