

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

On behalf of the Friends Council, I'm very pleased to present this Annual Report, following a very busy year as we emerged from the serious effects of the COVID pandemic.

Unfortunately our hard-working Treasurer, Anne Holmes had to step down from Council with effect from 31 August 2023. The role of Treasurer is very demanding and Anne fulfilled that role with exceptional dedication, for which I thank her and express our sincere appreciation. Effective from 1 September 2023, long-standing Friends Member, Dr Rod King, stepped up to assume the role.

MEMBERSHIP

The Friends membership year runs from 1 November to 31 October the following year, unlike the financial year which runs from 1 July to 30 June. At the end of September 2023 we had 2,118 memberships comprising 2,913 individual members (households and groups comprising more than one person).

The reduction in the number of members compared with an increase in memberships over the period was due to renewing and new Household Memberships now only being for 2 people whereas previously there could be up to 4 people on a Household Membership.

PROJECTS

Several projects have been funded in 2022-23 and significant amounts are committed for future projects. The projects funded this year were \$4,000 for honours thesis research on the impact of climate change on Alpine Euphrasia, and \$27,500 for iconic display plants for the gardens surrounding the Ian Potter National Conservatory.

Two additional commitments were agreed this year: ongoing research scholarships and the installation of a permanent exhibition in the foyer of the Visitors Centre. The Friends ANBG Scholarship program will provide three scholarships to the value of \$7,500 annually. These are funded by the Friends, including the Public Fund and with the third scholarship being part of the Don Beer Memorial Scholarship. More detail is provided in the August edition of Fronds. Several inquiries have been received since applications opened on 1 August.

Friends have committed \$82,000, part from the Public Fund, toward the exhibition in the foyer of the Visitors Centre. Installation is scheduled to commence in November. The exhibition will showcase the ANBG's behind-the-scenes science and conservation activities. This commitment is in addition to \$15,000 contributed in 2021-22 toward the initial design of the exhibition.

There are also longstanding commitments of \$107,500 for projects to be funded in 2023-24, including for online education resources (\$50,000), fit out for the seed bank (\$20,000), rejuvenation of How Do I Survive the Red Centre (\$10,000) and further iconic large plants (\$27,500).

GROWING FRIENDS

The Growing Friends had another successful year in 2022-23. The number of active members stayed roughly the same as the previous year, with a number of new members making up for some members leaving the group.

The Group had two successful sales, one in Spring 2022 and the other in Autumn 2023.

These raised over \$15,000 for Friends.

The Group's success is due largely to the help and support of many different areas of the Garden. In particular, the Group could not function without the Crosbie Morrison Building and Banksia Centre being made available for our monthly meetings; the invaluable support of the plant records area in approving plants for propagation; horticultural staff in assisting members each month in the collection of cuttings; the nursery staff in providing high quality potting mixture and also offering invaluable advice on how we can improve our activities; and, the rangers who do everything from opening buildings for our meetings, to arranging for help when problems arise in our igloo and shade house, to assisting with setting up for our sales.

Whilst the backbone of the sales' successes will remain having well known plants, such as Grevilleas, Callistemons, Banksias and Correas available for sale, the group is also trying to diversify, to cater for native plant enthusiasts. In particular, the Group is trying to make available plants which it has not propagated before, or which it has rarely propagated.

This means that the Group is looking to often have plants for sale which are not readily available through normal commercial outlets. The Group is also hoping to get into grafting, although it may need to get additional facilities before this is feasible.

BOTANIC ART GROUP

Monthly meetings of the Botanic Art Group were held on a regular basis and were well attended by a growing number. The Group also organized a number of courses for beginners.

The 16th annual art exhibition ran from 8 April to 7 May 2023, with the title "High Country Natives". The Friends purchased two paintings for a total of \$500 which were donated to the Gardens, for addition to their collection. The works chosen were "*Hakea laurina*" by Jacqui Gillilands, and "*Acacia Leprosa 'Scarlet Blaze'*" by Annette Dahler. The Group is grateful to the horticulturalists who provided specimens from the Gardens as art subjects.

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

This year has been a year of strong growth for the Photographic Group (PG). Numerically, the Group gained around 15 new members.

The Group held its 9th photographic exhibition - titled "Illuminate" from 24 November to 11 December 2022. The title has two meanings, referring to both physical light and intellectual or spiritual enlightenment.

The exhibition comprised fifty-eight framed images from 21 exhibitors, cards, unframed prints, calendars, bags, earrings, and bookmarks for sale. While 2022 was a difficult time to hold an exhibition, it nevertheless was financially successful with \$1,742.66 raised for the Friends of the ANBG.

A number of awards were made. The Friends of the ANBG Councils' Choice was *Present and Future* by Steven Playford, the Rangers' Choice was *Scribbly Gum Details* by Pam Rooney and the Peoples' Choice was *Tawny Frogmouths* by Ben Harvey.

Until this year the ANBG Gardens Calendar was a joint effort of the Botanical Bookshop and the PG (who supplied the photos). In 2022 the bookshop discontinued production due to the time and effort required. The PG stepped up and took over the entire production and printing process. The Botanical Bookshop paid for printing and contributed an agreed amount to the Friends for the supply of photographs and organising the project.

This year has also been a big year for collaboration with the Gardens and other nature conservation groups. The Group has been able to respond to a number of requests for images by the Gardens and its allies, including a request from Questacon for photos of pollinators from around the Gardens to use as examples for their recent 'Build a Pollinator' activity. Earlier in the year PG members supplied photos to Birdlife Australia's "Birds on Farms" project to provide them local photos of a range of woodland birds. Lastly, the PG has run a monthly program of talks about photography or the plants or animals we encounter. These have included Peter Abbott - Native Bees, Dr Margot Oorebeek - Birds on Farms project, Ben Kopilow - Post-production - Exercising restraint & taste in photo editing and Ben Harvey gave us a "Ranger's perspective" on the Gardens and photography.

SCHOOLS PHOTO COMPETITION

There was no Schools Photo competition in 2022-23. The team is looking forward to an exhibition in 2024.

THURSDAY TALKS

Thursday Talks took place on 44 of the 45 weeks in the financial year of 2022-23, because the talk scheduled for 22 September was cancelled as it was National Mourning Day for Queen Elizabeth II. The total audience for the year was 1,740 (an increase of 806 compared to the previous financial year that had been affected by COVID restrictions) and almost \$3,000 in donations had been received. The average attendance at talks has increased as people have been gradually more confident about meeting in larger groups.

A booking system, Trybooking, has been in place for all talks. The booking system is managed by the convenor of the Friends ANBG Social Events and Activities Committee, Christianna Cobbold. If a talk is heavily booked, the people who have booked seats have priority.

The team has publicised the talks externally as well as by Friends ANBG, and the ANBG, which has had positive results.

There were several talks that were heavily booked. The program has included scientific research undertaken by ANBG staff and partners, along with other speakers from CSIRO, some research departments at the ANU, and other organisations. The speakers covered a wide range of topics related to botany as well as current and historical environments.

A small sub-group of the volunteer team tested digitally recording the talks, however, changes to the government IT system at ANBG caused problems with successful recording. The ANBG is now planning to have publicly available IT for bookings of the ANBG Theatre. We anticipate that this may enable remote and recorded Thursday Talks in this coming year.

PLANT SCIENCE GROUP

Between 1 July 2022 and 30th June 2023 the Plant Science Group had a talk every month, except December and January. The average attendance at these was 25.

Talks were given by staff and visitors from the ANBG (Nursery and Seed Bank), Australian National Herbarium, Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research, ANU and the Threatened Species Conservancy. Topics covered included ex situ conservation work on a variety of endangered species (ferns, a wattle in NSW, orchids on Norfolk Island, Hibiscus species in Kakadu National Park); work being undertaken at the Herbarium to relocate the spirit collection; an update on the ARC Linkage Project that was supported by funds and volunteer time of the Friends.

FLOWERS FRUIT AND FOLIAGE

Rosalind and Benjamin Walcott continue to provide a guided walk “Flowers Fruit and Foliage” (FFF), in the Gardens every fortnight. Fifteen plants with interesting flowers, fruit or foliage are identified, photographed and documented in a three-fold brochure. Visitors to the Gardens are able to take this brochure home with them to provide information for their own gardens in the future.

NATURE JOURNALING

Nature Journaling is into its third year at the Gardens. The Group has a strong core of regulars who were able to meet throughout Winter. The Group was lucky to have pleasant weather. The Banksia Garden was particularly good with lots in flower.

The Nature Journaling Group is working well, meeting at 10.00am on the first Monday of each month, going on separate ways then meeting up again for show and tell.

SOCIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

The Social Events and Activities committee arranged a number of walks with experts through the Gardens in 2022-23 including Fungi, Cryptogams, Birds, Butterflies and through the Bushland Precinct. They were well attended and greatly enjoyed by Friends.

VISITING OUTREACH

Pat and Warwick Wright are Voluntary Ambassadors of ANBG & Friends.

As self-appointed Ambassadors of the Friends of ANBG Pat and Warwick make themselves available, if anyone needs a speaker. This has been a rather quiet year for talks. From July 2022 to 16 Aug 2023 the Group has spoken to 295 people in 14 groups:

- 5 Woden Community Services Tuesday and Friday Groups.
- 3 Garden Clubs
- 3 Probus Clubs
- 1 Southern Tablelands ANPS
- 1 Birthday Group at ANBG
- 1 Legacy Group

Pat and Warwick enjoy the opportunity to make people aware and appreciate our wonderful native plants, the ANBG and the role of the Friends.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

The Friends have three key means of communicating with Friends members at large. The E-News email goes out once a month, plus ad hoc emails when special announcements are made. We have Fronds which is a truly high quality journal published three times a year.

And we have the Friends website which keeps us informed of all measure of announcements, news and details of activities. A new and updated website is under construction and should be rolled out throughout 2024.

All three of these activities require a great deal of effort from their various teams. We thank the people involved for their dedication and hard work.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Each year the Gardens and the Friends jointly hold a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony which is a formal thank you to those people who give freely of their time to contribute to the

ANBG Volunteer Programme, and to the Friends Special Group activities. A ceremony was held in November 2022 and certificates of appreciation were presented. A similar event has been planned for later this year.

Neville Page, President