

## 8.2 NORTHCOTE GOLF COURSE SHARED USE RECOMMENDATION

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**Reviewed By:** General Manager Operations and Capital

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community engagement on the future shared use of the Northcote Public Golf Course site took place between November 2021 and February 2022 in response to a previous Council resolution. This included the opportunity for public feedback via a survey that was open for 5 weeks between 4 November and 2 December 2021, and two public hearing sessions on 14 and 16 February 2022.

There was significant public interest in the future use of the site, and responses were varied and from a wide-reaching audience. The key themes that emerged were that both golf and other park uses were important to our community, as were issues of equity and inclusivity.

This report presents several options and recommends an option for shared use of the site that would increase open space and retain a 9-hole golf course. After Council's decision, the next steps would be to tender for a golf course management operator and to commence design for any physical works at the site. Tendering may establish an initial 2 or 3 year contract, with the contract option for Council to extend beyond that. Council would make a future decision about a contractor in late 2022.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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#### That Council

- 1) Endorses 'Option A' for shared use of the Northcote Golf Course site including decommissioning the southern most hole, retaining a 9-hole golf course, developing a new northern park, delivering a new eastern boundary path and unlocking approximately 5.72 hectares of park land for broader community shared use (**Appendix B**).
- 2) Seeks briefings from officers on:
  - a. terms and conditions of a new golf course management contract for the course including options that might further activate the course for those looking to participate in golf and non-golf pastimes.
  - b. the condition of the buildings on the site and how these buildings could be used to activate the space and encourage further shared use.
- 3) Calls for a review of fencing of the site to determine how access and security can best be managed for shared use.
- 4) Writes to The Hon. Ros Spence MP to thank the State Government for its contribution towards this project, continues negotiation on grant terms and conditions and seeks a further State Government funding contribution to the capital development of the site as endorsed by Council.
- 5) Incorporates necessary funding into the proposed 2022-23 Budget which will be considered by Council at a meeting in June 2022.

- 6) Commences work related to the recommended option including the reconfiguration of one fairway, changes to tees and greens and other capital improvements for delivery of shared use of the space in the 2022/2023 financial year.
  - 7) Thanks the community for their valuable and considered input made during the community engagement and publishes the Northcote Golf Course Community Engagement Report (**Appendix A**) on the Your Say page.
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## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

During 2020, community members sought to access the Northcote Public Golf Course site as additional public open space for recreation during Victoria's extended COVID lockdowns. In response to this, early in its new term Council resolved to seek feedback through community engagement on how the Northcote Public Golf Course site might be shared for broader shared uses in the future.

Following a Council meeting in 25 October 2021, community consultation was started and included a survey designed to capture the ideas and feedback on the future shared use of the site, as well as an opportunity to provide verbal submissions to Council through two hearing of community feedback sessions.

This report presents a summary of the key principles for use of the site, feedback from the community and stakeholders, and recommended options to proceed.

### Previous Council Resolution

At its meeting held on 25 October 2021, Council resolved:

*'That Council:*

- 1) Commences community consultation and invite community feedback regarding the future shared use of the Northcote Golf Course*
- 2) Notes that community consultation will occur for 5 weeks starting in late October 2021.*
- 3) Invites those who have provided feedback as part of the consultation to be heard in support of their response at a meeting of councillors at a date to be determined in early 2022.*
- 4) Notes that in parallel, Council officers will progress discussions with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation regarding any options relating to future co-management options of the site.*
- 5) Receives a report making recommendations on the future shared use of the Northcote Public Golf Course in March 2022.'*

And prior to that, on 22 March 2021, Council resolved to:

- 1) *Notes the report.*
- 2) *Upon the adoption of the 2021/2022 budget, immediately commences community consultations by adopting a Collaborative model of consultation to assist Council in developing a vision and plan for the future shared use of the Northcote Golf Course.*
- 3) *Receives a Council report no later than December 2021 on a future vision and plan for the shared use of the Northcote Golf Course after a period of community consultation with the range of key stakeholders as listed in the officer's report, and community members.*

An additional, relevant resolution was made on 26 April 2022. This resolution is not specifically about this site, but more broadly about Council owned land and land management.

That Council:

- 1) *Notes the 2021-2024 Council Plan strategic action commitment to having discussions with Traditional Owners to understand the feasibility and resources required for Council to hand back land and responsibility for land management.*
- 2) *Notes that Council will initiate and jointly design and respectful partnership engagement approach with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.*
- 3) *Receives a report on how Council could commence, in collaboration with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, the process of identifying and scoping all the opportunities, including any places of cultural significance, for Council to hand back land and responsibility for land management to the Wurundjeri.*
- 4) *Immediately writes to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation Board to inform them of the above.*

## **ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

## **ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

## **ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

2.1 We will deliver equitable and accessible infrastructure to provide opportunities for our community to live well

The Council Plan prioritises a number of actions that directly relate to this report. In particular, the future shared use of the golf course is a specific action, while consultation with the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation about a range of initiatives (including management/co-management of open space) is also relevant to this report.

## DISCUSSION

### Engagement Process

The first stage of community consultation on the future shared use of the Northcote Golf Course site took place from 4 November to 12 December 2021 via an online survey on Darebin's Your Say. Additionally, hard copies were available from a variety of locations.

The survey sought feedback on the following questions endorsed by Council:

- 1) What does sharing the space at Northcote Public Course look like to you and our community?
- 2) How do you see the space being shared between the general public uses and a golf course?
- 3) What options can you imagine for shared use?
- 4) Do you have any other comments?

### Community participation and interest

The survey was open for 5 weeks between 4 November and 2 December 2021, which saw a large number of responses from the local community and a wider reaching audience including interstate and overseas respondents.

The two public hearing sessions on 14 and 16 February 2022 also attracted a high number of participants. A video recording of each session is available on the Your Say page.

Close to 7,000 surveys were fully completed and approximately 70 attendees presented verbal feedback, sharing views from across the spectrum of single use and shared use feedback for the site.

Promotion of the consultation process followed a detailed community engagement plan to ensure that our community was aware of this opportunity. A total of 11,488 entries were recorded via the online survey tool, with 6,975 complete entries. Some surveys were either incomplete (2,959) or not proceeded as participants were not able to share personal information to complete the survey (1,554). 112 entries were removed as they were duplicates (where the same name and email address were used). In accordance with Council's community engagement policy, anyone who chooses to participate in a consultation process is required to provide personal information. This enables Council to identify demographic data thus ensuring our engagements are representative of the diverse community.



Type of feedback received

Overall, the type of feedback received through the survey was varied. All feedback was coded into themes. The framework is provided as part of the engagement summary in **Appendix A**. In general, community views can be summarised into the following groups and response numbers:

Code	Total	Darebin residents	Moreland (residents and CALD)	Coding framework
<b>Support sharing</b>	2782	1505	57	Includes comments that support sharing the golf course, this includes people who want golf to be retained with additional uses.
<b>Golf only</b>	2985	1470	37	Relates to comments that clearly stated that they only support golfing activities in Northcote Golf Course, without sharing it with other uses.
<b>Park only</b>	697	524	8	Relates to comments that clearly stated that they only support turning Northcote Golf Course into a public park, without sharing it with other uses.
<b>Shared – spatial</b>	802	487	17	Relates to comments that support sharing part of the golf course for other uses, for instance, reduce the size of the golf course and share part of the land; or sharing the club house for non-golf uses.
<b>Shared – temporal</b>	2082	1204	41	Relates to comments that support sharing through allowing different activities at different times, for instance, opening for other uses during summer, some days in the week/ weekends/ evenings or by timeslots for non-golf uses. This option does not involve reducing the size of the golf course.
<b>Non-golf uses</b>	1128	781	22	Relates to any ideas that are non-golf uses, for example picnic, BBQ, events, Indigenous storytelling, playgrounds, exercising, community hubs, community garden, and rewilding.

*\*\* Please note that participants expressed many different views within one submission, given this the total figure is higher than the total submissions received.*

*\*\*\* The survey was not designed as a quantitative exercise, therefore use of these numbers should be with caution.*

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation Engagement

Since Council considered this site specifically in October 2021, it has made a broader resolution on 26 April 2022 relating to land across Darebin, which seeks to explore handing back land and responsibility for land management using a respectful partnership engagement approach. Council wrote to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to advise of this broader decision and they have responded seeking a meeting between Council and the Board with regards to the resolution. At this time, formal feedback about the Northcote Golf Course site hasn't been provided to Council. The recommendation in this report would not prevent future consideration of any specific feedback about this site that Council may receive in future.

**Principles for shared-use of the site**

The following principles have guided the engagement process for the future use of the site and support Council's commitment to equity and wellbeing for our community. When evaluating the feedback from our community and stakeholders to develop the potential options, officers continually reflect on how each option measures against these principles:

1. Council is seeking feedback from and exploring options for future use and joint management with, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Council wants to ensure that the knowledge, living culture and practices of Traditional Owners are recognised, supported and promoted in the use and management of land as per Council's Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
2. Changes to the Northcote Public Golf Course will also be considered with attention to cultural heritage.

3. Council will consider how feedback aligns with Breathing Space: Open Space Strategy and make recommendations that align with those principles, in particular: 'activating open spaces through making them multi-use and increasing opportunities for social connections and physical activity.'
4. Council might consider perceptions of safety. Recommendations to Council will prioritise the safety of all users.
5. Council is committed to providing accessible, safe, welcoming and inclusive sites. We want our parks and open spaces to be places where all community members feel safe and included regardless of age, gender, culture, and abilities.
6. Council will consider the importance of healthy and active communities, and accessibility for diverse communities to recreational activity.
7. Council consider financial consequences of its decisions. Council will consider multi-year phased improvements and will consider grant applications to fund further improvements in future years.

**Shared use recommendations:**

Using the ideas and feedback generated from the survey, alignment with the project principles, and opportunities for joint management agreements in the future, the following options are presented for consideration:

***Option A (recommended) 'Spatial Shared Use' (Appendix B)***

The recommended option includes decommissioning the southern-most hole (the 5<sup>th</sup>) of the golf course, to create a new southern park connecting to a new northern park via a shared path corridor on the eastern side of the golf course. The golf course will be reconfigured to retain nine holes. This option will also see:

- The adjacent (previously) decommissioned fairway re-commissioned and a new tee and green created
- The slight relocation of 3 tees to ensure shared-use patron safety. These are the 7th, the 8th and the 6th

This option aligns with the principles and has the following benefits:

- This option is a compromise, a 'win – win' that allows golf to be retained on site, whilst allowing additional space to be used by the general public (Principle 3)
- It allows simultaneous use of the site, where golf and other recreational/passive uses can take place, without interference on one or another (Principle 3 & 4)
- This option allows Council to retain options for Wurundjeri when it is in a better position to consider the land for shared management opportunities (Principle 1 & 2)
- This option also allows for significant biodiversity outcomes. Given the proximity of the open space to Merri Creek and Bracken Creek, there are options to prioritise bushland and conservation outcomes (Principle 2 & 3)
- It is also a low-cost option (comparatively) that allows Council to make changes to cater for a variety of shared uses, compromising between various interested individuals and groups in our community (Principle 7)
- The location of the public open space is close to Warrk-Warrk Bridge providing a valuable link across Merri Creek, as well as opening a link along the eastern side of the golf course. There will effectively be two new parks – one at the north of the site near Mayer Park, and one to the south near Warrk-Warrk Bridge (Principle 5 & 6)

- This option will provide an additional 5.72 hectares of open space for community use. For reference, this is between the size of Arch Gibson Reserve in Kingsbury, and TW Blake in Preston (Principle 3, 5 & 6)



Figure 1: Option A for Northcote Golf Course, Arch Gibson Reserve and TW Blake Reserve (indicative only, not to scale)

### ***Alternative Option B (not recommended) ‘Spatial Shared Use’***

An alternative option is to retain the golf course on the site north of Bracken Creek and open up the site south of Bracken Creek for public open space (**Appendix C**). If Council's preference is for this option, the golf course would require a reconfiguration to a six-hole golf course. This would provide the community with approximately 9.11 hectares of new open space. This option is not recommended, as it does not align with the principles, in particular:

- Decommissioning four existing fairways, and installing one new fairway (does not align with Principle 7)
- Low level of support from the golfing community for a six-hole golf course (does not align with Principle 5 & 6)
- Will be very expensive to reinstate fairways if a different decision is made in the future (does not align with Principle 7 or 8)





Figure 2: Option B (not recommended)

Implementation of the recommended option:

The reconfiguration of the site for Option A would include (but not limited to):

- Decommissioning one fairway, and recommissioning one new fairway
- Minor changes to 3 tees
- Minor earth works on the decommissioned sand trap
- Removal of some exotic species of trees
- Installation of a path connecting Warrk-Warrk Bridge and Mayer Park along the eastern side of the site
- Installation of new seating and bins

The estimated cost to reconfigure the fairways and upgrade the open space to a park with a path is \$950,000 (over 2 years and subject to scope and any consultation).

Other options

Council has several other options including:

- 1) Leave the physical site as is, retain golf and tender for a new golf operator. There would be no capital cost associated with this option, however subject to the future tender, there would continue to be operating costs of running the golf course.
- 2) Do nothing and don't tender for a new golf operator. Golf use would cease at the site and while the site would be available as open space it would not have been 'reconfigured' to be open space.
- 3) Change more of the site from golf use to open space and do more extensive capital works at the site. The capital costs of this would be significantly greater given the size of this parcel of land.

Next steps:

A key next step should Council decide to continue golf use on part of the site, is to tender for a golf course operator and to commence design for any physical works at the site. Tendering would establish an initial 2 or 3 year contract, with the contract option for Council to extend beyond that. Council would make a future decision about a contractor in late 2022.

Should Council endorse the recommended design, detailed design could begin early in the new financial year. The design would be shaped by the wide array of community suggestions already provided during the consultation period and balancing it with what is in line with Council's priorities as outlined in Breathing Space. Detailed design would determine the delivery timeline for the changes, however it is hoped that a southern park could be opened to the community by January 2023.

**CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES****Financial Management**

Subject to Council's decisions about the definition of shared-use of the golf course, additional resources will be required. Financial consequences may include:

- Operational management of the course
- Capital investment into the golf course to deliver on any shared use position Council takes

Council's resolution of March 2021 also seeks State Government financial support for any future project. Officers wrote to the relevant State Government departments seeking a financial contribution towards a site assessment as outlined in the resolution. The State Government has responded with a grant of \$200,000 for a pedestrian cycle pathway and improvements to buildings. No further detail has yet been provided on the grant's terms and conditions.

Recommended option A

<b>Capital Activity</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<i>Design for golf course/construction of new fairway, green and tees/decommission southern fairway</i>	\$150,000	
<i>Design and due diligence of new eastern boundary path</i>	\$100,000	
<i>New eastern path construction</i>		\$350,000
<i>Design and due diligence of new northern park adjacent to Mayer Park</i>	\$100,000	
<i>Construction of northern park</i>		Subject to design
<i>Intense renewal works along the Bracken Creek</i>	\$100,000	
<i>New minor assets</i>	\$50,000	
<i>Approximately 10% contingency (total)</i>	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>

\*Council could fund year one activities from the Open Space Reserve

In addition to the capital costs above, Council could expect operating costs in relation to 1FTE for an officer to lead the design, construction, consultation, briefing and review works associated with the recommended option over the next 2 years. The additional annual maintenance costs related to option A would be \$100,000 – largely related to ongoing maintenance of the northern park, the southern park and the linear path.

Option B costs (not recommended)

Capital Activity	2022/2023	2023/2024
<i>Design for golf course/construction of new fairway and tees</i>	\$150,000	
<i>Design and due diligence of new eastern boundary path</i>	\$100,000	
<i>New eastern path construction</i>		\$350,000
<i>Design and due diligence of new northern park adjacent to Mayer Park</i>	\$100,000	
<i>Construction of northern park</i>		Subject to design
<i>Intense renewal works along the Bracken Creek</i>	\$100,000	
<i>New minor assets</i>	\$100,000	
<i>Approximately 10% contingency (total)</i>	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>

\*Council could fund year one activities from the Open Space Reserve

Like the operational costs associated with option B, Council can expect costs associated with a project manager to undertake the works (1 FTE) and additional maintenance costs of \$200,000 – a larger park will attract larger costs.

Open Space Levy and Reserve

Council maintains an Open Space Reserve (OSR) which has been created from levies against developments across the municipality. Council is required to draw down on the OSR to improve the quality, and increase the quantity, of open space in the municipality. In 2022/2023, Council has proposed in its draft Budget committing approximately \$7m from the OSR to open space improvement projects in the 2022/2023 capital works program – a similar sum will be proposed in 2023/2024. These projects include the Open Space Improvement Program, Dole Wetland, improvements to public toilets in parks, irrigation works, sportsground enhancement works, playspace renewal program, park asset program and improvements to buildings servicing parks.

The following are some of the projects currently proposed for 2023/2024 (subject to Council's annual budget process and approval) that might also be funded by the OSR (and which might compete with funding for the improvements at the Northcote Golf Course) – open space improvement program, Bill Lawry Oval improvements, parks public toilet strategy, sportsground improvement program, oval reconstruction program, park asset playground, rewilding program and playspace renewal program.

Officers believe that committing an additional \$550k from the OSR in 2022/2023 towards improvements to the open space at Northcote Golf Course is entirely consistent with the principles of the OSR and retains a prudent balance in the reserve for Council priorities in 2023/2024 and beyond. Officers had earmarked the OSR as a the likely and most suitable funding source for any improvements that Council agreed to when it embarked on the community discussion in relation to the golf course.

#### Operational costs of various options

The following is a summary of the estimated operational costs related to the various options.

Option	Cost	Comment
Existing cost to Council to run the course	\$150,000	Subject to rounds played and any new contract into which Council enters.
Option A (5.72 ha open space) plus a 9-hole golf course	\$250,000	Assumes similar cost to maintain course plus extra \$100,000 for maintenance of open space
Option B (9.11ha open space) plus 6-hole golf course	\$300,000	Assumes reduction by a third in cost to maintain course plus extra \$200,000 for maintenance of open space

\*subject to market response to any tender Council releases.

### Community Engagement

Community engagement on the future shared use of the Northcote Golf Course site was undertaken between November 2021 and February 2022. It included the following activities:

Engagement activity	Number of participants/people engaged	Target group	Demographic information
Letters to households	5,300	Residents living within 2km of site	Varied
Your Say page	Over 840 registrations	Community	Varied – translated information available in 12 languages on page
Feedback survey 4 November – 12 December 2021	6,975 fully completed survey responses from a total of 11,488 recorded surveys	All community and users of the site	See engagement report for full details
Online Q&A sessions (2)	134	All interested participants	Varied
Your Say Q&A widget	9	All interested participants	N/A
Hearing of Community Feedback meetings 14 & 16 February 2022	97 registered Approx. 70 verbal submissions heard	All interested participants	Varied
Invitation to participate – stakeholders	Approx. 7,000 newsletter subscribers	Advisory committees Stakeholder groups Newsletter subscribers	See engagement report for full details
CALD information packs	Information translated in twelve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darebin Ethnic Community Council,</li> </ul>	CALD specific

Engagement activity	Number of participants/people engaged	Target group	Demographic information
	languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic Museum of Australia and Islamic Society of Victoria,</li> <li>• North eastern Melbourne Chinese Association,</li> <li>• Northern Migrant Resource Centre,</li> <li>• Northcote Italian Pensioners Club,</li> <li>• Greek Community of Northcote,</li> <li>• Hellenic Stegi Friendly Elderly Citizen Club Preston,</li> <li>• Federation of Macedonian Senior Citizens Groups of NE Region of Victoria</li> </ul>	
Invitation to participate – schools and Youth Jury	Approx. 700 responses from students	Local schools	See engagement report for full details
Social media	Information only	Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn	Various – automatic translation available
Promotional posters	Information only	Libraries, community hubs and youth hubs	Various – translations available

In addition to the survey, Council also received the following submissions which have been taken into consideration.

- A petition presented to Council completed by the 'Unlock Northcote Golf Course' Facebook group in 2020, which received 2,289 responses
- Collection of drawings and letters from 700 students from 4 local primary schools emailed to Council on 12 December 2021
- Submission from Northcote Golf Club and Northcote Community & Golf Hub presented to Council Meeting on 15 December 2021
- Submission from the Normanby Park Golf Club
- Some submissions were also made directly to the Parks & Open Space team via email. The themes of the emails have been captured in the analysis

## Other Principles for consideration

### Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;



**Public Transparency Principles**

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

**Strategic Planning Principles**

- (c) Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation;

**Service Performance Principles**

- (a) services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community;

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS****Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

In developing the recommended future shared use options, sustainability considerations have been included as a criteria and the relevant Council units consulted. Any subsequent Council decision can directly contribute to mitigating the climate emergency through, for example, rewilding, tree planting, joint waterway management (with Melbourne Water), weed management and cultural Caring for Country with Traditional Owners.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

Officers worked with the equity impact team as part of a broad communications and implementation plan for the community engagement and consultation. At several check points during the consultation, further advice was sought to boost engagement of particular demographic groups where response numbers were lower than desired. This included additional outreach to schools and the CALD community.

Officers worked closely with the EIA and Communications teams to ensure that all avenues were implemented for improving the number of responses received from CALD community members. Survey participants were asked if they speak a language other than English at home. Overall, most participants spoke English only (87%). Over 500 participants indicated that they speak another language. 8.6% of Darebin residents surveyed indicated they speak another language.

Officers have attempted at all stages of the engagement process to boost the number of CALD participants; however, efforts have not yielded a high number of results. Direct engagement with CALD community groups offering to present at community meetings were declined by most groups, and others did not provide further feedback.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

Economic development opportunities, particularly as they relate to local procurement and local jobs, will be explored through any decision Council makes on the future of the golf course in 2022. The recommended option does not prevent Council considering any feedback from the Traditional Owners in future.

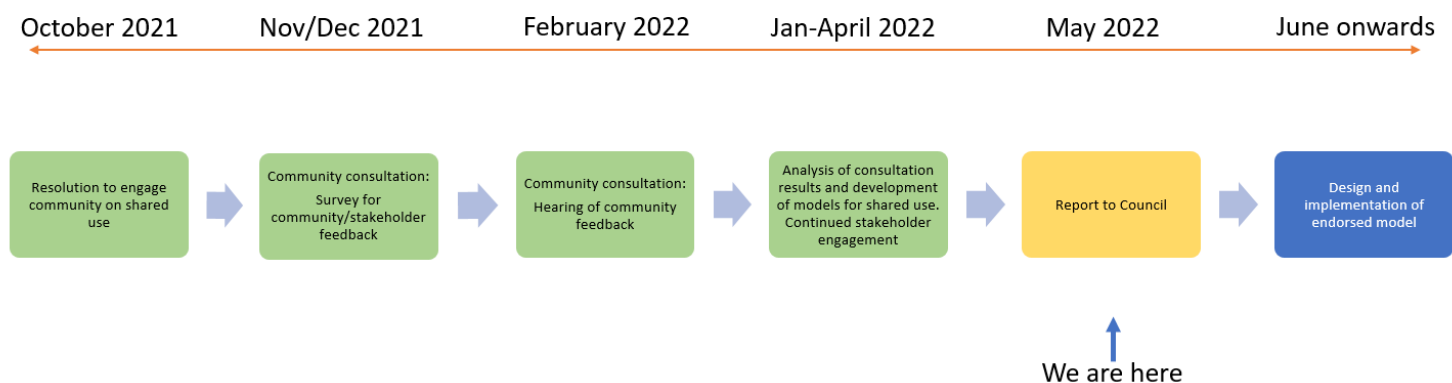
## Operational Impacts

Changing part of the use of the site from a golf course to open space will change the nature of the maintenance requirements - discussed in the Financial Management section.

## Legal and Risk Implications

An immediate risk to implementing any changes to the existing golf course is in relation to contractual arrangements with the course management operator and the need to engage a management contractor beyond 2022. Assuming Council makes a decision about the future of the space, officers can mitigate this risk by tendering for a management operator in mid-2022.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS



### Key dates as follows:

- 24 May 2022 – Contact all registered participants and stakeholders to announce outcome of the consultation, and publish engagement report/update the Your Say page
- June 2022 – Confirmation of budget for 2022/2023 financial year
- July 2022 – Tender for a management operator for the golf course
- July onwards – Design of reconfigured golf course and parklands and implementation of new design

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Breathing Space: The Darebin Open Space Strategy

## Attachments

- Northcote Golf Course Engagement Summary (**Appendix A**) [↓](#)
- Northcote Golf Course Option A Recommendation (**Appendix B**) [↓](#)
- Northcote Golf Course Option B Alternative (**Appendix C**) [↓](#)

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.



# Consultation on the future shared use of the Northcote Public Golf Course

## *Engagement Report*

Prepared by Capire Consulting Group on behalf of Darebin City Council

**capire**

*Giving every person a voice.*

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## DEFINITIONS

The following lists the key definitions for common terms used in the design and delivery of community engagement as stated in the City of Darebin's *Community Engagement Policy*, 2021.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A planned process that provides individuals and groups the opportunity to be involved meaningfully in service planning, delivery and decision-making which may affect them or are of interest to them. Community engagement seeks to build trust and strengthen relationships.

### COMMUNITY

A term used that includes residents, businesses/workers, community leaders/representatives, and community groups and organisations in Darebin.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Project background

The Northcote Public Golf Course (the golf course) site is located on approximately 25 hectares of Council owned land adjacent to the Merri Creek, Mayer Park and Normanby Avenue. The site is within the area bounded by Leinster Grove, Beavers Road, Merri Creek and Normanby Avenue (see Figure 1).

The site of the golf course is Council-owned land and is currently leased as a nine-hole public golf course with a contract in place until 30 June 2022. During the COVID-19 pandemic, since the golf course had paused their activities, the community petitioned to Council to allow use by the wider public, where it became a popular destination for different uses including walking and picnicking.

This triggered a discussion within Council to investigate shared use of the site. On 22 March 2021, Council decided to undertake community engagement to explore options for the future shared use of the site. This decision has also been listed as part of the *Council Plan Action Plan 2021/2022*.

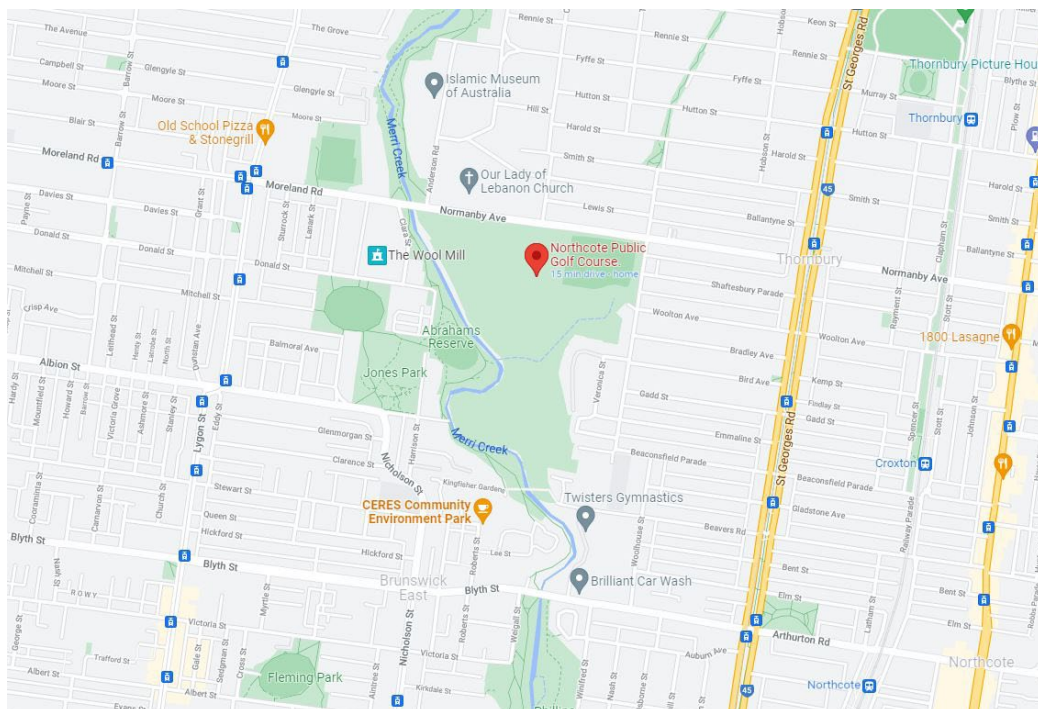


Figure 1 Map showing the location of Northcote Public Golf Course (the site)

## 1.2 About this report

Between 4 November and 12 December 2021, Council invited the community to complete an online survey, via Darebin's Your Say, to better understand community priorities. Council engaged Capire Consulting Group (Capire) to collate and analyse survey responses, as detailed in this report. These findings will be presented to Council in January 2022 and will inform the development of draft models for shared use of the site.

## 1.3 Limitations

The limitations of the engagement process are outlined below.

- The COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements meant that planned in-person engagement activities could not proceed. An alternative approach was undertaken. Hard copy surveys were delivered upon request to ensure community members were informed about the project and had the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Council made every effort to reach a diverse representation of the Darebin community through a range of promotion activities (see Section 2 of this report).
- Participants volunteered to share their views and opinions. These findings do not represent a statistically valid<sup>1</sup> sample of the Darebin community.
- The engagement was designed to target the local community and site users. However, the engagement attracted individuals from outside Darebin who were highly interested and passionate about the topic.

The limitations of the analysis of findings are outlined below.

- This report is a summary of the public engagement, and an analysis of the feedback received via the survey. All feedback has been carefully analysed as part of preparing this report. This report presents items that were frequently raised to support Council in its decision-making, it does not include individual participant's contributions. All feedback has been provided to Council for their review and consideration.
- This engagement aims to explore shared options for the Northcote Public Golf Course. Hence the survey was designed to collect ideas for shared options, but not single-use options for the site. However, some participants have used the survey to share their support for single use of the site.
- Participants' sentiment was understood based on human interpretation of survey response, and hence is a subjective analysis. This report does not provide a quantitative analysis of participant's sentiment.
- During the engagement process, Council received contributions other than the online survey, including email contributions, and a collection of drawings and letters from over

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<sup>1</sup> This means that Capire cannot say with confidence that the views collected represent the views of the Darebin community.



500 students from Darebin schools. These contributions have not been included in the overall analysis detailed in this report. They have been shared with Council alongside this report.

- Capire has faithfully reported on information documented by participants and has interpreted the information to represent the views of participants as closely as possible. Capire has tried to retain the voice and language used by participants.
- This report might include information shared by participants that is factually incorrect, infeasible or outside the scope of the project. It may also reflect individual experiences or misunderstanding of the existing use of the site. Capire has faithfully recorded participants' opinions, ideas and aspirations and has not fact-checked them.
- Duplications of survey entries were identified and consolidated to avoid double-counting. Duplications were identified by the email addresses and names provided in the survey. In the instance where the same email address was used but the names were different, these entries were not counted as duplicates.
- The analysis of data collected through the engagement was undertaken by Capire's engagement consultants and even with a thorough quality assurance process there may be a small margin of error due to individual interpretation.

## 1.4 Next steps

This report will be presented to Council in January 2022. All participants who have provided a response to the survey will also be provided with an opportunity to speak to Council. Council will make further decisions on this project in March 2022.

## 2 Engagement approach

This section outlines the engagement objectives and approach. This includes approaches to raise awareness about the project and collecting community feedback.

### 2.1 Engagement objectives

The engagement objectives are outlined below:

- To inform the community of Council's decision to explore shared options for the Northcote Public Golf Course
- To provide opportunities to existing and potential users, and the wider Darebin community to share their views on potential shared use options of the Northcote Public Golf Course.

Parallel to this community engagement, Council was also in discussion with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to explore co-management options for the site.

### 2.2 Raising awareness

To ensure the broader Darebin community were aware of the project and were able to participate in the engagement process, Council used a range of tools (listed in Table 1) to promote the engagement.



Table 1 Tools used to build awareness and drive participation

Tool	Description
<b>Your Say page</b>	<p>Online engagement via Council's Your Say page (<a href="https://yoursaydarebin.com.au">yoursaydarebin.com.au</a>), including an online survey that gather community ideas on the shared use option.</p> <p>Community could ask questions using the Q&amp;A tab, find out more about the project via the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). These were live FAQs updated throughout the engagement process, such as following the online Q&amp;A sessions.</p>
<b>Social media promotion</b>	<p>A series of social media posts were published to invite participation through Council's website and social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook platforms). The posts were published throughout the engagement period; and promoted through the Mayor's and Councillors' social media pages.</p> <p>These posts were automatically translated by social media platforms into Darebin's key community languages to target residents who do not speak English as their first language.</p>

Tool	Description
<b>Online Q&amp;A Webinar sessions</b>	<p>Council hosted two 1-hour online Q&amp;A webinar sessions to answer questions about the project. Participants were able to submit their questions prior to the session through the Your Say page, or project email address or directly in the session.</p> <p>All questions and answers were either answered by Council staff during the sessions or posted as written responses in the FAQ section on the Your Say page. The sessions were recorded and shared via the Your Say page.</p> <p>Closed captions was used in both sessions to support participant accessibility.</p>
<b>Direct mail</b>	<p>Direct mail out was sent to nearby residents within the local precinct area as well as those residents who had previously proactively contacted Council and expressed interest in this project (Council has a register of these contacts).</p>
<b>Language packages</b>	<p>Language packages were mailed out to the following CALD groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Eastern Melbourne Chinese Association</li> <li>• Northern Metropolitan MRC</li> <li>• Federation of Macedonian Senior Citizens Groups of North East Region of Victoria</li> <li>• Northern Migrant Resource Centre</li> <li>• Northcote Italian Pensioners Club</li> <li>• Hellenic Stegi Friendly Elderly Citizen Club Preston</li> <li>• Greek Community of Northcote</li> <li>• Islamic Society of Victoria</li> <li>• Islamic Museum of Australia</li> </ul>
<b>Posters</b>	<p>Posters with a QR code to the Your Say page were displayed on site, at local community hubs, youth hubs, customer service centres and libraries in Darebin.</p>
<b>Phone</b>	<p>Participants could contact Council by phone to request hard copy surveys to provide their feedback.</p>
<b>Stakeholder email</b>	<p>Emails to promote the engagement opportunities were sent to 'friends of' groups, environmental groups, aged and disability groups, CALD community groups. Additional outreach to stakeholder groups including local schools, faith leaders, Darebin Ethnic Community Council and the Islamic Museum.</p>
<b>Council's advisory groups</b>	<p>All Council's advisory committee groups received an email notification about this project. The project was tabled at the Youth Jury Session on Thursday 15 November 2021.</p>

Tool	Description
<b>Newsletter</b>	The engagement was promoted in the Sustainable Darebin e-newsletter (3,279 subscribers); in Healthy and Aging Darebin Newsletter (more than 2000 hard copy subscribers and 900 email subscribers); and in the Darebin Disability Access Update e-newsletter (521 subscribers).

## 2.3 Data collection

An online survey was designed by Council to collect ideas from the community about possible shared use of the golf course site. This survey focuses on ideation and exploration of possible ideas, but not intended to determine the most preferred option for implementation of shared use.



Apart from the online survey, the community could request for a hard copy survey from Council.

While Council did not aim to seek feedback through channels other than the online survey, during the five-week engagement period, comments from the public were received through Council's email address and mail. This included a collection of drawings and letters from over 500 students. These contributions have not been included in the overall analysis detailed in this report but have been shared with Council alongside this report.

## 3 Participation

This section provides a breakdown of the demographic data collected through the survey, this includes postcode, gender, age group, language spoken at home other than English, whether the person identifies as having a disability, identifies as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander. This provides an observation on the reach of the engagement. The collection of this demographic data is in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

### 3.1 Overview

Over 7,000 participants participated in the engagement through the Your Say project page, this includes the survey and the two online webinar Q&A sessions. The following table provides a snapshot of the number of participants for each activity.

*Table 2 Number of participants across activities*

Your Say Darebin Page	
Overall site visits	11,900
Overall downloads of documents	184
Overall views of the Frequently Asked Questions	762
Online webinar Q&A sessions	
83 participants at the two Q&A sessions:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thursday 2 December 2021 - 6:00pm-7:00pm (55 participants)</li> <li>Tuesday 7 December 2021 - 10:00am-11:00am (28 participants)</li> </ul>	
51 participants viewed the session recordings.	
Survey	
A total of 11,488 entries were recorded via the online survey tool, with 6,975 complete entries. Some surveys were either incomplete (2,959) <sup>2</sup> or not proceeded as participants were not able to share personal information to complete the survey (1,554). 112 entries were removed as they were duplicates. There was one hard copy survey received.	

### 3.2 Demographic data

The following section provides an analysis of participants' demographic data as self-declared by participants themselves.

#### Postcodes

Participants were asked to indicate the postcodes of where they live. The table (Table 3) below listed the 10 most frequently indicated postcode and suburbs. The top three most frequently cited postcodes were 3070 (Northcote), 3071 (Thornbury) and 3072 (Preston).

<sup>2</sup> These were participants who entered their personal details but have skipped through the survey, or did not respond to all the questions.

Table 3 Top 10 postcodes and suburbs

No.	Postcode (Suburb)	Number of responses
1	3070 (Northcote)	1,551
2	3071 (Thornbury)	1,110
3	3072 (Preston)	656
4	3058 (Coburg)	297
5	3057 (Brunswick East)	291
6	3056 (Brunswick)	286
7	3073 (Reservoir)	258
8	3078 (Alphington/ Fairfield)	148
9	3068 (Fitzroy North)	120
10	3055 (Moonee Vale)	79

A total of 3,921 participants used a postcode in Darebin.

The maps below (Figure 2 and Figure 3) represent the location of the postcodes.<sup>3</sup> The online survey gathered interest from participants outside of Darebin, people cited postcodes from other states and one participant was living in the United Kingdom (not shown in the map).

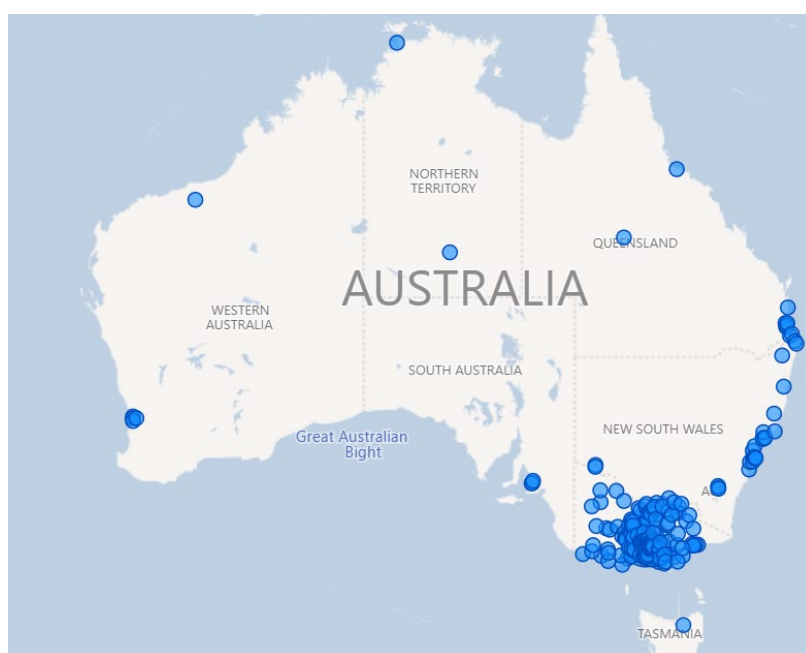


Figure 2 Dot map showing the location of postcodes (self-declared by participants) across Australia (N=6,975)

<sup>3</sup> The larger the size of the dot, the more participants it represents.

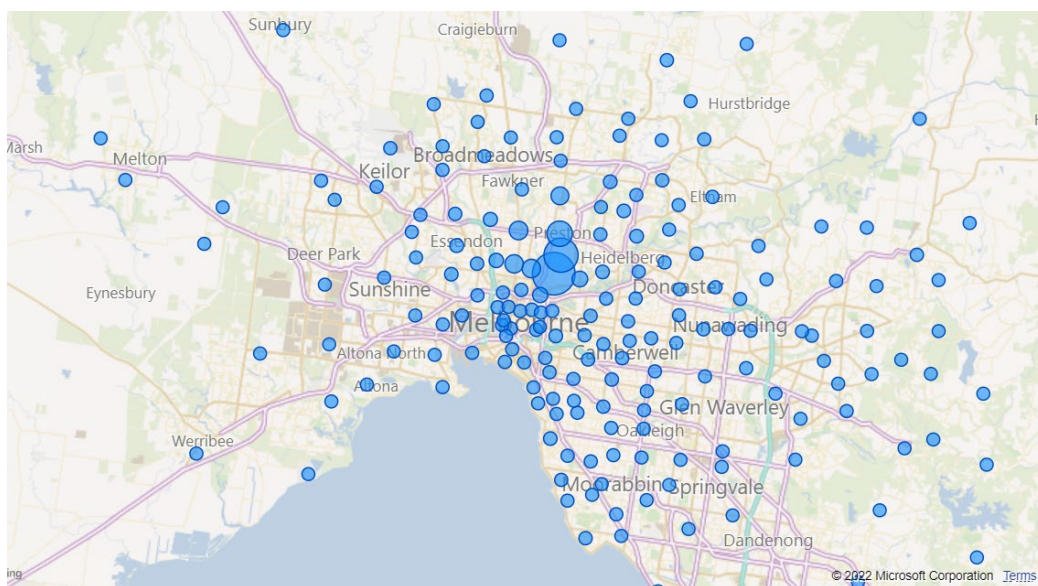


Figure 3 A dot map showing the location of postcodes (self-declared by participants) across Melbourne (N=6,975)

#### Further analysis: Participants' IP addresses

As participants completed their surveys online<sup>4</sup>, the survey also collected information about participants' devices, which included IP addresses<sup>5</sup>.

A map showing participants' IP addresses is shown in Figure 4.

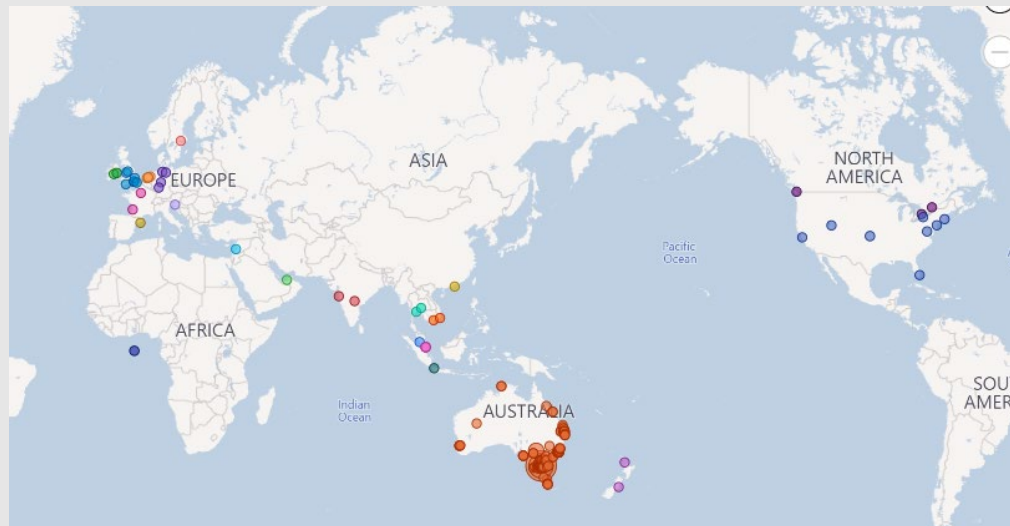


Figure 4 A map showing locations of participant's IP addresses (N=6,975)

83 out of 6975 surveys were submitted by a device with an IP address located outside of Australia, locations included the United States (33), United Kingdom (8), Germany (8), the Netherlands (8) and anonymous locations (11). It is important to note that IP addresses do not directly indicate one's physical location. Some participants maybe be using a Virtual Private Network Server that was located overseas.

369 out of 6975 surveys were submitted by a device with an IP address located within Darebin. This may be a surprising contrast when comparing to over 3,900 participants self-declared as Darebin residents. However, it is reminded that participants may have completed the online survey when they were away from home and the IP address was only their location at the time of completing the survey. Hence, this is not an indicator that these participants were not from Darebin and IP addresses should not be used to verify participants' locations.

However, Council officers were aware of external stakeholder campaigns that were intended to boost numbers for a particular outcome that would have triggered this external engagement.

In the following demographic analysis, Capire used self-declared postcodes for analysis, and provided an observation of the differences (if any) when filtered by IP addresses as a point of reference.

<sup>4</sup> Only one participant submitted a hard copy survey.

<sup>5</sup> An IP address represents the internet address of one's device, this could be a mobile, a computer or a router. IP addresses also provides a rough indication of physical location of the device.



Gender

Referring to Figure 5, the overall participation data shows that there were more male participants than female participants (a difference of over 1,000 participants). However, when looking at the demographics of Darebin residents (Figure 6), there was an equal split between female and male participants. Overall, there were 81 participants who identified as non-binary (or other), of which 54 of them lived in Darebin.

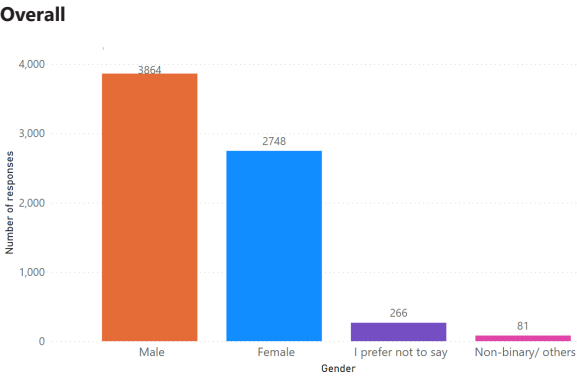


Figure 5 Gender of participants - Overall (N=6,959)<sup>6</sup>

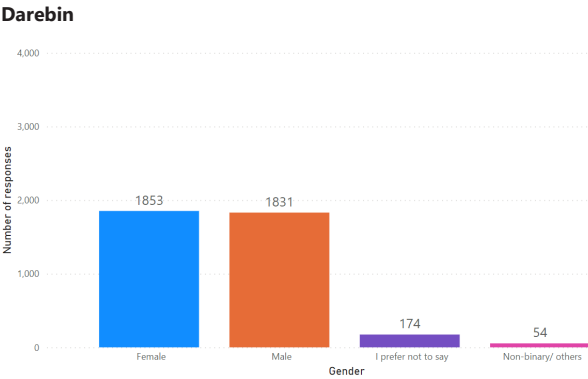


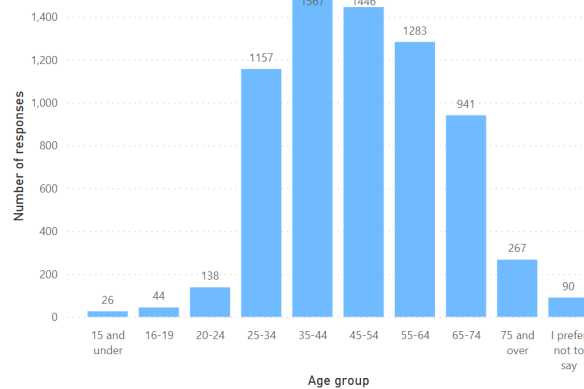
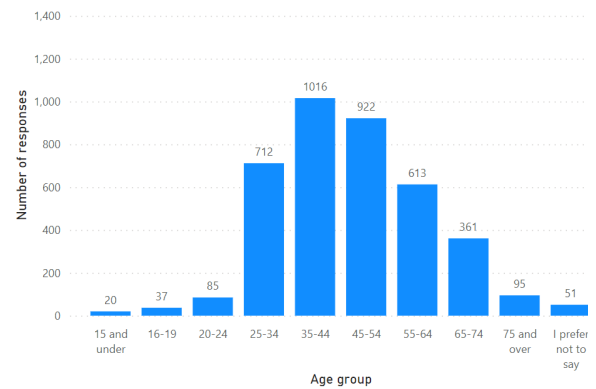
Figure 6 Gender of participants - Darebin (N=3,921)

There was no difference in the distribution of gender when using IP addresses to determine participants' location.

Age group

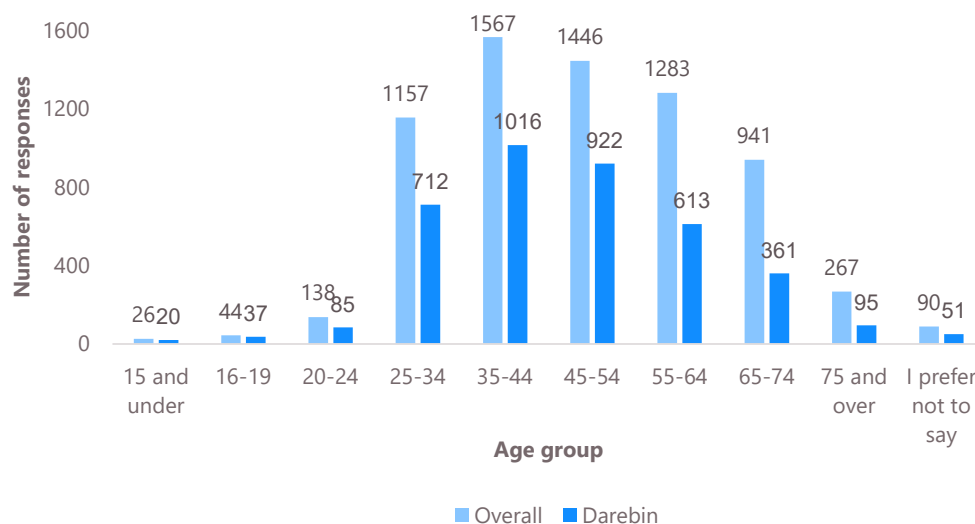
Participants represented a wide range of age groups. Figure 7 represents the age groups of overall participation and Figure 8 represents the age groups of Darebin residents. For both datasets, the most frequent age group was 35-44 years (with over 3,800 participants, of which over 1,800 of them lived in Darebin), followed by age group 45-54 (with over 1,400 participants, of which more than 900 of them lived in Darebin). This distribution is similar to 2016 Census data of Darebin<sup>7</sup>, where the largest age groups were 15 and under (18%), 25-34 (16%), 35-44 (14%) and 45-54 (13%).

<sup>6</sup> 16 participants did not provide demographic data.  
<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://profile.id.com.au/darebin/five-year-age-groups>

**Overall****Darebin***Figure 7 Age group of participants - Overall (N=6,959)<sup>8</sup>**Figure 8 Age group of participants - Darebin (N=3,921)*

When filtered by IP addresses to identify Darebin residents, the most popular age group is 45-54, followed by age group 35-44.

Figure 9 below illustrates a comparative bar chart that showing the above two data sets. Only half of the participants aged 55-64 years lived in Darebin; and more than half of the participants aged 65-74 years did not live in Darebin. In contrast, most of the younger participants (age groups 15 and under, and 16-19) lived in Darebin.

*Figure 9 Age group of participants – Overall (N=6,965)<sup>7</sup> vs Darebin (N=3,921).*

<sup>8</sup> 16 participants did not provide demographic data.

### Language spoken at home other than English

Participants were asked if they speak a language other than English at home. Overall, most participants spoke English only (87%), over 500 participants indicated that they speak another language. The top 10 most frequently cited languages are listed in Table 4. The same distribution of responses can be observed in both overall dataset and Darebin residents dataset.

*Table 4 Top ten most frequently cited languages spoken at home*

No.	Language spoken at home (other than English)	Number of responses
1	Italian	106
2	Greek	52
3	German	34
4	French	33
5	Spanish	29
6	Vietnamese	12
7	Dutch	10
8	Macedonian	10
9	Mandarin	10
10	Chinese	9

Similar pattern was observed when using participant's IP address to determine their postcodes. Of all participants, 7.8% of them spoke a language other than English at home, when filtering down to only Darebin residents, the percentage increases to 8.6%. The 2016 census data showed that 56% of Darebin residents spoke English only and 36% of them speak another language. Since the survey did not ask participants for the proficiency in English, the census data is not directly comparable. However, this survey still managed to capture the voice of the multicultural communities in Darebin. The percentage of participants who speak English only is relatively higher when compared to 2016 census (56% in census compared to 87% in this survey), while the most popular language spoken at home (other than English) were similar (Italian, Greek and Mandarin in 2016 Census).

### Identify as having a disability

As shown in Figure 10 below, most participants did not identify as having a disability. Amongst the 343 participants who identified as having a disability, 219 of them were from Darebin. In this survey approximately 5.5% of Darebin participants identified as having a disability, this percentage is similar to 2016 Census data (6%).

Similar distribution pattern was observed when using IP addresses to identify participants' postcode.

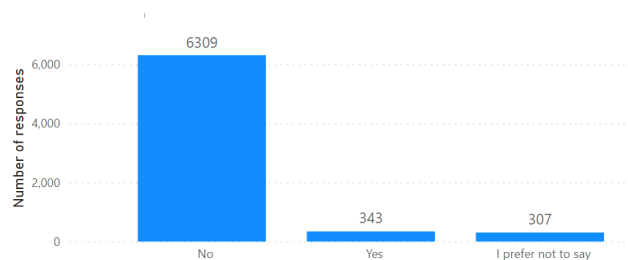


Figure 10 Participants who identified as having a disability (N=6,959)<sup>9</sup>

### Identify as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander

As shown in Figure 11 below, most participants did not identify as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander. Amongst the 101 participants who identified as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander, 65 of them were from Darebin. Approximately 1.6% of total Darebin residents identified as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander, this is slightly higher in percentage compared to 2016 Census data (0.8%). Similar distribution pattern was observed when using IP addresses to identify participants' postcode.

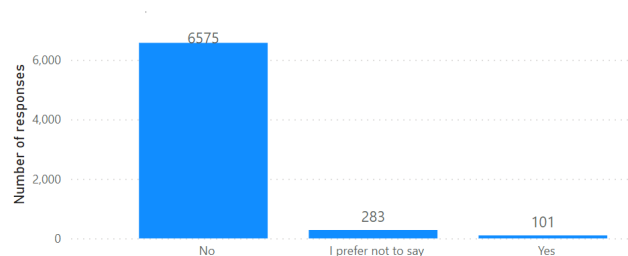


Figure 11 Participants who identified as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander (N=6,959)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 16 participants did not provide demographic data.

### User type

Participants were asked to indicate their relationship to the project site. Participants could select multiple answers for this question. As shown in Figure 12, more than half of the participants were nearby residents, followed by visitors to the golf course during lockdown and regular golfers. Many participants also chose 'others', most frequently cited relationships were infrequent golfers, former golf members of the golf course, ratepayers, former nearby residents, or residents of nearby suburbs.

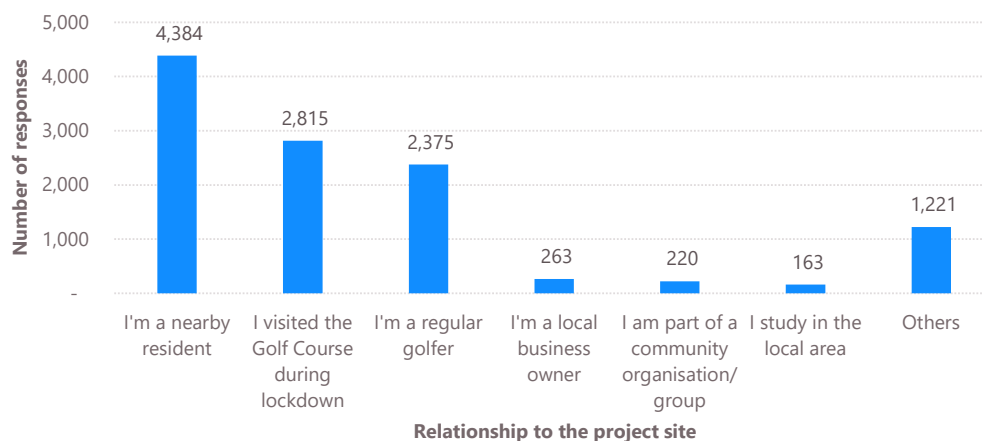


Figure 12 Participants' relationship to the project site (N=11,441). Note that participants can select multiple answers

Some participants specified the community groups or organisations they belong to, they included Golf Australia (60 participants), Friends of Merri Creek (17), Northcote Golf Club (6), a few participants from other Golf Clubs (Morack Seniors, Mornington, Mt Martha, Harp, Albert Park Women's) and members of the 'Unlock Northcote Golf Course' group, and 'Save the Northcote Golf Course' group. There were also representatives from Multicultural Arts Victoria, Victorian Golf Association and CERES.

### Reasons for visiting the golf course

Participants were asked to indicate their reasons for previous visits to the golf course. In the overall participation dataset (Figure 13), most participants indicated that they have visited to play golf, followed by walking and picnic. In contrast, there were more Darebin residents (Figure 13) indicating they went for a walk than people who indicated “play golf”. Note that the golf course was only open for non-golf uses during lockdown (2019-2021)<sup>10</sup>, and hence the short period of opening time may have influenced the results of this question.

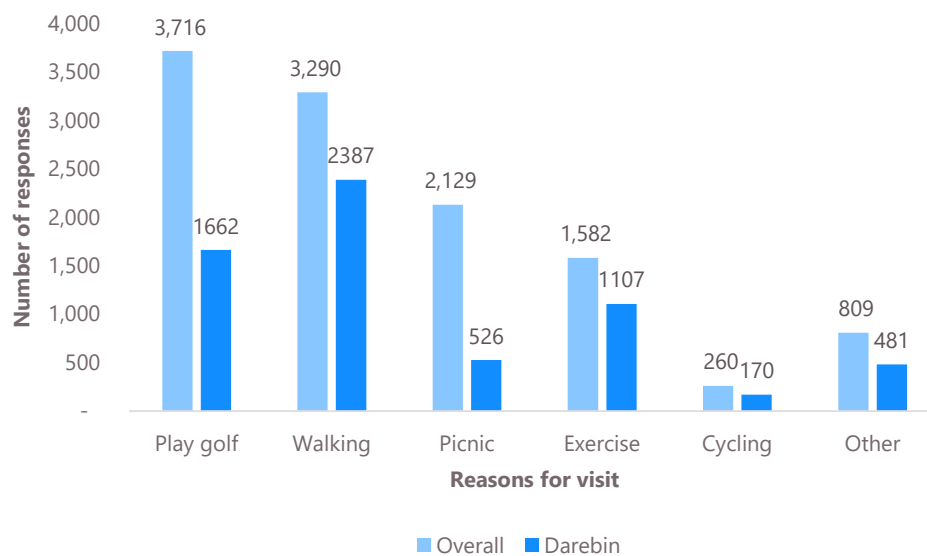


Figure 13 Reasons for participants to visit the site (Overall N=11,786) (Darebin N=6,333). Note that participants can select multiple answers.

<sup>10</sup> In 2019-2020, the golf course was open for 321 days and closed for 43 days; in 2020-21 the golf course was open for 234 and closed for 130 days.

## 4 Engagement findings

This section outlines an overview of the engagement findings and the methodology used for the analysis.

### 4.1 Overview

The online survey collected approximately 7,000 pieces of survey responses. The survey included four open-text questions to explore shared options for the site, they were:

1. What does sharing the space at Northcote Public Golf Course look like to you and our community?
2. How do you see the space being shared between the general public uses and a golf course?
3. What options can you imagine for shared use?
4. Do you have other comments?

This report presents a high-level qualitative thematic analysis that consolidates key emerging trends. The findings detailed in this report are ideas, comments and suggestions frequently raised by participants through the survey. This report does not provide a quantitative analysis of these trends. All other comments and ideas captured through the process have been shared with Council.

### 4.2 Survey analysis methodology

Capire has undertaken a comprehensive data approach commonly referred to as 'thematic analysis' in the research field. This is a widely accepted and commonly used methodology for qualitative research. Many researchers use the six-step approach as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006)<sup>11</sup>, Capire's data analysis uses a similar approach, as outlined below:

1. Development of a coding framework: This involved reviewing 15 per cent of the survey data<sup>12</sup> to determine the common themes that were emerging through the engagement findings. This threshold is developed based on Capire's years of experience in data analysis and research experience. For each theme a description was developed to form a code which became part of the coding framework.
2. Testing and reviewing the coding framework with Council: The coding framework was shared with Council for refinement.
3. Finalising the coding framework: The complete set of survey data was then coded using the agreed coding framework. At regular intervals spot checks of the data were undertaken to ensure the codes were being applied correctly, to determine if additional codes were needed, or descriptions needed refinement. This set of data was concurrently coded by four Capire

<sup>11</sup> Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.

<sup>12</sup> There is no industry standard regarding the sample size needed to develop codes. This threshold is developed based on Capire's years of experience in data analysis.

consultants. The consultants undertook peer review of each other's work to ensure consistency. Note, even with a thorough quality assurance process there may be a small margin of error due to individual interpretation.

4. Thematic analysis: Capire undertook further thematic analysis to determine any trends in responses across different perspectives. Through this analysis, Capire determined that themes were consistent across the different users. Where there were differences, these have been highlighted in the report.

5. Quality Assurance: Capire has followed a robust quality assurance process during the coding and analysis process. Four consultants who have coded parts of the dataset cross-checked the analysis section of this report, to ensure it truly reflects the survey responses.



## 4.3 Summary of findings

This section focuses on frequently raised views emerged from the survey. These views were grouped under each theme.

### 4.3.1 General sentiment towards sharing the site

Although the survey did not ask participants about their views on whether the site should be shared use, many participants used the survey as an opportunity to express their sentiment towards the idea of sharing the site. In general, their views can be categorised into three groups:

- Those who spoke positively about sharing the site between golf and non-golf uses through spatial and temporal sharing
- Those who desired the site to remain primarily as a golf course; with some participants welcoming the idea to share the access of the site to the broader community during non-golfing hours
- Those who desire the site to be turned into a park.

Participants' sentiment was understood based on human interpretation of survey responses. This report does not provide a quantitative analysis of participant's sentiments.

#### **Sharing the site spatially or temporally**

Participants who spoke positively about sharing the site cited their positive experience sharing the course during lockdown and how it had provided opportunities for social interaction. They also believed that by sharing the site, there will be more accessible green open spaces for the community in Darebin. There were both golfers and non-golfers who supported sharing the site.

Participants generally discussed two ways of sharing: spatially and temporally. For temporal sharing, participants discussed sharing by time slots, where the golf course could be used by the general community during quieter golf times. In practice, this could be splitting hours during the day or days in the week. Respondents who favoured sharing the grounds spatially, suggested creating safe recreational zones throughout the golf course, or splitting the course in half and reducing the number of holes.

#### **Desire to retain the site as primarily a golf course**

Although single use options were not intended for this engagement, some participants used the survey to express their desire for the site to be used for golf only. They emphasised that the site provides an accessible and affordable golf course for the public. As one of the few public golf courses in the Melbourne's metropolitan area, it offers the opportunity to access golf and club memberships to a broad range of the community including lower socioeconomic participants. The course is open to players of all backgrounds, which allows opportunities for social interaction, physical exercise, and hence beneficial to the wellbeing of the overall community.

These participants raised several concerns over sharing the site. These issues include public safety and golfers' liability as it is an inherently dangerous activity. Questions were raised over the cost of maintenance and who will pay for the site if it is to be shared. Some participants also raised concerns about overdevelopment or selling of the site.

Although this group of participants stressed that the site should primarily remain as a golf course, many of them also acknowledged the need for changes and improvements in the site to allow for greater accessibility for the overall community. Suggestions include upgrading existing facilities like the Clubhouse and improving the golf course by installing additional walking tracks, carparks, restaurants, and cafes. It was stated that this would enhance the site as an inclusive space and be of greater benefit to a wider part of the community.

#### **Convert the site to parkland**

Some participants used the survey to express their desire for the site to be used as a parkland. It was suggested that this would create a more inclusive community space for the overall community in Darebin. Community members would have constant access to a space that is safe, without the risk of injury from sharing the site with golfing.

Multiple suggestions were put forward by respondents including the opportunity to run events, such as festivals, outdoor cinemas, and sporting competitions. By allowing for a variety of recreational uses, both active and passive, it was thought that the site will have more accessible and inclusive spaces for a wider user group, shared amongst people of different ages, abilities, and interests.

### **4.3.2 Sharing the site by space (spatial sharing)**

Participants who supported a spatial sharing option of the site emphasised that any public space and the golf course should co-exist in a safe manner. Participants would like to see this as an inclusive green open space, that can cater for the diverse Darebin community, particularly those with limited access to private outdoor space and people with a disability. This will also help improving people's mental health, whilst continuing to provide a golf course for golfers to enjoy.

A summary of suggestions to spatially share the site, grouped by theme, are detailed below. Figure 14 presents a map of the site, its key landmarks and surrounds.

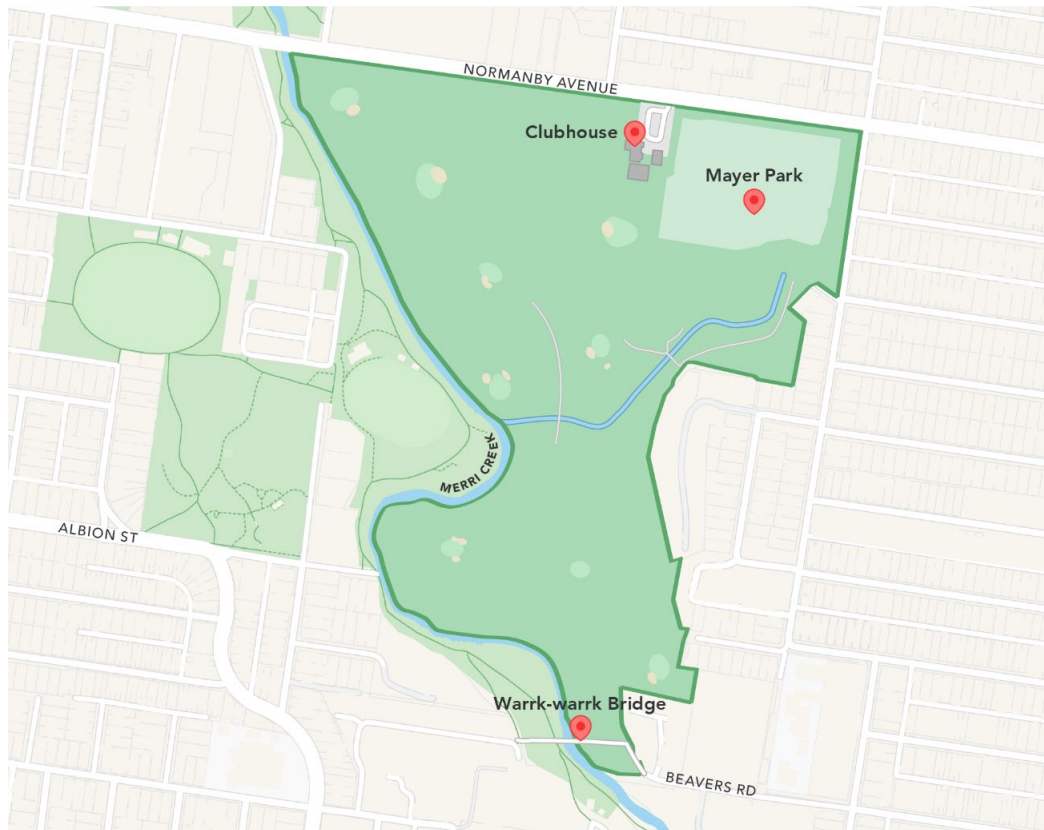


Figure 14 A site map showing key landmarks and immediate surrounds of the site

#### **Modifying the number or size of holes**

- Reduce the number or size of the current nine-holes. This would reduce the size of the golf course and provide public open space to the community whilst maintaining safe separation.
- Suggestions include reducing the current nine-hole course to a six- or three-hole course, revegetating every second hole, reducing all holes to par 3, or modifying the direction of holes.

#### **Creating public space on the eastern side of the site**

- Turn the eastern side of the site into public space would allow for improved north-south connection and access.
- Improve the connection such as a protected footpath between Mayer Park and the Merri Creek Bridge, install a pedestrian gate near Mayer Park, and introduce a track around the golf course to connect with Merri Creek trails.
- Remove the current fence so that the public space could be accessed by community members to walk around the site in a safe manner similar to Royal Park and Yarra Bend golf courses

- Improve the site surrounding the Clubhouse as the location provides a beautiful outlook for public space.

#### **Public Space along the western side along Merri Creek**

- Provide public space along Merri Creek including a separate walking and cycling path along Merri Creek between Normanby Avenue and Beavers Road. This would allow pedestrian access to Merri Creek's eastern bank and improve north-south movement along the creek.
- To accommodate this, it was suggested that the holes nearby Merri Creek could be removed to create more public space.

#### **Creating public space on the southern end of the site**

- The southern end of the site was suggested as it currently provides a nature and wildlife zone.
- The size of golf course could be reduced in the south end of the site to provide permanent public space.
- The nine-hole golf course could be reduced to a six-hole course in the Normanby Road, Mayer Park quadrant of the site to provide public space south of the Warrk Warrk Bridge.

### **4.3.3 Sharing the site by time (temporal sharing)**

Participants suggested the golf course should be shared on a temporal basis to allow the community to use the site for both golfing and other uses. Participants generally suggested two ways of sharing the site on a time basis:

- Splitting hours per day
- Or splitting days of the week.

Outlined in the tables below are the options, rationale and suggestions for the two proposed ways.

#### **Splitting hours per day**

*Table 5 Options for sharing by timeslots*

Options	Rationale	Suggestions
Specific times in the day	Golf has peak periods and off-peak periods of play. During the off peak times the site will be better used by the public so more people can enjoy the site.	For example, golf peak period: Weekdays until 4pm; Weekend mornings (before 11am).  For example, non-golf uses: Weekdays after school pick-up and night-time (after 4pm); early morning (before 8 am).
Even split between golf and non-golf uses	Allocate 50% of the time for golfers that includes the peak golfing times	For example: splitting 7 out of 14 fortnightly morning and evenings;

	and the other 50% for other uses such as walking and picnics.	alternating Fridays and Saturdays evenings for golf and non-golf uses.
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### Splitting days of the week

Table 6 Options for sharing by different days of the week

Options	Rationale	Suggestions
Specific days to golf and other days to non-golf uses	To continually provide golfers and non-golfers the opportunity to use the site while reducing the risk of safety concerns.	Other uses, for example: Sunday and Wednesday; three weekdays and one weekend day; days later in the week; both weekend days; one day per-month  Golf, for example: Monday and Friday; one day per-month
Evenly split weekend access	To fairly allow golfers and non-golf users to use the site on the weekend and allowing golf tournaments to continue on Saturdays.	Golf on Saturday and other uses on Sunday.

### 4.3.4 Ideas for other non-golf uses

Participants provided several suggestions for non-golf, shared uses for the golf course. These responses related to the access, environment, and infrastructure for the site. Suggestions for the site to be used for walking has been combined with the provision for increased trails and paths and dedicated sections of the site. Suggestions for the provision of public-access open space has been combined with unspecified general access, including picnicking.

Many of these responses have been reflected in the suggestions for spatially and temporally shared options for the site.

Below is a summary of the ideas, grouped by theme.

#### Recreational uses

- The temporal sharing of uses was considered by respondents and considered in depth in Section 4.3.3 The allocation of designated “golf” and “non-golf” times, ranging from specific hours to days of the week, was an appealing option for supporters of shared non-golf uses.
- The uses undertaken during these hours was predominantly unspecified. Many respondents supported access to the site for all users during the designated “non-golf” times, irrespective of use.
- Respondents frequently suggested using the site for picnicking during designated “non-golf” times. Respondents also frequently suggested using public-access sections of the site for picnicking. This highlights that many respondents consider picnicking and golfing incompatible uses at the same time.

- Suggestions for recreational non-golf uses were often considered with other suggestions, including access to walking trails and barbecue facilities. They were also often considered alongside opportunities to provide a wilderness area like Darebin Parklands where varied native ecology is re-generated.

**Walking and cycling trails**

- The inclusion of new trails, and strengthening of the existing walking trails, featured heavily in responses.
- Respondents expressed a desire to increase or improve upon the walking trails and paths for the site, separately from its shared golf use. This may be done through areas of the site being dedicated for walking, for connectivity or leisure, or through the temporal limitation of golfing to ensure visitors can walk safely on the site.
- Some distinctions were made between the inclusion of walking and cycling trails. Many responses suggested the inclusion of both walking and cycling, provided that they were separate or dedicated to their respective uses. However, others suggested the inclusion of mixed or shared-use walking and cycling paths.
- Footpaths and cycling tracks should be located at the perimeter, or through the golf course whilst maintaining the site as a golf course. This allows access to other green spaces and maintain uninterrupted golfing activity.
- Walking and cycling trails were suggested for connectivity as well as for leisure. Some respondents desired the site will be used leisurely by recreational walkers, with additional walking paths adding to the site's appeal.
- Walking and cycling trails were often suggested in combination with other recreational activities, like the provision of open space for picnics, dog off-leash areas, children's playgrounds, and outdoor exercise and gym equipment.

**Recognition of Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal heritage**

- Respondents suggested that any improvements to the site should reference the rich Aboriginal heritage of the area.
- Shared use of the site could include events centring the voice and culture of Traditional Owners.
- Aboriginal culture and knowledge of Country should be integrated into shared uses of the site. This could be embedded in place, through education informational trails, or in establishing an information hub.
- There were suggestions to ensure Traditional Owners have a strong voice in the management of the site, as well as its ongoing management.

**Native revegetation and renewal**

- Various iterations of native revegetation and renewal were suggested by respondents
- The degree of revegetation varied, ranging from partially planting native flora into dedicated areas of the site, to the complete dedication of sections of the golf course for wetland regeneration and revegetation.

- Biodiversity and regeneration suggestions included maintaining habitat trees, promoting and re-generating native indigenous plants including along Bracken Creek next to the golf course, providing artificial habitat/nest boxes, and reintroducing native animals.
- These responses were often related to walking paths and trails, where paths would be established through revitalised sections of the site.

#### **Equitable access**

- Equitable access to the site was important to many respondents.
- Accessibility related to the degrees of access to the site, and its uses as a golf course, including its perceived exclusivity.
- Suggestions included increasing affordability for golfing admission, increasing the amount of beginner lessons especially for women and young people and having an open day of the golf course to promote golfing in the community.
- Changing the site to shared use was considered one way to provide more equitable access, as it disallows the exclusive use of the site by one group of users. Many respondents felt that partially transitioning the site to shared public use would provide equitable access to open green space to the residents of Darebin.

#### **Other uses**

- Non-golf temporary uses for the site suggested included using the site for live music and charitable events.
- A mixed and shared use open venue was also suggested, with respondents proposing the site be used for pop-up events, open-air markets, night-time cinema, and community gardens.

### **4.3.5 Out of scope feedback**

Respondents highlighted several concerns, suggestions and perspectives that fall out of the scope of the engagement.

These responses cover a wide range of topics, including the general management of Darebin's open spaces, safety, and anti-social behaviour concerns, as well as funding and management of the golf course. Respondents also specified methods to enforce shared use at the golf course, rewilding the golf course and ways to keep non-golfers away from fairways and bunkers. A few respondents also noted other issues relating to the consultation process and the overdevelopment of Darebin.

A summary of responses, grouped by themes, are detailed below.

#### **Implementation concerns**

- Potential loss of Council revenue, increase in Council costs (or cost to ratepayers) if the golf course is opened for public use.
- Suggestion that a pay-per-use model is needed to ensure sustainable financing of the golf course if its uses are shared.

- Noting anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the golf course has led to the damage of the fairway and bunkers.
- There are liability and safety issues caused by golfing when non-golfers are in the area.
- There is a perceived unfairness around why other sporting venues are not being considered for shared use.

**Golf improvement suggestions**

- Footpaths and cycling tracks should be located at the perimeter, or through the golf course whilst maintaining the site as a golf course. This allows access to other green spaces and maintain uninterrupted golfing activity.
- There should be reductions in fees and open days so that people can try out golfing.

**Shared use of the Clubhouse**

- The current Clubhouse could be improved, updated, and further used to provide additional community uses like the Yarra Bend Clubhouse.
- Suggested alternate or dual uses include a community hub, a community centre in consultation with local first nations groups, café/restaurant/bar, social housing, a space for events and markets, soccer club rooms for Mayer Park and allowing public access to the toilet facilities.

**Flora and fauna**

- Wildlife located in the area may be threatened if the golf course is abolished.
- Snakes that live along the Merri Creek area may be a threat to non-golf users who are unfamiliar with the golf course.

**Consultation**

- The questions in the survey seemed to be pre-determined and positioned on the premise that shared use has already been agreed to by Council.
- There was a perceived lack of transparency, communication, and information available during the consultation process.

**Council performance and priorities**

- Council should improve maintenance of other existing open spaces in Darebin instead of changing this golf course, which would divert public funding.
- Council should focus on areas with a shortage of open spaces instead, as highlighted in its Open Space Strategy.
- Concerns about how converting the golf course to a park may set a precedent for future development on public space.



## 5 Consultants' observation

- i. During the five-week engagement period, approximately 6,975 participants have completed an online survey to share ideas for future uses of the Northcote Public Golf Course. This survey has attracted interest from not just Darebin residents, but also residents across Australia.
- ii. Participants provided a wide range of options for shared use of the site. These options include ways to accommodate different uses by time or by location (meaning splitting the existing site into several uses.) There were also participants who expressed their desire for the site to remain as single use, this included solely for golf or solely as a park.
- iii. Participants also shared their past experiences using the site, both from those who played golf in Northcote Public Golf Course, or those who had used the site for non-golf uses during lockdown. Participants expressed a strong connection to the site, and regarded it as a valuable public asset for the community.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Online survey

1. How have you previously used the Northcote Public Golf Course? (choose all that apply)

- Play golf
- Picnic
- Walking
- Cycling
- Exercise
- Other (please specify)

2. What does sharing the space at Northcote Public Golf Course look like to you and our community? (open text)

3. How do you see the space being shared between the general public uses and a golf course? (open text)

4. What options can you imagine for shared use? (open text)

5. Do you have other comments? (open text)

### About you

The following questions will help us understand more about you.

6. What is your relationship with the Northcote Public Golf Course? (choose all that apply) \*

- I'm a regular golfer
- I'm a nearby resident
- I visited the Golf Course during lockdown
- I study in the local area
- I work in the local area
- I'm part of a community organisation/ group that have an interest in this project (please specify your organisation/ group)
- I'm a local business owner
- Other (please specify)

7. What is your age group? \*

- 15 and under (note: please let a parent or guardian know you are completing this survey)
- 16-19
- 20-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 and over
- I prefer not to say

10. What is your gender? \*

- Male

- Female
- I prefer not to say
- I identify as: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you speak a language other than English at home? \*

- No - English only
- Yes (please specify)
- I prefer not to say

12. Are you Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander? \*

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

13. Do you identify as having a disability? \*

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

## Appendix B: Number of responses by postcode

Table 7 Number of responses by postcode (self-declared by participants)

Number of responses	Postcode
1,551	3070
1,110	3071
656	3072
297	3058
291	3057
286	3056
258	3073
148	3078
120	3068
79	3055
60	3044
50-59	3040
40-49	3079, 3084, 3083
30-39	3085, 3121, 3186, 3032
20-29	3065, 3146, 3039, 3054, 3101, 3193, 3206
10-19	3000, 3002, 3008, 3013, 3030, 3031, 3041, 3046, 3051, 3052, 3060, 3064, 3066, 3067, 3081, 3088, 3089, 3095, 3102, 3103, 3104, 3106, 3113, 3122, 3123, 3124, 3127, 3130, 3133, 3134, 3135, 3136, 3141, 3142, 3144, 3145, 3149, 3181, 3182, 3187, 3188, 3192, 3195, 3196, 3199, 3204, 3207, 3216, 3220, 3350, 3550, 3754, 3939, 3977
1-9	2010, 2022, 2042, 2061, 2112, 2159, 2173, 2227, 2250, 2282, 2285, 2300, 2321, 2324, 2429, 2454, 2470, 2486, 2488, 2500, 2603, 2612, 2640, 2643, 2646, 2913, 3001, 3003, 3004, 3006, 3011, 3012, 3015, 3016, 3018, 3020, 3023, 3024, 3025, 3026, 3027, 3028, 3029, 3033, 3034, 3036, 3037, 3038, 3042, 3043, 3047, 3048, 3049, 3050, 3053, 3059, 3061, 3074, 3075, 3076, 3082, 3086, 3087, 3090, 3091, 3093, 3094, 3099, 3105, 3107, 3108, 3109, 3111, 3114, 3115, 3116, 3125, 3126, 3128, 3129, 3131, 3132, 3137, 3138, 3140, 3143, 3147, 3148, 3150, 3151, 3152, 3153, 3154, 3155, 3156, 3160, 3161, 3162, 3163, 3165, 3166, 3167, 3168, 3169, 3170, 3172, 3174, 3178, 3180, 3183, 3184, 3185, 3189, 3190, 3191, 3194, 3197, 3198, 3201, 3202, 3205, 3212, 3214, 3215, 3217, 3218, 3219, 3222, 3223, 3224, 3225, 3226, 3227, 3228, 3230, 3232, 3233, 3250, 3264, 3270, 3272, 3280, 3300, 3304, 3305, 3328, 3331, 3336, 3337, 3338, 3340, 3341, 3342, 3352, 3355, 3356, 3357, 3370, 3377, 3380, 3395, 3400, 3423, 3429, 3431, 3434, 3437, 3438, 3440, 3441, 3442, 3444, 3450, 3451, 3453, 3460, 3461, 3463, 3467, 3488, 3496, 3500, 3523, 3551, 3555, 3556, 3561, 3564, 3579, 3585, 3608, 3614, 3616, 3629, 3630, 3631, 3634, 3636, 3639, 3644, 3658, 3666, 3677, 3678, 3689, 3690, 3699, 3701, 3717, 3722, 3723, 3728, 3730, 3747, 3749, 3750, 3752, 3753, 3756, 3757, 3764, 3766, 3767, 3770, 3775, 3777, 3782, 3788, 3791, 3793, 3796, 3799, 3804, 3805, 3806, 3807, 3808, 3809, 3810, 3815, 3816, 3818, 3820,

3823, 3824, 3825, 3840, 3844, 3850, 3851, 3858, 3860, 3875, 3878, 3880, 3896, 3904, 3909, 3910, 3912, 3914, 3915, 3916, 3922, 3925, 3926, 3928, 3929, 3930, 3931, 3934, 3936, 3937, 3938, 3940, 3941, 3942, 3943, 3944, 3950, 3953, 3957, 3959, 3971, 3975, 3978, 3984, 3995, 3996, 4017, 4051, 4065, 4068, 4209, 4272, 4500, 4573, 4814, 5061, 5158, 5159, 6052, 6076, 6152, 6164, 6760, 6968, 7248, 8002
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## Addendum

Council has requested further analysis to outline participants' sentiments towards sharing the site, against a breakdown of Darebin residents, Moreland residents and whether they were from the CALD community.

Readers should note that the survey did not ask participants to indicate their preference for sharing options. Participants' sentiment was understood based on human interpretation of survey response, and hence is a subjective analysis. This report did not intend to provide a quantitative analysis of participants' sentiment; the following table has been provided to Council for internal reference.

*Table 8 Coded survey responses, by Darebin residents, Moreland residents and CALD community of each*

Code	Total	Darebin residents	Darebin (residents and CALD)	Moreland residents	Moreland (residents and CALD)	Coding framework
<b>Support sharing</b>	2782	1505	113	603	57	Includes comments that support sharing the Golf Course, this includes people who want Golf to be retained with additional uses; and those who do not want Golf to be retained and support a complete redesign of the open space.
<b>Golf only</b>	2985	1470	145	373	37	Relates to comments that clearly stated that they only support golfing activities in Northcote Golf Course, without sharing it with other uses.
<b>Park only</b>	697	524	46	138	8	Relates to comments that clearly stated that they only support turning Northcote Golf Course into a public park, without sharing it with other uses.
<b>Shared – spatial</b>	802	487	35	150	17	Relates to comments that support sharing part of the golf course for other uses, for instance, reduce the size of the golf course and share part of the land; or sharing the club house for non-golf uses.
<b>Shared – temporal</b>	2082	1204	81	475	41	Relates to comments that support sharing through allowing different activities at different times, for instance, opening for other uses during summer, some days in the week/ weekends/ evenings or by timeslots for non-golf uses. This option does not involve reducing the size of the golf course.
<b>Non-golf uses</b>	1128	781	56	202	22	Relates to any ideas that are non-golf uses, for example picnic, BBQ, events, indigenous storytelling, playgrounds, exercising, community hubs, community garden, and rewilding.

Note:

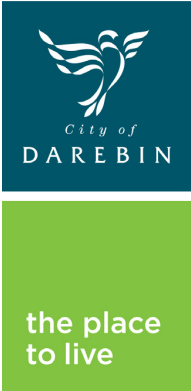
Multiple codes could be applied to a single survey response.

Residents were determined by participants' self-declared postcodes.



NORTHCOTE GOLF COURSE  
OPTION A

- Formalised Path
- Recreation zone total 5.72 Ha
- New Trees
- Existing Trees to be retained
- Area for park benches & bins
- Creek



NOT TO SCALE  
INDICATIVE ONLY





NORTHCOTE GOLF COURSE  
OPTION B

- Formalised Path
- Recreation zone 9.11 Ha
- New Trees
- Existing Trees to be retained
- Area for park benches & bins
- Creek



NOT TO SCALE  
INDICATIVE ONLY

