

This aerial view showing Latrobe, Green Acres, Kew and Ivanhoe golf clubs in Melbourne shows the vital role golf courses play in acting as wildlife corridors in built up urban areas

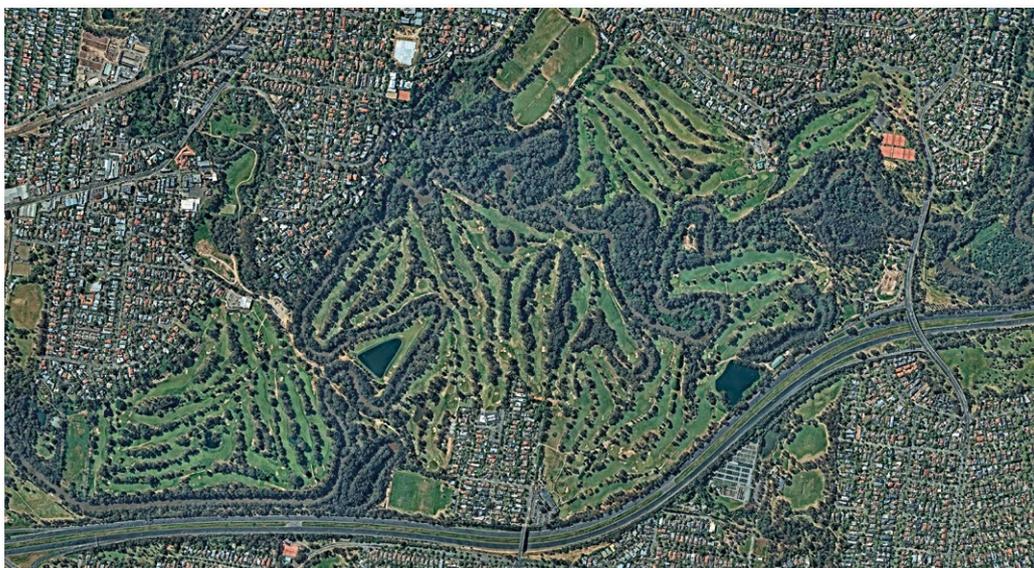


PHOTO: NERMAP

# Making a difference

This edition of ATM sees the start of a regular column dedicated to environmental management issues. In this and future editions, passionate environmental manager Kate Torgersen will look at the many ways golf clubs can enhance their environmental management credentials.

Programmes such as drumMUSTER provide an effective way of disposing of used chemical containers



**E**nvironmental polluters! That's what someone said to me about golf courses when I began my career in the turf industry back in the early 2000s.

While raking a bunker, I was admiring all the native trees, heathland shrubs, wildflowers and many native animals using the course as a home and thought how could people say that golf courses were such a negative impact on the environment. Understandably chemicals can be used on a daily basis, large amounts of water are required to sustain turf and a lot of machinery is employed to prepare turf surfaces, but outside that golf courses have huge advantages that many people overlook.

If managed well, golf courses can provide many benefits such as;

- Providing large green spaces in built up urban areas;
- Native wildlife corridors;
- Reducing contaminants and nutrients in stormwater runoff;
- Protecting remnant vegetation;
- Providing refuge for endangered flora and fauna;
- Storing large amounts of carbon; and
- Promoting physical health and mental well-being.

As an industry these days more people are becoming aware of the importance of environmental management practices and are implementing their own plan. Environmental organisations specialising in golf courses are becoming more prevalent, golf courses are hiring staff to specifically manage native areas, while studies and research is being conducted by major universities and organisations (e.g.: biodiversity on golf courses, carbon storage). In addition, leading industry groups are working

together to assist golf courses and working with stakeholders on promoting environmental management and the importance of adhering to industry best practice.

All this is helping to educate course/general managers, committee members, staff, golfers and most of all it is promoting and showing the general public that golf courses provide a huge contribution to the environment and well-being of everyone.

## A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

Each year golf course managers are expected to present the course to a higher standard on a tighter budget. Many may have deteriorating irrigation systems, rebuilding playing surfaces to keep up with the advancement of the game and upgrading tired old machinery. All of this is often carried out with decreasing staff numbers and increased pressure from committees.

Now add a focus on the environment and sustainability and you may be asking where am I going to get the money to institute such works? The best thing about environmental management is that it can cost as little or as much as you like, but even the smallest of adjustments to your maintenance programmes and you are managing your course in a more environmentally positive way.

Some examples may be to reduce mowing rough in selected areas (you never know what natives may appear as a result), collecting or composting your grass clippings instead of spreading it in rough areas and adding more nutrients (equals more weeds) and adding habitat logs in out-of-play areas instead of mulching or stockpiling adding to costs. These are just a few examples to get you started and something we will explore in more depth in future editions of ATM.

Positive environmental management practices can be implemented right throughout a golf club, from on the course to the clubhouse kitchen. Here are a few examples:

- Maintenance facility – installing water management systems, solar panels;

- On course – preservation and enhancement of native flora and fauna and updating aging irrigation infrastructure to use water more efficiently;
- Clubhouse – waste management, energy efficient lighting;
- Kitchen/bar – source locally, create your own herb/vegetable garden;
- Pro Shop – utilising sustainable suppliers, instituting recycling procedures;
- Tournaments – recycling, protecting out of play areas with designated paths; and
- Golf course architects – environmental awareness during the design phase, sustainable water design

So here's a task to get you started. We all recycle at home so why not at work? All clubs will likely have a recycling bin (it may be at your maintenance facility or clubhouse). While emptying all the bins on course, separate the recyclables and the waste into separate bins.

Managers these days are preparing more and more reports. Why not set up a paper recycling station in your office? Some local councils provide paper recycling services for local businesses. If this is not available in your area, there are numerous commercial recyclers in Australia that provide a collection service.

Clubs use chemicals on a regular basis, so what to do with the empty containers? drumMUSTER is the national programme that has been set up for the collection and recycling of cleaned, eligible chemical containers. In addition to this programme a number of commercial operators may accept



chemical drums for recycling – check with your local operator for this.

We all know the key asset of any golf club is the course. To ensure this asset is protected for future generations as an industry, we need to manage them in an environmentally and sustainable manner. I hope through this regular column and the ongoing assistance now available through the industry we can help you ensure your club's future.

**Editor's Note:** With environmental management an ever-present issue, ATM encourages readers to send in any questions they may have for Kate or any topics that they would like her to address in this column. Send your questions/ideas to ATM editor Brett Robinson via email [brett@agcsa.com.au](mailto:brett@agcsa.com.au) or call (03) 9548 8600. 🙏

Mown areas transformed to native vegetation areas not only enhance the aesthetics of a golf course but help to reduce maintenance inputs

“The best thing about environmental management is that it can cost as little or as much as you would like – the smallest of adjustments to your maintenance programmes and you are managing your course in a more positive way to the environment.”

– KATE TORGERSEN

## INTRODUCING KATE TORGERSEN

ATM is delighted to introduce **Kate Torgersen** who from this edition onwards will be providing a regular column for readers. The hope of this column is to build a greater awareness and appreciation of golf course environmental management issues and provide advice on some of the best ways to institute projects around your course.

Kate started her career as an apprentice greenkeeper at Peninsula Country Golf Club in southeast Melbourne and this was where her passion for golf and the environment would begin. Over the course of the next 14 years, Kate has enjoyed stints working at some of the top golf courses in Victoria and is currently head horticulturist at Commonwealth Golf Club.

Kate also travelled to Scotland in 2012 to discuss golf and the environment with the likes of The R&A, the Golf Environment Organisation and the Scottish Golf Environment Group. From these meetings she decided to come back and start a

business (Environmental Golf Solutions) to help golf courses with environmental management and to spread the word, not only within the industry but also the wider community, about how valuable golf courses are to the community and the environment.



To broaden her knowledge, Kate decided she needed to explore other avenues and began a job as a natural reserves ranger with a local council, gaining valuable bushland management skills and techniques that she now uses on golf courses to manage their out of play areas. She then decided to go back to school to study conservation land management.

Not long after starting her studies, she found herself back on familiar ground working at a golf club, implementing their vegetation management plan. This was a new and exciting chapter for Kate as it wasn't just implementing the plan on the ground, but also selling the concept to the club's committee and members – a real challenge as any superintendent will attest.

Through all these experiences both on and off the course, Kate now finds herself assisting golf course architects, creating and implementing environmental management plans for golf clubs and assisting them through the process.