



Open Letter from Arie Geursen, Chair of NZ Bridge, and other members of the
Board of NZ Bridge to all Affiliated Bridge Clubs.

RESPONSE TO LETTER FROM ALAN TURNER DATED 4 NOVEMBER 2016

8th November 2016

Dear fellow bridge players

Some of you may have been concerned by the relative silence from me and other Board members in recent weeks as rumours about Board intentions have swirled around the game. This silence has been entirely necessary and appropriate as the Board considers a possible restructure. Under New Zealand Law this is ultimately a private matter between NZ Bridge as employer and those employees that may be affected.

I can state categorically that we have not and will not make any final decisions regarding any proposed restructure until we have consulted with affected employees. For that reason also, it has been inappropriate for the Board (and indeed individual Board members) to make any comment.

Alan Turner's letter to all clubs may be well-intentioned, but is inaccurate in many respects and, in the majority of the Board's view, entirely out of order.

Below we deal with a number of matters Alan Turner has raised.

NZ BRIDGE STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

No final decision has been taken on possible restructuring, but the Board has signalled an intention to work towards a model which sees the Board in a governance rather than a management role, something envisaged and provided for when our Constitution was adopted in 2008. This type of model, where governance and management/implementation are separated is widely followed in New Zealand by virtually all organisations with comparable responsibilities (e.g. Golf NZ, Rowing NZ and NZ Football). Your Board does not intend to allow any restructure to be financially unsustainable.

It is indisputable that it is entirely reasonable, legitimate, and business best practice for any organisation to review its structure and staffing from time to time. There is an opportunity for NZ Bridge to do this in order to become more effective, dynamic and efficient in our work to promote, develop and sustain bridge in New Zealand, and "keep up" in a changing world. And obviously, any changes any organisation may make to its structure are never 'irreversible', but are always able to be modified or changed after due process.

Alan Turner's incorrect assertions that the future structure is known is deeply unsettling for all involved. I have given NZ Bridge staff the consistent and accurate message that nothing has been decided. I have also advised there will be a consultation process in which they will be



fully involved before any final decisions are taken. Employment law requires this to happen, and the Board will continue to move this forward. We are all concerned, as Alan Turner identifies, to mitigate the potential for ongoing stress upon our employees due to lack of direct consultation at this point. This will not be achieved by setting the issue aside until later next year.

ALAN TURNER'S ROLE ON THE BOARD

Alan Turner was not asked to relinquish his roles on the Board because of his objection to using funds. The current Board members, all of whom acknowledge Alan's extensive contribution to bridge over many years, have been utterly dismayed by his recent actions. For example, the way he has misused confidential information, distorted or misrepresented Board actions, and now pursued a wildly different agenda in completely inappropriate fashion. It is untenable for them to continue to work with him in such circumstances in relation to any restructuring or as Treasurer.

There is much more that could be said that underpins the above but it should be noted that Alan Turner has been fully involved to date in all discussions concerning the possible restructure. Indeed, he has voted in favour of some actions which have been taken. He has even participated in discussions and voted positively since the AGM on 23 September. It is only in recent times he has changed his mind after the event and gone public with his new position.

MANDATE TO PROCEED

It is also not correct to say that the Board has no mandate to proceed. Under the Constitution, control of NZ Bridge rests with the Board and it has broad powers to deliver the organisations strategies and objectives, including those relating to staffing and structure.

As a consequence of our concerns, I expect the Board will shortly appoint Allan Joseph to take over as Treasurer of NZ Bridge. Another action will be to reconstitute the Governance Committee with the appropriate scope and delegation it needs to progress its key tasks. The membership will encompass the full Board with the exception of Alan Turner. We will also review and re-form the Employment Committee as clearly Alan Turner can no longer be expected to act as a member and remain objective.

Following Carol's resignation from the Board, we called for expressions of interest, in accordance with Clause 12 of the Constitution. The notice on the NZ Bridge website includes a statement of the responsibilities of the Board and a Code of Ethics all Board members are required to follow. We anticipate any new appointee will be able to play a full part in future decision-making, including being involved with the Governance committee. Applications close on 18th November.

REBUTTALS TO THE 'SCHEDULE' IN ALAN TURNER'S LETTER

1. "Private Meetings" – The Board has the right to hold workshops and other meetings where staff may or may not be present. This is standard practice for Boards. Clearly it would not be fair or appropriate to staff to be asked to attend meetings where the future structure of any business which may or may not affect their role is under discussion.

2. "Private Meeting on 23 September" – this meeting (which Alan Turner agreed was required and he attended) was held because the Board needed to a) prepare our response to the items of General Business which arrived after the deadline and b) ensure that anything said at the AGM did not breach the privacy and employment laws. That is not the same as "controlling discussions" as Alan Turner chooses to put it. Rather, in relation to any possible restructuring, it was about respect, integrity and the need to follow due process.
3. "Independent Facilitator" – many organisations hire independent facilitators for workshop sessions when looking at future directions or strategy. This is sound business practice as it is recognised that external experts can add to such sessions and ensure all perspectives are included as well as new ideas that may not have been previously considered.
4. "Verbal resignation" – it is incredibly disappointing that Alan Turner should reference such a personal disclosure in relation to a suggestion made during a confidential meeting, where context cannot be publicly conveyed, and which was withdrawn. . We believe this is a private matter for the individual concerned and should remain so.
5. Email prior to Skype Call – it is astonishing that Alan Turner chooses to divulge selected points from an email subsequently discussed in a call he chose not to attend. Had he been on the call he would have heard a discussion which included:
 - a. Looking to reduce accountancy fees (with a possibility this may mean a change of accountants)
 - b. the profound sadness that Alan's decision to go against his Board colleagues on matters he had previously supported and other actions leading to the proposal that he be asked to stand down as treasurer
 - c. the possible appointment of an interim, experienced CEO if any restructure went ahead rather than any Board members assuming additional responsibilities
6. "Formal Board Meetings becoming meaningless" – Alan has been the architect of formal Board meetings no longer being the forum they once were for debate and an honest exchange of views on these issues. His breaches of confidentiality, inappropriate sharing of information, inconsistency and apparent hidden agenda mean the remaining Board members can no longer trust him. As recently as 17th October he was involved in discussions, sometimes disagreeing and voting against certain matters (as all Board members do and should when necessary). However, his decision to then remove himself from Board discussions rather than sitting down with us and working things through has led to the current extremely unpleasant situation.

CAROL RICHARDSON'S RESIGNATION

Lastly, one matter not directly included in Alan Turner's letter. I have become aware some persons have linked the recent resignation of Carol Richardson as a Board member of NZ Bridge to the events catalogued by Alan Turner. That is unfortunate and not factual. Prior to her departure Carol shared with myself as Chair her reasons and they are entirely personal and completely unrelated to these issues.

In closing, I would ask all Clubs to think about this matter very carefully. Myself and the current Board members remain committed to working for NZ Bridge and taking the tough discussions needed to secure our future as an organisation.

Alan Turner's letter asks you to write to us within the next two weeks. We welcome your views, but ask they are based on careful consideration at the appropriate time rather than on misinformation and innuendo. Accordingly, we will be in touch again soon with details of our communications plan and timetable for keeping Regional Chairs and Clubs informed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arie Geursen', written over a horizontal line.

Arie Geursen
Chair, NZ Bridge

Allen Joseph

Karen Martelletti

Noel Woodhall

Phil Rutherford