



# Course Improvement Plan DESIGN REPORT December 2012



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## **Introduction**

The simplistic purpose of this Course Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Murwillumbah Golf Club is to assess the current golf course, its overall site, its strengths and weaknesses and provide conceptual ideas to improve the layout and maximise its potential.

Of course a major factor which drives this process is the realistic budget allowances for such improvements. If the club had access to vast supplies of capital for course improvements and modifications then the outcome of the plan may have been different, however with the information and “scope of works” provided by the Clubs representatives these conceptual ideas for the course have been kept to a reasonable and affordable level. In reality this CIP should provide a solid foundation for ongoing improvements to the golf course that can be staged and structured over a long period of time as funding permits.

## **Golf Course Analysis and Summary**

The Murwillumbah Golf Course is currently a fine test of golf. It has fantastic rolling terrain, good vegetation (albeit a little encroaching in places) and a beautiful river along its northern border. I would certainly put this golf course in the “hidden gem” category when discussing its merit in golfing circles.

It is easily the pick of the courses in northern NSW and if its location was moved to a capital city like Brisbane it would only have a couple of courses that would surpass it for quality. It’s a generally well layed out course that has a high level of presentation and playing enjoyment even though its ground staff numbers are relatively low and its irrigation system is considered basic to say the least.

## **General Comments and Recommendations**

Many golf course designers will sprukey the philosophy that their designs are playable for both high and less skilled golfers. In reality they usually end up skewed in one direction, often in the “difficult” direction.

The key to achieving the perfect balance of a golf layout to appease the vast range of golfers’ skills is a strong emphasis on “risk and reward” design. The focus on great “risk and reward” philosophies is to present options to the player’s shot-making skills on each golf hole. If an obstacle is presented at the landing area of a tee shot the player should be rewarded if the shot is hit efficiently near or over this obstacle. If the player opts to take an easier line of the tee then his/her follow up shot should be more difficult. This really is the simplistic theory to “risk and reward” design and if you study the best golf courses in the world they will all adhere to this simple principle.

When this principle in design is demonstrated on the golf course the better players will be challenged into taking risks at the heroic lines and angles whilst the lesser players can always find a safer route to the golf hole. In effect, I want to tempt all players into taking risks on the golf course to stimulate their enjoyment and to constantly add thought provocation when playing. If these options and thought provocations are evident then there is a fair chance the golf course will remain interesting to play for both members and playing guests.

The alternate principle of design, which I find to be particularly negative, is a “penal” approach. Golf fairways that are tight and tree lined simply ask for a straight shot to be made. This certainly provides difficulty to the golfers but also lacks variety. Similarly, if a green is guarded by bunkers both left and right of the entrance this again asks for a straight shot to be hit. This constant demand for straight shot making is certain to create boredom on a golf course and significantly diminishes the enjoyment of the experience.

When I apply these principles to my conceptual recommendations at Murwillumbah GC there needs to be a concerted effort to look at each obstacle or hazard and determine why it was intended. In most cases you will notice that the adjustments of bunkering, water bodies and green angles is to reinforce a safe and daring playing strategy of each golf hole.

The key ingredient in allowing this “risk and reward” principle to work is width. The reason the St Andrews and Royal Melbourne courses are so good is they have ample width in their playing arenas. Of course, the design of the playing strategies utilises the width very well and there are often multiple playing lines to each golf hole dependent on weather conditions and pin locations.

The size and orientation of the site at Murwillumbah certainly restricts this width requirement. Many of the golf holes run parallel in a north-south orientation and it is very difficult to improve on this constraint. The prime opportunity to ease this constraint is with tree removal. Whilst trees certainly provide an important role in the theme and style of a golf course and the enjoyment to the playing patrons they are often detrimental in the playing strategies and sometimes create an unfair situation.

Trees with thick canopies often provide an important service to the golf course in protecting players from being hit, or stopping a golf ball from venturing off the property. Unfortunately this vegetation also hinders sunlight and greatly impacts on the turf quality, which is really one of our major requirements. The delicate balance of these two aspects needs to be addressed and I believe the CIP provided does this successfully.

Whilst the enclosed plan identifies several trees to be removed from the property there will be an ongoing instruction given to the course superintendent that if a tree needs to be removed to improve turf quality without endangering the golfers then it should be removed.

There are also a few suggestions on the plan to enlarge the water bodies on the site. These additions are not to simply add difficulty but to add to the strategic merit of each golf hole. The 12<sup>th</sup> green was earmarked as the initial putting green to be fully remodelled, primarily as it is a fairly flat and featureless target but also because it sits too low and is the first one inundated with water in flood events.

This green needs to be raised between 1.5 – 2.5 metres and the material for this must be found on site. The new waterway on the right of the green will provide this material and also ensure the haulage of such material is kept to a minimum.

The other added benefit of this exercise is to expand on the water storage volume for irrigation works.

## **Individual Hole Analysis**

### **HOLE 1 - Par 4**

With the initial comments and explanations about “risk and reward” philosophy noted, this 1<sup>st</sup> golf hole is a text book example of how it can be adopted with a minimum amount of adjustments.

The current putting green is a fairly good target and presents much interest to the golfers. It also strongly favours an approach shot from the left side. There was discussion about lowering the sharp mound in behind the front-right bunker but I am inclined to keep it as it provides an important part of this playing strategy.

I believe the wide, central bunker could be modified to appear narrow from the tee. This will create a left and right alternative for the golfers however it should be remembered that the bunker starts at about 240m and many will not be able to reach it. The wider area on the right will be easier to hit, particularly with the right-handed slicer, however the approach from this side is more daunting. The pond can be enlarged on the left to place it more in the landing zone. Golfers aiming up this narrower left side will need to be very accurate if there are to obtain this better angle to the flag.

A couple of Eucalypts short of this pond can be removed but a few large Pines kept. There could also be some trimming and pruning of the vegetation on the immediate left of the tee to ensure the players gain a great view of the water body on the left.

The only modification at the green is to trim back the front-left bunker as it will create a wider grassed traffic zone for golfers getting on and off the green.

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### **HOLE 2 - Par 3**

As with most of the Par 3's at MGC the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole is a very solid golf hole.

The green is fine but the right side bunker needs to be reshaped to blend in better with the mounding. The “containment mounds” between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> holes need to flow better and ensure the surface drainage of water flows well towards sumps.

There needs to be some tree clearing on both sides of the hole to open up the playing line and provide a fairer test for all golfers. The large Fig on the right is a great feature tree but definitely needs to be trimmed and pruned on both sides. I am concerned though that this pruning will give the tree an unusual appearance. Care should be taken during this exercise.

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### **HOLE 3 – Par 4**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> hole is the first in a series of the “parallel and narrow” fairway problem. Whilst fairways on holes 4, 5 and 11 are quite narrow there is the scope to solve the problem on the left side of the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

With some tree removal along the left side the fairway can be widened by at least 10m. This additional width should even allow enough room to construct a central strategic bunker. There should be a new putting green (and surrounds) created that will best favour an approach from the right. The new central fairway bunker (in the 220-240m range) should be located with the narrower target width on the right. With this narrow side in place there might be more opportunity for the golfers to hit away to this left side and reduce the danger with the adjacent 4<sup>th</sup> fairway.

The current green has minimal pin locations available and it seems putting back off the front edge from above the hole is a common occurrence. With the terrain sloping heavily from back to front this is an opportunity to create two distinct platforms separated by a 300-400mm step.

The three greenside bunkers can be replaced by one lone trap guarding the front-left side. This will ensure a more difficult approach from the left side of the fairway.

The cart path should be built around the left and rear of the hole and connecting with the current path at the 4<sup>th</sup> tees. This should alleviate some of the danger with carts driving into the hitting line off the 4<sup>th</sup>. The walking golfers should still have a safe route up the right side of the green and with fewer bunkers creating a blockage then there should be less grass wear here.

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#### HOLE 4 – Par 4

The first recommendation to the 4<sup>th</sup> hole is to formalise the path along the side of the tees and extend the path beyond the rear tee to connect with the existing. This will assist in maintenance equipment moving through the area.

This hole is fairly bland that plays down through a narrow corridor and has a green guarded both left and right requiring two accurate shots to reach the target. As discussed in the opening comments of this report it certainly lacks variety, strategy and interest.

In an effort to open up the playing areas to create width and to also promote better sunlight to the turf there is an opportunity to remove some of the large vegetation between holes 4 and 11. There is an advantage in that these two holes both play in the same direction so golfer safety is less of a concern than if the holes being played into each other.

The large Fig trees in between are a nice feature and should be kept and emphasis should be more on the removal of non-natives and a few Eucalypts. Where these trees are removed the fairways between the two holes can be joined together to create great effect. The clearing of the left side of the 4<sup>th</sup> will also work well with a new playing strategy.

With a new wider landing area down the left there should be a lone fairway bunker added to the right side about 230-240m. From this right side a better angle will present to a new putting green angled from right to left. A small tree should be removed on the right of the green and some prominent mounding added at the left-rear to create a good separation point from the nearby 11<sup>th</sup> green. The green should be bunkered on the left side and players encouraged to exit the green to the right and onto the access path. When we arrive at the detailed design phase for this green it may even present an opportunity to build a double green with the 11<sup>th</sup>.

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#### HOLE 5 – Par 5

This hole is a contrast of two halves. The first half of the golf hole is excessively narrow with a tight landing area and trees that encroach into the hitting zone badly. It may be the narrowest landing zone on the entire golf course and the problem is accentuated with a fairway trap on the left and thick, vegetation immediately to the left of the sand. The latter half of the golf hole is quite good strategically however there are still some alterations that can improve the play zone.

Firstly, remove, trim and prune the large Pines on the right. There needs to be enough room for players to access the full width of fairway. There are a few smaller trees on the right side at the 200-

240m mark that can be removed to provide an ample landing width. The fairway bunker on the left should be removed in addition to the thick vegetation to the left.

The 12<sup>th</sup> hole will be remodelled and a new pond added to the left side. This pond will catch errant balls hit too far right on the 5<sup>th</sup>. There needs to be some minor shaping works on the right side of the 5<sup>th</sup> fairway to remove a few small mounds and allow visibility into this new pond when it is constructed. As a result, a small tree on the left of the fairway (level with the pond) should be removed so there is ample landing area adjacent to the pond for the shorter hitters playing their second shots.

The latter part of the hole is good strategically with a two level landing area at the lay-up zone. The more difficult left side needs to be hit to ensure an easier approach angle to the green. Consideration should be given to move the start of the cart path further to the right and build up the right side landing area so it is more receptive. It appears now that a lot of balls will career off the edge and into the water.

There is a group of Lomandra plants on the right edge of the fairway that are not good so close to the playing zone. These plants are generally very sharp and are too severe a penalty for shots just missing the right edge of the fairway.

The green could be improved for a more receptive target and also provide more distinct pin locations.

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#### HOLE 6 – Par 4

The mechanics of this golf hole are fine. The tees are tucked in to the creek so that players hit away from the property boundary and results in a fairly safe situation with the houses nearby. There is a nice wide landing zone for the shorter hitters but it does become very narrow at the 220-250m mark. With the angle of the green from left to right I believe one or two of the Pine trees are unfair for those hitting the left side of the fairway. The Pine closest to the fairway edge should definitely be removed and assess the next two over time.

There are also issues with a spring on the left of the hole and the water needs to be dealt with to improve the drainage situation. There appears to be some old drainage pits and sumps in amongst the trees but some additional shaping works may be required to improve the flow and direct the water into sumps better.

The concept of the green angled from left to right works well, however the extreme right edge does appear to be a little severe. The green could eventually require a remodel however it is fine in the short term. The small bunker on the left could be reduced in size to assist with the walking access on and off the green.

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#### HOLE 7 – Par 4

The 7<sup>th</sup> is easily the strongest Par 4 on the layout. From the rear “tiger” tee it requires a formidable shot to reach and keep the ball on the landing zone. The contouring on this hole is severe with in excess of 8m drop from the right side to the left and without significant earthworks this problem will remain. I believe there is some opportunity to scallop in some receptive “ball collection” shapes on the right edge of the fairway which will assist in keeping balls on the high side.

Balls currently hit too far right can cross an Out of Bounds line which appears to be a little unfair, particularly to those not familiar with this layout. Firstly, there should be some tree elimination on the

immediate right of the ladies tee so that the entire right side of the landing zone is visible. I would also suggest converting the Out of Bounds line with a Hazard line and to ensure there is no confusion to its entry point add a “drop zone”. I would imagine that the new visibility to the tree line on the right would eliminate any confusion with the entry point.

For the very long hitters, and also those shorter hitters playing second shots, there is a problem with balls running to the far left edge and being blocked out to the green. I believe the solution can be made much better with the removal of about nine large Pines along this left edge. There may still require some minor shaping works to the bottom of the hill but at least these players will have an unhindered line to the flag.

The green itself sits on a very awkward piece of land. Water runs off the steep land from the right and there is a very steep drop off on the left. For the short term this green can remain. The front-right bunker sits well in the terrain and works well with balls bounced in from that side. The left bunker could be re-shaped to provide a little more visual impact whilst still serving a role to restrict balls from bounding down the hill.

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### **HOLE 8 – Par 3**

The 8<sup>th</sup> is a tricky Par 3 that is very picturesque set in amongst the thick vegetation. Unfortunately the front of the green possesses great landform but is hidden by a group of trees. I do not believe these trees add to the beauty of the area and pose no significance to safety. I would remove them all and reshape the bunkering to really improve the aesthetics. The front-right bunker is a necessity however the remainder of the right side could be utilised with either more sand or scalloped shapes. These swales and bunkers are there to restrict the errant balls from running all the way down onto the 7<sup>th</sup> fairway.

Once again, the green could be greatly improved over time but in the short term remain as is. The front-left bunker could definitely be reduced in size. This would provide a fairer opportunity for those bouncing the ball onto the green and would also improve the access space for walking golfers.

The second bunker on the left could be replaced with a grassy swale providing there was an opportunity to drain the water away, preferably to the rear.

There are definite similarities with the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> greensites and given a little more latitude with the design process the holes may well work better routed differently. This southern section of the site is quite dramatic however is awkward to fit in decent green sites.

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### **HOLE 9 – Par 4**

The 9<sup>th</sup> is a decent golf hole but could be significantly better, in fact one of the best on the course. The hole plays through very interesting terrain and looks terrific from the tee.

The hole currently plays with most tee shots slinging and rolling to the right, hence the need to invoke an Out of Bounds line to protect the practice area. The current green is a simple circular shape which does not demand a preference from the right or left side of the fairway.

I propose that the landing area be divided into a higher platform on the left with the remainder running balls down to the right. There has already been some minor shaping works towards the left edge of the fairway and I think these shapes can be embellished so that a narrow, receptive slot appears on the left half. This narrow slot will be the preferred angle to a new putting green.

The new green should be angled from left to right and the rear section sitting as a similar level to the current height. The green can be stepped down at the front and create a smaller shelf. The green can be guarded by a few small pot bunkers along the right edge. This will ensure the balls slinging to the right off the tee will be forced to overcome the bunkering and the angle of the green. Those taking the risk of hitting into the new slot on the left will be rewarded with a much easier angle.

There are a few small trees in front of the green and to the left that must be removed. I toyed with the idea of keeping the last large Eucalypt at the 240m mark but I believe the golf hole will be much better if it is removed. It will allow more room for this landing space to be created.

There is a tree to the right of the green that can be kept and a new path constructed to collect the cart and walking golfers and be directed off to the right and to the edge of the practice putting green. Some golfers may still opt to walk off the green to the left but it will significantly reduce the traffic and make the interface with the 10<sup>th</sup> much safer.

I have no doubt that these changes will produce a great Par 4 and this is one of the holes I am most excited about.

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### **HOLE 10 – Par 3**

The 10<sup>th</sup> is a very good short hole that will once again be improved if the players can fully see the target. Remove the large Eucalypt in front of the green for better visibility and a fair chance to hit the target.

One rear bunker has already been removed and the remaining right-rear bunker could be halved in size. This bunker is still visible from the tee and aesthetically balances the front sand nicely.

The green surface has interesting undulation and can be kept as is.

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### **HOLE 11 – Par 5**

The 11<sup>th</sup> is a fairly straightforward Par 5 restricted by the narrow tree lined fairway.

As discussed on the 4<sup>th</sup> hole there could be pockets of tree removal along the right side of the fairway which will open up the play zones and put more emphasis on the feature trees amongst them. More space will appear along the right edge whilst a feature Fig tree juts out at the 260m mark.

The landing zone off the tee should remain uninhibited from obstacles (i.e. bunkers) so that more players may be tempted to attack the green in two. The green is nicely angled from left to right and features some significant contouring which works well with a short Par 5.

Those opting to lay-up should be faced with both a daring and safer line. A small bunker about 100m out on the left will put more interest in the layed up shot.

A small tree should be removed on the right just short of the green to make a little more room and the small bunker on the left of the green could be replaced by a mound. This will assist the access from golfers walking off the green and will put more emphasis on the club selection of the approach shot. Balls now not stopped by the bunker will find their way over the back-left edge and result in a difficult recovery.



There should be a minor adjustment to the short path off the back of the green to improve the turf quality and better direct traffic to the next tee.

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### **HOLE 12 – Par 4**

The 12<sup>th</sup> is probably one of the most mundane on the current layout and unfortunately one which will require the most funding to fix.

The primary problem of the golf hole is the green sitting too low, subsequently flood prone, and some drainage problems along the right edge of the fairway. The green needs to be raised at least 1.5 metres to keep it above the inundation level. With the material needed to raise this green needing to be sourced within the site it makes sense to create a new water body nearby and incorporate as part of the strategy.

This new pond can be constructed along the right edge of the green and slightly angled to the left side of the fairway. The green will sit parallel to this pond. More material can be gained from behind the green and expand the current creek and pond as required.

The area in the natural low point on the left of the green, about 30m short is also a drainage issue. This area can also be created into a new small pond. The two water bodies can be connected with piping and vastly improve the drainage of the entire back side of the golf hole. All of the water from the pond needs to connect with the existing creek at the rear and continue around the back and left side of the 13<sup>th</sup> hole. The excess water runoff currently being directed from the bridge near the 13<sup>th</sup> tees along the right side of the 12<sup>th</sup> hole should be ceased.

With two new water bodies on the golf hole there needs to be plenty of width for all players to get through. Of course the strategy of the hole will be to take risks near these obstacles to ensure better angles to the flag. A line of trees should be removed along the right side to create this width and provide a wide hitting zone. Of course, the wider the golfer plays off the tee the more the new water body comes into play on the right.

The two existing fairway bunkers need to be removed and a new bunker added on the left edge about 210-230m. Some minor tree clearing is also required on the left to ensure the players can hit near this bunker from the tee.

With many players expected to bail out left of the green there needs to be more tree removal to make room. I do not want to add bunkering in this area but intricate shapes and mounds to ensure a tricky recovery is required from this left side with the water waiting at the rear.

This will evolve into a very picturesque and strategic golf hole, a marked improvement on its current status.

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### **HOLE 13 – Par 4**

The 13<sup>th</sup> is a neat little Par 4 with little to be adjusted. The green sits close to the Out of Bounds fence and appears most hit a lay-up shot to the corner for a short shot approach.

I suggest the trees be trimmed back on the left side to entice more of the longer hitters having a crack at the green. They still need to be brave to keep the ball in bounds so the risk needs to be worthwhile.

The fairway bunkers are a little short and really only trouble the short hitters. I would fill these in and replace with a bunker further up at about 220-230m.

The green surface is fine, albeit a little plain, but the bunkering on the left and right simply demands a straight shot in. The left bunker should be adjusted and extend out a little more and the right bunker converted to a deep grassy swale. In reality grassy swales provide a more difficult recovery shot than a bunker and I'm sure more of the lower markers would prefer to play from sand. The tightly mown swale is a far better alternative as the players can opt for a putt, a flop shot or a bump and run to get back on the green.

These suggestions will prove to be a slight improvement to its current state however if a more severe improvement is sought then I provide an alternative option below.



### HOLE 14 – Par 3

The 14<sup>th</sup> presents an interesting green complex but feels a little sparse up against the cane field.

The green surface and bunkering is good and the only minor modification is to address an area whereby the water runoff feeds into the right side bunker.

There could be a little more streamlining of the mounding and clump some of the trees together on the right side. The left edge near the cane could also benefit from a clump or two of feature vegetation.

### HOLE 15 – Par 4

During my initial site inspection I identified this hole as possibly the worst on the golf course. The routing of the golf course features the strip of parallel holes running north-south through the middle but the northern most section features three east-west fairways. The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> fairways have ample room between them but the 15<sup>th</sup> is squeezed into a narrow space that makes the playability of the hole awkward. It also creates a few safety issues with the adjacent fairways.

After much deliberation and consideration I believe we can slightly improve the 15<sup>th</sup> however it is still a Par 4 squeezed into an awkward space. The following parts of this report will outline how tremendous holes 16 and 17 can be with a few modifications but 15 still remains in an awkward space. I am resolved that we have to make the best out of it that we can.

Firstly, the angle of the dog leg is quite sharp. I would imagine most of the really big hitters attempt to bomb a drive over the corner whilst most of the golfers try to keep a straight one through the trees. The 2<sup>nd</sup> green appears at the 180m mark and is flagged as a dangerous spot.

I think the hole can be improved with the tees being moved to the right and softening the dog-leg angle. It should actually play along the same line as the ladies tee. This would involve the rear tee moving right but staying left of the tree at the rear of the 14<sup>th</sup> green. This tee would hit directly over the current bridge so this would have to be closed off and the rails taken down. There is room for the traffic to go through the space to the left.

By moving the tees to the right there is a group of trees on the other side of the pond that will need to be cut back. This will create enough space to get the tee shot to the corner. There is adequate vegetation remaining to protect the 5<sup>th</sup> tees. This slight adjustment to the hitting angle should also reduce the safety problem towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> green. As mentioned earlier the right side bunker and “containment” mounds need to be re-shaped to provide a better separation between the golf holes.

The safety situation between the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> holes needs to be continually monitored though.

There is some tree clearing recommended along the latter half of right side of the 15<sup>th</sup> fairway to allow more sunlight through. The soil quality looks poor in this area as a result of flooding I suspect. If material became available I would suggest raising the fairway and promoting better drainage as required.

The green is a good one however there can be some adjustment made to the greenside bunkering to enforce that better approach angle from the right side. I would like to make the left side of the green very difficult to deter players hitting tee shots up the 16<sup>th</sup> fairway.

It would also be advantageous to send both walking and cart golfers to the path on the right side for better safety from the 16<sup>th</sup> tees.

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## HOLE 16 – Par 5

The main shortcoming with the current 16<sup>th</sup> is that there is a forced lay-up for many players. There is 230m from the rear tees to reach the hazard across the fairway and I would imagine that even those golfers that can hit it in the 200-220m range would be very cautious with their tee shot.

The best Par 5's are those that tempt the golfer into making heroic shots. The longer hitters will consider reaching the green in two and the “regular” players need to plot their way along the golf hole. With a tee shot coming to rest against the current hazard there is still over 230m to reach the front of the green which fundamentally makes it unreachable for most, and a fairly negative golf hole.

Of course we have an engineering situation dealing with water and drainage which is why the current situation exists. My aim is to maintain the drainage flow whilst improving the golf hole and I believe the suggestions on the plan achieve this.

Construct a new pond in between the 16<sup>th</sup> fairway and 17<sup>th</sup> tees and encroach it into the right side of the fairway. The water from the left side of the 16<sup>th</sup> can be piped underground so that there is a continuous fairway wrapping around the pond. This will now provide the opportunity for the players to hit it into the narrow slot and possibly get home in two. Those avoiding the pond by hitting it up the left edge will need to be careful as the large Fig tree further up the fairway will block some shots.

In an ideal situation the green can be moved to the right and really utilise the river edge better. I would like to see the vegetation along the entire river edge cleaned up so that you can get great river views as you get up on the green. It will also provide a terrific strategic element for approach shots being hit too far.

The green should be pointed towards the right edge of the fairway so that the players can get home from near the new pond and those laying up will need to be coming in from the right side too. The entire left side will be left open so they have lots of room to lay-up safely. The risk with this easier lay-up is that they will now approach the green at a very awkward angle with the river at the rear. There will need to be some significant tree clearing along the right side of this hole for the strategy to work successfully.

I should note that this new golf hole will be a massive improvement and will prove to be one of the most exciting on the golf course. If however the funding is not available for this new green then some minor modifications can be made to the current one. By simply adding the pond and keeping the existing green the hole will be improved a little however I think we should strive for this new green near the river.

The only other issue of concern is the power lines and poles along the edge of the river. I do believe that the green can be positioned in a way to be kept clear of these.

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#### HOLE 17 – Par 4

The 17<sup>th</sup> is currently a scenic hole but a fairly weak strategy. As it currently plays the best line of attack is from the right side, which with the river bank nearby is really under-utilised.

Another point to mention is that the golf course does not possess a short “drivable” Par 4. These short Par 4’s (less than 300m) are easily my favourite holes in golf. If the hole can be built at 250-260, then many will take big risk in their efforts to reach the green in one mighty hit. Of course if the hole is strategically set up well there is also the risk of taking big scores if not executed properly. Some of the best golf holes in the country fit in this category including Royal Melbourne West, Lost Farm, Barnbogle Dunes, Woodlands and Kingston Heath to name a few.

The idea on 17 is to move the tees forward and build a new green that is angled from left to right in a similar location. There is a large tree in poor condition along the river bank which will be removed and this will effectively be the “carry point” for the heroic tee shot. Depending on the tee location I would like to see this “carry point” at 200-230m so that many will be tempted in having a crack at the green. If this point is cleared and on the correct line then there will be a receptive “landing pad” created to bounce balls onto the putting surface.

If the players drag their tee shot left then they are in the water and if they bail too far right the recovery angle to the green will be very tricky. I would hope the green can be elevated with a very sharp drop off on the right side.

Even if the players opt to lay-up they will need to hug the river edge to achieve an easier line in. This hole will be bunker-less but will reap scores from 2’s to 10’s. It will be a very tempting golf hole at the end of the round when medals and championships are on the line.

With the tees are being moved forward this allows us to build that pond in between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> holes. If the tees were kept in their current location then this pond would have forced a carry distance that was too far.

I am extremely pleased with how holes 16 and 17 link together and they will be the best two holes on the golf course.

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## HOLE 18 – Par 4

The 18<sup>th</sup> is a strong finishing hole but unfortunately has a safety concern with the school on the left side. Its current problem is caused by the tees sitting hard up against the property boundary with minimal screening from fencing or trees. It was also identified that the rear tee is fine to be used on weekends when the school is unoccupied.

I believe this problem can be eliminated, or significantly reduced through a series of staged changes to the golf hole. When a safety problem occurs with neighbouring property it is always the intention that the golf club make every effort (within reason) to improve or rectify the problem. With this process in mind we should endeavour to remedy the problem over a series of considerations.

### Phase 1.

- a) Provide a new teeing area, slightly forward and right of the current middle and front tee. This tee should be used from Sunday to Friday when the school grounds are occupied. The rear tee may be used on Saturdays.
- b) In addition to the movement of the tee there should be a planting strategy to screen the property boundary as indicated on the CIP. This corridor should be heavily planted to reduce as many balls as possible from crossing over the boundary line.
- c) The right side of the fairway needs to be widened considerably to entice the golfers to aim much further from the boundary. For this to occur there should be some tree removal and possibly the re-contouring of the drainage swales. As a result the fairway edge on the left side can be mown further to the right, effectively moving the fairway to the right.

These initial changes to the golf hole should in itself make significant improvement to the safety problem.

### Phase 2.

As a further deterrent to golfers there could be bunkering added to the left side. These bunkers should have fairly steep faces at the front which will ensure a very difficult recovery shot remains. These bunkers should only be added if a few stray golf balls continue to be hit past the boundary line.

### Phase 3.

The putting green could be re-built and angled from right to left. This will make the approach shot far easier from the right side. Greenside bunkers should guard the left side, which in turn will prevent many balls from running down the steep embankment. The right side of the green could be steep grassy swales.

As indicated on the CIP, the “aim line” will be significantly angled to the right which should dramatically reduce the safety problem. The safety situation should be monitored frequently and ongoing advice sought from the golf course architect.

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## **Practice and Short Course**

In an effort to attract more customers to the game and to assist clubs revenue I believe an excellent Short Course could be established in the southern section of golf holes.

There are a variety of loops that could be played over a short period of time that could prove to be very attractive for late afternoon games and possibly even floodlit.

Holes 10, 8, Spare hole from 9<sup>th</sup> tee and spare hole to 9<sup>th</sup> green would act as an interesting four hole loop that could be played in about an hour. An alternate loop of four holes could play up the practice fairway with two small new greens and then onto the two temporary holes along the 9<sup>th</sup>.

There may also been an opportunity to add in a shot from the 11<sup>th</sup> tees to the 7<sup>th</sup> green and create a variety of four, five or possibly six hole loops. I think the idea of floodlighting this section of golf holes would really create a neat group of holes played at night and an excellent opportunity to utilise with the functionality of the clubhouse eating and drinking services.

I believe as a “revenue raiser” for the club this idea has tremendous merit and one that should be thoroughly persued and experimented.

## **Summary**

The Murwillumbah Golf Course is a fine layout with many very good golf holes. I trust you find the aforementioned comments and recommendations in the best interest for its long term future. I believe with the alterations mentioned, in particular some of the tree clearing, the course can reach its full potential that the site will allow.

The possibilities, in particular, of holes 9, 16 and 17 are extremely exciting and they will be prove to be outstanding golf holes if completed.

I am pleased to come on board as the Club's Golf Course Designer and look forward with much anticipation in seeing these concepts transform to a great product on the ground. I look forward to a long and fruitful association with the Murwillumbah Golf Club and are open to discuss any of these issues if required.

# APPENDIX "A" (Golf Course Master Plan)

## MURWILLUMBAH GOLF CLUB COURSE IMPROVEMENT PLAN



### LEGEND

- Remove Bunker
- Proposed Bunker
- Proposed Green
- Retained Green
- Mound/Re-shaping
- Additional Planting
- Sharp Batter/Slope
- Proposed Pond
- Fairway Edge
- Retained Vegetation
- Tree Removal/Trimming



Course Improvement Plan Notes:  
 - This plan is to be read in conjunction with the written "Design Report" to assist the explanation and reasoning behind the suggested conceptual changes to the golf course.  
 - The structural mowing of the golf holes have fundamentally been left unchanged.  
 - This plan is anticipated to be a long term project of improvements for the golf course with the Owners Committee, in consultation with the Course Architect, determining the timing and scope of works for each phase of work.



**DECEMBER 2012**