

# Victorian Bridge Association – State and Congress Disciplinary & Ethics Regulations

Bridge players should:

- be polite and courteous to their partners, opponents and officials at all times;
- have respect for other people's rights to have different opinions;
- play in a proper, mature and inoffensive manner; and
- be aware of their obligations under Laws 73 and 74 of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge

These regulations describe the procedures to be adopted in reporting and dealing with breaches of the above code of conduct.

The VBA provides central secretarial services for the administration of these regulations. In the following, "written" and related terms mean by email and/or written on paper as the context permits.

The term 'congress' refers to any of the types of events specified in regulation 1.1.

## 1 SCOPE

1.1 These regulations apply to any breach occurring at or relating to:

- Congresses conducted by affiliated clubs under the auspices of the VBA, whether played at the club's regular venue or some other location;
- Victorian State events and any associated side events;
- Regional finals of GNOT qualifying events;

1.2 These regulations do not apply to:

- Regular club duplicate sessions and club events (including but not limited to qualifying events of the GNOT);
- ABF licensed events (e.g. Victor Champion Cup);
- Bridge Holidays and Cruises, whether conducted by an affiliated club or an independent operator.

## 2 REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 A complaint may be submitted by:

- Any player participating in a session during which an alleged breach occurs
- Any person affected by a breach occurring in or around the playing venue during the period of an event
- Any person authorised to take part in organising or running the congress (whether paid or not) affected by a breach relating to the congress occurring at any time or place
- The Director or Congress Convenor
- The Secretary of the VBA in the case of a suspended player entering an event

2.2 Complaints must be submitted either by email to [secretary@vba.asn.au](mailto:secretary@vba.asn.au) or in writing to the offices of the VBA, or in writing directly to the Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee.

2.3 A written complaint must reach one of the addresses specified in 2.2 within 7 days of the date on which the breach is alleged to have occurred.

2.4 The accused person(s) will be informed by the VBA within 7 days of receiving the complaint that a complaint has been submitted.

2.5 Complaints against directors, staff or officers of congress events are not subject to these regulations. Such complaints should be submitted directly to the organising club of the congress.

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### 3 GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The Congress Disciplinary and Ethics Committee (the **Committee**) consists of up to 12 members, with a target composition of 6 from metropolitan Melbourne clubs and 2 each from clubs in the Western, Northern and Eastern regional association areas.
- 3.2 Nominations are ordinarily taken once every three years with nominations for VBA Special Councillors. Each club may nominate 1 member. If more than the target number of members for a region is nominated, an election will be held in the same manner and at the same time as the election of VBA Special Councillors
- 3.3 The Committee selects a Chairman from its members, annually, during January.
- 3.4 The Committee may appoint members to fill casual vacancies
- 3.5 Members must be renominated and elected every three years
- 3.6 Committee members may stand for re-election.
- 3.7 These regulations may be revised by the VBA Council as required from time to time. The Committee, the VBA Council or affiliated clubs may propose revisions.

### 4 THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

- 4.1 All complaints will be directed initially to the Chairman of the Committee, who will assign a member of the Committee as the Investigating Officer to conduct the initial disciplinary process. The Chairman has discretion to appoint further Committee members to assist in the process (for example if the complainant and accused live in different regions).
- 4.2 The assigned Committee member will interview the complainant, the accused person(s) and any other relevant parties. If the complaint is sustained (the standard is 'comfortable satisfaction'), the Mandatory Penalties as listed hereunder will be applied. The Investigating Officer will determine the exact penalty within the range set, in consultation with any other appointed Committee members and the Chairman of the Committee, and in accordance with any separately developed penalty guidelines. The accused person(s), the complainant(s) all Victorian affiliated clubs and the ABF Recorder will be informed in writing accordingly.
- 4.3 Having been informed of the outcome, the accused may appeal the decision and request a Disciplinary Hearing to be held before a separately convened Hearing Committee (which will consist of between 3 and 5 members of the Committee or other co-opted people, as appointed by the Chairman, and which will exclude the original Investigating Officer(s)). In such an event, the reasons and grounds for requesting a Hearing are to be set out in detail. The request must be submitted to the VBA by email or in writing within seven (7) days of being informed of the sentence imposed.
- 4.4 In the period between an applied suspension and the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing, the accused may only continue playing at congress events at the discretion of the President of the VBA.
- 4.5 The accused is entitled to be represented before the Hearing Committee by another financial member of a VBA-affiliated bridge club or by a lawyer, who need not be a member of a bridge club. If the accused disputes facts found during the initial disciplinary process, witnesses may give evidence on matters relevant to the findings of fact.

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- 4.6 The Hearing Committee has the option of acquitting the player, varying the applied penalty within the range specified below, or modifying the offence under which the player is charged and applying the appropriate mandatory penalty for the modified offence. An appeal considered by the Hearing Committee to be frivolous or vexatious may attract an increased penalty within the range specified below.

### 5 MANDATORY PENALTIES

- 5.1 Should a person be found guilty of committing an offence, the Mandatory Penalties as listed below shall be applied.
- 5.2 The start date of any suspension will be determined by the Chairman of the Committee having regard to any disruption to pending congresses and any other relevant considerations.
- 5.3 Suspension applies to all events listed in 1.1.
- 5.4 A suspended player will not be permitted to represent Victorian nationally during the period of their suspension.
- 5.5 Players should be aware that a suspension under these Regulations may be recognised and applied according to the provisions of the Regulations of another bridge jurisdiction, whether another State or a National body.
- 5.6 A player suspended in another jurisdiction under a comparable disciplinary regime (whether of another State, National or International) will be deemed to have been suspended under these Regulations in respect of the events listed in 1.1. The Committee will determine from time to time which other disciplinary regimes are comparable for this purpose.
- 5.7 All Victorian affiliated clubs will be informed of the suspension (except deemed suspensions under 5.6), and congress entries from the suspended player(s) must not be accepted for any congress to be held within the period of suspension.
- 5.8 If a person is found guilty of more than one offence, committed on the same occasion, all or part of the penalties may be applied concurrently at the discretion of the Chairman of the Committee.
- 5.9 All or part of the sentence may be suspended for a period, as is deemed fit.
- 5.10 No part of a sentence may be suspended for a second or subsequent offence committed within ten (10) years.
- 5.11 Any suspended sentence imposed for a first offence must be added to the sentence for a second offence, provided the period for which the suspended sentence was imposed has not expired.
- 5.12 If a person is found guilty of any subsequent offence even if other than the type of offence of which he was first guilty, it shall be deemed to be a second offence unless the person can show reason why it should not be so.
- 5.13 For the purpose of second and subsequent offences, an offence will remain on the person's record for seven (7) years.
- 5.14 In the table of Mandatory Penalties, "D" indicates that the penalty is discretionary, "L" indicates a lifetime suspension, "W" indicates a warning and numbers indicate the number of weeks of suspension (from playing in congress events subject to these regulations).

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Table 1 – MANDATORY PENALTIES

	<b>Offence</b>	<b>Penalty 1<sup>st</sup> offence</b>	<b>Penalty 2<sup>nd</sup> offence</b>	<b>Penalty 3<sup>rd</sup> or later offence</b>
1	Verbal abuse of an opponent or partner	W-12	4-24	8-52
2	Verbal or written abuse of a person authorised to take part in organising or running a congress	2-12	4-24	8-52
3	Making any racial, religious or cultural remark or comment to which offence might reasonably be taken	W-12	4-24	8-52
4	Use of crude or abusive hand signals or gestures	W-4	2-8	4-24
5	Threat of assault or physical interference	W-12	4-24	8-52
6	Physical interference without intent to cause grievous bodily harm	8-12	12-52	52-L
7	Physical interference with intent to cause grievous bodily harm	L		
8	Wilful damage or abuse of playing cards, scoresheets, bidding pads, bridgemates or other equipment or property	W-4	2-8	4-16
9	Persistent non-premeditated breaches of the Laws of Bridge with the effect of gaining an unfair advantage and/or unauthorized information	4-12	12-24	12-52
10	Deliberate and disguised or concealed, violation of the laws of bridge intending to improve one's score	26-208	L	
11	Breach of congress venue policies or operating permit requirements (where it is reasonable to presume the player to expect or be aware of such policies or requirements)	W	W-2	2-4
12	Presenting in an intoxicated state, or becoming intoxicated during the course of a session	W-12	2-24	4-52
13	Playing in a congress whilst suspended	D	D	D
14	Any other offence not specifically covered by any of the above	D	D	D

Legend: "D" indicates that the penalty is discretionary, "L" indicates a lifetime suspension, "W" indicates a warning and numbers indicate the number of weeks of suspension (from playing in congress events subject to these regulations).