

# FRIENDS *of* GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS INC.

ABN: 21 699 253 561 INC NO. A13509G



## Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Annual Report 2017-18

The purpose of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens is to advocate for and support the Geelong Botanic Gardens, as well as provide members opportunities for participation. The Annual Report highlights, with appreciation, the significant achievements resulting from the commitment of Members of the Friends throughout 2017-18.

- **Friends' Nursery Greenhouse Project**

Undoubtedly the Greenhouse Project has been the Friends' major achievement of the year, as the sale of plants is one of the Friends main sources of revenue. In December 2017 the Friends were successful in obtaining a City of Greater Geelong Community Infrastructure Grant, allowing the Friends to replace the ageing propagation igloo in the Nursery with a polycarbonate greenhouse. The City contributed \$8,000 and the Friends contributed \$4,000. The greenhouse has two climate zones and is a safer work environment for the volunteer Growers. The Nursery has also been re-vamped, with not only more stock tables but a uniform configuration that maximises space between the tables. Geelong Botanic Gardens staff organized the removal of trip hazards and the unused water tank. With the addition of a purpose-built potting trolley, donated by the out-going Geelong Pelargonium Society, the Nursery is not only safer but has a more professional and welcoming appearance. The Friends would like to thank the City of Greater Geelong for making such a worthwhile grant available, the Geelong Pelargonium Society and GBG garden staff for assisting with this project.

- **2018 Botanic Gardens Day**

Sunday 27 May 2018 was Botanic Gardens Day, a day designated nationally to celebrate and promote botanic gardens. It was with great pleasure and enthusiasm that the Friends joined the Geelong Botanic Gardens in showcasing the Gardens. Events and activities were held by the Friends throughout the day and the GBG Education Program provided activities for children. All Friends volunteer representatives were rostered from all of the volunteer groups. This successful event gave the Friends an opportunity to engage with the public and showcase the diversity of volunteering opportunities that the Friends provide. Many thanks to the volunteers who participated so willingly on this most enjoyable occasion.

- **Sustainable Visitor Facility and Furphy Water Tank Restoration**

In 2017 the Friends supported the Geelong Botanic Gardens' application for funding for the second stage of the Sustainable Visitor Facility in the Gardens. Work commenced on the installation of the sewerage lines in 2017-18. This is a three-year project and the Friends will continue to offer assistance to complete this wonderful addition to the amenity of the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

This financial year the Friends have contributed further funds to complete the restoration of the Furphy Water Tank, so that it may be located more prominently in the Gardens.

- **Learn @ GBG**

In 2017-18 the Friends continued to support the Geelong Botanic Gardens' Education Program. The five-year Education Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends and the GBG concluded in December 2017 and we look forward to renewing this important partnership, as education is central to the purpose of Botanic Gardens.

- **Refurbishment of Meeting Room:**

In July 2017 the City of Greater Geelong undertook refurbishment of the GBG Meeting room, re-roofing and re-carpeting the building. The Friends contributed by providing sixty new padded, stackable seats and a new refrigerator for the kitchen. These improvements have greatly enhanced the use of these rooms, not only for the Friends but also for our corporate members and other Meeting Room users.

- **Geelong School of Botanical Art**

The Geelong School of Botanical Art provides the Friends with a significant source of income, as well as an opportunity for members and the public to receive tuition from internationally recognized artists. It is pleasing to report an increase in student intake and interest in Botanic Art workshops and classes.

In 2017 the Friends' fifth biennial Art Exhibition – 'Inspired by Nature' was held at Art@Wintergarden gallery and opened by new Geelong Art Gallery Director, Jason Smith. It is an exhibition by invitation and the artworks by our tutors and students continue to be of the highest standard and attract appreciative audiences.

The exhibition of students' artwork and merchandise for sale, held at the Friends' 2017 Christmas Drinks and Christmas Fair event, again showcased beautiful works created from the Geelong School of Botanical Art.

The Friends would like to acknowledge the excellence of the courses offered by our tutors and thank them for their commitment to the Geelong School of Botanical Art. Many thanks also to the Botanic Art Committee led by Convenor Judy Fyfe.

- **Media and Promotion**

The Friends' Social Media presence on Instagram, Facebook and our Website, is an essential means of communicating the Friends' role and events with the wider community.

During the last twelve months there has been a significant increase in the amount of promotion undertaken by the Friends, as promotion of, and advocating for the Geelong Botanic Gardens and the Friends, is central to our purpose. Along with social media, we have continued using our quarterly magazine 'Jubaea', the 'Geelong What's On' Magazine, Geelong and the Bellarine 'Official Visitor Guide', our monthly emailed 'Members' Committee Update', promotional flyers, community notices in local papers and attending interviews on local radio. This year we produced a high quality, double-sided DL card, which outlines Friends activities, the Art School and regular events, as well as promoting exploration of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. It, along with event flyers, is made available through various outlets around Geelong.

A six-month promotion in a new Geelong tourism booklet has been trialed to ascertain whether or not such productions increase visitor numbers to the Gardens. The initiative of a member writing a major article for a Geelong magazine, highlighting the work of the Guides and Friends, was another positive promotional opportunity.

The Guides' monthly 'Gardens Highlights' flyer, featuring seasonal plants and map of the Gardens, has been reduced from A4 to A5 size, supporting our protocol of reducing waste.

In August 2017 the Friends' Recipe Book was published, featuring beautiful photography of the Gardens and recipes supplied by members. It promotes the Gardens and the Friends in a very positive and practical way.

The production of the Friends' Child Safe Standards Policy in 2017 was one of the first to be received by the City of Geelong and the Friends were congratulated on being so pro-active in this area. As a potential model for other not-for-profit groups this is great promotion for the Friends.

Many thanks to our office staff and Marketing Group for maintaining all forms of media and promotion. It is time consuming and requires regular monitoring.

- **Friends' Events**

The wonderful variety of events and activities for our members, their guests and the public has seen an increase in participation and income derived from events. Many thanks to the Events team for their scrupulous planning.

- **2017, July-** train trip to **Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Nursery**
- August- **Winter Lunch** at Geelong Yacht Club, guest speaker **Simon Rickard** gave a wonderful talk about Japanese gardens. **The Friends' recipe book** was launched
- **AGM Guest Speakers** Grant Baverstock, Craig Morley '**Bats & Birds of GBG & EP**'
- September- bus trip **Castlemaine Botanic Gardens, Buda, Munro Court housing project**
- October- biennial '**Inspired by Nature 5**' art exhibition
- November- '**Through the Garden Gates**' self-drive tour showcased outstanding private gardens from **Torquay to Drysdale**
- December- **Christmas Drinks and Christmas Merchandise Fair** featuring artists from the Geelong School of Botanical Art
- **2018, January** - Cooking Demonstration by Gwen Anderson '**Salads with Pizzazz**'
- February - Movie Night at St.Marys, '**Painting the Modern Garden**'
- February - **Guest Speaker** Dolores Sk-Malloni '**History of Botanical Art**'
- March – Ferry and Bus trip to **Cranbourne Botanic Gardens and Friends' Nursery**
- April - **Guest Speaker and Luncheon** Lyndi Garnett from **Salvia Study Group**
- May - **Volunteer Week Soup Luncheon** with **Guest Speakers** Shirley & David Johnson
- May - **Botanic Gardens Day at GBG**
- June - Movie Night at St.Marys '**A Man Named Pearl**'

- **Friends' Volunteer Activities**

Volunteers are vital to the continuation of the Friends. They provide opportunities to advocate for the Gardens and for our members and the public to actively engage. Strong participation is essential to generating income, which in turn allows the Friends to support the GBG. Pleasingly, despite membership remaining steady with 383 members, income and engagement of our members and the public have increased in the 2017-18 year, due to the efforts of the following groups:

The **Guides** have continued to gain new members, offering a comprehensive training program, as well as increasing their interaction with the public. Their U3A course, an introduction to the Geelong Botanic Gardens, has again been offered in 2018. Many thanks to Cherry Collins for continuing as Guides' Co-ordinator until January 2019.

Congratulations to the Guides and member David Johnson on the professional development and research that maintains the high standard of guiding they set in educating the public about the Gardens. An increase in booked walks and talks over the year is very pleasing.

The **Perennial Border**, **Heritage Rose** and **Silver Border** volunteers continue to work with GBG staff to maintain some of the most admired floral aspects of the Gardens. Their knowledge

and dedication over so many years of maintaining these beautiful gardens is greatly appreciated by the Friends and all who visit the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

In the **Growers' Nursery**, sales from the three seasonal Plant Sales and other special events have increased throughout the year and the volunteers are to be congratulated on this achievement. The administration of the Nursery has undergone change, with Co-ordinator Roz Hill sharing the role with a Growers' Steering Group. This allows more sharing of responsibility and flexibility for volunteers. There has been a significant emphasis on creating a safe and productive work place for volunteers and the public, and the new Greenhouse has greatly enhanced the work environment.

Our **Library and Plant Data Base volunteers** carry out vital work to support our members and Nursery Growers. Co-ordinator Luanne Thornton and Library volunteers continue to process the large number of reference books that were donated by the family of a founding member George Jones. The meticulous tasks of collating Friends' archive material, maintaining the Nursery data base and creating plant labels, are carried out diligently by volunteers every week. Thank you to all the members who quietly contribute to such important areas of volunteering with the Friends.

Friends volunteer **Subgroups** co-ordinate activities and special events and their outstanding contributions are acknowledged with much appreciation:

- In 2018 the Growers Steering Group formed to work as the advisory group to the Nursery Growers and oversee the operation of the Friends' Nursery. It has overseen the phasing out of plastic bags for customer use in the Nursery.
- In 2018 the Finance Group formed to assist the Treasurer and Office Staff with financial matters, annual reporting and advising Committee.
- The Publications Group is responsible for planning and producing the quarterly 'Jubaea' magazine. Our office staff work with the group to co-ordinate articles and photos supplied by members. The History Sub-Group has begun collecting material with the aim of producing a History of the Friends book. A Timeline of the Friends, from inception to 2010, was completed in 2018. Many thanks to Jayne Salmon and Annie McGeachy for this painstaking task. It will be extended to include subsequent years with accompanying photographs.
- In late 2017 the Marketing and Promotions Group produced a promotional DL card and is working on a new tri-fold brochure to attract membership of the Friends. The group advises on all areas of advertising and promotion of the Friends.
- The Events team works throughout the year to ensure a varied program of events and activities for members and the public.
- The Geelong School of Botanical Art Committee meets to carry out the organizational duties required for the School, which is a separately registered business of the Friends. The Friends' Committee of Management retains overall responsibility of the School.

**The Friends' Committee of Management** continues to meet monthly, being responsible for the smooth operation and governance of our organisation. It is responsible for all areas of management and the administration of our Rules and Purposes. Two members meet monthly for briefings with the GBG Director. All Committee members belong to other Friends volunteer groups and many thanks are due for so generously giving of their time and commitment.

During the year Committee sadly fare-welled two sitting members. Long-time volunteer Gwelda Owen passed away and Lawrie Baker stepped down to take up a new private role. Both have been deeply missed. Lucy Pope will not re-nominate for Committee as she embarks on a new family adventure. On behalf of the Friends I thank Lawrie and Lucy for their

outstanding contributions and wish them well.

As long-term members cease to be able to actively contribute it is pleasing to see that some of our newer members are willing to join the Committee, to learn from experienced members and take the Friends forward with new ideas and expectations. The Committee's dedication and tireless enthusiasm are appreciated with gratitude.

**Thanks:**

The Friends' office administration staff, Tracey Tilbury and Sally-Ann Bird provide great support to the Committee, the members and the public. Their professionalism and welcoming dispositions are much appreciated by all.

Finally, sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the administration of Friends affairs, events and activities through volunteering and to the members who have supported them. Active participation of members contributes not only to the advancement of the Geelong Botanic Gardens but enhances the experience of being a member of the Friends. It has been a privilege to lead and report on the achievements of such a committed organisation.

Allison Martland

President FGBG

August 2018