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# MURRUMBIDGEE COUNTRY CLUB

## BUNKER MASTERPLAN AND COURSE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

PREPARED BY  
CONTOUR GOLF DESIGN GROUP



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## 1. BACKGROUND

The bunkers at the Murrumbidgee Country Club (the Club) have always been problematic. When the course was originally constructed in the early 1990s, aerial photographs reveal there were no bunkers, and seemingly none planned. During the mid-1990s and continuing into the 2000s, bunkers were built on a hole by hole basis, starting with the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes (1995). Many bunkers were later filled in – demonstrating the lack of planning involved with the course’s bunkers. In addition, very little thought went into strategic design principles when decisions were made as to the location of new bunkers.

The bunkers built in the 1990s also have insufficient drainage, which has now become blocked. After heavy rainfall, water often sits in the original bunkers for several days. Starting a few years ago, several of the bunkers were rebuilt with a bunker liner system called ‘Custombind’ and a bunker face system called ‘Ecobunker’, which consists of a stacked synthetic grass face that cannot wash away. Bunkers rebuilt include those on the left side of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> greens, the right side of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, and most recently, the right side of the 9<sup>th</sup> green. These bunkers all now drain very well, even after heavy rain.



*The bunker on the right side of the 8<sup>th</sup> green at least 24 hours after 30mmm of rain.*

In January 2020, the Club conducted an internal audit of all the golf course bunkers. This audit, prepared by Ross Tharle, Heather Millar and Rod Drayton, rated each bunker, and discussed issues with each. A rating out of 10 was assigned to each bunker and recommendations of actions required to improve them were discussed. The reconstruction of the single bunker on the right side of the 9<sup>th</sup> green (into two bunkers), has been undertaken since this report was prepared.

Following completion of this work, there was a reluctance within the Club and from the maintenance staff, to continue to rebuild existing bunkers without external advice. There was an appreciation and an understanding that some of the bunkers seemed to be located in obsolete locations. The Club wisely sought expert advice to advise on the remaining bunkers prior to any further expenditure on reconstruction.

In November 2021, Contour Golf Design Group was contacted by the Club and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2021, Ben Davey, Director, met with Club management and conducted a site visit. In January 2022, Contour Golf were appointed to prepare this report.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF A MASTERPLAN

The Club understood that some of the bunkers on the course were poorly positioned or obsolete. Had the Club simply continued to rebuild the existing bunkers, the results would have been average. It would have been pointless to rebuild a bunker that was poorly positioned, without considering the way the game is played in 2022.

By preparing a Masterplan, which carefully considers the position and value of each existing bunker, but also considers the location of possible new bunkers, the Club can be assured that their investment in bunkers will not only achieve better draining, easier to maintain bunkers, but also a better golf course. In preparing this Bunker Masterplan, I considered the following;

- The location of bunkers from a golf design, strategic and playability perspective.
- The bunker size, dimensions, and visual character.
- Whether each bunker is necessary or if it might be better to fill it in and convert to turf.
- The possible location of new bunkers.
- The total number of bunkers, considering the Club's ability to fund their construction, and to maintain them.

The focus of this report is the bunkers, however other course improvements were considered, such as;

- The width and cut of fairways and green surrounds.
- Trees and whether their removal in some locations (sometimes replaced by a bunker), would improve a golf hole.
- Other issues that may improve the golfing experience at MCC.

The report **does not** consider the replacement of any putting greens, except in relation to how new bunkers might better protect certain hole positions.

*Note: all the recommendations in this report are based on the course routing remaining the same. If the Club ever proceeds with the development proposal envisaged for land on the back nine, then a much broader Masterplan for the entire golf course, that looks at all aspects of the course, and how that development can be accommodated, may be required.*



*The bunker on the left side of the 18<sup>th</sup> green at least 24 hours after 30mm of rain.*

### 3. THE GOLF EXPERIENCE AT MURRUMBIDGEE COUNTRY CLUB

#### 3.1 THE COURSE ROUTING

The front nine plays in an anti-clockwise loop around a residential housing development. This is a common planning and design tool used – especially in the 1980-90s – to maximise the frontage that home sites have to a golf course. This adds value to house blocks.



*A 2019 aerial view of the course showing the front 9 (left) looping around the housing estate.*

Some of these developments were poorly designed and inadequate space was made available for the golf holes. Fortunately, MCC's designers *did* provide adequate space and rarely do the golf holes feel enclosed by houses. In fact, the front nine have a very spacious feel, with distant views of mountains adding to the very pleasing character of the landscape – especially the opening six holes. The rolling landforms adds further to the very pleasing landscape.

The back nine, despite being more open and less surrounded by housing, isn't quite as pleasing a landscape as the front nine. This is especially the case with the flatter holes such as the 10<sup>th</sup> through to the 13<sup>th</sup>. Overall, the course is blessed with significant amounts of space - uniquely so, compared to many other courses in the ACT.

#### 3.2 BUNKERS-THEIR CHALLENGE AND STRATEGY

As mentioned earlier, a review of historical aerial photography reveals that when the course was first built there were no bunkers on the golf course. Starting in the mid 1990s, a program of bunker construction commenced. I

am unsure if they were originally planned for, but they seem to have been added (and filled in) in a very ad-hoc way by successive Committees.

There are currently 28 bunkers on the course – 16 on the front nine and 12 on the back. Of these, just four are fairway bunkers (including the now obsolete bunker on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole) – all of them on the front nine. The vast majority are greenside bunkers.

The shape and size of bunkers varies considerably. Some of the older bunkers are quite large and convoluted, such as the fairway bunker on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole, the front left bunker on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the two greenside bunkers on the 11<sup>th</sup>. These contrast with the tiny pot bunker front left of the 6<sup>th</sup> green or the oval shaped bunkers on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Some of the bunkers have been placed to stop golf balls running into trouble, such as behind the 1<sup>st</sup> green. Others are too far from the edge of the putting surface to pose a problem for skilled golfers.



*The new bunker on the 9<sup>th</sup> hole (left) and the front left bunker on the 3<sup>rd</sup> on the same day.*

The following are the main considerations I have focussed on with all new bunker placements;

- I want to instil more strategy into the way the golf holes play. In its simplest form, strategic golf course design rewards the golfer that plays a riskier tee shot. So, for example, if a fairway bunker is placed on the left side of a fairway, the green should be bunkered front right.
- I want to have the bunkers closer to the green, and sometimes wrapping around the front of a green, so that if golfers approach from the wrong side, they need to carry over the bunker to get to difficult hole positions or play away from the flag.
- Generally speaking, fairway bunkers should be located on the 'line-of-charm'. This is the sightline that a good golfer sees when they approach a tee shot. Often the best location for a fairway bunker is the position a good golfer wants to be for the ideal approach shot to a green.
- Usually, we only need to bunker one side of a green. If there are bunkers on both sides, then they should be offset (for example, front left and back right) so that one side of the green remains more open than the other.
- There are instances where trees that are too close to fairways and too close to the preferred play line should be removed and replaced with a bunker. This would only be done in the interests of making the golf hole better.
- Bunker shapes should be kept simple without convoluted shapes, walk-ins and tongues. Consideration must be given to drainage, access for golfers, runoff from the surrounds, maintenance, and access from a green to the following tee (traffic flow).

- The capillary concrete and Eco-bunker products should continue to be used in all new or rebuilt bunkers.

### 3.3 FAIRWAYS AND GREEN SURROUNDS

Fairways are generally 20-30 metres wide. In most cases, the course fairway widths are good and very little change is needed. There are two instances however, where fairway mowing should vary. These are;

- Putting green surrounds. There are several instances where the extent of short grass in the surrounds to greens should be widened. Too often, the fairway narrows at the point where the couch fairway grasses merge with the cool season grass surrounds.
- Where there is a fairway bunker, the fairway should be mown as close to it as possible. Where existing fairway bunkers are filled in, fairways should often be widened into that space.
- There are several holes where the fairway could be extended back towards the tee. This may require new irrigation.

### 3.4 LANDSCAPING AND PATHWAYS

Pathways are a necessary evil on golf courses but there are ways their presence can be made more tolerable. On too many holes, more consideration could have gone into the pathway location. Often the pathway from the tee to the fairway has been placed directly on the line of sight from the tee and excessively dominates the view. On too many occasions, the golfer is looking straight down the length of the path, whereas if they were placed off to the side slightly, with a slight bend they would not dominate the view. Often, they are longer than necessary too.



*The path on the 13<sup>th</sup> (left) seems to be aiming straight at the flag! The path on the 17<sup>th</sup> where it merges with the fairway (right).*

In addition, where pathways meet the cut turf, all the wear is often focussed into the one area, meaning there is 'messy' ground in these areas. A slight hook in the path where they meet the fairway would enable the wear to be spread more evenly over a larger area and allow the maintenance staff to better control where traffic exits the path.

In my opinion, the 'landscape' at Murrumbidgee Country Club is the treed setting and the forested backdrops. Landscaping around tees using exotic plants such as Photinia, Agapanthus and Diosma does nothing to lift the golf

course. Often such landscaping is undertaken by volunteers, always with the best of intentions, but rarely with ongoing follow up maintenance. Maintenance staff are left to manage these landscaped areas, and as they are busy trying to present excellent turf, they nearly always are neglected – except perhaps at high-end golf clubs that have the resources to look after them.

### 3.5 TREES

Trees are obviously a dominant aspect of the course. There are both remnant trees predating the golf course and planted trees. Some of the remnant trees are probably over 100 years old. The planted trees, mainly planted at the time the golf course was developed (around 1990), and in its early years, are all about 25-30 years old. All new plantings are native with the exception of some of the landscaping adjacent to tees where Photinias and other exotics have been used, and a few instances (such as on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole), where Ash and Chinese Elms were planted.

The Golf Club has a Tree Management Plan policy document, and the following is an extract from that document pertinent to this Bunker Masterplan.

*“Many trees have been planted on the golf course over the past 25 years. Many have flourished and others have struggled. Many areas now have trees that are encroaching on fairways, tees and greens and are in competition for water and nutrients with the turf that we play golf from. Many areas in the rough have large numbers of trees growing under the canopies of other trees and have reduced grass cover in these areas significantly. In some of these areas it is not possible to mow between the trees. The plan is to remove the smaller trees under canopies of other trees which will reduce competition and improve the growth of the remaining trees and grass cover.*

*General principles used to evaluate current trees and the course.*

- *Ensure that the mature canopy of the tree will not protrude on the line-of-flight between a tee and a fairway.*
- *Trees with protruding limbs dramatically reduce the usable size of a tee and increase wear in some areas.*
- *To allow for vital air movement and exposure to sunlight, resist the temptation to plant dense groves of trees around greens, tees, and fairways.*
- *Reduce shade on greens and tees.*
- *Never plant trees close to a green or tee, because they will become serious competitors for available water and nutrients.*
- ***Try to avoid screening out scenic vistas.** Scenic vistas include the clubhouse, mountain views, lakes or other open areas of the course.*
- *When selecting trees, choose species that **match the existing vegetation** and have favourable characteristics.*
- ***Avoid large trees near hazards** such as dams and bunkers as they can create a double penalty from the hazard and reduce options when continuing play on the hole. Tree roots in bunkers will become an issue.*
- *Endeavour to keep significant trees on the course where possible, especially the large original trees when the course was first developed.*
- *Evaluate dangerous trees and prune/remove where necessary.*
- *Any future planting to be planned for and be able to be maintained by existing greens staff and volunteers effectively. These plans have to keep the playing of golf in mind.*
- *An audit of trees on each hole to be carried out to assess what needs to be removed or pruned to allow the golf course to be efficiently presented and maintained.*



I concur with all these principles. There is one additional principle that I think is missing though. There are several trees that I recommend be removed because they negatively impact on the golf hole and because their removal will improve the golf course. I recognise that 'negative impact' is subjective and often a contentious issue. I have heard countless times golfers argue that a certain tree is a golf hole's only defence – usually by low markers who are able to bomb their drives over them! Our recommendations in relation to trees are targeted at *all* golfers though, and our advice is aimed at making the course better, not more difficult. In addition, scenic vistas (mentioned in the General Principles as worthy of retaining not screening) should include views of golf holes. The removal of a tree that screens the corner of a dogleg for example, will usually improve the view from a tee. Improving visibility nearly always improves a golf hole.

And finally, it is a widely held view in the world of golf architecture that trees (in the words of famous American golf course architect Donald Ross "...should serve perhaps as the scenery, but never as part of the stage". While I recognise that trees have an environmental value too, my role is to advise how the golf course can be improved. And for every tree that I recommend be removed, there is ample space to replace them with twenty more in areas where they will never negatively impact on the play of the golf course.



*A 1984 aerial photo before the course was built, showing that the main lake had already been built and that approximately 60-80 remnant trees remained on the site following clearing for what was then farmland.*

## 4. THE GOLF HOLES (1 – 18)

### HOLE 1

#### Description

A very good mid-length to short par 4 opening hole with a semi-blind, slightly downhill tee shot. The tee shot in itself is not special, but the forested mountain backdrop lifts it considerably. The approach to the green is also downhill to what appears to be a bunkerless green. However, there are two bunkers hidden, behind the green, apparently placed there some years ago to stop balls ending up in worse trouble.



*The very attractive backdrop to the opening tee shot.*

#### Recommendations and reasoning

- The 1<sup>st</sup> hole is very good. Some tree works have already been carried out and this should continue as per the Tree Management Plan.
- The bunkers behind the green are unseen and from a strategic golf design perspective, they serve no purpose.
- Given the only role they play is stopping balls that carry the green or roll off the green from ending up in worse trouble (questionable in any case), the cost of maintaining them, or rebuilding them cannot be justified. I also think as an opening hole, a bunkerless hole is appropriate.
- I recommend the bunkers be filled in, and that in the process, the area to the rear of the green be converted to turf and regraded. I would like to see short grass extend down the slope at the back of the green.

## HOLE 2

### Description

The 2<sup>nd</sup> hole is a mid-length par 4. The tee shot is played downhill to a fairway that tilts quite sharply from high left to low right. There are two small ponds on the right, which are in play for blocked or sliced shots. There is also a bunker on the left about 230 metres out from the main tee. The approach shot is played to a green that is bunkered on the right, although it is unseen from the fairway. Google Earth reveals that it appears to have been reduced in size around 2016. There also used to be another bunker about 25 metres short right of the green that was filled in around the same time.



*The tee shot (left) and approach shot to the 2<sup>nd</sup> green.*

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Fill in the bunker on the left, reinstating the natural landform. The bunker is in poor condition, fills with water after rain and narrows the fairway in an area where more width would be better.
- Build a new, smaller bunker, further on (about 260 metres from the back tee).
- Widen the fairway on the left into the area occupied by the original bunker, and short of it.
- With the fairway bunkered left, the approach would be better with the green bunkered front right, where it is visible and protects the green better.
- Widen the extent of short grass on the left up and over the low mound, with the right side protected by the new bunker. A drive up the flatter left side will be rewarded with an approach that can use the hill on the left to feed shots onto the green.

## HOLE 3

### Description

The 3<sup>rd</sup> hole is a mid-length par 5 with another very good tee shot playing downhill with the same mountainous backdrop as the opening two holes. The tee shot asks for a shot played from right to left, as the hole bends to the left gently, the fairway tilts slightly to the right. There is one small bunker on the left about 200 metres from the tee. Going back to 2012, there used to be two more bunkers, one very short left and another larger one about 230 metres on the left. Both were filled in.

The approach shot towards the green bends further left, giving the hole (almost) a double dogleg. Longer hitters need to carry their approach over trees on the left if they are going for the green. The green itself is protected by a large bunker at its front left.



*The arrow indicates to direction of the green and shows why the Ironbark should be removed.*

### Recommendations and reasoning

- A bunker works well on the left, however the one that is there is not far enough out to bother longer hitters. It is also in poor condition, lost in the rough and too close to overhanging trees.
- Fill in the existing bunker and convert to turf and build a new bunker placing it 30 metres further down and further right.
- Wrap the fairway around the bunker.
- Remove a couple of overhanging trees near the current bunker to reveal more of the fairway when viewed from the tee.
- For the approach to the green – remove the Ironbark tree that blocks the path to the green on the left, and another small tree short of it.
- Replace the Ironbark with a bunker set into the low hill about 80 metres short of the green.
- Fill in the large bunker on the left, level and convert to fairway.
- Increase the width of the fairway beyond the new bunker all the way to the green.
- Construct a new smaller bunker protecting the front right of the green.

*Note: these proposed recommendations will probably make the hole easier for good golfers – tree removal usually does. However, the hole will also be far better with far more strategy at play!*

## HOLE 4

### Description

The 4th hole is a par 3 that again plays slightly downhill. There are two bunkers on the left, the first of which has been rebuilt and drains well now.

There is a very generous mounded ‘backstop’ at the left rear of the green (a feature on several greens) that prevents many long shots from running off the back of the green.



*The trees to the right of the flag, behind the green should be removed.*

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Very often a dark backdrop of trees to the rear of a putting green is good as it highlights the features in the foreground. In this instance though the background, behind the trees, is what I would like to see from the tee. Therefore, remove all the trees behind the green (to the right of the flag in the photo above). This will reveal the following fairway and more distant trees beyond.
- In addition, remove the bump or backstop so the rear edge of the putting green is a straight line.
- The impact of these measures, when viewed from the tee, will be that the turf of the putting green will merge with the distant turf of the following fairway. This will give an 'infinity green'. The definition being 'a putting green that merges into the surrounding landscape producing a visual effect of no rear boundary'. Often this is done in golf design to make a hole look harder than it is, but also sometimes just to show off a beautiful landscape. Click here for a video on Infinity greens.  
<https://www.golfchannel.com/video/architecture-101-infinity-or-skyline-green>
- To the left rear of the green, construct a new bunker. Make it blind from the tee – golfers will soon learn of its presence, and it will enable some great back left hole positions.
- Shorten the pathway and re-grass.

## HOLE 5

### Description

The 5<sup>th</sup> hole is a long and strong par 4 that plays partially across a water storage lake, then gently uphill to the green. There are no bunkers on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Recommendations and reasoning

- The 5<sup>th</sup> is a very good hole and minimal change is required.
- The hole is currently bunkerless and should remain so.

- My only suggested change is to mowing patterns short left of the green to remove the narrow entry. The mound short left should be mown as fairway up to its highest point so that it can be used to feed shots onto the green (as recommended on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole as well) rather than balls hanging up in long grass. I think this would improve the enjoyment of the hole for less skilled golfers.

## HOLE 6

### Description

The 6<sup>th</sup> hole begins the journey back north. The mountain backdrops are gone for now.

The tee shot on the 6<sup>th</sup> bends to the right, the fairway tilting slightly from right to left. The tee shot is bunkered on the left about 230 metres from the tee. The history of the left bunker is interesting – historical photos reveal there were four small round bunkers in 2004, two in 2005, and one larger one in 2008. There is a dam on the right at a higher level than the fairway.

The approach shot bends to the right with the fairway tilting gently from right to left. There is a tiny pot bunker front left of the green. There used to be a large bunker on the right about 25 metres short of the green, and another on the left. Both have been filled in.



### Recommendations and reasoning

- Fill in the fairway bunker on the left, reinstating the original landform (so that there is no indication that a bunker was ever there). This bunker – on the outside of the dogleg – is very poorly positioned and is contrary to the principles I discussed in Part 3.2 of this report.
- Convert this area to turf.
- Remove a couple of trees on the right corner of the dogleg to open up views of more fairway from the tee.
- Remove four trees on the right about 80 metres short of the green that in time will block the approach shot.
- Construct a small bunker into the low rise on the right about 30-40 metres short of the green.
- Widen the fairway on the right, wrapping it around the bunker, and then providing broad short grass surrounds short and right of the green.

- Increase the size of the existing bunker on the left, so that it extends across the front left of the green.

## HOLE 7

### Description

The 7<sup>th</sup> hole is a mid-length par 4 that bends slightly to the right. The tee shot calls for a left to right shot, the fairway assists as it tilts from high left to low right. There is a creek on the right, but its not really in play and hidden in trees.

There is a large bunker on the left that has been 'decommissioned', wisely so, as with the fairway bunker on the 6<sup>th</sup>, it is poorly positioned.

The approach shot is an uneventful affair, to a bunkerless green.

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Fill in the fairway bunker, reinstating the natural landform, flattening any sign of the bunker.
- Extend the fairway into the space currently occupied by the bunker.
- There are a couple of trees on the right that if removed would reveal more fairway around the corner of the bend.
- Construct a bunker on the right about 230-240 metres from the back tee.
- Construct a bunker front left of the green, reshaping the entire left surrounds to the green, installing drainage as necessary.

*Note: These works are not a priority and could be reviewed after other works are completed.*

## HOLE 8

### Description

The 8<sup>th</sup> hole is a short par 4 that plays over a small pond, over a hill, before bending slightly to the left. The crest of the hill is about 190 metres from the back tee. Long hitters need to negotiate the tree on the left of the hill with their drives or hit a big right to left shot or play an iron.



*The tee shot (left) and approach on the short par 4 8<sup>th</sup> hole*

The approach to the green is attractive, with a nice backdrop. There is a large bunker front left of the green, and another on the right set into an artificial mound.

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Consideration was given to removing the large tree on the left near the crest of the hill, however this may compromise the boundary which is quite close at this point.
- Rebuild the bunker on the left, making it two smaller bunkers, closer in to the green, so the left half of the green is behind the bunkers.
- Rebuild the right bunker, making it much smaller, filling in most of the front half, and lowering the hill into which it is built.
- Remove the gum tree short right of the green and the willow adjacent to the lake.
- Import good sandy topsoil and fill the area short right of the green, convert to turf, cut at fairway height. A drainage pit will be required.
- Clean up the messy pathways in this area.

## HOLE 9

### Description

The 9<sup>th</sup> hole is a long dramatic par 3 played across the main lake. Although intimidating, the water is not really in play (for competent golfers) as the green is located quite a long way from it. There are two bunkers front right of the green, the first of which needs to be carried if playing at the pin if the hole is on the right half of the green. Both of the right side bunkers have been recently rebuilt. There is another large bunker on the left. The new bunkers are very good, and this is the style that should be executed across the course. My only negative comment is that the elevating of the bunker edges (so the water sheds away from the bunker), is a little overdone.

In some ways the 9<sup>th</sup> hole epitomises what I am recommending with the rest of the course – that greens are protected on one side but left open on the other. This asks a question of the golfer – do I play at the pin or play safe? The 9<sup>th</sup> does this very well.



*The intimidating water carry on the long par 3 9<sup>th</sup> hole.*



### Recommendations and reasoning

- Rebuild the bunker on the left, making it smaller, and leaving space to its rear for traffic.
- Expand the fairway on the left into part of the space occupied by the bunker.

## HOLE 10

### Description

The 10<sup>th</sup> hole is a mid-length par 4 that heads off to the north over probably the dullest section of the golf course with little elevation change. The 10<sup>th</sup> is an inoffensive hole though and works well as one of the openers.

The fairway has been mown around low mounds for both the drive and the approach, which I don't like, but other than this I do not recommend any changes or the addition of any bunkers.

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Adjust the mowing pattern so the fairway cut extends over the low mounds both at the drive zone (about 250 metres from the tee and left of the green).

## HOLE 11

### Description

The 11<sup>th</sup> hole is a longish par 5, approaching 500 metres from the back tee. The hole turns south again so the tee shot again has the pleasant mountain backdrop enjoyed on many holes on the front nine.

The first two thirds of the 11<sup>th</sup> is straight, but at about the 350 metre point it starts bending left. This means that only the longest of hitters get a clear view of the green for their approach. The majority of golfers play their approach shot into the broad space about 100-150 metres short of the green, but for longer hitters they are forced to carry over the trees on the left (or lay up with a mid-short iron). There are two large greenside bunkers. One short right and one on the left. These were built in the mid 1990s.



*The 11th tee shot (left) and approach shot to the green with a copse of trees blocking the path to the green.*

### Recommendations and reasoning

- Remove about five trees on the left and prune the right side of the very old, large gum tree, located about 50 metres short left of the green.
- Construct two small bunkers into the rise about 40-50 metres short of the green into what is currently fairway. Wrap the fairway around these bunkers on their right.
- Fill in the large left bunker, reshape so it doesn't look like a filled in bunker! Convert to turf.
- Rebuild the bunker on the right, bringing it closer to the green.
- Expand the extent of fairway into what was part of the old bunker.

## HOLE 12

### Description

The 12<sup>th</sup> hole is a long par 4 that doglegs quite sharply to the left, although its only after seeing the hole in its entirety that it becomes clear that it turns left – upon first viewing, the sheer number of trees confuses the eye. The fairway does a peculiar turn about 200-220 metres from the tee. It has been mown around a couple of mounds.

The approach is uneventful – the green bunkered at the front left.



### Recommendations and reasoning

- Remove a gum tree about 140 metres from the back tee on the left that screens the view up the left.
- Remove several small trees in the vicinity of the very large gum tree on the corner of the dogleg on the left. Remove one large limb from that same tree on its right side.
- Construct a small bunker into the area where the two mounds are, at the same time lower and soften the mounds a little.
- Extend the fairway around the bunker and left as shown on the drawing.
- Long hitters can choose to play left, right or over the bunker.
- Fill in the greenside bunker which is too far from the green.
- Construct a new bunker on the right, and another short of the green set into a small mound. The left bunker wants to appear as though its hard up against the green.
- These changes will make the 12<sup>th</sup> a far better risk reward par 4.

## HOLE 13

### Description

The 13<sup>th</sup> hole is a mid-length par 3. The green is bunkered on the left with a newer bunker with Custombind liner. This is one of the best bunkers on the course in terms of drainage. This bunker style is slightly different to what has been done on the 9<sup>th</sup> though. On the 9<sup>th</sup> the line of the bunker edge is straighter whereas here it is like two curved eyebrows. There is also a bunker on the right.



*The par 3 13<sup>th</sup> hole. The pathway is an eyesore and needs to move left!*

### Recommendations

- Unfortunately, the first thing I noticed when I walked onto the 13<sup>th</sup> tee was the pathway which was aimed straight at the flag that day! Move it left and shorten it.
- Rebuild the bunker on the right, making it slightly smaller and more in front of the green so the entry to the green is a few metres narrower.

## HOLE 14

### Description

The 14th hole is a really good par 5 that plays slightly downhill. The tee shot is very good, except for the unnecessary addition of the mounds at about good drive length. The approach shot is also played slightly downhill, the fairway tilting to the right slightly.

The green has a solo bunker on the right, and this is one of the better bunkers on the course. There used to be another bunker back right that was filled in around 2011.



*The very nice tee shot on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Aim at the highest mountain with a touch of draw!*

#### **Recommendations**

- The tee shot here is very good and does not require any changes.
- Remove the tree about 50 metres short of the green on the left (the stump with the regrowth).
- I think the approach shot to the green needs the addition of a bunker. The green is bunkered on the right, so the preferred approach is from the left, so that's where the bunker should be built – into the slight rise about 30 metres short of the green.
- Widen the fairway and green surrounds short and left of the green past the new bunker extending up the slope left of the green.

## **HOLE 15**

#### **Description**

The 15<sup>th</sup> hole is a strong par 4 that plays up and over a hill. The top of the hill is about 220 metres from the back tee, so many shorter hitting golfers have a blind second shot if they are unable to carry the hill with their tee shot. The tee shot is quite narrow, played between the overhanging canopies of large trees on both sides of the fairway.

The approach shot to the green is played slightly uphill to a good green with a steep drop-off on the right.

#### **Recommendations**

- The tee shot would be so much better if three (or perhaps two) large trees on the left near the top of the hill were removed and replaced with a bunker set into the crest of the hill. This would open up the tee shot and make it a much better hole. Again, it may make it easier for the big hitters, but it will make it better for everyone.

*Note: I recognise that this may be controversial and that a Permit will be required! As mentioned earlier, I understand the environmental value of large trees, but our advice is predicated on making the golf course the best it can be.*

- If the fairway bunker was built, the green is set up perfectly for a bunker to be built into the bank, front right of the green.
- I would like to see the left surrounds mown as short grass for 8-10 metres from the putting surface, up the slope, as recommended on several other holes.
- Shorten the pathway back to where it crosses the maintenance track.
- With these changes implemented, the 15<sup>th</sup> can be an excellent hole.



*The tee shot on the long par 4 15<sup>th</sup> hole (left) and approach to the bunkerless green.*

## HOLE 16

### Description

The 16<sup>th</sup> hole is a short par 4 with a pleasant mountain backdrop in the distance. The tee shot is played downhill to a fairway that tilts from right to left. There are no fairway bunkers but there are two greenside bunkers, one at the front right, and another, back left. The course lacks a really good risk and reward short par 4 and the 16<sup>th</sup> could be so much better than it is.

### Recommendations

- The tee shot on this hole could be very good if some of the trees down the right were removed and the fairway widened – there is plenty of space to do so.
- With a much wider fairway, this hole could have a central bunker located at about 240-250 metres from the back tee (before the dip in the fairway).
- Construct a second small bunker into the ridge/hill on the left which is about 25-30 metres short of the green. Ensure both of these bunkers are very visible from the tee.
- Fill in the back left bunker, which is too far from the green.
- Construct two new greenside bunkers, one at the front right (reconstruct the existing one bringing it closer to the green). And the other, behind the green on the right.
- These measures would give longer hitters options to consider – play short, play down the slightly wider right side, leaving a more difficult approach, play down the riskier left side for an easier approach or bomb it over the top! This will make a much better risk and reward short par 4.



*The 16th hole. Tree removal on the right and a wider fairway would improve this hole.*

## HOLE 17

### Description

The 17<sup>th</sup> hole is a mid-length par 3. There are two bunkers, one on either side of the green. Both of them have been built into mounds with flashed up faces – especially the one on the left. The rear and left side of the green is surrounded by a ridge that feeds everything back towards the green.

### Recommendations

The 17<sup>th</sup> is a similar hole to the 13<sup>th</sup>, with the simple set-up of a bunker either side of the green (although it does play in the opposite direction). To make it different to the 13<sup>th</sup>, but also better, I recommend the following.

- Fill in the left bunker, flattening it and leaving just a low rise with no indication of the old bunker.
- Rebuild the right side bunker making it two smaller bunkers, the first one built about five metres from the front of the green, set into a low rise that conceals the front of the green on the right. It will look as though its hard up against the green.
- The second bunker can be further on, closer to the green.
- Convert the area occupied by the left bunker to turf. The left side becomes the safe bail out. The right half of the green becomes the more difficult side to approach.



*The tee shot on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a close up of the green and flashed up bunkers.*

## HOLE 18

### Description

The 18<sup>th</sup> hole is a par 4 that doglegs sharply to the left. The main lake sits on the left but is not really in play (except for bombers who try to carry over it). There are several very large remnant trees between the lake and the edge of the fairway, and other trees that make seeing down the left difficult.

As with the 12<sup>th</sup> hole, this fairway has some mounds on the corner of the dogleg and the fairway does a strange twist around them, away from the direction of the hole. The fairway goes from nearly 30 metres wide at 220 metres, to just 17 metres wide about 240 metres from the tee.

The green is bunkered both short left and short right. There used to be a bunker back left, but this was filled in around 2013. The bunker on the right is relatively new, has a Custombind liner and drains well. The one on the left is an older bunker.

The 18<sup>th</sup> is already a good hole, but it could be even better.

### Recommendations

- There is a tree about 140 metres from the back tee that blocks the view down the left. Remove it.
- There are three large gum trees on the corner of the dogleg. If they were all removed, I have no doubt we could create an excellent 18<sup>th</sup> hole, however I am not recommending it!
- There is an alternative that enables the trees to be retained that will still give a much better hole, with pruning of limbs and possible removal of the furthest right tree.
- Covert all the rough on the corner of the dogleg (where the bumps are and left of them) to fairway.
- If the tree(s) are removed, build two bunkers, the first requiring about a 220 metre carry, the second a 250 metre carry.
- The bunker on the left should be rebuilt, however, I think it would be better moved more to the side of the green. As it is both bunkers only catch weak shots short of the green.
- Replace the bunker area with turf.



*The tee shot on the 18<sup>th</sup> (left) and the approach to the green from past the dogleg corner.*

## 5. SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES

The evolution of the current bunkers seems to have been done in a very ad-hoc manner with little to no planning or reasoning that explains why bunkers were placed where they were. The original course appears to have not had any bunkers, and no plans or drawings seem to exist that proves any were ever planned.

It is likely that bunkers were built in particular locations because someone (probably on a Greens Committee) thought it was a good idea or it suited their game! Likewise, bunkers have been changed, or filled in over the years for the same reason. A good example is the 9<sup>th</sup> hole. In 1995, there were three bunkers on the right of the green. Around 1997, one of them was filled in and reduced to two, this was then reduced to one around 2005, and now there are two again! Another example is the fairway bunker on the left of the 6<sup>th</sup>. In 2004 the aerial photo shows a string of four small pot bunkers (a strange idea in itself). By 2005 two were filled in and around 2007, the remaining two were enlarged to one! This exemplifies the lack of forward planning that has taken place over the years when it comes to the bunkers.

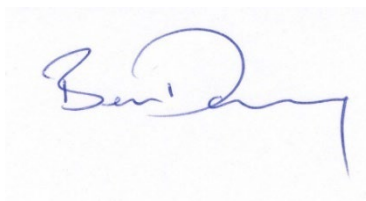
In terms of the priorities moving forward – given planning is currently underway into possible development options on the back nine, I would not be doing anything to the bunkers on the back nine yet, despite a hole such as the 11<sup>th</sup> probably being near the top of the priorities. The focus therefore needs to be on those holes that are least likely to be impacted by any possible development. If the development does not get member approval, or does not proceed for other reasons, this can be revisited.

The priority therefore is filling in unnecessary bunkers and perhaps rebuilding those bunkers that will make the biggest difference. Therefore, the following works should be considered first;

- Fill in the old bunker on the 7<sup>th</sup>, reinstate original levels and turf. Widen the fairway left.
- Fill in the fairway bunker on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Construct the new fairway bunker short right of the 6<sup>th</sup> green and other measures recommended for that hole.
- Fill in the fairway bunker on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Construct the new fairway bunker on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and other measures recommended in the vicinity of the existing bunker.
- Works to the 8<sup>th</sup> hole as recommended.

The changes recommended in this report, if implemented on a staged basis over the coming years, will result in a golf course that is more strategic to play and more challenging, especially for better golfers. At the same time, the course will remain very playable for golfers of all standards. In addition, the course will have bunkers that are visually pleasing and far easier to maintain, saving the Club valuable resources that can be directed into other areas of course maintenance.

Finally, all recommendations in this report should be revisited if the redevelopment proposal with Knowles Group gains member support and then development approval. If this happens, a much broader Masterplan for the entire golf course may be required to accommodate that the new development. It is unknown yet what that might entail.



*Ben Davey*

*Golf Course Architect and Director of Contour Golf Design Group*