

This information kit is designed to assist you, the enquirer, with information about Bridge in Victoria. Who are the relevant bodies, what do they do, what assistance can they provide, what about other sources of information both within Victoria, and inter-state?

The Victorian Bridge Association (VBA)

The VBA is the state controlling body, for Victorian Bridge. It has a Council, elected by members of the VBA. This Council has a President, 2 Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, and a number of ordinary committee members. The VBA's charter is to provide overall direction and administration of the game in Victoria, to arrange tournaments to select players to represent Victoria in interstate competition, and to promote the game. Each state and territory has a similar body, although the set-up and constitution of them vary substantially. Each state body is the local representative of the Australian Bridge Federation (ABF). The VBA provides sanctions to clubs to hold congresses, and, in particular, to award various grades of Master-Points (see later) at them.

The Australian Bridge Federation (ABF)

As the VBA controls Bridge within Victoria, so the ABF controls Bridge in Australia, and represents all players. It looks after financial matters concerning Australian representative teams, and local variations to the Laws of Bridge, as handed down by the World Bridge Federation (WBF), among other things. It provides overall direction to the State bodies. It handles the money raised from the State bodies by capitation fees, and Master-Point levies.

The Clubs

Victoria has around 50 Bridge clubs, scattered the length and breadth of the State. They range in size from tiny, with 3 or 4 tables in regular play, and maybe 20 members, to much larger clubs, with well over 200 members, and 20 to 30 tables in regular play. Clubs may charge membership and joining fees, as well as session fees. Some clubs may run a Congress each year, that is, a competition, open to all players, typically run over a weekend, with prizes and/or prize money to the victors. Clubs may or may not be affiliated to the ABF through the VBA.

What is Affiliation?

If a club chooses to affiliate with the ABF, then its members are charged a capitation fee each year, on top of any local fee. This money goes to the ABF and is used to help defray international competition expenses and to assist in helping the ABF run Bridge nationally. In addition, when sessions are run within a club, players will be awarded master-points for finishing in various places in a field, from first downwards. These points are ultimately managed by the ABF, and clubs are charged for the number issued each year. An Affiliated club will also have the chance to award Red and Gold points, for certain events and Congresses, above the standard Green points. Presently, the ABF capitation fee is \$12 per player.

Master-points

Players earn master-points for doing well in sessions. As points accumulate, a player earns a higher ranking, starting from Junior Master, all the way up to a Grand Master, with various gradations in between. As the rank gets higher, there are requirements for Red and Gold points, not just Green points. While clubs can hold sessions where Red and, sometimes, Gold points are available, players will earn more by attending weekend congresses, and National events, both within Victoria and inter-state.

The Victorian Levy

Victoria has imposed an additional levy on affiliated club members, presently \$3. The money thus collected goes specifically towards the promotion of Bridge in Victoria. It is managed by the VBA, and is intended to be reported on to clubs each year by the VBA.

Future Bridge and its role

Future Bridge is the joint creation of the VBA and the FBCV. Its role is to assist in promoting Bridge within Victoria. It looks to all players and clubs to suggest how this may be done. It receives requests for assistance, either in the form of funding, or of people, or equipment. A form has been developed which goes to any person/body seeking assistance, preferably BEFORE any activity. The form is used by the administrators of Future Bridge to determine whether or not, and to what extent, the activity can be supported.

Future Bridge is not intended to confine its role to helping ONLY affiliated clubs. Members believe that its role is to promote Bridge to anyone, anywhere, and as such, it will receive requests from non-affiliated groups. However, clearly the guidelines on expenditure have to be rigidly observed, as the funds are not bottomless, and should not be seen in hand-out terms, nor as a substitute for planning.

The Federation of Affiliated Bridge Clubs of Victoria (FABCV)

The FABCV is a body made up of representatives from affiliated clubs within Victoria. It exists, because of concerns expressed in the past, and still true, that the VBA is an unrepresentative body. The VBA council is elected by only its members, yet its task is to represent all players within Victoria. This has led to great dissatisfaction with the way Bridge is being run, and hence the FABCV's formation. Talks aimed at improving the lot of all players were instigated several years ago, which resulted in the VBA's decision to invite 2 club presidents to serve on the VBA Council. The FABCV aims to see the democratisation of Bridge administration within Victoria, it does seek necessarily to be the body that does the administration.

In addition to the role just described, the FABCV concentrates on providing bridge tournament experience to the newer player. It runs several the Victorian Simultaneous Pairs and the Croft Teams each year.

Regional Bridge Associations

The FABCV was involved in discussions with a number of clubs in the eastern region of Victoria, and determined that there might be value in a local body, with a management and supervisory role for that area. To this end, representatives met and discussed the issues, and this resulted in the formation of the Eastern Region Bridge Association (ERBA), a body with a role similar to FABCV, but confined to players in the Eastern Region of Victoria. It oversees events in the area, co-ordinating matters so that clashes are avoided, and organises events under its own banner.

A Northern Region Association has existed for some time, and is presently being reactivated.

Running your local club

The biggest expense in setting up a club is equipment. This includes tables, perhaps chairs, boards, cards, stationery, and, further in the future, perhaps a computer to handle scoring, master-pointing, and membership maintenance. The VBA and Future Bridge may be able to assist with a loan of boards and tables for a period, until you are sure your club is going to continue, and you are in a position to be able to buy equipment for it.

Many clubs use a playing Director, to oversee sessions, particularly small or new clubs. As you grow, you may want, indeed need, a non-playing Director. Director training courses are offered at various times during the year, and you should think of having some of your members attend. It is useful to have several people capable of running sessions, and even if they don't want to do that, learning about the Laws in more detail can be useful, and rewarding. After attending a Director's course, an examination is available, that can be done 'open book', at your leisure, that accredits you as a Club Director. You may wish, later, to move on to become a Congress, State, or even National Director, if you are interested in this aspect of the game.

You may wish to have someone provide players with lessons, both beginners, and more advanced. There is a number of experienced teachers in Victoria, who will be more than happy to assist you, for a suitable fee. For new clubs, this is typically an area where you may think of asking for assistance from 'Future Bridge' (see above).

There are several computer systems available to support you in running your club, and advice will be freely given on the various options.