



29<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## **Covid Advisory No 27 Returning to Bridge**

For the last 2+ years we have endured- Alert Levels and Traffic Lights, lockdowns and limitations on gatherings, isolations and restricted movements, testing, proof of vaccination and mask wearing.

Throughout Clubs have navigated the ever-changing set of rules and interpretation of same, caring for the wellbeing of members and staff. Equally members have shown the same level of commitment for their own and others health.

We have now reached a point under the “Orange” setting where there are no limits for indoor gatherings and, no need for face masks but wearing of them is encouraged by government. Whilst we are not back to pre-pandemic days, we are observing players returning to their clubs.

The return to club play must be seen as a positive step. We know for our game to prosper we must return to our clubs and face-to-face bridge. This is not a New Zealand unique situation, as national bodies all round the world are grappling with the same issue.

The biggest and probably the most challenging issue facing clubs is the wearing of face masks or not. There will inevitably be two camps. Those for wearing face masks and those opposed. Whilst NZ Bridge can provide a guideline, the responsibility for setting policy on this matter sits with clubs. Clubs must determine what is in the best interest of their membership, consulting where necessary. They need to consider the demographic of their membership; the prevalence of covid in their community; level of vaccination; vaccination status; adherence to health management protocols; quality of air management and air circulation systems; the willingness of members to self-police themselves and to stay away when they have a cold/flu or are unwell. If on balance, you are on top of the above there is probably acceptance that mask wearing need not be compulsory but is optional.

Today we observe greater relaxation of the rules governing Covid. In most settings face masks are not required. Mask wearing after all is only a risk control tool, designed to stop or minimise the spread of covid and to reduce putting the health system under duress. Whether clubs adopt an optional mask wearing policy or not we do recommend there needs to be very clear club specific protocols that cover the delivery of services under the

current Covid conditions. These should be a condition of entry and play. They could be posted on the front door as players enter and designed as below, as an example.

### ***Rules of Entry and Play***

- 1. Wearing of face masks is optional.***
- 2. The director or manager has the right to preclude entry if they consider the player is a risk to others.***
- 3. The player will have no right to contest the decision of the director or manager.***
- 4. If a player has contracted covid or been a close contact, they should not enter the club.***
- 5. If a player has a cold or has the flu or is unwell, they should stay home, and seek medical advice as required.***

We can only hope the relaxation of controls will encourage players back to bridge at their club.

Up till now we have approved the transfer of tournaments to online. We know many of the tournament players would like to see a continuation of online events. However, there is a natural conflict when both face-to-face and online events are being run at the same time. Unless we rebuild the grass roots (membership and participation) of the game, our game will be under serious risk. Our focus is getting players back to bridge. Consequently, we will not be approving, for the time being, any future transfer of tournaments to an online event.

Earlier in the month we shared out thoughts on the need to be innovative, courageous as we look for ways to encourage people back to bridge. We mentioned clubs running face-to-face sessions, online sessions or even hybrid sessions. The needs of metropolitan clubs could be very different to those of rural clubs. It is wrong to think one size fits all. We are therefore keen to engage with club committees. Feel free to contact Alister, setting a time aside for us to get together.

Cheers Allan