

This time last year I outlined a goal for the Tea Tree Gully Bridge Club to be a welcoming, friendly environment in which to have fun playing bridge.

How to address falling membership was identified as a major concern.

Since then Covid issues have continued to raise their ugly head – things seem to be on the improve and then there is another outbreak!

In September we lost Jean Ashworth, along with her legendary laugh. Several other members, including Eric Bates, John Duckworth and Ian Wardrop, have retired as a result of advancing years or failing health.

At this point I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their contribution to the club – they have all been very supportive and diligent in their duties and in looking to move the club forward – those with specific roles have done a great job. We also need to thank Rob Branson for dealing 3 boxes of cards each week and making sure they end up where they are supposed to be.

The major focus for the year was how to maintain our current membership and how to attract and retain new members.

One of the first changes was to reintroduce the 3 feature annual club events – the Club Championship, The Derek Ashworth Handicap and the Len Thompson Handicap. To reduce the cost of the Club Championship, I directed it at no cost – saving the fee of an external director.

We then revisited the Annual Christmas Function, changing the venue to the Function Room at the Clovercrest Hotel and using the event to have our Patron present all of our annual trophies as well as the winners of the club special events. This proved to be an outstanding success.

To improve the financial viability of Wednesday evenings we moved them to the smaller room 7 at U3A – halving the rent. These sessions are now financially viable. We need a few more people playing Friday afternoon to make that session more viable as Dernancourt rent is much higher.

The biggest change, however, was the decision to seek affiliation with the South Australian Bridge Federation and the Australian Bridge Federation. After a lot of investigation into affiliation, this proposal was overwhelmingly supported by you, our members, at the Special General Meeting in March – I thank you all for putting the considered thought required into the proposal and then supporting it.

We moved quickly to achieve affiliation because there was a narrow window available for us to make an immediate saving of more than \$1000 on our insurance this year – we made it with a day to spare.

In registering our 62 members who actively play, 10 were current members of other affiliated clubs, 27 had inactive ABF affiliation and 25 were new to the system. I was surprised that so many had inactive ABF membership, which meant that our first year costs will be higher than anticipated (new members are free in year 1).

At the SGM I anticipated the ongoing net cost of affiliation to be between \$1200 and \$1500 per year – this seems to be proving correct at this point – closer to \$1500 than \$1200. A note of caution however, as it seems likely that ABF costs will increase next year, so the ongoing cost would be a bit more, but manageable.

After a steep learning curve, the Masterpoint Secretary (me) had our masterpoints up and running, with hiccups ironed out, by the end of April! – some members have already been awarded promotions, with Certificates to follow.

Bill Roche has been appointed as our delegate to the SABF and is well immersed into the position and doing a very good job.

Being affiliated makes you all members of an almost world wide bridge club! You can take your ABF membership to any bridge club and be accepted and recognized as a bridge player.

I also encourage you to go to the ABF website – there is a link on our TTGBC website – and see if there are other benefits you may access – particularly travel insurance - there are special deals for ABF members and their families for those up to 90.

I hope that even if you aren't interested in masterpoints, you may at least get a bit of fun from achieving some and getting a certificate or 3.

I must formally document my appreciation to Di Marler from SABF who was extremely helpful and supportive in the affiliation process and David Anderson for advice he has given in getting masterpoints working.

I think Bill will agree that we have been enthusiastically welcomed into the SABF fold.

It has been a busy year, an interesting one, and one in which we have made some very positive steps. We will learn that the club remains in a sound financial position.

I hope the coming year will see us consolidate what we have started and continue to work on ways to attract new members, keep our current ones happily entertained and hope that the Covid gods become more kind.

Milton Hart