

## **Appendix A - Procurement Methodology – Golf Course Concept Design/ Master Plan**

### Request for Quote (RFQ)

Officers initiated an RFQ process to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced golf course architect to conduct an appraisal of the current state of the Northcote Public Golf Course and develop a draft master plan. To inform Council's decision making and next steps, a list of recommendations and indicative costings for both detailed design and construction was prepared for golf and non-golf improvements to the site.

### RFQ Response and Evaluation

The RFQ (Request for Quotation) was initially issued on July 21, 2023, and the original submission deadline was August 10, 2023. To give ample time to all applicants and ensure a robust pool of submissions to be assessed, the submission period was extended by 3 working days until August 15, 2023. At the time of the extension, only two responses had been received. All contractors were informed of the extension, and those who had already submitted were given the opportunity to revise their response.

A total of 6 submissions were received at the conclusion of the submission period. Council received one request for a late submission beyond the extended deadline. In line with Council's procurement process, this request was not supported.

Submissions were evaluated against the following criteria:

- Price
- Availability
- Experience with similar projects
- Qualified team
- Proposed methodology and timeline
- Evidence of Social procurement practices or initiatives
- Quality Assurance/OH&S and Required Insurances

Following the evaluation process, a suitably qualified golf course architect was engaged to complete this project component. The contractor demonstrated to the evaluation panel that they were suitably qualified with over 25 years' experience in similar projects at private golf clubs and with State and Local Government bodies. The contractor was also recommended to Council by Golf Australia.



# **NORTHCOTE GOLF COURSE**

## **COURSE MASTERPLAN REPORT**

PREPARED BY  
CONTOUR GOLF DESIGN GROUP FOR THE CITY OF DAREBIN

NOVEMBER 2023



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## THE MASTERPLAN PROCESS

In August 2023 Contour Golf Design Group (Contour Golf) were appointed to prepare a Masterplan for the Northcote Public Golf Course (the golf course). The first step in this process was to conduct an appraisal of the current state of the golf course. This appraisal consisted of several site visits conducted by Contour Golf Director, Ben Davey. Ben is a full member of the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA).

During these site visits Ben walked the golf course several times, and studied all aspects of the golf course, including but not limited to;

- Playability and challenge
- Safety outcomes
- Remodelling works
- Layout/course configuration, with the intent to achieve a course par rating 34+
- Golf hole improvements
- Enhancing natural site features, including landscape/vegetation
- Opportunities to enhance playing surfaces
- Consideration of golf course operations including maintenance and management
- The likely cost of recommended improvements

As well as appraising the golf course Ben met with several key stakeholders including;

- Darebin Council, Parks and Open Space officers, and Planning officers.
- Northcote Golf Club members and other community members.
- Clublinks Pty Ltd staff (the current golf course management and maintenance operator).
- Golf Australia staff

The golf course appraisal forms **Part 1** of this report. **Part 2** of this report is the recommendations to improve golf activities at the site. The recommended improvements are explained for each individual golf hole and the target audience for all improvements are;

- Entry level golfers, especially children and young adults.
- Golfers who regularly use the facility, including Northcote Golf Club members.
- Women and girls with the aim of promoting the game to a larger community base.
- The broader Darebin community who benefit from having a large green and heavily treed space in their urban environment.

The recommendations are detailed in this report but are also illustrated on the Masterplan drawing for the Northcote Public Golf Course.

**Part 3** of this report then explains the priorities, possible staging of the works, and cost estimates for design and construction.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northcote Public Golf Course (the golf course) is a 9-hole golf course intended as an entry level facility, but also suited to regular and more experienced golfers. The golf course is located on Normanby Road adjacent to the Merri Creek on flood-prone land. The site is heavily treed with a mix of native and exotic trees.

The golf course is very short by contemporary standards but despite that, is perfectly adequate considering the patrons that make up the majority of golfers that play the course. The golf course is popular with beginner golfers, both older and younger players, and is an important community level golf facility. Many golfers have their first game of golf at courses such as Northcote Public Golf Course before moving on to full size 18-hole courses and private clubs.

Given the course's entry level status, the course features, such as the putting greens and bunkers, are mainly adequate. The tees are also satisfactory but do require remedial work to improve them. Most of the golf course flows well, making it enjoyable and fun to play. The exception to this is the connection between the *current* 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> holes, which requires a long uphill walk to get from the current 5<sup>th</sup> green to the 6<sup>th</sup> tees. To a lesser extent the long walk from the 7<sup>th</sup> green to the 8<sup>th</sup> tees can also be improved. Prior to 2021 the 5<sup>th</sup> hole was a par 4 that played from the rear of the 4<sup>th</sup> green, uphill to where the 6<sup>th</sup> tees are located. The 8<sup>th</sup> hole used to play from the east side of Bracken Creek. Its tees were moved to the west side of Bracken Creek. All of the land to the east of Bracken Creek and the old 5<sup>th</sup> hole, has now become parkland.

Golf holes cannot exist in isolation but must connect with one another as a golf course is played. A game of golf has a starting point, usually at the clubhouse, and an ending point, usually back at the clubhouse. After playing the 1<sup>st</sup> hole, a simple walk takes golfers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> tees and so forth until all nine holes have been played. The current layout of the 5<sup>th</sup> hole does not provide the necessary clear connection to the 6<sup>th</sup> hole, and the transition between them requires a resolution. Removing the long, uphill walk from the current 5<sup>th</sup> green to the 6<sup>th</sup> tees, is one of the primary issues this Masterplan addresses.

The solution explained in detail in this Masterplan report, is to abandon the current 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> holes and to build a new 5<sup>th</sup> hole into the land both holes occupy, but in the opposite direction to the current 6<sup>th</sup>. This new hole will connect effortlessly - *from* the current 4<sup>th</sup> green to new 5<sup>th</sup> tees, and then to the repositioned 6<sup>th</sup> tees (the current 7<sup>th</sup> tees), from the new 5<sup>th</sup> green. In addition, a further new hole is required to re-establish 9-holes. There is space available between the current 7<sup>th</sup> green and the 8<sup>th</sup> tees for a new, short par 3 hole. These two new holes are the primary changes required to the golf course and should be the main priorities when implementing this Masterplan.

Other less critical improvements are recommended and are also described in this Masterplan report. These include changes to lift the par of the golf course to 34, changes to the current 1<sup>st</sup> tees and practice putting green to improve the amenity of the clubhouse precinct, remedial works to other tees to improve their playability, and adjustments to some of the fairways. The estimated budget to complete the priority works being the new 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> holes, plus the 1<sup>st</sup> tees and practice putting green, is \$1.32 million.

In order to complete the priority works explained above, some tree removal will be required. This includes a number of native trees, and some exotic trees. While every effort has been made to minimise tree removal, there are ample opportunities within the golf course site for new and replacement tree planting. The number of new trees proposed, mainly in out-of-play areas within the golf course, will easily account for any tree planting offset requirements, as per Council's Tree Policy.

Legend



Indicative Scorecard

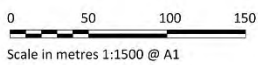
Hole	Tee position			Par
	Back	Middle	Forward	
1	315	300	280	4
2	440	400	350	5
3	170	155	145	3
4	380	330	255	4
5	145	130	110	3
6	270	250	215	4
7	125	110	90	3
8	370	350	330	4
9	305	280	235	4
	<b>2520</b>	<b>2305</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>34</b>

(All hole lengths are in metres)

Masterplan principles and priorities

- The majority of the current greens are adequate for a course such as Northcote, which is intended to be an introductory level golf course for the local community.
- The golf course should flow seamlessly from one hole to the next. The course needs to be an easy walk for older and less able golfers, avoiding long walks between greens and tees, and avoiding unnecessary hill climbing. The transitions between holes is very important.
- In order to resolve point 2 (above), two new par 3 holes are recommended. The first will be located in the vicinity of the existing 6<sup>th</sup> hole, the second located between the current 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> holes.
- The course needs to be fun to play, especially for beginners and older golfers. The course also needs to be an enjoyable experience for more skilled golfers.
- Tree removal has been minimised, however some tree removal is required to make space for the new par 3 holes. There are ample opportunities for replacement tree planting and revegetation in out-of-play areas.
- A par of 34 is possible by reintroducing a par 5. This can be achieved by lengthening the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole with new tees and a new green located approximately 12 metres beyond the current green.
- The new 7<sup>th</sup> hole will need to be constructed first, so that a nine hole course can remain in play at all times.
- All the existing tees need to be partially rebuilt and levelled.
- Other upgrades to course furniture, retaining walls and pathways are also recommended.

Refer to the Masterplan Report for a detailed commentary and recommendations.



# Northcote Public Golf Course MASTERPLAN

November 2023



## PART 1: COURSE REVIEW

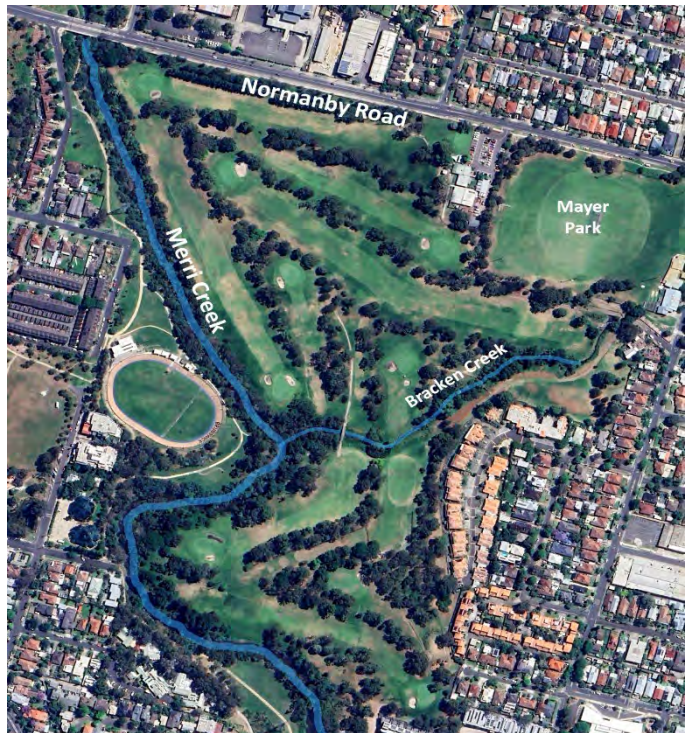
### 1.1 PREAMBLE

A game of golf is like a journey with a beginning and an end. The beginning starts as soon as the golfer arrives through the front gate, visits the pro-shop and heads for the 1<sup>st</sup> tee. The end is when that golfer walks off the final putting green, shakes the hand of their playing partner and calls it a day. We want to describe that journey at Northcote and discuss what is good about it, what is not good, what works and what doesn't work. The purpose of this Masterplan is to explore and understand that journey, and then to recommend how we can improve it, and how we can make it as enjoyable as it can be for golfers at the Northcote Public Golf Course (the golf course).

Northcote Public Golf Course, as with many other public golf courses in Melbourne, plays an important role in the community and the golfing landscape. The golf course is a 9-hole facility and, for many golfers, is an entry level or introductory course. For many young golfers, Northcote is the first golf course they will play before moving on to larger 18-hole courses or private clubs. For many others the golf course will remain their golf venue of choice.

While the golf course is, and will remain, an entry level course, it still should be the best it can be, while considering the site and other constraints. The Northcote course does not need to be more difficult or more challenging – that is not going to make it better. It does need to be fun though – after all, golf is a form of recreation for most golfers. Golfers want to be entertained, and the golf experience needs to be memorable. Golfers should want to return.

Perhaps most importantly, the course needs to flow naturally across the landscape. Most golfers at Northcote walk, so that walk needs to be relatively easy.



*A recent aerial photo of the Northcote golf course site. Normanby Road and the course entry are at top right, while Merri Creek forms the western boundary of the course.*

### 1.2 THE ARRIVAL AND CAR PARKING

The existing arrival experience is underwhelming. The vehicular front entry gate off Normanby Road is made of inexpensive and dilapidated, industrial style wire mesh. The carpark space caters for approximately 55 cars, which is adequate, and the asphalt surface is in good condition. Tree planting in the carpark is adequate and in time as these trees mature further, they will improve the amenity of the carpark and provide additional shade. Some of the planter holes have been damaged and tree replacement is required.



*Figures 2 and 3: The vehicular arrival from Normanby Road through poor quality wire mesh gates, and the pedestrian arrival that takes golfers to the pro-shop.*

Pedestrian entry to the course is via a ramp that leads golfers to the pro-shop. The entry and exits have been defined to direct golfers towards the pro-shop staff, we assume to encourage the public to pay their green fee and avoid the temptation to bypass staff. The exit from the course is via an old fashioned turnstile. While this arrangement is no doubt effective in controlling green fee sales, it does not feel very welcoming or hospitable. The Building Review that is underway will consider pedestrian access to the course.

### 1.3 THE CLUBHOUSE AND PRO-SHOP PRECINCT

Entry to the course from the pro-shop is through a heavily treed and shady area, where there is a paved seating area under a shade sail (figure 4 below). There are several outdoor tables and a barbeque in this area for groups to sit either before or after golf. The entire area feels somewhat tired, and again, this area is being addressed in the Building Review.



*Figures 4 and 5: The shade sails-covered sitting area with a barbeque (left) and practice tee area.*



Adjacent to the shade sails is a small practice putting green and a chipping area. To the left of the pro-shop in the direction of the 9<sup>th</sup> green is the golf clubrooms. In front of the clubrooms is a practice tee with several synthetic grass strips and pads and a covered enclosure for golf lessons. This area is also very tired and the condition of the synthetic turf and general landscaping is poor. It is obvious to me that the 1<sup>st</sup> tees were originally located here because of the bluestone walls and steps that remain, and the connection this area has to the fairway on the first hole. No doubt safety issues with errant golf balls being hit onto Normanby Road forced the closure of this tee and its replacement down the hill and to the right. The area where the 1<sup>st</sup> tees were located has been repurposed as a practice tee. This was done, it would seem, sometime in the 1990's.

A concrete pathway leads to those 'new' 1<sup>st</sup> tees, which are located downhill, an awkward 50 metre walk from the clubhouse. The spatial and visual connection between the pro-shop, clubrooms and 1<sup>st</sup> tees is poor.



Figure 6 and 7: The small practice green in front of the pro-shop and the very poor quality 1<sup>st</sup> tees.

#### 1.4 THE GOLF COURSE LAYOUT AND QUALITY

The Northcote Public Golf Course is a nine-hole golf course that starts on the west side of the clubhouse near Normanby Road and finishes just to the south of the clubhouse. Most full size golf courses have 18 holes and usually have two separate nines that both return to the clubhouse. The majority of the golf course is located on flood prone land adjacent to Merri Creek. The site is generally quite flat, especially in the vicinity of the Merri Creek and Bracken Creek, a tributary that flows through the middle of the golf course. The only significant elevation change is in the vicinity of the clubhouse which is located on a rise above flood level.

The opening hole originally played from this hill, downhill to the fairway; its tees have now been moved further down the hill. The ninth hole plays from the flood-prone land back up the hill to the clubhouse. The 8<sup>th</sup> hole also plays up and over part of this same hill. The only other section of the course that is not flood prone is the area currently used for the 6<sup>th</sup> tees. It is very common for golf courses in Melbourne to be located on flood prone land that cannot be developed for housing or other buildings. There are a number of such golf courses located along the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers, and other creeks in Melbourne's suburbs.

Golf courses are usually made up of either 9 or 18 holes. These holes are all linked though, they are not separate entities. After playing one hole, the golfer should have a brief walk or transition to the next hole. This is an essential characteristic of golf courses and a critical element of golf course design. For example, at Northcote, after playing the 1<sup>st</sup> hole, a golfer simply walks off the back of that putting green onto the 2<sup>nd</sup> tees. After walking

off the 2<sup>nd</sup> green, a short walk takes the golfer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> tees, and so forth. At Northcote, these transitions from green to the following tee generally work well, with one significant exception.

As has been well reported, following the Covid lockdowns, changes were made to the golf course to free-up space for broader community use. The changes that were made included removal of approximately 2 hectares of land used for golf. This included land that was previously used for the 5<sup>th</sup> hole and part of the land previously used for the 8<sup>th</sup> hole. This has meant the broader non-golfing public now has access to a 'Public Open Space' which encompasses the eastern side of Bracken Creek, and the far southern end of the original golf course.

What it also means though, is that with the old 5<sup>th</sup> hole removed, the current 6<sup>th</sup> tees now sit atop a hill, somewhat isolated from the rest of the golf course. And while there are still 9-holes of golf, the transition from the current 5<sup>th</sup> green to the 6<sup>th</sup> tees, is not as good as it should be. Addressing this issue is one of the primary objectives of this Masterplan.

Other than this issue between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> holes, the other transitions are generally good, perhaps with the exception of the long walk from the 7<sup>th</sup> green to the current 8<sup>th</sup> tees. The course offers a good mix of hole lengths, and the course uses the land well. The transition from the 9<sup>th</sup> green back to the clubhouse also works very well.



Figure 8: The current course layout with the challenging arrangement of holes 5, 6 and 7. Other than this small section of the golf course, the remainder of the course flows well, and the layout of the holes is generally good.

## 1.5 THE COURSE LENGTH AND PAR

The course length is very short by contemporary standards at just 2,437 metres from the back tees. The current par for the course is 33. Usually, 9-hole golf courses have a par of 35 or 36 and, with at least one or two par 5's. Prior to the course changes endorsed in 2022, the course had a par of 35 and the original 8<sup>th</sup> hole was a par 5. When the 8<sup>th</sup> tees were moved to the western side of the creek, the resultant reduction in length, meant it had to be reduced to a par 4. There have been requests to reinstate a par 5 hole somewhere on the course. The course not having a par 5 is not a *significant* failing, but I can understand why the members and regular golfers at Northcote would like it reinstated.

The Masterplan proposes a new par for the golf course of 34, and a par 5 be reinstated. The new course layout will be about 80 metres longer than at present due to the lengthening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole (to become par 5), and the current 7<sup>th</sup> hole (the proposed 6<sup>th</sup>, as shown on the scorecard in Figure 9). Considering the entry level status of the golf course, the demographic, and average skill level of golfers who play the course, the recommended course length and par of 34 is appropriate.

Hole	Tee position			Par
	Back	Middle	Forward	
1	315	300	280	4
2	440	400	350	5
3	170	155	145	3
4	380	330	255	4
5	145	130	110	3
6	270	250	215	4
7	125	110	90	3
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	<b>2520</b>	<b>2305</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>34</b>

Figure 9: The proposed new Masterplan scorecard when completed

## 1.6 PUTTING GREENS AND BUNKERS

The majority of the putting greens are believed to be original, meaning they are quite old – likely more than 40 years. Despite this, they still drain well and are generally in quite good condition. The greens are small, averaging about 350 square metres. On a full-size course, putting greens are generally about 500 square metres in area. Some of the greens have quite interesting shapes and contours and again, considering the golfers who play at Northcote, the greens are adequate. Many of them appear to have shrunk in size over time though. If resources were available, constructing new putting greens would be ideal, however the cost of doing so probably cannot be justified.

The course currently has eleven sand bunkers. We are told the bunkers generally drain well and are also in good condition. The bunkers are simple oval shapes, making maintenance of them relatively easy. The bunkers are easy for golfers of all ages and abilities to access and they are quite shallow, meaning playing golf shots from them is not overly difficult.

The Masterplan recommends the number of bunkers be increased marginally to thirteen. The current 6<sup>th</sup> hole (to be decommissioned, has one bunker that will be filled in. The new 5<sup>th</sup> hole is shown with two bunkers and the new 7<sup>th</sup> hole with one. This is subject to detailed design and costings.



Figures 10 and 11: The 1<sup>st</sup> green (left) with a single shallow bunker at its front left, and the 9<sup>th</sup> green (right).

## 1.7 TEES

The tees are generally in poor condition. While most of the tees are, in principle, large enough in area to spread wear across them, in reality they are often so uneven and lumpy that golfers tend to concentrate divots into the same spots across the tees, meaning the useable space is reduced. Currently the golf course uses two sets of tees. The back tees are intended for use by men and the forward tees used by women.

The tees that have screen safety fences adjacent to them also suffer because golfers inevitably tee their ball as far from the fence as possible, so all the wear is concentrated into one side of the tee. Most of the tees have had very little attention paid to them and the amount of play on the course means the divots have no time to recover. Shade from large trees in some instances is an issue too.

All of the tees need to be rebuilt to some extent, and on several holes additional tees are also recommended. This will be explained in more detail in Part 2 of this report. It is also recommended that a three tee system be adopted and that the new tees be described in gender neutral terms. We have simply described them as back, middle, and forward tees, however any name or colour could be adopted, but perhaps not colours traditionally associated with one gender – ie. blue for men and red for women. There has increasingly been a movement towards encouraging golfers to use tee positions best suited to their golfing ability or age, rather than their gender.



Figures 12 and 13: The 1<sup>st</sup> tees are in very poor condition (left), the 4<sup>th</sup> tees (right) are large enough but require levelling.

## 1.8 FAIRWAYS

Fairways are generally 20-30 metres wide, averaging about 25 metres. The fairways are mainly kikuyu, which is an aggressive, drought tolerant grass type that spreads from prostrate runners and vigorous rhizomes. While considered a weed in Melbourne due to its ability to spread into bushland areas, it is an ideal turf type for a golf course such as this due to its ability to rapidly repair and its drought tolerance. Most golf courses in Melbourne have couch fairways though, and kikuyu is uncommon.

Turf conditions were generally very good to excellent when we conducted our site visits in September and October 2023. The maintenance contractor is maintaining fairways and the surrounds to putting greens to a high standard and they clearly understand how the course should be setup and played. There are some areas where fairway mowing can be adjusted and where fairways should be expanded. This will be explained in Part 2 of this report.

## 1.9 COURSE FURNISHINGS

Course furnishings are items such as seats, signage, rubbish bins, sand dispensers, golf ball washers, drinking fountains, retaining walls and flags are all essential items that are an underrated part of the golf experience. Done well they should be hardly noticed. Done poorly they can make a course feel cluttered and messy. Unfortunately, at Northcote Public Golf Course, in most cases it's the latter.



Figures 14, 15 and 16: Tired furnishings, and standard residential rubbish bins. Below, the practice tee area.

## 1.10 PRACTICE FACILITIES

The course has a small practice putting green and chipping area adjacent to the clubhouse. The putting green is very small - about 190m<sup>2</sup>. A considerably larger putting green is recommended and described in Part 2 of this report.

The course also has a short practice fairway that uses the first third of what used to be the 1<sup>st</sup> fairway. The practice tees are located on the original 1<sup>st</sup> tees in front of the clubhouse. The 1<sup>st</sup> tees were



moved due to the risk of errant golf balls being hit over the boundary fence onto Normanby Road. The bluestone retaining wall and steps down to the original tee remain.

The practice tee area has a number of synthetic grass hitting pads and a covered area, for giving lessons and for Junior Golf Clinics. This area will be considered as part of the Building Review currently underway.

### 1.11 TREES AND OTHER VEGETATION

Historical aerial photography from 1945 reveals that the site was almost completely cleared of vegetation prior to the development of the golf course. Located on a flood plain, it was most likely cleared for farming activities with no prospect of it ever being developed for housing.

The relevance to this Masterplan is that nearly every tree on the golf course has been planted since 1945 and there is very little remnant vegetation older than the golf course. There are several very old gum trees, such as to the left of the 1<sup>st</sup> green, adjacent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> tees and back left of the 6<sup>th</sup> green, that are most likely older than the golf course, but the vast majority of trees were planted.

The majority of the trees planted since the course was developed are native trees, and mainly include varieties of Gum trees (*Eucalyptus sp.*). There are other natives, such as Wattles, Grevillea, Sheoaks and Banksia. There are a number of non-native planted trees too, such as Gleditsia, Lagenaria, Oaks, Elms, Pines, Cypress, and other conifer varieties.

The Merri and Bracken Creeks are densely vegetated, but there are a large number of weed species that have invaded the creek corridors, including Elms and Willows. There are also a large number of ground cover weeds such as Vinca. We understand these corridors are the responsibility of Melbourne Water and not Darebin Council.



Figures 17 and 18: Bracken Creek infested with weeds (left), and planted trees on either side of the 9<sup>th</sup> hole.

## PART 2: RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1 THE GOLF HOLES

#### HOLE 1      PAR 4      315 METRES

##### Description

A short par 4 that plays adjacent and parallel to Normanby Road. About 20 years ago the tees were moved from their original location in front of the clubhouse (now the practice tee), down the hill and to the right. This was because of errant golf balls hitting over the boundary fence onto Normanby Road.

In the understandable interest of safety, the hole went from being a good par 4 from an elevated tee to an average par 4, mainly because of the tees and the fence. The new tees were poorly constructed, the emphasis being purely on forcing play away from the boundary, with little consideration given to the playability or aesthetics of the opening hole, or its important relationship with the pro-shop and clubhouse. The wire fence that is hard up against the edge of the tees, makes the tee shot very awkward, and the tees and their surrounds are now tired and dilapidated. The size of the turf tee is far too small, especially given nobody uses the right half of the tee because of the proximity of the fence. During this past winter, the tee was closed, due to the terrible state of the turf from winter dormancy, shade and overuse.

Once past the tee, the hole improves. The fairway is very well maintained, and the putting green is adequate, with a big tilt from back left to front right. There are not many hole positions on the green to spread wear, but there are more pressing issues to resolve on the golf course before considering this green.

##### Recommendations

- The tees need to be rebuilt. In the interests of the long term benefit of the golf course, the best solution is to rebuild the tees completely further up the hill, closer to the pro-shop.
- Because of the slope, the tees will need to be on several different levels, stepping down the hill. A new and inviting pathway connection is required between the pro-shop/clubhouse and 1<sup>st</sup> tees.
- A new screen fence to replace the current fence will be required, but it should be located further from the tee so it does not impact so negatively on the tee shot, and be made of nylon, not wire mesh.
- New 1<sup>st</sup> tees will enhance the arrival experience and dramatically improve the clubhouse landscape precinct, along with other works proposed to enhance this area. If this was done though, the new screen fence to protect Normanby Road will be essential.



Figures 19 and 20: The tees on the 1<sup>st</sup> hole should be moved up the hill closer to the pro-shop (left), and the 1<sup>st</sup> green (right).

*Alternative option: An alternative option is to retain the tees in their current location, but rebuild them making them far larger, with an additional tee on a lower level in front of the current tees. The existing wire fence would remain. This option would be less costly but will not have any of the benefits offered by the preferred option.*

## HOLE 2      PAR 5      440 METRES

### Description

The 2<sup>nd</sup> hole is currently a long par 4 of over 400 metres from the back tees. The 2<sup>nd</sup> hole plays basically straight, running parallel to Merri Creek which is on its right. The tee shot is played to a generously wide fairway, and then a wide spacious second shot to the putting green. This is the longest hole on the course now that the original 8<sup>th</sup> hole has been shortened, and the only opportunity for the course to reinstate a par 5, as desired by golfers. The hole is currently 416 metres from the back tee, and a minimum distance of about 430 metres is required for a golf hole to 'qualify' as a par 5. Therefore, either the tee needs to move back a minimum of 15 metres, or the putting green needs to move back, or both.

### Recommendations

- Remove two trees behind the tee – a Gleditsia and a Peppercorn. Neither are native trees. Construct a new tee about 10 metres further back.
- Revegetate the area to the rear of and surrounding the new tee.
- Remove two trees back left of the current green – a Eucalyptus and a Pittosporum.
- Construct a new green and bunkers (as shown on the Masterplan drawing), moving it back by approximately 12 metres, still leaving adequate space between the rear of the new green and the embankment of Merri Creek.
- The new green and approach can be bunkered as shown, with the fairway widened on the right, leaving clear, broad access to the following tees to spread wear.
- Moving both the tees and putting green will give a hole length of about 440 metres, which is a good length for a par 5 on a public golf course.



Figures 21 and 22: The approach shot into the long 2<sup>nd</sup> hole, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> green (right).

## HOLE 3      PAR 3      170 METRES

### Description

The 3<sup>rd</sup> hole is a mid-length par 3 of 167 metres. The tees are a good size but are so uneven and bumpy that golfers all tend to use the same areas to tee their balls up, so divots tend to all be focussed into the same areas.



The green is almost two tier (on two levels), with a ridge passing through the middle from front right to back left. There is a level plateau at the back that is pinnable and there are a couple of hole locations at the front with nice roll-offs into the putting green surrounds. There is a single bunker front left, and overall, the putting green and the hole are very good.

#### Recommendations

- Rebuild the top of the tees, retaining an equal or slightly greater size, but making them level. The tee can go back a few metres closer to the creek too.
- The putting green is very good, and no work is required to amend it.
- Maintain short grass surrounds (especially on the right) and extend the fairway as far back to the tees as the irrigation allows.

## HOLE 4      PAR 4      380 METRES

### Description

A walk of about 80 metres takes the golfer back to the 4<sup>th</sup> tees. The 4<sup>th</sup> hole is a long par 4 that plays through a heavily treed chute, across Bracken Creek, before turning to the right. The tee shot is very good for competent golfers however, for short hitters, the carry over the creek is a challenging distance. The tees themselves are large enough but are very lumpy and require levelling.

The hole turns sharply to the right at about 230 metres from the back tee and then the approach shot is played to another very good putting green. There is a very large Spotted Gum about 50 metres short of the green on the right that can interfere with the approach shot if played from the right. There are a lot of trees crowding the area short right of the green, several of them non-native. The mainly flat green sits right under high voltage powerlines, slightly elevated with a tilt towards the front. There is a bunker front right and another back left.

#### Recommendations

- Rebuild the top of the tees, retaining an equal or slightly greater size, but making them level.
- Maintain the area between the tees and the creek as fairway, so that if golfers 'duff' their tee shot, they are playing their second shot over the creek from the fairway.
- Council should also prioritise working with Melbourne Water to clean up the weeds, in and along the creek corridor. Weed removal and revegetation works will reinstate greater environmental value.
- There are a couple of trees short right of the green that are crowding out other better specimens. Remove the Oak tree and a Prickly ti-tree.
- The green is fine and does not require any changes.

## HOLE 5      (A NEW HOLE)      PAR 3      145 METRES

### Description

The current 5<sup>th</sup> hole is a par 3 played from new tees to a very small 'interim' putting green that were both constructed in 2022, as part of the course layout changes. This is the hole that replaced the original 5<sup>th</sup> hole, that played up the hill to its right. The new 5<sup>th</sup> hole has been located on a section of the course that used to be part of the current 7<sup>th</sup> hole.

The location of the green for the 5<sup>th</sup> hole is not an ideal outcome for the golf course or Northcote golfers and its interim status needs to be addressed. As explained earlier in this report, the current arrangement of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> holes is less than ideal, given the long uphill walk required to arrive at the 6<sup>th</sup> tees. In order to address this

issue, the 5<sup>th</sup> hole needs to be rebuilt and moved to the right into the land currently occupied by the 6<sup>th</sup> hole. The current 6<sup>th</sup> hole will be abandoned, as there is no practical way of using the current 6<sup>th</sup> tees.

### Recommendations

- Construct new tees in the location as shown, aiming at the new green site. The tees should at least 500m<sup>2</sup> in area for par 3's, to spread wear caused by divots. There is a native Silky Oak that needs to be removed to create space for the new tees.
- Remove several trees behind the current 6<sup>th</sup> green. These are mainly non-native Ash.
- Demolish the existing 6<sup>th</sup> green, levelling the area back to natural ground.
- Remove several immature, planted River Red Gums in the location of the new hole.
- Construct a new 6<sup>th</sup> green in the location as shown on the Masterplan, just on the upslope, well away from the new pathway to its rear and complying with setback standards to boundaries used by Australian Golf Course Architects. The new green construction will require a small cut and fill, and drainage run-off behind the green will need to be directed either side of the new green. This is subject to detailed design.
- The area behind, and to the right of the new green (including the area currently occupied by the 6<sup>th</sup> tees), can be revegetated, as per Council's Tree Policy in relation to offset tree planting.



Figure 23: The proposed new 5<sup>th</sup> hole, playing into the space currently occupied by the 6<sup>th</sup> hole.

## HOLE 6 (THE CURRENT 7TH) PAR 4 270 METRES

### Description

The current 7<sup>th</sup> hole used to play from tees located behind the 6<sup>th</sup> green, with the hole playing much longer and bending left. The tees were relocated in about 2014 due to errant golf balls causing problems for residents of the Veronica Gardens Retirement Village. The tees were moved about 180 metres, and a large screen fence was installed adjacent to them. This fence is about 12 metres in height.

As was done on the 1<sup>st</sup> hole, the location and height of the fence was at the time considered an appropriate mitigation measure to resolving the boundary issue. As with the 1<sup>st</sup> hole, the fence was located hard up against the edge of the tees, inevitably meaning golfers only use the left half of the tee. In this instance, I also question

whether the fence is necessary at all – certainly not at the height it is. Tree growth over the past ten years has now formed a natural barrier too, that will continue to increase in height and density.



*Figures 24 and 25: The new 5<sup>th</sup> hole will play in the direction shown above (the red arrow). The current 7<sup>th</sup> tees (right) with the screen fence adjacent to them, showing the concentration of divots on the left side of the tee.*

The additional problem with the tee location is that Bracken Creek crosses the fairway at a very awkward distance for short hitters – it starts at about 110 metres and requires at least a 150 metre carry. That’s a long carry for many golfers, especially many of the patrons at Northcote Public Golf Course. As a result, a lot of balls end up lost in the creek.

Beyond the creek, there are some nice undulations leading up to another slightly domed green. There are not a lot of hole positions on this green either, however it is still good.

### **Recommendations**

- Our preferred recommendation is to construct a new set of tees, about 60 metres further back, very close to where the new 5<sup>th</sup> green will be located. From here the tees can be aimed further left, and existing trees to their right will protect the boundary. It may be that only a low screen fence will be required just to protect users of the new shared pathway from ‘shanked’ shots, but this may be something that can be managed without a fence as well. The addition of 60 metres to the carry will make it over 200 metres, which is only achievable by long hitters. Far more golfers will therefore be unable to reach creek, from the tee.
- Remove several trees on the far left of the fairway near the creek and widen the fairway by at least 10 metres. Council should also prioritise working with Melbourne Water to clean up the weeds in and along the creek corridor.
- Adjust the angle of the fairway mowing on the sides of the fairway so it aims further left.
- No changes are required to the green.

### *Note: Alternative options for the tees:*

- *The existing tees could simply be extended back by about 12 metres, and an additional fence panel added.*
- *The existing tees could be retained as they are and levelled.*
- *Both options are less costly than the preferred option but will not achieve the best outcome for the golf course.*

## HOLE 7 (A NEW HOLE) PAR 3 125 METRES

### Description

There is space available between the current 7<sup>th</sup> green, and the 8<sup>th</sup> hole to establish a new par 3 that will fit with the adjusted golf course layout very effectively.

The transitions between the 6<sup>th</sup> green (the current 7<sup>th</sup> green) and new tees for a par 3 7<sup>th</sup> hole, and then from the new 7<sup>th</sup> green, onto new 8<sup>th</sup> tees, flows seamlessly, and we are able to eliminate the other long green-to-tee walk currently in place.

### Recommendations

- The new 7<sup>th</sup> tees will be located where there is currently a poor quality Melaleuca that has split and fallen over. This tree, and several others within its vicinity, will need to be removed to make way for the new tees and the first part of the holes fairway.
- The new tees will need to be elevated by up to 1 metre at their rear due to the levels.
- The new 7<sup>th</sup> green will be located on the flat area about 20-30 metres from Bracken Creek. There is a ridge and then a slope that runs from the current 8<sup>th</sup> fairway down to this area, so the finished hole may be semi-blind from the tee. That means not all of the putting surface may be visible from the new tees, but the flag certainly will be, as will a golfer standing on the green. The green will need to be elevated by perhaps 0.5-0.75 metres to improve the view of it, and for drainage.
- It may also be necessary to cut through the low ridge in front of the new tees. Lowering this ridge would again improve the view from the tees and provide the fill to elevate the green (detailed design required).
- The new hole will be a short par 3 of about 125 metres, but if well designed, will be a fun addition to the course, with easy walks to and from the new hole.
- Council should also prioritise working with Melbourne Water to clean up the weeds in and along the creek corridor and revegetating this area.
- New tree planting, with an appropriate indigenous species, to the right of the new green will also screen public areas on the eastern side of the creek from view.



Figure 26: The recommended 125 metre par 3 7<sup>th</sup> hole, located in the space available between the current 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> holes. There is ample opportunity for new tree planting.



Figures 26 and 27: The site for the new par 3 7<sup>th</sup> hole from in front of where the new tees will be located. The arrow points to the proposed green site. The tee shot on the revised 8<sup>th</sup> hole (right).

## HOLE 8      PAR 4      370 METRES

### Description

The 8<sup>th</sup> hole used to be a par 5 played from the east side of Bracken Creek but is now a long par 4 played from the old forward tee. Currently golfers of all abilities, ages and genders play from this tee as there are no alternatives. New tees, that are much larger and that offer more flexibility are required.

The original tee shot from the east side of Bracken Creek, required golfers to hit their drives onto, or just over, a low rise about 180-230 metres from the old tee. With the new tee moved about 60 metres further forward to the west side of the creek, long hitters are now able to consistently hit their drives over that hill, meaning it is now a blind shot, as golfers playing their tee shot, cannot see the other side of the hill. There is nothing that can be done to solve this issue, other than move the new tees more than 100 metres forward to the top of the hill. That cannot be justified and would not improve the hole. Blind tee shots on public golf courses are not uncommon, and the bell, that golfers are required to ring as they clear the fairway drive zone, makes it as safe as it can be.

The 8<sup>th</sup> fairway is wide and generous, offering one of the most spacious holes on the golf course. The green is also good, with its single bunker front right.

### Recommendations

- The addition of the new par 3 7<sup>th</sup> hole means the new tees for the 8<sup>th</sup> hole will need to move up the slope onto the flatter plateau to the left, and more elevated than the proposed new 7<sup>th</sup> green. The tee shot from here is better than from the current tee.
- The hole needs a large main tee, and then another tee further forward and to the left as the hole is played. The tee shot will be blind over the hill and longer hitters will need to play down the far right side of the fairway, because the fairway will run out into trees on the left.
- More fairway is needed on the right. If necessary, the irrigation here might need to be adjusted.
- The rest of the hole, and the green are all very good.
- After completing this hole, the transition from the 8<sup>th</sup> green to the 9<sup>th</sup> tees is poor though.

## HOLE 9      PAR 4      305 METRES

### Description

The 9<sup>th</sup> hole is a short par 4 that plays firstly along the flat, and then climbs steeply uphill back towards the clubhouse. The transition from the previous green to the 9<sup>th</sup> tees is poor, and the 9<sup>th</sup> tees are also in poor condition with shade issues from large trees.

The first half of the hole is basically flat but then the hole starts climbing at about 170 metres. After 240 metres it becomes steeper all the way up to the green. The green is located on top of the hill about 10 metres higher than the tee. There is a bunker in front of the green, and slightly to the right. The green itself is a good size, relatively flat but with a tilt back towards the direction of play. The 9<sup>th</sup> is a fine finishing hole.

### Recommendations

- Remove several trees around the tees, including a large Cypress, several other conifers and a Melaleuca.
- Once the trees are removed, demolish the pathway and the timber edging adjacent to the tees.
- Convert the transition zone between the 8<sup>th</sup> green and 9<sup>th</sup> tees to turf.
- Rebuild the 9<sup>th</sup> tees, making them level
- Mow the fairway wider on the left, up near the green.
- No other changes to the hole are required.



Figures 29 and 30: The tee shot on the 9<sup>th</sup> hole (left) and the uphill approach to the green.

## THE PRACTICE GREEN

### Description

The practice putting green is located adjacent to the pro-shop and carpark in an area highlighted in the Building Review, that is currently underway, as an area recommended for pedestrian access from Normanby Road. It has also been identified as an area better suited for outdoor recreation, and bicycle parking.

In order to facilitate this recommendation, the practice putting green will need to be relocated down the slope slightly further away from the carpark, but closer to the recommended new 1<sup>st</sup> tees. Given the significant grade of the slope, we have proposed a putting green on two separate levels with a tier between them. A new putting green with an area of about 450m<sup>2</sup> is possible. It will be located right next to the new 1<sup>st</sup> tees, in an ideal location, while the old putting green area can be put to better use.

## 2.2 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### TREE PLANTING

There are significant areas identified on the Masterplan drawing for new tree planting. As per Council's Tree Policy, any tree removal will be offset with additional tree planting. Tree planting using locally indigenous species can be undertaken in the following areas of the golf course;

- Between the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> holes.
- To the left of the current 4<sup>th</sup> green between the new park boundary and proposed new 5<sup>th</sup> tees.
- In the area currently occupied by the 5<sup>th</sup> green (which is recommended for removal).
- To the rear and back right of the proposed new 5<sup>th</sup> green (and the area where the current 6<sup>th</sup> tees are located).
- To the rear of the proposed new 7<sup>th</sup> green, between that new hole and Bracken Creek.
- To the left of the current 8<sup>th</sup> hole near the new 7<sup>th</sup> hole.

We have estimated that approximately 150 new trees may be planted. All new trees should be locally indigenous species. Tree planting should be focussed into out-of-play areas, so that they can become very low maintenance areas. Tree planting should be supplemented with understorey planting of shrubs and grasses in areas that are out-of-play for golfers.



Figures 31: Indicative tree removal requirements and tree replacement – subject to detailed design and tree assessments.

## FURNISHINGS

A replacement program should be put in place to upgrade items such as seating, rubbish bins, ball washers and signage. The existing course furnishings are tired, and their replacement will be relatively inexpensive but reduce clutter across the course. Their upgrade will significantly improve the amenity of the golf course especially the surrounds to the tees where such furnishings are usually located. The residential style street rubbish bins are perhaps the priority for replacement, with a commercially available alternative. This could potentially be undertaken adjacent to each tee, as that tee is being rebuilt.



*Figures 32: Commercially available course furnishings that will improve the amenity of the golf course considerably.*



## PART 3: STAGING AND COST ESTIMATES

The priority construction works are the new 7<sup>th</sup> hole and 8<sup>th</sup> tees. The reason this is the priority is because this will enable 9-holes of golf to remain in play at all times, which will minimise disruption to the operations of the golf course. If the new 5<sup>th</sup> hole was completed first, then the 6<sup>th</sup> hole will need to be closed, meaning the course only has eight holes and a temporary green will be required. But by building the new 7<sup>th</sup> hole as the first priority, the course will temporarily have 10 holes. This means that in Financial Year two, the new 5<sup>th</sup> hole can be built while the current 5<sup>th</sup> hole remains in play. The current 6<sup>th</sup> hole will need to be decommissioned to enable the new 5<sup>th</sup> hole to be built, but the golf course will still have 9-holes of golf available for play.

Timing of golf course construction works is important, and it ideally needs to coincide with the growing season for turf. In Melbourne's climate that means grassing in late Spring to early summer. Therefore, construction works need to be preferably scheduled for early and mid-Spring.

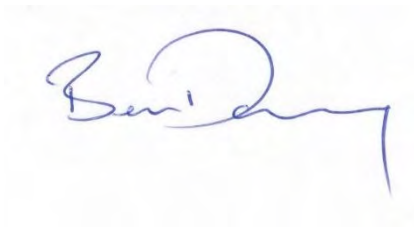
HIGH PRIORITY WORKS	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Budget estimate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site survey and detailed design for Stages 1, 2 and 3. Packaged to allow each Stage to be Tendered separately.</li> </ul>						\$80,000
<b>Priority 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 7<sup>th</sup> hole</li> <li>New 8<sup>th</sup> tees</li> </ul>						\$420,000
<b>Priority 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 5<sup>th</sup> hole</li> <li>New 6<sup>th</sup> tees</li> </ul>						\$420,000
<b>Priority 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 1<sup>st</sup> tees</li> <li>Safety screen upgrade.</li> <li>Practice green.</li> </ul>						\$400,000
	<b>Total high priority budget estimate</b>					<b>\$1.32 million</b>
<b>LOW PRIORITY WORKS</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey and detailed design for additional works. Packaged to allow each Stage to be Tendered separately.</li> </ul>						\$40,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 2<sup>nd</sup> green</li> <li>New 2<sup>nd</sup> tees</li> </ul>						\$250,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 9<sup>th</sup> tees and associated works</li> </ul>						\$100,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levelling/upgrade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tees</li> </ul>						\$75,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levelling/upgrade of the 4<sup>th</sup> tees</li> </ul>						\$75,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Furnishing upgrades</li> </ul>						\$80,000
	<b>Total investment estimate</b>					<b>\$1.94 million</b>

Detailed Design cost estimates includes the following;

- *Site survey, set out plans, tree removal plans, grading plans, grassing plans, landscape plans, Bill of Quantities, construction specifications, irrigation design, final tender documents.*

Construction cost estimates includes the following;

- *Tree removal, earthworks and detailed shaping, greens, bunker and tee construction, drainage, pathways, grassing, irrigation, tree planting/landscaping, site visits by the architect and grow-in/maintenance (by the contractor).*
- *All estimates are based on 2023 rates.*
- *Irrigation allowance is for new works areas only. A full appraisal of the condition of the remainder of the irrigation system and pumps may be required.*
- *Cost estimates do not include Darebin Council's internal Project Management costs.*



*Ben Davey*

*Director*