



Dear fellow member,

Members will be aware that the VBA's primary purpose is to oversee the game of bridge in Victoria and its dozens of affiliated clubs. But, for many years, because of its financial challenges, the VBA has not been able to carry out important aspects of its primary role in a strong and effective fashion.

For the past decade, the VBA Council has been grappling with complex issues associated with our Poath Road site and operations. A combination of shrinking bridge club attendance and the mounting costs associated with an ageing building, that is far too large for the scale of our current operations, has resulted in losses since 2011. This situation is still occurring, despite the efforts of the Council and management to reverse this trend. Unfortunately, propelled by the fallout from COVID, these financial losses are likely to continue unless firm action is taken.

At the 2018 AGM, Council provided members with a realistic assessment of our financial prospects and indicated it would be pursuing certain avenues to remedy the situation. Unfortunately, none of these avenues have resulted in any long-term positive scenarios. Therefore, we have reached the point where action must occur, before our cash position reaches a point of crisis.

Bridge as a game worldwide is suffering from loss of players and a failure to gain new followers among all groups under 60 years of age. Victoria is no exception. COVID has compounded the difficulties of attracting new players and a strong campaign of promotion at a state level and support for our clubs is required to reinvigorate our great game.

As the result of much deliberation and consideration, we have arrived at the conclusion that we should sell the clubhouse and wind down the club to primarily focus on state events. Proceeds from the sale of the Poath Road property would be invested to generate a long-term stable income stream under corporate governance arrangements recommended by legal experts and invested under the advice of finance professionals. This will finance the development of bridge in Victoria, greatly assist our clubs and enable a dynamic vision for the game to be enacted. In other words, to return the VBA to its principal purpose as defined in its Memorandum of Association, i.e. to be a strong governing organization.

We know that for some of you who have played daytime bridge at the VBA for many years, this may be a tough pill to swallow. We recognise that it will also be difficult for many evening players, especially those with a long association with the VBA at Poath Rd. One of the reasons for the demise of our daytime operations is paradoxically because we are surrounded by great clubs, like Waverley, Gardenvale, Dendy and Bayside, which run excellent daytime bridge sessions and are highly successful. We will be strongly encouraging our daytime group from the beginning of 2022 to join these clubs, which will welcome you with open arms.

The Council has considered several high-level changes, which would alleviate the financial issues we currently face. It is important to underline that these changes,

although far-reaching, are essentially administrative in nature and do not involve any changes to our Memorandum or Articles of Association.

Given all of the above, the Council has now come up with a plan for the future which is set out below. We will be holding information sessions which all Members may attend in August to discuss these plans with you in person. Following these briefing sessions, and assuming that nothing more advantageous emerges to change these plans, the Council intends to ratify the proposals outlined and proceed with implementation. They should be read alongside the information provided in the attachments.

Proposals:

The following is a summary of the proposals and their proposed implementation timetable:

- 1) The VBA bridge club will continue to exist as an ABF-affiliated and registered club, but will cease to offer daytime duplicate, teaching or supervised-play operations after December 2021.
- 2) All State Bridge (Wednesday night) and VBA club signature events (Monday night) will be held at a location or locations other than Poath Road, from the commencement of the 2022 programme.
- 3) The VBA office and VBA honour boards, library and other permanent fixtures and fittings will be relocated in early 2022 and the Poath Road site cleared.
- 4) The Poath Road site will be put up for sale in 2022, after appropriate preparation and oversight by a special working group of Council, in association with a professional commercial real estate advisor and auctioneer/sales specialist.

Attached is a Question & Answer document that explains the scope of our issues. In addition, there will be two principal briefing sessions at Poath Road on **Wednesday August 4 at 6 pm** and **Monday August 9 at 9.30 am**. All members and associate members of the VBA are cordially invited to attend those sessions.

In the meantime, please direct any and all questions or comments not covered in the attached Q&A document, to this email address: secretary@vba.asn.au. Questions will be collated and answered at the briefing sessions and added to the Q&A document where appropriate.

In conclusion, I assure you that the Council has not arrived at these proposals, years in the making, in a hurried or ill-considered fashion. But I believe they are the right proposals and will lead to a far better Victorian Bridge Association creating a dynamic and productive body that will have great capacity to advance the game of bridge in our state.



Christopher Leach
President.