



**32nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
15 October 2020
Shine Dome, Australian Academy of Science**

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Opening and Confirmation of Agenda

The meeting was opened by the President, Max Bourke AM, at 3.30 pm. The agenda was confirmed.

Attendance

Present: Thirty nine (39) members of the Friends signed the attendance sheet
Invited: Judy West, Executive Director ANBG; Peter Byron, General Manager ANBG, Megan Menz, Business Development ANBG, and Anthony Whalen, Biodiversity Science, ANBG.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Allum, Dennis Ayliffe, Lynden Ayliffe, Graeme Beveridge, Glenys Bishop, Maggie Bourke, Anne Campbell, Merrie Carling, Judith Daniells, Maurice Hermann, Shirley Kral, Judy Pearce, Neil Porter, Geoffrey John Robertson, Jean Robertson, Ian Sayers OAM ED, Brigitta Wimmer, David Young.

3. Acceptance of Minutes of 31st AGM held on 17 October 2019

No amendments were made to the circulated draft minutes.

RESOLUTION

Moved Linda Beveridge **Seconded** Wendy Antoniak that the Minutes of the 31st AGM of the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Inc held on 17 October 2019 be accepted as circulated (Attachment A).

CARRIED

4. President's Report

The President's Report for 2019-2020 (Attachment B) highlighted the Friends' achievements and activities. Max Bourke introduced his report noting that although he enjoyed his role, hearing loss made it difficult for him to chair meetings, so with considerable sadness he was standing down. He described this year as a most bizarre year for the lives of people, and he personally found it a disappointing year, due to the wonderful menu of events planned for the Friends 30^h Anniversary.

Although it might be expected that the closures due to bushfire smoke, the hail storm and restrictions due to COVID-19 epidemic would reduce the numbers of visitors, in fact the Gardens have been extremely popular with local people in these difficult times.

Max thanked the Executive Director, Dr Judy West, and General Manager, Mr Peter Byron, and the many Gardens' staff for the excellent rapport between the Friends and the Gardens' staff. He also expressed his sincere thanks to the Friends' Executive, Linda Beveridge, Helen Elliot and Lynden Ayliffe for their dedication. He acknowledged the support of the Friends Council including Wendy Antoniak, Alan Henderson, Neville Page, David More, and Peter Heaume as well as regular invited

attendees Barbara Podger, Tricia Morton, Lesley King, David Coutts, and his staunch predecessor, Lesley Jackman.

Max thanked all members and leaders of the Special Interest Groups, who not only raise money for the Friends, but also enrich the lives and understanding of our members and the general community through their work. He particularly acknowledged the *Fronds* and website teams, the Plant Science Group, and the *Flowers, Fruit and Foliage* team, whose leaflet is highly popular with the increased number of new and regular visitors. He also publicly acknowledged on behalf of all Friends the huge amount of work done by the Membership Team, Lesley Harland and Pam Cooke.

Raising and carefully spending funds for the Gardens is essential to our national focus on the understanding of Australia's native plants. It requires not only the contribution by the Commonwealth Government, but also the immediate and deep support from a focussed group of people, the Friends who love this enterprise.

The Friends made major investments despite the appalling events of 2020, as well as smaller amounts for other projects:

- The Friends' contribution of \$73,000 for the Banksia Garden, was the largest project to be supported by the Friends this year
- The Video Wall in the Visitor Centre, was the second major project
- PhD research project on the flora of Norfolk Island
- A study into the Thermal Tolerance of Native Plants.
- The Find a Plant App is now live
- The purchase of an audio loop to enhance the experience of hearing impaired in the theatrette
- Support for the publication of *Miracle on Black Mountain; a history of the Australian National Botanic Gardens*.

Max emphasised the importance of the Friends support and advocacy for the Gardens in a variety of situations, for example the lobbying several years ago for the Gardens, and quoted from Genevieve Jacobs' comments at a ceremony to announce the Gardens' 50th Anniversary celebrations,

“This place is an ark – a carrier of deeply significant information - but it is also a covenant, a promise to ourselves that the beauty and the infinite variety of Australia's plant life matters at the most profound level. To see it here arrayed in all this sweeping variety and to know that what can be represented here is just a fragment of everything on this remarkable continent should more than make us pause.”

He saw the Australian National Botanic Gardens as a great cultural institution that plays a role in the lives and emotions of all Friends as we hopefully seek to conserve, display and educate our children and others about the role that our plants play in human survival. Something which many have focussed on this year.

Max wished his successor good luck, and looked forward to much engagement with the Gardens and to certainly continue to find ways to contribute. He will do so with the profound sense that he is among Friends!

RESOLUTION

Moved Max Bourke, AM **Seconded** Warwick Wright that the President's Report for 2018-19 tabled at the annual general meeting be accepted.

CARRIED

5. Treasurer's Report

Helen Elliot, the Treasurer, tabled her fifth Treasurer's Report for the financial year ended 30 June 2020, that included the audited financial statements for the Friends and the Friends' Public Fund

(Attachment C). Helen described the first 9 months of the financial year as business as usual but then, COVID-19 virus hit and disrupted so many plans by so many people.

With the Gardens forced to close late March, a number of Friends planned events could not proceed – the half-yearly Growing Friends plant sale, always well patronised and a large income earner for the Friends, the “Meet and Greet” of new members, the Photographic Group’s workshop and the Botanic Art Group exhibition in April. She also noted that our 30th Anniversary events were cancelled and Thursday Talks, always so popular, will not re-commence this year.

Helen highlighted the different ways we earn income on the Income Statement on page 2. The sub-total of Other Income states only \$39,929 compared to \$61,750 the previous year, a decrease of 35% because of cancelled events due to COVID. Thankfully membership renewals remained strong, and this coupled with an increase of 252 new memberships resulted in a 9% increase in income from Membership Fees to \$94,305.

She praised the Friends’ volunteers’ tireless efforts that were rewarded with about \$191,000 in income for the year just a decrease of 8%. In the main, this income will be donated towards projects proposed by the Gardens. Helen thanked the Project Committee for reviewing these proposals and tabling them to the Friends Council for discussion and decision.

Donations to the Gardens for 10 varied projects totalled \$239,353, more than double the previous year; a rewarding outcome.

Helen mentioned that the second tranche of \$71,338 (of the Friends \$100,000 commitment) was paid towards the new Banksia Garden, as well as \$7,645 for the hearing loop in the theatrette and \$52,143 towards the pollinator film and new video wall installed just outside the theatrette.

The Public Fund is a registered charity and receives tax deductible donations from members and the general public. This year the Public Fund issued tax deductible receipts for \$25,916. As a result of these donations, the Public Fund could provide the Seed Bank exhibition with \$8,826 and \$2,350 towards interpretation signs in the Banksia Garden. The Public Fund committed other funding but unfortunately the projects were not finalised in time for 30 June.

The consolidated Balance Sheet at 30 June 2020 states total assets of \$414,324, and Helen noted that there is still a significant commitment to the new Conservatory, and that both Friends’ Council and the Public Fund are always willing to consider new project proposals. Council is confident that the accounts are in a robust financial position to continue Friends’ work, as per our Constitution, “for the purpose of supporting the Gardens.”

The Friends’ Financial Statements were consolidated and included the Public Fund’s assets of \$97,696. Helen also presented separate Financial Statements for the Public Fund to provide transparency for its deductible gift recipient status and to assist in the various regulatory annual returns.

Helen thanked all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to generate income and profile the dedicated work of the Friends. She also thanked the Garden management and staff who are very collegiate, Council members, Public Fund trustees and, of course, other members of the Friends for their continuing support and renewal of membership.

RESOLUTION

Moved Helen Elliot, **Seconded** Linda Beveridge that the Treasurer’s Report, including the financial statements for the Friends and the Friends’ Public Fund, for the financial year ended 30 June 2020 be accepted.

CARRIED

6. Report by Executive Director

Dr Judy West opened her remarks by recalling that the Gardens' 50th Anniversary had been planned as a year of celebratory events, but instead the Golden Anniversary had been plagued by bushfires, hazardous smoke hail storms and the COVID-19 pandemic. She admired the flexibility and resilience shown by Gardens' staff, volunteers and the Friends, and that there will be celebrations of 50 years of a wonderful institution and the people who continue to make the Gardens a special place, before the end of the calendar year.

Highlights of the year included:

- The new Banksia Garden was completed and the official opening by the Minister was scheduled for 21 October. The Friends' funding the Garden was a significant gift to the ANBG for the 50th Anniversary.
- The Banksia Centre had a significant refurbishment, with most of the work done during the COVID-19 shut-down period. The building had been severely damaged during the hail storm in January, and its transformation makes the Centre even more functional than before.
- There will be a special ANBG feature in the weekend *Canberra Times* and in the *Canberra Weekly*.
- The tender for the builder of the Conservatory was being finalised. Over the next month the terms with the preferred builder will be negotiated and it is hoped that construction will soon be underway.
- Local architect Guida Mosely Brown have been appointed for the National Seed Bank and they are making good progress on the initial design.
- A new infrastructure funding package from the Government for Parks Australia will include development of the Horticulture Centre at the ANBG, adjoining the new Seed Bank in the northern precinct and an extension of the boundary fire suppression system. These projects will get underway next year.
- A five-year Education Strategy was developed and there will be new online education products to extend outreach to students throughout Australia, not only those who visit the ANBG.
- The National Seed Bank managed to collect 135 new accessions including two Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act listed species. They also successfully germinated the critically endangered Dales' Waterfall Fern from Christmas Island from spores and this now being grown by nursery staff and will be displayed in the Conservatory.
- The Friends' funded *Find a plant app* was upgraded and now enables visitors to find more than 29,000 individual plants.
- The Friends funded video wall and pollinator film has become a big hit with visitors and gives scope to display a range of films and information.
- With COVID restrictions progressively lifting there has been a resurgence of local visitors to the Gardens. September numbers were only 5% down from September last year. This is very positive, considering that 30%-40% of visitors are generally from interstate or overseas, and once interstate travel opens up the Gardens should enjoy increased number of visitors.

Judy thanked the many volunteers who have supported the Gardens during the COVID shutdown period, sent messages of support, and have returned to resume their volunteer activities.

She also thanked all members of the Friends for their ongoing support of the Gardens. Under the leadership of the Friends Council and Public Fund their support of projects each year significantly contributes to the quality of visitor experience and enhances conservation and research activities.

Judy concluded by saying how much she enjoyed working closely with Max Bourke as President; that his leadership and passion for the Gardens and Australian plants is inspirational and that she looked forward to working with the new Council and President.

7. Election of Office Bearers and Council members (for 2 years in each case)

The election for President, Secretary, Treasurer, and four members of Council was chaired by the Executive Director of the ANBG, Dr Judy West.

Nominations were received for each of the positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer, and four Ordinary members of Council. Personal profiles for nominees were included in the agenda papers.

Judy West declared the following positions filled:

- President – Neville Page
- Secretary – Lynden Ayliff
- Treasurer – Helen Elliot
- Ordinary members of Council – Wanda Filsell, Alan Henderson, Lesley King, and David More.

8. Appointment of Auditor for 2020-21

The Treasurer reported that she was extremely satisfied with the work undertaken by Jeff Brewer of MGI/Joyce Dickson and, after declaring a personal connection with the firm, recommended that the Friends continue to engage MGI/Joyce Dickson for the 2020-2021 financial year.

RESOLUTION

Moved Helen Elliot, **Seconded** David More that the appointment of Mr Jeff Brewer, Partner at MGI/Joyce Dickson, as the auditor for the Friends for 2020-2021 be accepted.

CARRIED

9. Award of Life Membership

In this year of the 30th Anniversary of the Friends of the ANBG, Life Memberships were awarded to the four members in recognition of their distinguished service to the Friends of the ANBG.

Lesley Harland: Lesley has been a Friend for 30 years, being one of the original members with a Household membership Number 24. She commenced with the Memberships team in 2008, sometimes with a second person assisting over the years but sometimes on her own. Every Tuesday since 2008 (apart from 4 weeks mid-December to mid-January each year), Lesley has processed member applications and Public Fund donations, as well as replying to emails from members and the Treasurer and promptly following up any queries. During the particularly busy membership renewal period of about 8 weeks during October and November of each year, she leads the process twice a week. Her knowledge of the membership process is unsurpassed. Lesley has also been an active participant in the Plant Science Group over many years. Lesley is a very supportive member of the Friends IT Working Group that is searching for a new software package for online membership and updating the member's database. She has been freely assisting David More with various trials and testing of new IT systems.

Marion Jones: Marion was Treasurer for Friends of ANBG between February 2010 and February 2016. She was also a volunteer guide between 2008 and 2020, with outstanding contributions to the Friends' Breakfast/Wake Up with the Birds walks, to Guides' learning activities and the development of themed walks, and as a Flora Explorer driver. Marion is also an active and enthusiastic contributor to many other Friends activities.

Barbara Podger: Barbara has been a member of Friends since early 2000s. She has been a Member of the *Fronds* Committee since 2008 and shares responsibility for its preparation and publication. Between 2007 and 2012 Barbara was Vice President of the Council of the Friends of ANBG, and has been a Member and Chairperson of the Public Fund for a number of years. Barbara has been a guide for more than 20 years, and has mentored many new guides and coordinated Flora Explorer since its inception. She has also been a member of the Social Events and Activities Committee for many years as well as coordinating volunteers at many public events organized jointly by this Committee and the Gardens. Her enthusiastic contribution continues in many other Friends activities, too.

Anne Rawson: Anne has worked on *Fronde* for at least 15 years, since before it was called *Fronde*. She joined the team when Barry Brown, who was an employee at the ANBG, ceased doing the design and layout of the Friends newsletter. Anne took over the design and layout role, working with Andrew Walker, Elizabeth Bilney and Anne Phillips. Although Pam Rooney took over the design and layout role in 2016, Anne Rawson remained on the editorial team undertaking roles including writing, editing, proofreading, and liaison with the ANBG. The Friends ANBG acknowledge her commitment and the outstanding work that Anne has done in producing *Fronde* for so many years.

10. Other business

- a. Max Bourke presented *Banksia solandri* by Sue Greives to Judy West, Executive Director ANBG, for the ANBG Collection. The Friends of the ANBG had purchased this painting from the Botanic Art Exhibition for the ANBG collection in October 2020.
- b. Dennis Ayliffe was congratulated on receiving the Handbury Award from the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens for his exceptional contribution. He had been nominated for the award by Friends of the ANBG. For many years Dennis has been one of those volunteers we all treasure; someone capable of turning their hand to pretty well anything required. He has served on the governing body, been a Guide, assisted with running our Summer Sounds concert series and been wise Council to both my predecessor and myself as President. He has served on the Projects Committee which liaises with Garden Management to shape the design and implementation of those many projects which the Friends invest in. At different times he has managed and guided in the Friends' very successful Breakfast with the Birds. This program not only attracts a usually 'booked out' audience, it raises useful funds for the Gardens. Dennis was president of AAFBG and guided it through a difficult time.

Meeting closure

The meeting was closed at 5.15pm.



31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

17 October 2019 ANBG Theatre

MINUTES

11. Opening and Confirmation of Agenda

The meeting was opened by the President, Max Bourke AM, at 5.30 pm. The agenda was confirmed.

Attendance

Present: Forty members of the Friends signed the attendance sheet

Invited: Judy West, Executive Director ANBG; Peter Byron, Acting General Manager ANBG, Megan Donaldson, ANBG.

12. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dennis Ayliffe, Lynden Ayliffe, Jo Boothroyd, Jacqui Brown, David Campbell, Christianna Cobbold, Maureen Connolly, Marcel Dimo, Les Fielke, Jan and Philip Finley, Peter Heaume, Yvonne Kilgour, Lesley King, Colin Maclachlan, David More, Tricia Morton, Jann Ollerenshaw, Barbara Podger, Jennifer and Don Rowland, Barbara Scott, Doreen Wilson, Brigitta Wimmer.

13. Acceptance of Minutes of 30th AGM held on 27 September 2018

No amendments were made to the circulated draft minutes.

RESOLUTION

Moved Wendy Antoniak **Seconded** Maurice Hermann that the Minutes of the 30th AGM of the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Inc held on 27 September 2018 be accepted as circulated (Attachment A).

CARRIED

14. President's Report

The President's Report for 2018-19 (Attachment B) covered the Friends' achievements and activities over the past year. The President noted the great range of good projects in science and education as well as development of projects that will roll out especially during 2020, and on into future years. They are a diverse use of funds raised by the Friends of the ANBG, via membership and donations. These projects include support for the Conservatory, research, and the new Banksia Gardens.

Max thanked Lesley Jackman for handsomely briefing him when handing over this role to him, which has been strong learning curve. He was also grateful the cooperative work of Council colleagues, the special interest groups and other Friends. Max acknowledged the engagement and collegiality shown by the Executive Director, Dr Judy West, the General Manager Peter Byron, and all the staff he met and worked with. It really is a pleasure to do so.

The Friends are all looking forward to 2020 as the Garden's 50th Anniversary and the Friends' 30th Anniversary. There has been a lot of planning, and spending in preparation for it.

On a sombre note Max talked about the loss of huge numbers of plants over the years and loss is continuing. The ANBG plays a key role to reverse or stabilise this loss. He encouraged all Friends in joining the volunteer time and /or donations as firm basis for the next 50 years.

RESOLUTION

Moved Max Bourke, AM **Seconded** Ian Primrose that the President's Report for 2018-19 tabled at the annual general meeting be accepted.

CARRIED

15. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report for the financial year ended 30 June 2019 included the audited financial statements for the Friends and the Friends' Public Fund (Attachment C). The Treasurer noted that in her fourth year as Treasurer, she is still awed by the dedication and time commitment that volunteers contribute to support the Gardens, especially the special interest groups. They help the Gardens and the Friends in different ways, including raising funds; Growing Friends' plants sales, the Thursday Talks, Summer Sounds, Booked Walks, and exhibitions by the Botanic Art and the Photographic Group.

Donations by Friends to the Gardens totalled \$100,325 including \$27,880 from the Public Fund. The Public Fund provided the Seed Bank with \$24,880 of new equipment as well as the x-ray assessment of legacy collections. This was in addition to \$3,000 for the collection of *Macadamia janseni* seeds in far north Queensland. All worthwhile projects in support of the Gardens. The Friends also supported attendance by 30 Guides at the conference in Perth by reimbursing \$200 of the registration to each of them.

The combined Balance Sheet at 30 June 2019 states accumulated funds of \$514,388. However, it should be noted there is still a significant commitment to the Banksia Garden and potentially the new Conservatory.

Helen thanked all the Friends volunteers who work so tirelessly to generate income and profile the steadfast work of the Friends. Thanks also to the Garden management and staff who are very collegiate, Council members and of course other members of the Friends for their continuing their support and renewal of membership.

RESOLUTION

Moved Helen Elliot, **Seconded** Alan Henderson that the Treasurer's Report, including the financial statements for the Friends and the Friends' Public Fund, for the financial year ended 30 June 2019 be accepted.

CARRIED

16. Report by Executive Director

Judy West explained that even though she had been Acting Director of National Parks for a good part of the year she remained closely involved with the Gardens and through the changes in executive leaders in the Gardens their relationship with Friends had remained excellent.

Highlights of the year included:

- The Ian Potter National Conservatory project has gone through an intense period of design and light modelling. Construction for the Conservatory is planned to commence in 2020 and be completed late 2021.

- Funding has been secured for the construction of the National Seed Bank (NSB). The NSB contributes to international, national and local plant conservation. During the year the NSB accessioned 128 collections of seed from 69 species from across Australia (ACT, NSW, QLD, and Norfolk Island).
- The completion of the Pomaderris Garden and the Conservation and Research Garden. Both feature a range of significant, rare and threatened species, augment the genetically representative collection available for research, future translocations and landscape enhancement.
- The web-based “Find a Plant” application was completed for public release (<http://www.anbg.gov.au/fap>) with funding support from the Friends.
- The volunteer program continues to be strong with more than 200 volunteers working in 16 different programs across the Gardens and the Australian National Herbarium (ANH). We successfully recruited 15 new Volunteer Guides. Volunteers are an invaluable resource to the Gardens, supporting activities in Visitor Centre Hosts, Volunteer Guides, Herbarium Specimen Monitors Seed Bank Volunteers, Nursery Volunteers, Growing Friends and more.
- More than 502,778 visitors, (a 2.1% decrease on 2017-2018 year). Student visitation increased to 15,334 from 14,487 the previous year, approximately 6% increase.
- Worked with new partners to deliver new and signature events; the most successful being the Carramar Koala Quest with the theme of conservation of native flora and fauna, Luminous Botanicus IV ‘s theme of shade of trees, and “Magic Garden” Concert No 9 of the Canberra Music Festival.
- The Flora Explorer 12-seater bus was upgraded, for these popular tours of the Gardens.
- The Gardens will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2020. A series of events, programs, and products will showcase the Gardens history over 50 years. Under the theme of “Celebrating Australian Plants” the 50th Anniversary provides a platform for staff recognition and public outreach, highlighting the Gardens as a world-renowned scientific institution, as well as a popular Canberra tourism destination.
- The construction of the Banksia Garden is well underway and with an opening planned for 28 April 2020.

Judy took the opportunity to acknowledge the importance of the Friends and its Public Fund for ongoing support of the Gardens, including thanking Max Bourke for his contributions as President.

17. **Election of Office Bearers and Council members (for 2 years in each case)**

The election for Vice President, Secretary, and two Council members was chaired by the Executive Director, Judy West:

- Nominations were received for each of the positions of Vice President, Secretary, and two Council members. Personal profiles for nominees were included in the agenda papers.
- Judy West declared the following positions filled:
 - Vice-President – Linda Beveridge
 - Secretary – Jann Ollerenshaw
 - Council – Wendy Antoniak, and Peter Heaume

18. **Appointment of Auditor for 2019-2020**

The Treasurer reported that she was extremely satisfied with the work undertaken by Jeff Brewer of MGI/Joyce Dickson and, after declaring a personal connection with the firm, recommended that the Friends continue to engage MGI/Joyce Dickson for the 2019-2020 financial year.

RESOLUTION

Moved Helen Elliot, **Seconded** David Coutts that the appointment of Mr Jeff Brewer, Partner at MGI/Joyce Dickson, as the auditor for the Friends for 2019-2020 be accepted.

CARRIED

19. Award of Life Membership

The President awarded life membership to the Friends to Dr Anne Campbell in recognition of her distinguished service to the Friends of the ANBG. Max outlined Anne's long involvement with the Friends. Anne has been a Volunteer Guide since 2008 and often contributed to the development of special walks, as well as to the Red Centre Guiding Handbook. In 2012/13 she worked on the development of the Eucalypt Discovery Walk. She was one of the original Flora Explorer drivers who developed the original route for the Flora tour. Her professional background enabled Anne to support scientific activities – a Botanical Resource Centre volunteer in its early days, and subsequently convenor of the Plant Science Group, and organised a trip for both that group and the Guides to visit the Plant Bank at the Australian Botanic Garden, Mt Annan. Anne served on Friends Council for four years and has been a regular volunteer at Summer Sounds and, more recently, at the Visitor Centre. She is now starting a new phase of volunteer work in Adelaide after her recent move there. The award was presented to her *in absentia*.

20. Other business

Marlena Jeffrey advised that she is standing down as the Vice-Patron of the Friends of the ANBG for family reasons. She was Patron from 2007 to 2011, and Vice-Patron since then. She has been impressed by the amazing developments in the Gardens over these years. She has strong affection for the Gardens and will continue to be a Friend. The Friends' Council is very grateful for Marlena's support over these years and we look forward to seeing her at Friends' events into the future.

Max mentioned that we are still working on securing a patron and will hopefully announce that in the near future.

Meeting closure

The meeting was closed at 6.30pm. It was followed by Vice President, Linda Beveridge leading a presentation and discussion on ideas and suggestions to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Friends of the ANBG.



President's Report 2020

It is with considerable sadness I write this report. I really have enjoyed this task but I am afraid my hearing loss makes it very difficult to chair meetings and so am standing down. Also 2020, which may go down as one of the most bizarre years for the lives of people ever, has been a great disappointment in some ways, not the way to go out. I was really looking forward to the wonderful menu of events we had planned for our 30th Anniversary entwined with those for the 50th Anniversary of the Gardens.

I felt and feel so sorry for the teams of both Garden staff and Friends volunteers who had created these events to mark both the Anniversaries.

But the Gardens themselves keep me going and I know they do for many of you.

And the Gardens are certainly thriving, despite being lashed by drought, smoke and hail! Figures which our Liaison Officer, Megan Menz has given us show that the number of people coming to the Gardens has been in many ways extraordinary. You might imagine with closures due to smoke and restrictions in travel and access due to Covid-19 that our numbers of visitors would be drastically reduced. But no, in fact as has been observed in many places around the world, sites like these Gardens are extremely popular with local people for recreation or 'escape' perhaps but also, solace and hope in these difficult times.

Before I go too far, I want to record some appreciations.

I think I enjoy an excellent relationship with many Gardens staff but none more than Executive Director Dr Judy West and General Manager Mr Peter Byron and I thank them most sincerely for listening to my requests on your behalf and my crazy suggestions, on my behalf. Many of their staff have also helped me and the Friends on a regular basis and are a delight to work with. Then there are the people in Friends without whom my task would be impossible. Firstly, my fantastic Executive Linda Beveridge, Helen Elliot and Lynden Ayliffe, who not only keep me on the straight and narrow but put in so much time you would not believe. Then there is the Council itself and through the year that included as well as the above, Wendy Antoniak, Alan Henderson, Neville Page, David More and Peter Heaume as well as regular invited attendees Barbara Podger, Tricia Morton, Lesley King, David Coutts and my staunch predecessor Lesley Jackman. It is a truly wonderful collection of skills and energy that keeps the organisation going. On top of that there are all the members and leaders of our multifarious Special Interest Groups, who not only raise money for the Gardens but enrich the lives and understanding of our members and the general community through their work. I particularly want to acknowledge the Newsletter team and the Website team, the Plant Science Group, the Flower Fruit and Foliage team, whose leaflet is highly popular with the increased number of new and regular visitors. I also want to publicly acknowledge on behalf of all Members of Friends the huge amount of work done by our wonderful Membership Team Lesley Harland and Pam Cooke.

Raising and carefully spending funds for the Gardens is a tricky business but essential if we are to see this national focus for the understanding of Australia's native plants thrive. It is all very well to have books and herbaria, records and web sites on the subject of our native flora, but to grow them, to understand them, to protect them into the future, and to share all those things with as many Australians and international visitors that is a huge task.

It is a task that requires more than the contribution of the Commonwealth Government which of course is central to its operations. It requires the immediate and deep support from a focussed group of people who love this enterprise. And that is what the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens comprise. A group of over 2,500 people who have stated by their membership and involvement and direct financial support, “this is an important enterprise”!

Despite the appalling events of 2020 there have been a number of major investments as well as the ongoing support of projects large and small.

During the last 12 months the largest project supported was the wonderful Banksia Garden. This will be officially opened on October 21 and this year we have spent over \$73,000 from Friends funds direct and from the Public Fund (‘our’ tax deductible arm). It is not only a repository for a very diverse living collection, the interesting and artistic signage and interpretation should leave visitors with a lot of knowledge about this iconic genus.

Another major project was the support for the video wall in the Visitor Centre where an introduction to the Gardens through a large format video sets the scene for new visitors and repeat visitors alike. Two scientific projects of note are support we provide for the research by a PhD student on the flora of Norfolk Island and a study into the Thermal Tolerance of Native Plants. This latter study gets ANBG staff engaged with a wider collective of researchers from a number of institutions into examining the role, and possible management of plants as climate changes, clearly an urgent issue.

Another smaller project but important for enhancing the visitor experience has been the completion of the Find a Plant App which is now live. Purchasing an audio loop to enhance the experience of hearing impaired in the theatrette is a good step forward for many in our community and it is working very effectively.

A diverse range of small expenditures make up the spending this year. They include buying gifts of botanical books for the summer intern program, which the Gardens runs whereby young botanical science students work for a period during summer vacation to assist the herbarium and other facets of the Gardens. We provided support for the Seed Bank Exhibition as part of our commitment to get visitors to understand the important role of seed banking and inter alia the need for a much improved facility to undertake this work. For the historical record we also supported the publication by Professor Don Beer of his comprehensive history of our organisation.

These are very brief descriptions of the extraordinary diversity of projects supported through funds raised from Membership, from the work of our special interest Groups like Growing Friends, the Botanic Art and Photographic Groups. As well special events ranging from Summer Sounds to Wake up with the Birds and the Thursday Talks, all contribute to the pool of funds given in support of Garden projects. Because all of the people who work on raising, managing and disbursing the funds do so voluntarily virtually 100% goes to the Gardens.

We have also committed major funds to assist projects into the future including the soon-to-be started Tropical Conservatory. This extraordinary building will house a major living collection of Australia’s tropical flora and an interesting new ‘system’ of interpretative signage will be provided by Friends funding.

I suppose it is because I worked in the private sector and specifically the fund management industry, that I see my donations more as investments. I want these investments to pay dividends long after I am around. It is the test I apply when considering what should we support for the Gardens.

In March just before Covid struck, at a ceremony to announce the 50th Anniversary celebrations, well-known local identity Genevieve Jacobs said of the Gardens:

“This place is an ark – a carrier of deeply significant information - but it is also a covenant, a promise to ourselves that the beauty and the infinite variety of Australia’s plant life matters at the most profound level. To see it here arrayed in all this sweeping variety and to know that what can be represented here is just a fragment of everything on this remarkable continent should more than make us pause. “

To me Genevieve got it spot on.

This great cultural institution, the Australian National Botanic Gardens plays a role in the lives and emotions of all Friends as we hopefully seek to conserve, display and educate our children and others about the role that our plants play in human survival. Something which many have focussed on this year.

I wish my successor good luck and I look forward to much engagement with the Gardens in other roles in the future and will certainly continue to find ways to contribute. I do so with the profound sense that I am among Friends!

Max Bourke AM

President

15 October 2020



Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2020.

It is with pleasure that I present my fifth Treasurer's Report for the Friends.

The first 9 months of the financial year was business as usual but then, as we all know the COVID-19 virus hit and disrupted so many plans by so many people.

With the Gardens forced to close late March, a number of Friends planned events could not proceed – the half-yearly Growing Friends plant sale, always well patronised and a large income earner for the Friends, the “*Meet and Greet*” of new members, the Photographic Group's workshop and the Botanic Art Group exhibition in April. Let's not forget, our 30th Anniversary events were cancelled and Thursday Talks, always so popular, will not re-commence this year.

The Income Statement on page 2 details the different ways we earn income. The sub-total of **Other Income** states only \$39,929 compared to \$61,750 the previous year, a decrease of 35% because of cancelled events due to COVID. Thankfully membership renewals remained strong, and this coupled with an increase of 252 new memberships resulted in a 9% increase in income from Membership Fees to \$94,305.

The Friends' volunteers should be proud that their tireless efforts have been rewarded with about \$191,000 in income for the year just a decrease of 8%. In the main, this income will be donated towards projects proposed by the Gardens. Thank you to the Project Committee for reviewing these proposals and tabling them to the Friends Council for discussion and decision.

Donations to the Gardens for 10 varied projects totalled \$239,353, more than double the previous year; a rewarding outcome.

It was pleasing to donate the second tranche of \$71,338 (of the Friends \$100,000 commitment) towards the new Banksia Garden, as well as \$7,645 for the hearing loop in the theatrette and \$52,143 towards the pollinator film and new video wall installed just outside the theatrette. The Public Fund is a registered charity and receives tax deductible donations from members and the general public. This year the Public Fund issued tax deductible receipts for \$25,916. As a result of these donations, the Public Fund could provide the Seed Bank exhibition with \$8,826 and \$2,350 towards interpretation signs in the Banksia Garden. The Public Fund committed other funding but unfortunately the projects were not finalised in time for 30 June.

The consolidated Balance Sheet at 30 June 2020 states total assets of \$414,324. It should be noted there is still a significant commitment to the new Conservatory and both Friends' Council and the Public Fund are always willing to consider new project proposals. Council is confident that the accounts are in a robust financial position to continue our work, as per our Constitution, “for *the purpose of supporting the Gardens.*”

The Friends' Financial Statements is consolidated and includes the Public Fund's assets of \$97,696. However, there is also separate Financial Statements for the Public Fund to provide transparency for our deductible gift recipient status and to assist in the various regulatory annual returns.

In conclusion, thank you to all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to generate income and profile the dedicated work of the Friends. Thanks also to the Garden management and staff who are very collegiate, Council members, Public Fund trustees and of course other members of the Friends for their continuing support and renewal of membership.

Helen Elliot, Volunteer Treasurer.