



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

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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*.

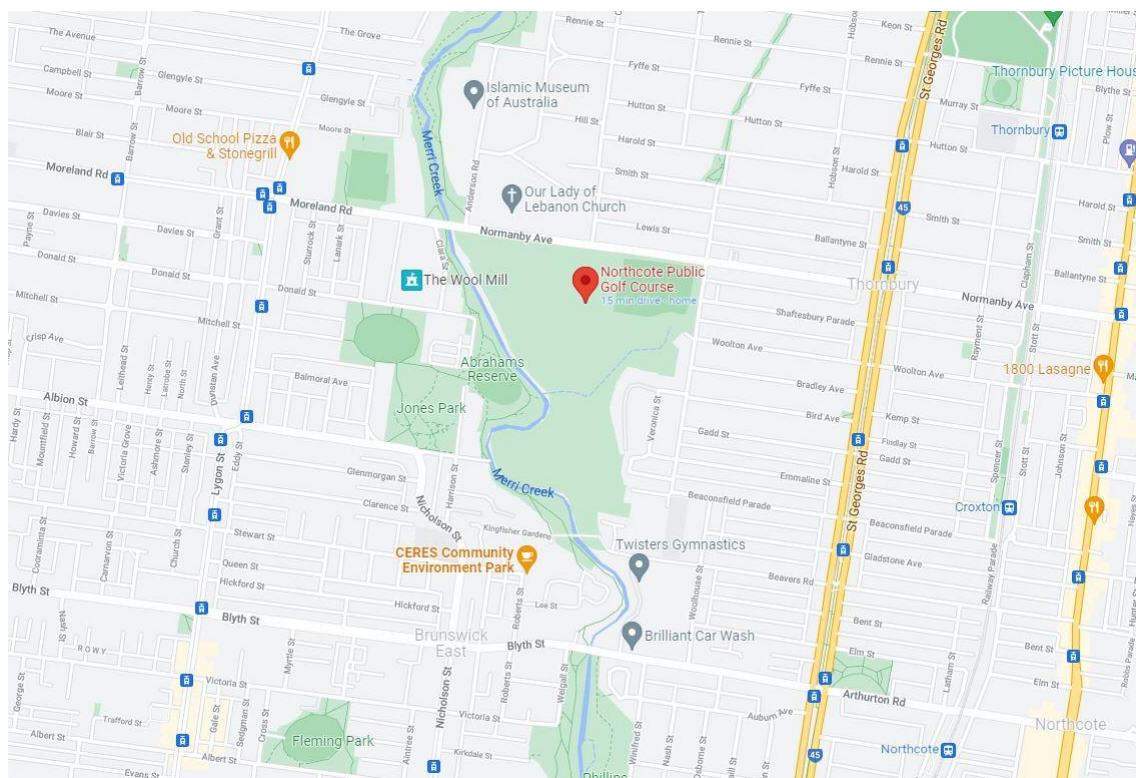


Figure 1 Map showing the location of Northcote Public Golf Course (the site)

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 valid¹ 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

¹ 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
Your Say page	<p>Online engagement via Council's Your Say page (yoursaydarebin.com.au), including an online survey that gather community ideas on the shared use option.</p> <p>Community could ask questions using the Q&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&A sessions.</p>
Social media promotion	<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
Online Q&A Webinar sessions	<p>Council hosted two 1-hour online Q&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>
Direct mail	<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>
Language packages	<p>Language packages were mailed out to the following CALD groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Eastern Melbourne Chinese Association • Northern Metropolitan MRC • Federation of Macedonian Senior Citizens Groups of North East Region of Victoria • Northern Migrant Resource Centre • Northcote Italian Pensioners Club • Hellenic Stegi Friendly Elderly Citizen Club Preston • Greek Community of Northcote • Islamic Society of Victoria • Islamic Museum of Australia
Posters	<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>
Phone	<p>Participants could contact Council by phone to request hard copy surveys to provide their feedback.</p>
Stakeholder email	<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>
Council's advisory groups	<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
Newsletter	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">Thursday 2 December 2021 - 6:00pm-7:00pm (55 participants)Tuesday 7 December 2021 - 10:00am-11:00am (28 participants)	
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) ² 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).

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

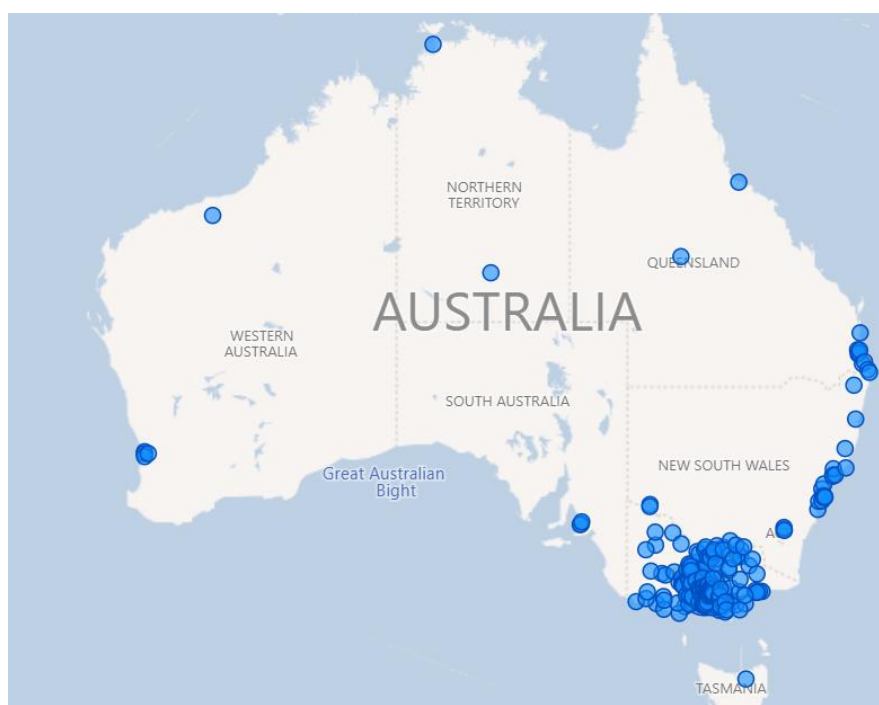
Table 3 Top 10 postcodes and suburbs

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.³ 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).



³ The larger the size of the dot, the more participants it represents.

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

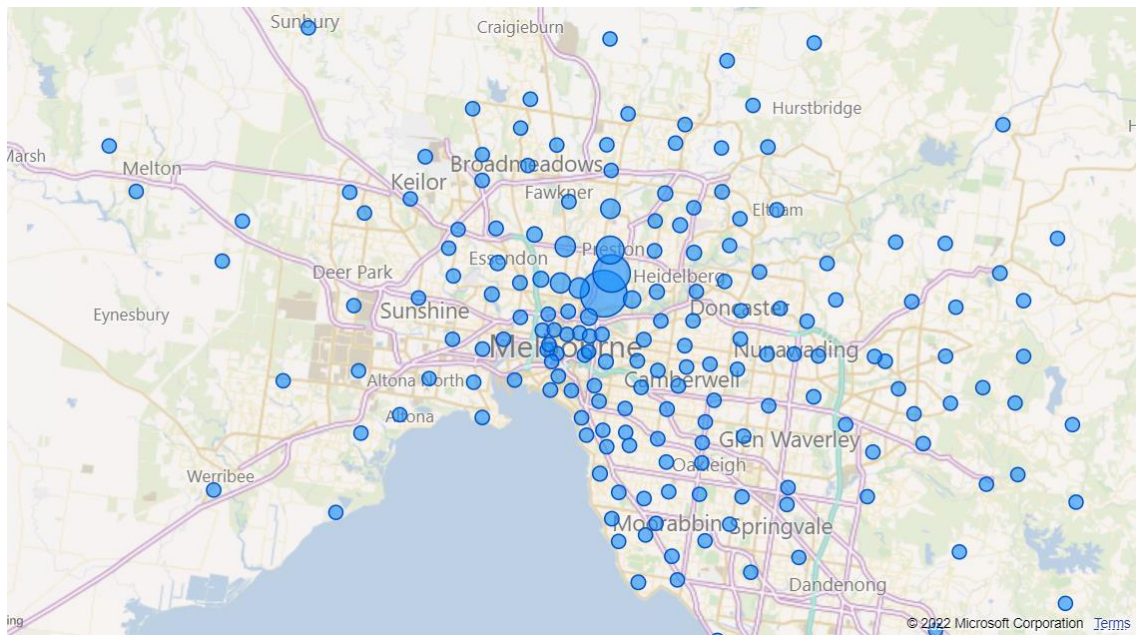


Figure 3 A dot map showing the location of postcodes (self-declared by participants) across Melbourne (N=6,975)

Further analysis: Participants' IP addresses

As participants completed their surveys online⁴, the survey also collected information about participants' devices, which included IP addresses⁵.

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.

⁴ Only one participant submitted a hard copy survey.

⁵ 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.

Overall

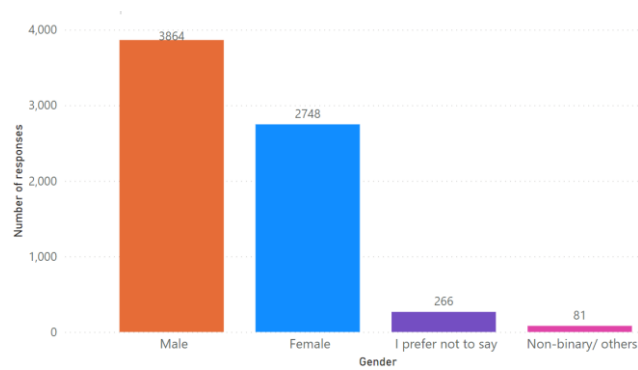


Figure 5 Gender of participants - Overall (N=6,959)⁶

Darebin

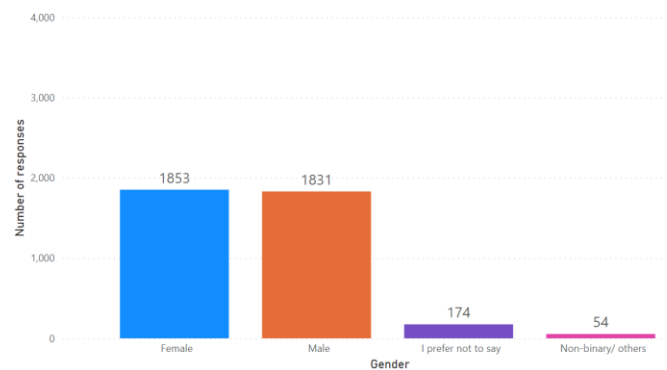


Figure 6 Gender of participants - Darebin (N=3,921)

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

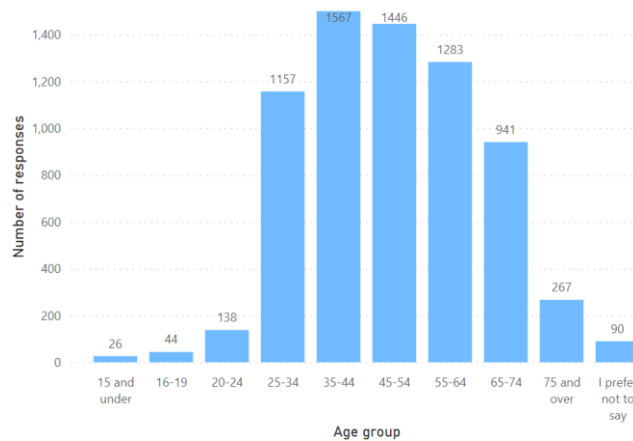
Age group

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 Darebin⁷, where the largest age groups were 15 and under (18%), 25-34 (16%), 35-44 (14%) and 45-54 (13%).

⁶ 16 participants did not provide demographic data.

⁷ Source: <https://profile.id.com.au/darebin/five-year-age-groups>

Overall



Darebin

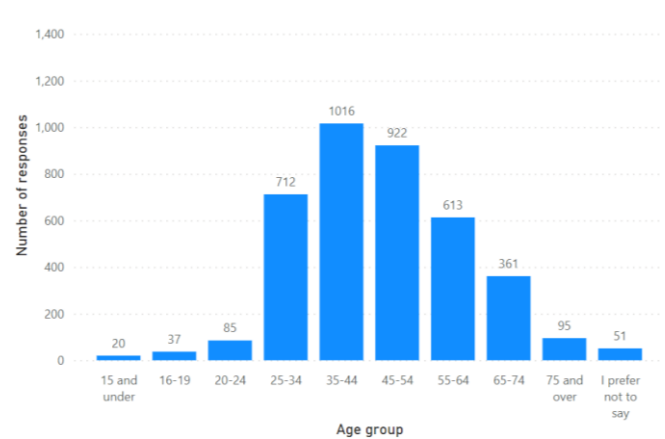


Figure 7 Age group of participants - Overall (N=6,959)⁸

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.

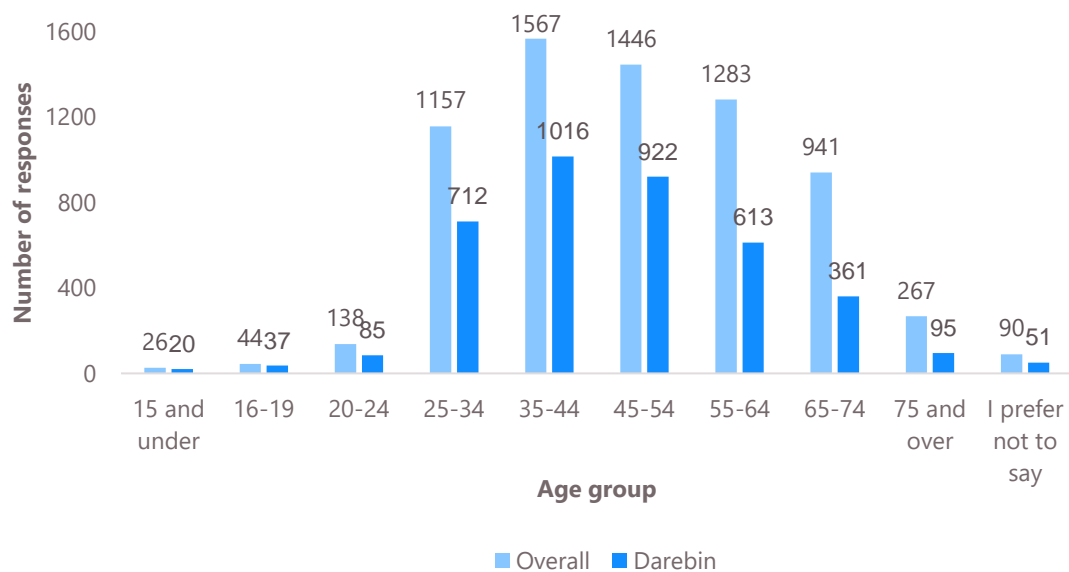


Figure 9 Age group of participants – Overall (N=6,965)⁷ vs Darebin (N=3,921).

⁸ 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.

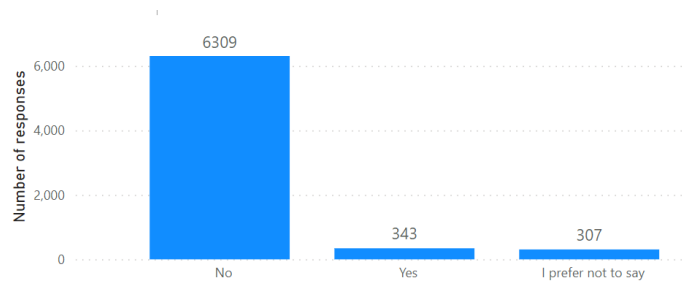


Figure 10 Participants who identified as having a disability (N=6,959)⁹

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.

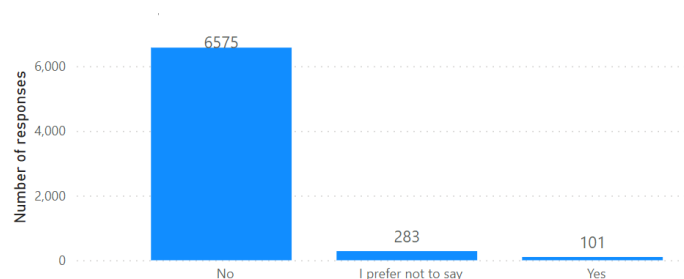


Figure 11 Participants who identified as Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander (N=6,959)⁹

⁹ 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.

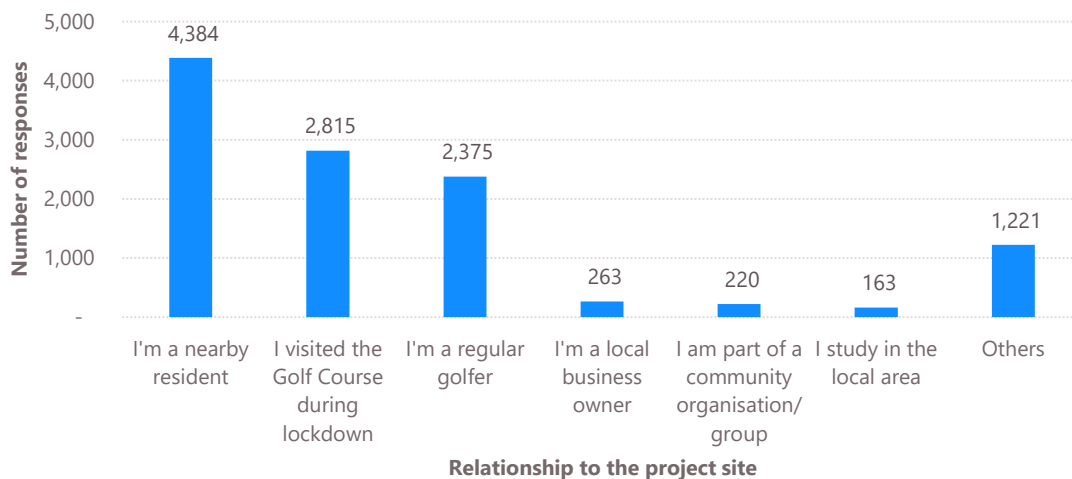


Figure 12 Participants' relationship to the project site (N=11,441). Note that participants can select multiple answers

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)¹⁰, and hence the short period of opening time may have influenced the results of this question.

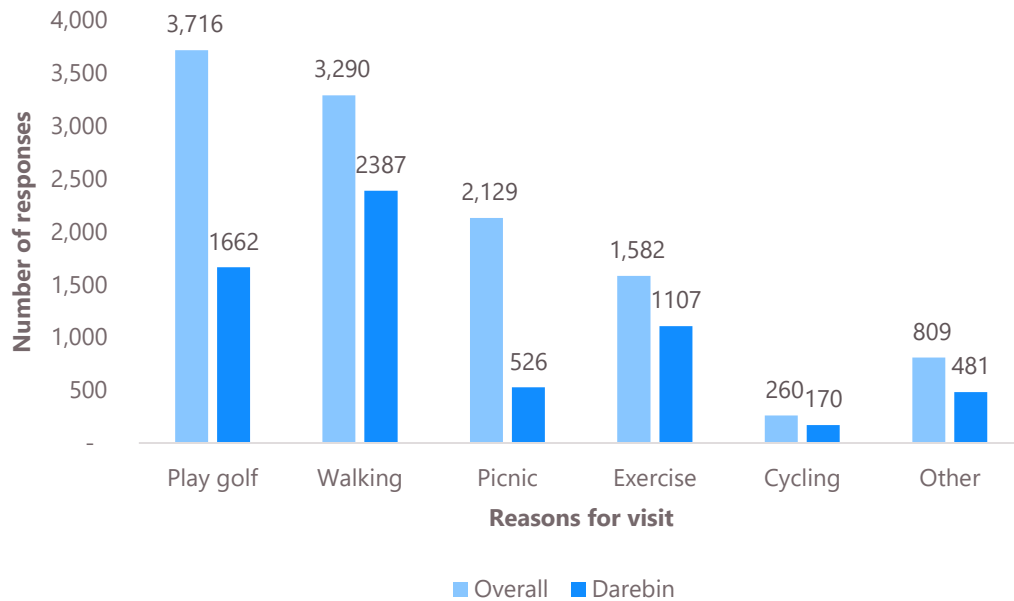


Figure 13 Reasons for participants to visit the site (Overall N=11,786) (Darebin N=6,333). Note that participants can select multiple answers.

¹⁰ 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)¹¹, 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 data¹² 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

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

¹² 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.

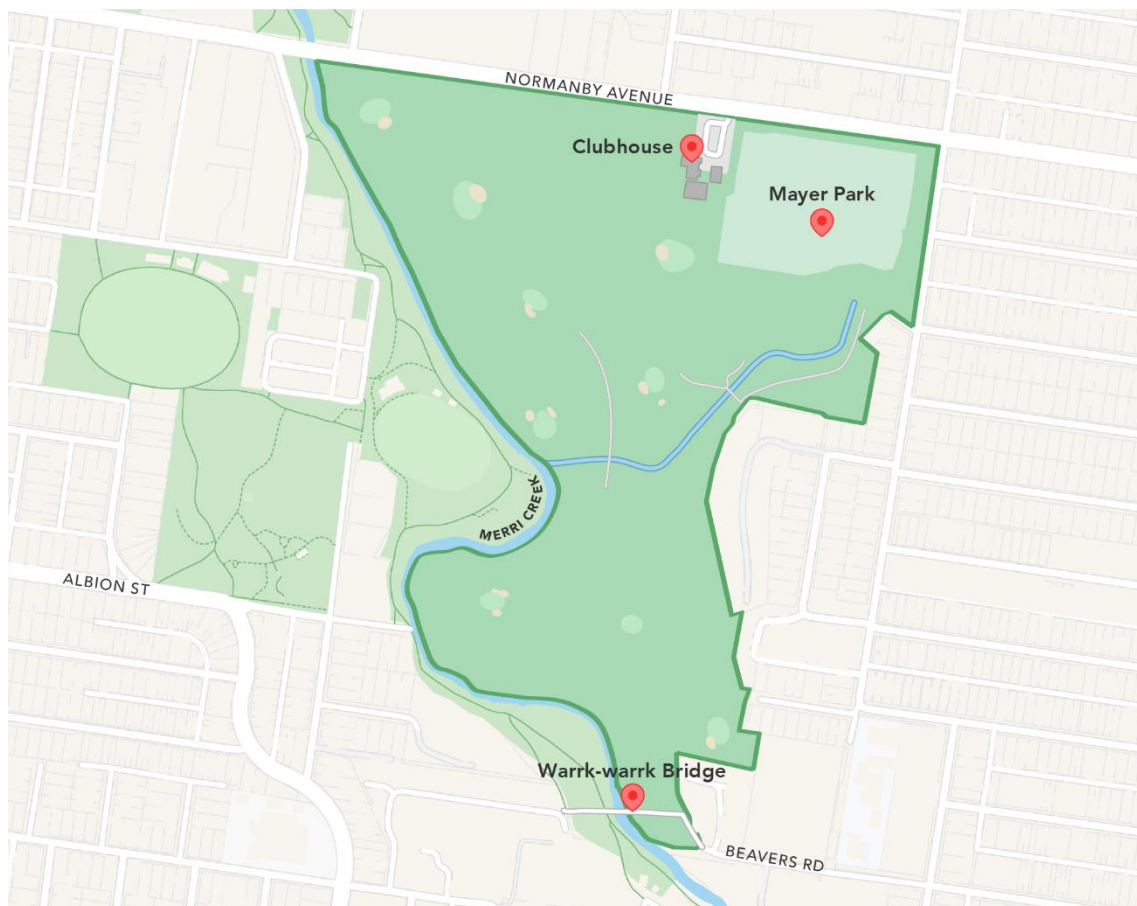


Figure 14 A site map showing key landmarks and immediate surrounds of the site

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
Support sharing	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.
Golf only	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.
Park only	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.
Shared – spatial	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.
Shared – temporal	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.
Non-golf uses	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.