

It has been another busy bridge year, with lots of face to face and online with BBO or the more popular Real Bridge. Although Covid is less dominant there has certainly been the Influenza, RSV and pneumonia viruses having an impact. We can't let our guard down yet!

Last years Canberra in Bloom was well attended and received, under the expert direction of Ronnie Ng and Daryl Whitfield. Ronnie and Daryl are in charge again this year, with a very popular new event - a one day Novice/Restricted Teams. A large part of the proceeds from the event go into the youth budget, supporting players in the region.

Will Jenner O'Shea continues to do a sterling job helping the young and the not so young build their bridge acumen. He has run a number of youth training sessions, advanced workshops & 1 day workshops. Players from around the surrounding districts work it in with a visit to Canberra and there is a lot of positive feedback. BFACT greatly appreciates the time & effort Will puts into these events plus Canberra Bridge Club for the use of their premises. Thanks in part to Will's efforts two locals Diya Shah and Zara Chowdhury were part of the 2024 Under 26 Australian Women's youth team.

BFACT has a long history and if you want to learn more I can recommend '*A Compulsive Pastime: A History of Bridge in the ACT and Surrounding Regions*', published this year by two ACT legends, John Brockwell and David Hoffman. In it you will find out that the ties to the ACT from regional clubs Cootamundra and Cooma (Monaro) go back to the 70s and 80s! Yes Cootamundra and Monaro, two great clubs, are part of BFACT.

Cootamundra Bridge Club held the BFACT InterClub teams event as part of their annual congress. This is a new initiative, with the aim to have the InterClub outside of Canberra roughly every 3 years (Monaro is next). These country congresses are really well organised, and enjoyed by all participants. Clubs playing this year were Canberra, Capital, South Canberra, Monaro, West Wyalong, Wagga and of course Cootamundra. A big thanks to the organising committee for doing such a great job, and also for agreeing to take this on, it was a bit of an unknown. Capital Bridge Club has a turn as host next year. The Monaro Bridge Club is starting their congress (Back to Cooma) again this year, on the weekend of 12/13 October. I encourage you all to attend, it should be a great event.

During the year BFACT was delighted to welcome Gungahlin Bridge Club into their fold. Gungahlin is a well organised friendly club, playing at Gungahlin Lakes Golf Club on Wednesday mornings. They use MyABF, a similar process as used in Canberra Bridge Club.

Sebastian Yuen ran a successful Director training workshop in November, with another one planned for November this year. If you have the time and can see yourself in the role seriously consider becoming a Director - the more we have, the more holidays they can go on.... BFACT is fortunate to have Sebastian and Bruce Crossman to help with any Director issues. BFACT also thanks Barry Butz, a Director from South Canberra, who has been helping Monaro and Gungahlin.

The ABF appointed David Fryda to the new position of ABF Executive Director, effective 1 November 2023. David has hit the ground running, helping reshape the ABF as it transitions to increased use and development of the MyABF platform. As a consequence master point and ABF annual fees will rise in 2025, see this video for more information.

The ABF has continued the Nationwide Pairs twice a month (played at local clubs), and also the ABF Knockouts on Real Bridge (with a reduced time frame to last year). The GNOT (Grand National Open Teams) format has changed, with the second phase being a 64 Team online knockout event on Real Bridge. This is a 3 day weekend catering for all time zones, not for the faint hearted (48 boards per day). The finals (phase 3) will be face to face. Also the 2026 ANC will be held right here in Canberra (make sure you fit it into the diary), a focus for the BFACT Council - a busy couple of years ahead.

I would like to thank all the BFACT Council members for their great work over the year. Retiring Councillor John Niven has been the Secretary since 2018, helping BFACT run smoothly for so many years. On behalf of BFACT and the wider bridge community I thank John for all the work and time he has given to bridge, both at BFACT and at his local club (where he was the reviewer). I am also retiring from the President's role, time for new shoes.... *Cathy Nichols BFACT President*