

In the Region – Bright Country GC

Superintendent: Cameron Wickes
VGCSA member since 2002



Turf career

1988 – 1993: Turf Management Apprenticeship,
Victoria Golf Club

1993-1998: 2 IC, Medway Golf Club

1998- Present: Superintendent, Bright Country
Golf Club

2010: Completed Cert IV, Sports Turf
Management

Bright Country GC Staff structure

2 x full time staff

1 x part time - during spring & autumn

Course Overview / Characteristics

The Club acquired land and established the course in the late 1980s. The land was originally a pine plantation on the banks of the Ovens River, surrounded by hills and mountains that lead to Victoria's snowfields.

The course was designed by Tony Cashmore. It is gently undulating and measures 6100 Par 72.



It is incredibly picturesque being surrounded by mountains and a river running beside it. It is populated with hundreds of Oregon and Californian Redwood trees. Visitors are always commenting on what a unique and beautiful course it is.

It has water in play on several holes and is an excellent test for all levels of golfer.



Turf Management/Operations

With limited staff and budget, we focus on presentation for the most part. We have a fair bit of green fee traffic at times during the year so we try to cater to that, to maximise the Club's income.

Major projects take time and planning and prioritising them is important. Probably the biggest changes to the way we operate in my time as Super, is learning that what we learnt at Trade school isn't always practical and you have to improvise sometimes. Also, learning what the course needs over a long time helps you better manage your time and therefore your stress levels.



Time has also taught me that sometimes it's just time to go home and it's not possible to make every golfer happy because, after all, very few of them take responsibility for their own lack of ability and greenkeepers are obvious targets.

What course improvements/alterations have you been involved in during your time at the Club?

My first ten years were spent cutting and picking up hundreds, possibly thousands of Silver wattles that had self-sown after fire had burnt through prior to course establishment. I just happened to arrive when they were at the end of their life span.

We also converted all our fairways to local native couch and flattened a lot of lumpy tees and established them with Santa Ana.

The last ten years, we have done a few more layout changes by opening the course up to the river where possible and essentially completing Tony Cashmore's vision for a quality layout that had been limited by budget during establishment.

What is the one piece of machinery you could not live without?

Spray unit ('cos Round-up at correct rates can save you a lot of mowing and money)

What are the pros and cons about being a Superintendent at your course?

Pros:

1. I have always had a great committee that give me a budget and just let me maintain the golf course. They don't tell me how to do my job. They just essentially let us do our job as we see fit and support us where possible. Too many greenkeepers seem to leave the profession because the opposite of this is more common.
2. A beautiful environment to work in.

Cons:

1. Floods!
2. Money - Not enough in the budget, not enough in the pay packet.
3. Long hours in spring and summer.



Describe your management style

I'm the Superintendent but the staff are my workmates, not my employees. I consult with them on all aspects of the job and value their opinions. Staff who aren't happy don't do their job well, so I prioritise their happiness and that seems to work well.

Covid hasn't affected us too much. Whilst there have been less green fees, more members have been playing so we have been fortunate. Mind you, a few months without golfers is incredibly appealing.

If you could change one thing about your job what would it be and why?

More staff! I find sitting on mowers incredibly frustrating as I'm always looking at other things I would like to be doing to improve the course.

Most pleasing/rewarding moment during your time as a Superintendent

I guess getting the Superintendent's job at Bright. It's allowed me to raise a family in a beautiful place. It's also allowed me to pursue a

passion for golf course management that I derive great satisfaction from.

The course was very raw when I arrived and had several maintenance issues to chip away at and it's been very rewarding to see it develop into what is a very good country golf course.

Favourite spot on the course

7th hole. We removed 120 very large pine trees and rerouted the fairway to incorporate the river into the hole. We established the riverbank with native grasses and ultimately turned the worst hole on the course into the best - if I do say so myself (Ha Ha).

