

Bridge Victoria – 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
- comply with 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.

Bridge Victoria 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:

- Congresses conducted by affiliated clubs under the auspices of Bridge Victoria, whether played at a 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
- The Director or Congress Convenor
- The Secretary of the VBA in the case of a suspended player entering an event
- A Recorder duly appointed to receive initial complaints at a congress or State event

2.2 Complaints must be submitted either by email to info@bridgevictoria.au or 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 Bridge Victoria 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, ideally comprised of persons residing throughout Victoria.
- 3.2 Members of the Committee shall be nominated from time to time by the Bridge Victoria Operating Committee (BVOC), in conjunction with the Chairman, as and when vacancies arise.
- 3.3 BVOC appoints a chairman, who, subject to satisfactory performance, may serve for up to six years, with one extension of three years possible at Council's discretion
- 3.4 These regulations may be revised by BVOC as required from time to time. The Committee, BVOC 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) and the Recorder will be informed in writing. If a suspension is imposed, all Victorian affiliated clubs, all other State, Territory and National bodies and the ABF Recorder will also be informed in writing.
- 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 to be submitted to Bridge Victoria by email (info@bridgevictoria.au) 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 Chair of Bridge Victoria.
- 4.5 The accused is entitled to be represented before the Hearing Committee by another financial member of a Victorian 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 Australian jurisdiction will be deemed to have been suspended under these Regulations in respect of the events listed in 1.1.
- 5.7 All Victorian affiliated clubs will be informed of the suspension, 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

	Offence	Penalty 1st offence	Penalty 2nd offence	Penalty 3rd or later offence
1	Verbal abuse of an opponent or partner	W-12	4-24	8-52
2	Verbal abuse of a Director	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).