

Welcome to the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Auckland Bridge Club.

It gives me great pleasure to record and advise you of the activities of the Club and its members over the past year, and to have the chance to acknowledge the contribution of many, and reflect on the opportunities and challenges that face the Club. I congratulate all those who have achieved well in their bridge over the year, and those who are beginning the amazing journey.

The photos scrolling through behind me celebrate our year – of birthdays, presentations, awards, social events, staff functions, welcomes and good byes, lessons and of course bridge. A number of changes have been made in the past couple of years and the 15/16 year provided an opportunity to bed some of those in.

The kitchen offering is now running very smoothly, and I am delighted to report that the Club receives many compliments on the food and service. Our thanks must go to Barbara and Emma, and their teams, and the volunteer morning tea contributors, for delivering something of which we can be very proud.

Education has been a big focus for the Club, and we appointed Douglas Russell last year to develop a set of beginner's lessons and a programme of interesting speakers and workshops for intermediate and advancing players. In 2016 we have run two beginner's series, and now have two strong novice groups playing on Monday and Thursdays and have, as a consequence welcomed a number of new members as a result of the support and encouragement extended to those new players. We expect to see our education programme extensively expanded in the coming year. Please thank Douglas Russell, Tracey

Lewis, Julie Atkinson, Janet Barnard, Peter Hensman and all the helpers and mentors who support our new player development.

As part of improving our knowledge base, Bev Morris and a team of helpers took on the task of sorting the extensive, but unorganised collection of bridge books we had acquired over a number of years. We now have an open and highly functioning library that I have observed being well used. The Committee is looking to support the development of this library over the coming years, and I would encourage members to utilise this resource. Babs Merel-de Visser also adds the knowledge of members by cajoling contributions and creating our newsletter, which is both entertaining and informative.

Membership numbers remain steady at around 700. This number however is not always just the measure of a Club's success – rather, I would suggest, success is also about having an active membership who participate in the club activities and are engaged in the clubs development and its future. It is that activation that makes the difference. Our table numbers continue to be good, but like many leisure activities these days we face competition for people's time. We work hard to get new members, but we also need to work hard to keep them – we need to welcome them, encourage and support them, and recognise their needs – for they are the Clubs future – they will be your committee, your fund raising groups, your social group, you improvers, your winners – they will be the banner bearers of the future.

The environment to nurture this support is wrapped around the welcome and encouragement from the staff – Patrick, Debbie and Ann. Patrick keeps everyone to time, and honest and moving, and Auckland Bridge Club is proud to call him our Director. Tony Morcom, Peter Bowyer and others step up when he is away, and for that we are grateful,

but it's never quite the same! Deb Tangney and Ann Weatherston run the office in a welcoming and open manner- Ann always has time to solve problems, organise tickets (averaging 185 sets of 10 tickets every month), console and celebrate with our members, and Deb is constantly looking to improve the club, its services and standards. They work extremely well as a team, and are single minded in their focus to deliver a positive bridge environment for Club members and visitors. I would ask you to thank them and ask them to come up and receive a small token of appreciation.

It is also appropriate to acknowledge Bill Fairs who was the Club's caretaker and cleaner for many years. He left in 2016 to take up a new career, and he has been very difficult to replace. Thank you to the part members have played in clearing their tables at the end of play. It does make a difference.

Tournaments continue to provide good exposure for the Club, and are an important source of revenue for club finances. Our venue also provides resources for regional tournaments such as interclub, for other bridge clubs and groups who use the unique space. A key part of the welcome we offer is the work that Russell Watt does managing and staffing the bar. How he always manages to be dummy on the last hand of play never ceases to amaze me, but he is always ready to serve as the rest of the room finishes. Thank you.

Your committee meets monthly on a Tuesday evening. I would remind you that committee members are volunteers – they do what they can in the time they have. They work in an increasingly regulatory environment – keeping abreast of health and safety legislation, changes to accounting and reporting standards, and employer responsibilities and requirements. We advocate on your behalf, discuss a range of topics, solve a number of issues, manage the Club resources, and support the team who are employed to serve the

club. We are working to a plan that is focused on developing the Auckland Bridge Club to be the premier club in Auckland – setting ourselves high standards of governance and operational outputs, and building the Club toward a strong future. It is a lofty vision.

Please thank your committee of 2015/16 – Anthony Hopkins, Immediate Past president, Sharon Marryatt, treasurer, Mark Robertson, Allan Morris, Peter Hensman, Bianca van Rangelrooy Alice young and Mike Dunn (co- opted on during the year) and Douglas russell, who resigned when he took on the role of educator. It is been a pleasure working with them.

Alice young is resigning this year after a year of service. We are sorry she is leaving as she brought enthusiasm and an interest to the meetings with a real focus on the needs of competition players. Anthony Hopkins hold the position of Immediate past president, which he can't resign from – it is an earned office! However he has indicated that he will not be able to attend meetings in the coming year. I also note that it was remiss of us not to acknowledge all the work he did as President, and so would like to present a couple of books to him as our way of saying thank you,

Two areas of focus this year have been a review of technology and future needs of our premises.

We formed a premises sub-committee at the end of last year, with Mark Robertson as chair, to investigate options for the clubs development. We ensured all members understood that they would be kept informed of the thinking of the committee, and to that end we held update meetings in June to do just that. At the date of this AGM there is no further news to report. General activity has slowed due to a combination of some of the past opportunities

no longer being considered, and not too many new opportunities emerging. There are still some ideas to follow up but they are at an early phase and will need further work to evaluate them before we can decide if they have any validity. One area of feedback that we did receive, following the mid-year presentations, related to the setting aside of a budgeted amount, should we need to seek professional advice on any concepts. We have listened to your concerns and have taken a much more conservative approach on this. If the time comes where we have an idea that we wish to move forward, it will require a special meeting and a majority vote from members to make that happen. Be assured, as soon as there is anything significant to tell you about, we will convene another property update meeting to converse and consult.

Meanwhile in the coming year we plan to clean the outside of the building, do some internal painting to freshen up, repaint the car park lines and refresh the upstairs bathroom.

The other area we have been working through is improving the technology offering to build on our scoring programme, and we are close to beginning some trials on tablet technology. We wanted to investigate and implement the most flexible and user friendly options that we could build on, over time, and future proof as far as is possible in this rapidly changing sector. We look forward to your feedback on these as we introduce them into club play.

Thank you to all those who work toward delivering a great club environment. If I haven't mentioned you personally it does not mean your work is unnoticed or unappreciated. It does mean I have gone on too long!

In conclusion, I would urge to remember your club is an ever evolving organisation and your committee, on behalf of the membership, must be looking not only at needs for this year,

but also how the club might look to future members. It will be the responsive and adaptive clubs that build and retain their membership.

Some thoughts for the coming year:

Be kind to new players – we were all there once

Be kind to your partner – and he may return the favour

Be open minded to change – others were and got us to 85 years old!

Be proud to be part of Auckland Bridge Club as it strives to be the premier club in Auckland

Enjoy your bridge.

Thank you.