

FRIENDS OF GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS INC

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AUGUST 2014

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Preamble

As incoming President at last year's AGM, I saw the position as one of a facilitator *servi*ng our association while leading us towards a bright future, in accordance with our Purposes and Rules. This would be achieved: by managing the association business well; by supporting the Gardens; by maintaining a happy atmosphere and supporting our volunteers; and by providing our members with fruitful and meaningful events.

Next year I hope we will continue all of this AND: raise membership numbers; support a number of projects in the Gardens and Eastern Park; build the Gift Fund in partnership with the City; engage the wishes of the membership.

The year 2013—2014 has been a big one. Your Committee and volunteers in all fields have worked hard and co-operatively with real success.

Management

- The Purposes and Rules (effectively our new Constitution), were submitted to Consumer Affairs Victoria in a timely manner following our last AGM, and were accepted without adjustment.
- We have a new and supportive Patron in Dr Philip Moors, recently retired Director and Chief Executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne and Cranbourne.
- Our Treasurer and administrative staff have husbanded our funds with meticulous care, keeping all records up to date, while seeking and taking regular advice from our accountants where necessary.
- Our Gift Fund is growing gradually, as shown in the Treasurer's Report. Resolutions considered at this meeting will affect our ability to grow the Fund by broadening its scope.
- Our Secretary has managed our business correspondence expertly.
- The FGBG Members' Induction Handbook (always a work in progress) was written and signed off by Committee and volunteers, introducing new members to our association and ensuring we are compliant with City of Greater Geelong volunteer requirements, while reducing the need for repetitive and complex OH&S paperwork.
- A new website has been built and is continually updated and expanding, with excellent material of interest to members and the public, and substantially enlivening our image.
- We have a new Facebook page, and our posts are regularly updated, demonstrating our work and our events, while reaching out to a different public and potential new membership group.
- Four seasonal issues of *Jubaea* have been produced and distributed on time to the membership, and uploaded onto our website. We are currently experimenting with colour illustrations for the e-version, and are grateful to members who receive the newsletter in this form, saving our association hundreds of dollars in postage.
- Three seasonal Plant Sales were run by our Growing Friends, stocked by plants they had propagated from the Gardens and kept alive through watering rosters during the year. These sales are now a major source of income, and we are very grateful for the Growers' constant work and commitment.
- The Botanical Art School continues to thrive with excellent tutors taking classes at different levels of expertise several times a week during term, admitting new students to the delights of scientific representation, artful composition and expression. The Wagtails also continue gathering weekly.
- Representatives of your executive have met with the City and Councillors to discuss partnership development, and the business of a public appeal project to advance the Gardens and Eastern Park.

Supporting the Gardens

- The Friends have contributed a further ten thousand dollars to support the Geelong Botanic Gardens' Education program. Our support amounts to twenty thousand dollars over the last two years, in accordance with our MOU with the City. Volunteers also assist with research and teaching materials production.
- The Friends have regularly requested projects it might support in the Gardens, and have pledged twelve thousand seven hundred dollars for maintenance works to the Raddenberry and Cabmen's Shelters, and the First Customs House. This work is to be undertaken in the very near future.
- The Friends have won for the Gardens, a City of Greater Geelong Community Concepts budget grant of thirty-five thousand dollars for new interpretative signage and plant labelling.
- The long process of documentation gathering for an application to Heritage Victoria for a grant to restore the Ladies Kiosk in Eastern Park (in the vicinity of the new catchment dam) has been completed, and the application submitted. The Friends have supported this project, paying for historical, soil and structural surveys, and the architect's and engineer's drawings. The City has also committed a smaller amount to assist the application. We hope for a positive response from Heritage Victoria before the end of the year.
- The Heritage Rose Gardeners have brought their expertise to bear and worked hard again this year in the Rose Garden, with great success.
- Our Perennial Border Gardeners have done excellent work, especially in reconstruction following the unavoidable excavation of this special place during irrigation installation.

Volunteer support

- The Members' Induction Handbook and OH&S support for volunteers mentioned above were undertaken to serve our volunteers. The Committee took this work very seriously and are encouraged by our members' participation.
- The Committee supported our Growing Friends' request for Nursery tables, to lift plant stock off the ground, saving the backs of growers and the purchasing public alike. They have been a huge success, and the plants have thrived.
- While we hope our volunteers are well aware of the high regard in which we hold each other, and the work we do here, it was felt that these should be celebrated. To this end the Committee catered for a number of well-attended morning tea/luncheon parties to thank the Gardeners, Growers and Librarians, and plan to treat the Guides as soon as we all find a suitable date. These are occasions for recognition of service, and for fun.

Events

Each event is a project requiring selections to be nominated and agreed, and bookings, marketing, financial and logistic management undertaken by your Committee.

- After months of documentation, February was again dedicated to Music in the Gardens. Extremely hot weather on Music Sundays this year deterred all but the keenest followers, so that, while our costs were covered, profit was small. It costs the Friends between sixteen and twenty thousand dollars for permits, staging, bands, security and safety officers, and one thousand volunteer hours to present the four concerts each year. Should two concerts be lost to storms, or attendance low, the Friends make a loss. It is sad, therefore, that after sixteen years of Music and extraordinary efforts to continue, your Committee has relinquished the event in its present form, and is seeking other means to provide Music in the Gardens.
- Our speakers' program was reinstated in March, after a long break. These evenings were planned to alternate with other monthly events. In March, Linsey Poore spoke on the 'Gardens of Paris'. Steven Wells presented the 'Therapeutic Garden' in May, and in July 'The Gardenist', Michael McCoy, introduced his approach to garden design. Dr Anne Vale will talk about 'Gardening with Native Plants' in September.
- In April a bus trip for members was taken to Mount Macedon, visiting Stephen Ryan's Dicksonia Rare Plants Nursery and his home garden, followed by a leisurely exploration of the garden estate, Duneira.

- Winter High Tea was a successful, profitable and elegant event in June, with Dr Philip Moors making the presentation on the roles of seed banks and botanic gardens in securing plant species for an uncertain future as the world warms.
- Our Botanical Art School Exhibition was held at Wintergarden in October, attracting admiring visitors from Geelong and other Victorian regions, due to our artists' reputations for excellence.
- In November our self-drive garden tour, Through the Garden Gate, was enjoyed by members, their friends, and some visitors from Melbourne. It finished with a lavish afternoon tea at *Arundel*. Another event is being planned for later this year.
- After being invited to apply to host the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AFBG) biennial conference in 2016, your Committee has selected a theme, commenced marketing, booked appropriate venues, garnered the City's support, and presented to the AFBG conference, held on the Gold Coast this year. Five Committee members attended the AFBG conference early in August.

I want to give special thanks to all Committee of Management colleagues—the CoMrades—and our valiant administration staff for their enthusiasm, their personal support and their hard work throughout the year. None of this happens by chance or osmosis. We look forward to another busy and prosperous year ahead full of fun and achievement.

Dr Judith Trimble
President
AGM August 2014