

34th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
20 October 2022
Australian National Botanic Gardens Theatre
DRAFT MINUTES

1. Opening and Welcome

The meeting was opened by the President, Neville Page at 3.00 pm with an Acknowledgement to Country. Neville confirmed that a quorum had been reached with over 60 members of the Friends present. Guests included Judy West, Executive Director of the ANBG.

2. Apologies

Neville read out the list of apologies at Attachment A and the agenda was confirmed.

3. Acceptance of Minutes of 33rd AGM held on 29 October 2021

No amendments were made to the draft minutes prepared by the Secretary and placed on the Friends website prior to the meeting (*link*). Maureen Connolly moved the following resolution that was seconded by David More:

RESOLUTION: that the Minutes of the 33rd AGM of the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Inc held on 29 October 2021 be accepted as presented on the website. CARRIED

0. President's Report

The President's Report for 2021-2022 was placed on the Friends website before the meeting for Friends to view (*link*). Neville Page indicated that a few copies were also available at the front desk. He said he would not read his full 6-page report but would limit it to some short comments:

- Neville said he was proud of the Friends and what they had achieved over the past year. Member numbers had not declined and Friends had raised \$344,680 for the ANBG to fund some worthwhile projects.
- There had been continued enthusiastic participation in Friends Groups as well as ANBG volunteer programs.

Neville concluded by repeating his heartfelt thanks to Friends and the ANBG for their ongoing support. He asked if anyone had any questions but there were none.

Christianna Cobbold then moved the following resolution that was seconded by Alan Henderson:

RESOLUTION: that the President's Report for 2021-2022 be accepted.
CARRIED

5. Treasurer's Report

Neville Page indicated that the Treasurer, Anne Holmes, was not able to attend and that he would present a short summary of her full report which was placed on the website prior to the meeting (*link*). The Treasurer's Report for the financial year ended 30 June 2022 includes the audited financial statements for the Friends and the Friends' Public Fund.

Before reading Anne Holmes' report, Neville indicated that Anne had taken over the Treasurer's position following the departure of Helen Elliot and had done a sterling job. The key points he highlighted from Anne's summary were:

- Despite COVID restrictions on activities, the Friends' groups were still able to raise revenue by approximately \$177,000, allowing Friends to donate \$344,680 to the ANBG for artworks and the following projects:
 - Conservation Activities Video
 - East Core Precinct redevelopment including the Friends Lawn
 - Metallic Bee Signage
 - Foyer Design of Visitor Exhibition Centre, and
 - Final payment towards the Banksia Garden Interpretation.
- The revenue from Friends membership fees continued to rise and there was a marked increase in people taking out longer-term memberships.
- A special thank you to all the members who renewed their membership and to all the people who became new members.
- Donations to the Public Fund increased by 12.5%.
- The Friends and Public Fund have project commitments this coming financial year to 30 June 2023 of almost \$124,500, for both projects in progress and projects in their final stages of development.

Anne thanked all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to generate income and to profile the dedicated work of the Friends. Lesley Harland then moved the following resolution that was seconded by Lesley Jackman:

RESOLUTION: that the Treasurer's Report, including the financial statements for the Friends and the Friends' Public Fund, for the financial year ended 30 June 2022 be accepted.
CARRIED

0. Report by Executive Director of ANBG, Dr Judy West

Judy outlined the major events over the past year:

a. Management Plan: Tabled in Parliament in July 2022 after *Have your Say* period in February and public comment on a draft Plan in November 2021. Disallowance period expires at the end of October 2022.

b. Visitation: Visitors in 21/22 totalled 387,320, down 30% from 505,273 in 20/21. Non-lockdown months were, however, at or above long-term average. Students from 81 schools totalled 4505 but numbers are recovering in 2022.

c. Master Plan Implementation: Judy showed an artist's impressions of the proposed Ian Potter Conservatory now under construction pointing out that it would rise another 10m above the height now seen from the viewing platform. The ANBG secured \$2m from the Ian Potter Foundation for the Conservatory that could attract a further 100,000 visitors a year. The Visitor Experience Team is developing tours for the building that will be lit at night.

The Friends Lawn is part of the café precinct, complemented by sweeping paths, outdoor seating and landscaped gardens, expanding the view of the extended café deck. Judy recognised the significant financial contribution to this project that is part of Stage 1 of the Master Plan.

The design of the National Seed Bank and Horticulture Centre has been completed and the process of assessing tenders for a builder has started with construction to start in 2023. Part of the Northern Precinct it will see the closure of other depots and bring services closer the nursery.

The current Seed Bank is full and this new Centre will attract more people to come and train. Parks held an online auction for specialised equipment to fit out the building including temperature-grading plates that will germinate seeds at the correct temperature.

d. Living Collections and Gardens Developments: These include new and repaved paths, gardens and landscapes as well as public infrastructure such as the shelter in Section 37 and new seating at the Friends corner and Crosbie Morrison amphitheatre. Major repairs and maintenance include vehicles, repainting, reroofing and CCTV cameras as well as refurbishment of the Dickson Room.

Penny Wong recently visited with Laotian parliamentarians and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade were delighted with the outcome. The ANBG is hosting Laotian students.

e. Nursery and Conservation: Judy spoke firstly about the recent 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress held in Melbourne and comments they received from some 45 countries that attended. The ANBG is seen as outstanding in terms of its seed science and horticulture conservation.

She mentioned a new tropical greenhouse volunteer program, the *squishy vols*, a conservatory horticulture plan for the tropical plant collection and a new Living Collections and Conservation Strategy that is underway.

The *Survive and Thrive* bushfire recovery project continues along with collaborative conservation projects that includes new propagation techniques and ex situ plant collections.

f. National Seed Bank: Judy described how the Horticulture and Seed Bank teams have been working together on research projects with 11 externally funded projects active. There have been collecting trips far and wide from Namadgi to Kakadu. There are 238 new seed collections of 100 taxa, including 11 taxa new to the Seed Bank and 8 never collected for ex situ conservation. By the end of the financial year, the Seed Bank expects a total of 8803 banked accessions

Alex McLachlan has been awarded a scholarship funded by Friends to continue his work on alpine eyebrights and what effect climate change might have on their regeneration. This ongoing scholarship program will attract students to the ANBG.

Staff delivered 2 presentations at the Seed Ecology VII conference in Spain and co-authored a further 3 presentations as well as chairing sessions.

This past year, the Australian National Herbarium began to digitise its vascular plant collection, completing 40% with the rest to follow next year. Following this, other plant and insect collections will follow.

g. Visitor Experience: The MEGAfauna event was key this year, bringing in over 47,400 visitors – a 25% increase over MEGAfauna 2021. A major attraction was the MEGAfauna afterDARK.

Ten exhibitions were held in the Visitors Centre. During March's *Enlighten* festival in March a nocturnal evening was held, followed by the Canberra International Music Festival in April. There was a children's art competition and outdoor exhibition in May to celebrate Canberra Tree Week. Also in May, the Plant Lovers Challenge Trail celebrated Botanic Gardens Day where 12 staff shared their favourite plant stories on video as well as on the physical trail.

Judy then demonstrated the first 3 modules of the new Plant Science Learning Hub for teachers and students that will eventually be available around Australia. It includes tasks and games to enhance the educational experience and inquiry. So far 3 other countries have expressed interest.

Judy concluded her talk by thanking volunteers from the 10 programs operating in the Gardens. Volunteer assistance helps integrate ANBG activities into the community. A review is underway with *Volunteering ACT* to benchmark these programs and ensure they meet current standards.

In the question and answer session after Judy's talk, David Couatts asked whether the learning hub could be included in the new design for the Visitors Centre foyer. Judy indicated that the new design was intended to demonstrate back of house activities but that the learning hub could be linked to the video wall in the Administration Building foyer, opposite.

David then asked about Indigenous participation in the Gardens to which Judy highlighted the projects currently underway with Indigenous groups both in the Gardens and other National Parks.

7. Constitutional changes

Lynden Ayliffe introduced the revised Constitution (*link*) which had been widely promoted through the Friends website, E-newsletters and Fronds. She indicated that the Friends Constitution was last reviewed in 2015. A Committee comprising Wanda Filsell, David More, Jann Ollerenshaw and herself undertook the review and found that although the Constitution had stood the test of time, it required a few updates to bring it into line with current legislation and best practice guidelines.

These changes were first covered in a discussion paper on 10 February 2022 with comments sought by 30 April 2022. All the comments received were supportive and the Committee then fine-tuned the changes which were later approved by Council and published on the Friends website.

The major change to the Constitution was the provision of proxy voting. Other changes included:

- clarifying provisions relating to the Public Fund in accordance with the Guidelines for the Register of Environmental Organisations that allow tax deductible donations to the Fund.
- removing out-dated provisions such as the use of a Common Seal
- clarifying a few definitions and procedures, and
- making the Constitution gender neutral.

Before proceeding to a vote, Lynden asked whether there were any comments or questions. As there were no questions, Lynden then moved the following resolution that was seconded by Lesley Jackman:

**That the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Inc adopt by Special Resolution the revised draft Constitution dated July 2022.
CARRIED**

Lynden then thanked Friends for supporting the changes to the Constitution and particularly the team that worked on them.

8. Election of Office Bearers and Council members

The President handed over the chair of the meeting to Judy West who had agreed to act as the Returning Officer. Judy West declared that there were 7 vacancies on Council to be filled. Appointments would be for 2 years and information on each of the candidates was posted on the website prior to the meeting (*link*).

Dealing with the three Executive positions first, Judy indicated that the nominations were:

- President: Neville Page
- Treasurer: Anne Holmes
- Secretary: none.

As there was one nomination each for President and Treasurer, Judy indicated that they were duly elected. She then called for nominations from the floor for the position of Secretary. As none was forthcoming, Judy indicated that Council would need to fill the vacancy later as a casual vacancy.

Turning to the four vacant positions of Ordinary Council Members, Judy said that the nominations were:

- Alan Henderson
- Christianna Cobbold, and
- Masumi Robertson.

Judy indicated that one position remains vacant as Louise Maher had been a late withdrawal. Given this, the three candidates were automatically elected and once again the meeting was asked if anyone wanted to put their name forward. With no candidates, Council would need to appoint someone later to fill the casual vacancy until the next AGM.

Judy West then handed back to Neville Page to chair the meeting. Neville thanked Judy West and iterated that should anyone be interested in the vacancies, to please contact him.

9. Appointment of Auditor for 2022-23

In the Treasurer's absence, Neville Page said that Council was extremely satisfied with the work undertaken by Jeff Brewer of MGI/Joyce Dickson over the past 6 years. He indicated that they were extremely competent and their fees reasonable. With a new Treasurer it was felt that it would be important to maintain the firm to ensure minimal disruption. While their appointment was a matter for Council after the AGM, he asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There were none.

10. Award of Life Membership

Three Life Memberships were awarded to Helen Elliot, Lesley Jackman and husband and wife team, David and Jill More for their distinguished service to the Friends of the ANBG. The President congratulated the candidates and presented them with framed certificates and a book voucher for the ANBG bookshop. Their contribution is summarized at Attachment B.



L to R: Helen Elliot, David More, Lesley Jackman

Unfortunately Jill More was not able to attend but David accepted her certificate and voucher

11. Any other business

After canvassing the attendees, there was no other business raised and Neville Page closed the meeting at 4.40pm after announcing Judy West's retirement from her role as Executive Director of the ANBG. He said he was proud of the collaboration between the Friends and ANBG particularly the wonderful support given by Judy to Council and all of the Friends' groups. Neville then presented Judy with a gift in appreciation of her efforts.

Judy responded by saying that she had had a fantastic time working at the Gardens over the past 12 years. She said Friends shared her real passion for the Gardens and together the ANBG and Friends had achieved so much. Although it would be a wrench to leave, National Parks was ramping up the *National Parks Conservation Trust* with which she would continue to be involved.

Judy indicated that after her departure in 10 days time, Anthony Whalen and Peter Byron would be acting in her position until a permanent replacement was found.

Attachment A - Apologies

Amanda Gear
Marg Nicholls
Anne Campbell
Lesley King
Jennifer Warren
Beryl Bettell
Andrew Bettell
Pauline Jennings
Simon Smalley
Lynne Curran
Trish Munro
Linda Beveridge
Max Bourke
Margie Bourke
Anna Howe
Joan Adler
Stephen McMillan
Barbara Scott
Les Fielke
Karin Schulz
Beth Tyerman
Anne Holmes
Anna Robinson
Norelle Brown
Janet Hadley Williams
Margaret Webber

Attachment B - Life Members

Nominees must meet the following *criteria*:

- be a member of the Friends for at least ten (10) years, except in exceptional circumstances.
- have contributed outstanding service to the Friends in at least two of the following:
 - the Council, sub-committees or special interest groups,
 - the management and administration of the Friends,
 - partnership arrangements with the ANBG, e.g. Guides Program, social events
 - the increased community awareness of the scientific, educational, conservation aesthetic and recreational function of the Gardens, and
 - any activities that have advanced the 'Purposes and Objectives' of the Friends.

Helen Elliot

1. Number of Years a Friend: **10**
2. Outstanding Service contributed:
 - Became Treasurer of Friends Council on 29 January 2016; re-elected 2018, 2020, resigned 31 March 2022.
 - Member of Public Fund Management Committee concurrent with Friends Treasurer position.

Helen was a tireless and meticulous Treasurer who provided exceptional support to the Friends' various groups and their activities. She was always generous with her time, not only ensuring that financial matters proceeded smoothly but also providing hands-on support in any capacity that would help make the functions a success.

Lesley Jackman

1. Number of Years a Friend: **18**
2. Outstanding Service contributed:
 - Joined Friends Council February 2011
 - Talks Convenor 2012-2016
 - Elected Vice-President October 2013
 - Elected President 21 October 2014
 - Re-elected 19 October 2016; term expired 27 September 2018.
 - Coordinated preparation for fundraising campaign 2019 (stalled after the hailstorm, bushfire and COVID-19 interruptions to ANBG and Friends activities).

Lesley has been an active and effective contributor to the Friends. As President she brought a strategic view, thorough appreciation of situations, and diplomatic approach to issues; at a time when the relationship between the ANBG and the Friends deepened to encompass substantial projects such as the Treehouse.

David and Jill More

1. Number of Years a Friend: **14**
2. Outstanding Service contributed:

David

- Elected to Friends Council on 19 October 2016
- Re-elected to Friends Council on 27 September 2018
- Resigned from Council on 29 May 2022
- Provided significant IT and administrative support to Friends website, Guidesweb, Friends Public Fund, eBulletin, Google workspace, Membership database, Botanic Art and Photographic exhibitions.

Jill

- Very active Volunteer Guide and Guidesweb team
- Member of Guidesweb team
- Flora Explorer driver
- Regularly circulated details of relevant published materials and conferences
- Has written many articles for the Friends Website
- Member of Nature Journaling Group