The Australian Bridge Federation's flagship event is the Grand National Open Teams focussing, as it does, on all players across Australia providing opportunities for good teams bridge, gold masterpoints for local events and travel subsidies for those teams who make it to the finals at Tweed Heads in November. This year there was a total of nearly 2000 teams involved from the start and, in Queensland, we had 556 teams playing for the 15 places in the finals. These places are allocated proportionately according to the number of entries

Brisbane	190
Sunshine Coast	102
Gold Coast	88
Darling Dwns	61
Wide Bay	34
Far North	24
Whitsunday	22
Northern	20
Capricornia	15

An additional feature for Queensland players in 2017 was that the top placed Queensland team would be playing in the Commonwealth Nations Bridge Competition in February, just prior to the Gold Coast Congress. To select the two Queensland teams for the CNBC, the QBA had intentionally used events which involved subsidised players from across the state so as to maximise the chances for regional players to have this opportunity.

And so it was that 15 hopeful Queensland teams entered the arena against 45 other teams at the Ultima Resort at Tweed Heads. The format is brutal. One loss and you drop to the repechage where you then have to place 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> to re-enter the finals.

Queensland lost 5 of their teams to the repechage in the 1<sup>st</sup> round, one (North Queensland) by a mere 4 imps. But Round 2 was a blood bath with 8 more Qld teams being eliminated leaving just Brisbane 1 and Brisbane 2 to battle on. The former fell in Round 3 (65-48) to Sydney 4 and the latter in Round 4 (62-36) to Sydney 1, the eventual winners.

The focus now moved to the repechage where a number of our teams were doing well. At the end of Round 7:

- Wide Bay (Ann McGhee, Mike Stoneman, Ian Cruickshank, Rob Anderson) with a 5-2 winloss record were running 20<sup>th</sup>;
- North Queensland (John Johnson, Geoff Allen, Hugh McAllister, Di McAllister) were 19<sup>th</sup>, also with a 5-2 record;
- Sunshine Coast 1 (Richard Trollope, Rosemary Crowley, Ann Mellings, Maureen Jakes) were 17<sup>th</sup>;
- Far North Queensland (Rebecca Delaney, Lesley Fraser, Rick Gryg, Tony Lusk were 16<sup>th</sup>;
- Whitsunday (Janeen Solomon, Noel Bugeia, Bessie Baldry, Terrence Sheedy were 12<sup>th</sup>;
- Brisbane 1 (Neville Francis, Magnus Moren, Tony Hutton, Malcolm Carter, Therese Tully, Richard Ward) were 5<sup>th</sup>;
- Brisbane 2 (Bill Haughie, Paul Gosney, Ralph Parker, Paul Hooykass, Andy Hung, Paul Wyer) were 4<sup>th</sup>; and
- Brisbane 3 (Alan Gibson, Alison Dawson, Elizabeth Zeller, Brian Patterson) were 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Placings at the end of Round 8 were: 3<sup>rd</sup> Brisbane 2; 4<sup>th</sup> Brisbane 1; 9<sup>th</sup> Brisbane 3; 12<sup>th</sup> North Queensland; 13<sup>th</sup> Sunshine Coast 1; 19<sup>th</sup> Whitsunday. Then in the final round:

- Brisbane 2 defeated Brisbane 1 by 24 imps;
- Sunshine Coast 1 had a small loss against Geelong;
- North Queensland had a creditable 5 imp win against a strong Canberra 1 team;
- Brisbane 3 had a big win against Far North Queensland

And so the top 10 final Queensland placings with none making the semi-finals were:

3	Brisbane 2	16	Capricornia
5	Brisbane 3	18	Far North Qld
6	Brisbane 1	21	Whitsunday
11	North Queensland	30	Gold Coast 1
14	Sunshine Coast 1	31	Gold Coast 3

Top Queensland pairs in the 155 repechage datums were:

1st	Neville Francis	34th	John Johnson
	Magnus Moren		Geoff Allan
4 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Gosney	36 <sup>th</sup>	Rosemary Crowley
	Andy Hung		Richard Trollope
7 <sup>th</sup>	Alison Dawson	37 <sup>th</sup>	Janeen Solomon
	Elizabeth Zeller		Terrence Sheedy
17 <sup>th</sup>	Ralph Parker	39 <sup>th</sup>	Verna Brookes
	Paul Hooykaas		Peter Busch
26th	Jan Randall	42 <sup>nd</sup>	Rick Gryg
	Peter Randall		Tony Lusk

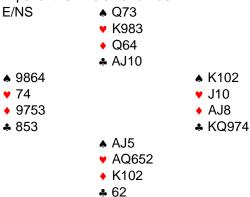
The final between two Sydney teams was very close for the first three sets but Sydney 1 (Liam Milne, Nye Griffiths, Sophie Ashton, Sartaj Hans, Adam Edgtton, Nabil Edgtton) won the fourth set 44-11 to take the title with a score of 97-67 over Sydney 3 (Michael Wilkinson, Shane Harrison, Matt Smith, Fraser Rew, David Wiltshire).

Here are three interesting hands from the event.

You are in 4<sup>th</sup> seat vul vs not vul holding

- ♠ Q73
- ♥ K983
- Q64
- ♣ AJ10

Dealer opens a 14-16 HCP which is passed around to you. Do you bid or pass? If you are playing Cappelletti or extended Landy or DONT or similar you may not have a bid for this flat, ugly 12 count. But it is for hands such as this that some partnerships modify their overcalling system so that a double here simply shows an opening hand. It just as dangerous to pass as it is to double on this hand -vulnerable with a possible 16 count sitting over you, but partner must have some values on this bidding so it's not as scary as it feels. If you were forced to pass, or simply chose to, you will lose 10 imps for the whole hand was:

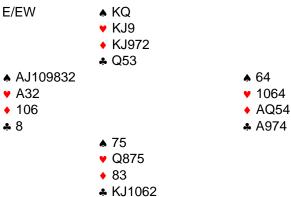


And, whilst holding declarer to just 3 tricks was reasonably satisfying, it did not make up for the missed vulnerable game.

And, in the same match, in 1<sup>st</sup> position vul vs not vul you hold:

- **♠** 64
- **v** 1064
- ♦ AQ54
- ♣ A974

The bidding goes round to partner who opens 3. Do you pass or raise? Dick Cummings, one of Australia's great international players from the 60s and 70s and regular partner with Tim Seres, advocated always raising to game holding two aces opposite a vulnerable pre-empt. That is what the Sydney player, Andrew Peake, did in a match against Brisbane and was rewarded when the whole hand was:



If the diamond finesse had failed he would have lost 5 imps against the part-score bid at the other table. As it was, he gained 11 imps – and that was the match. Across the field 4♠ was bid and made 17 out of 60 times.

There were two hands in the event where EW had a 6-6 heart fit. Not surprisingly, both hands reached the stratosphere very quickly in the bidding by which stage it was anyone's guess whose contract it should be. This final hand also took off quite quickly once West decided that this 9 count was an opening bid.

W/NS			
<b>^</b>	8	<b>^</b>	KJ976
•	J107652	•	-
•	-	•	A632
*	AKJ1083	*	Q765

W	Е	
1♥	1♠	
2*	<b>4♣</b> ¹	1 Too strong for 3., not Minorwood
4 • <sup>2</sup>	<b>4</b> ♥ <sup>2</sup>	2 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> round controls
4 🛕 <sup>2</sup>	<b>5</b> ♣³	3 Sign-off, no more to say
6 <b>.</b> 4		4 Optimistic

North on lead held ♠ A3 ♥ K843 ♦ KJ954 ♣ 94 and chose to lead a diamond. The only winning defence is to cash the ♠A and then lead a trump. So it was possible to discard the spade loser at trick 1 and to ruff out most of the hearts, give up a heart and claim. The contract at the other table was 5♣X making 11 tricks but a useful 8 imps in anyway.

As the finals got under way the GNOT Swiss Pairs, comprising 7x8 board matches, was held. Queenslanders did quite well in this field of 94 pairs with the following finishing in the top third:

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Paul Wyer	15 <sup>th</sup>	Margaret Pisko
	Bill Haughie		Trish Anagnostou
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ken Dawson	16th	Suzie Braithwaite
	Rosemary Crowley		Pele Rankin
8 <sup>th</sup>	Therese Tully	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Jill Magee
	Richard Ward		Terry Strong
11 <sup>th</sup>	Kerry Wood	31 <sup>st</sup>	Janeen Solomon
	Charlie Howard		Terrence Sheedy