

# FRIENDS *of* GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS INC.

ABN: 21 699 253 561 INC NO. A13509G



## Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Annual Report 2015-16

The year 2015-16 has been a very busy and rewarding for the Geelong Friends. It has seen several long term projects come to fruition and several new ones initiated. The Annual Report lists the significant achievements that have resulted from the continued commitment and endeavour of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

- **AAFBG Conference**

The Friends were honoured to host the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens [AAFBG] National Conference in Geelong 29 April to 3 May 2016. The meticulous organisation, beautiful venue and welcoming atmosphere were commented on by many of the visitors to Geelong. The AAFBG has 57 member groups and 4 international affiliates and this was the third time the Geelong Friends have hosted the Associations' National Conference. We applied for and received a COGG Community Grant of \$1,000 to assist with costs of the Conference. The program included a Civic Reception and Welcome to City, a visit to the City Cultural Precinct including the Library and Heritage Centre and the Geelong Friends Botanic Art Exhibition at the Geelong Gallery. It also included a Conference Dinner, three days of Conference Tours and two days in session at the Geelong Conference Centre, with prestigious and engaging speakers. The Conference was officially opened by the Hon Lisa Neville and the Geelong Friend's patron, Dr Philip Moors, generously agreed to MC much of the program.

The Geelong Friends applied for, and were successful in receiving, a \$2000 grant from Geelong Connected Communities to assist our members to attend the Conference.

Nineteen Geelong Friends attended and we are proud that our Friend's Professional Development Policy could also assist these members, as well as four GBG staff members, to attend. The organising Committee was thrilled to have achieved such a successful Conference. The Committee's decision to take collective responsibility for the entire organisation of the Conference was one of the main drivers of its successes and resulted in a truly collaborative enriching experience for all of those involved. All of our wonderful members, who assisted in so many ways, can be proud of their outstanding efforts.

- **Ladies Kiosk, Eastern Park - Restoration**

This began in 2010 when the Friends committed \$16,000 to initiate the project. Our application to Heritage Victoria for an \$80,000 restoration grant was awarded in 2014 and in May 2015 the Friends secured a Community Concepts grant for a further \$30,000 to cover a significant overrun of the original estimate of costs.

In September 2015 the Friends committed a further \$36,548 and in January 2016 the City commenced the project. The City is the Project Manager and is currently working with the builder to finalise the complete restoration of this historic and arresting Geelong landmark.

In May 2016 the National Trust, in partnership with the City of Geelong's Heritage Committee, awarded a joint certificate to the Friends and Geelong City, recognizing the historical significance of the Ladies Kiosk restoration project. The Friends and the City will organize celebratory heritage activities when the project is completed.

- **Repairs to the GBG Cranes**

In 2015 vandalism caused a great deal of damage to the Chinese cranes in the Gardens. The Friends offered to fund the repairs and contributed \$6,480, which took many months to carry out, being completed just in time for the Conference in late April 2016.

- **Grow @ GBG Multi-function Facility**

A multi-function shelter and storage facility for use by the GBG Education program, private weddings, small community functions and to provide proper toilets for visitors has been considered for the Gardens for some time. The proposed location is in the Southern part of the Gardens, behind the fern garden, in the vicinity of gate 3.

In 2015 the GBG Director again applied for a Capital Grant for the design stage of the facility. The Friends submitted a supporting letter, with a commitment of \$10,000 to assist funding. An announcement will be made in July 2016.

- **Learn @ GBG and Gardens Contributions**

In 2015-16 the Friends have continued to support the **GBG Education Program** with \$10,000, committed annually since 2013.

- **Signage Project at GBG**

In 2014 the Friends made a submission, through the Council's Community Concepts process, for new signage and plant labeling in the Gardens. This was successful and Geelong Council allocated \$35,000 to the GBG Capital budget. In 2015-16 a plant labeling machine which connects to the plant data base and considerable planning and designing has enabled the project to progress. We will see the rollout of interpretive signage, plant labeling, brochure boxes, location maps, events A-frames and directional signage, as well as a grand sign at the entrance of the Gardens.

- **Memorandum of Understanding**

Since 2014 the Friends and City have been working towards a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create a framework of co-operation and expectations and which will complement the existing Events and Education MOUs. In June 2016 the Friends began preparing a draft document, which is currently being considered by both parties. A formal recognition of the relationship between the Friends and the City will be a very important milestone for the Friends. Helen Rodd, Judy Fyfe and Allison Martland will work with the Director to finalise this document in 2016.

- **Meeting Room Refurbishment**

The Friends continue to contribute to projects which make the Meeting Room more amenable for users. In April 2016 we installed attractive new covered pin board and the City has recently installed internal steel supports to allow the construction of a low gabled roof to mitigate the leaks which occur after rain. The City will then replace the carpets after the rooms have been painted. When this has been done the Friends will reorganise the black and white historic reproduction photographs and images. Correcting the information in some of the photo descriptors will be researched and colourful prints will make the room more inviting. We have plans for more Meeting Room improvements in the coming year.

- **Friends' School of Botanical Art**

The Geelong Friends' School of Botanical Art provides the Friends a significant source of income as well as an opportunity for members and the public to receive tuition from internationally recognized artists. It is very pleasing to report a significant increase in the number of Botanic Art workshops that we have been able to offer this year, as well as an increase in student intake.

A very exciting coup for the Friends was our acceptance by the Geelong Art Gallery to hold an exhibition of works by members of our School of Botanical Art from April- June 2016. This is the first time that the Geelong Friends have exhibited at this most prestigious gallery. Forty works by students and tutors were selected by the Gallery for the exhibition, entitled –'***Geelong Botanic Gardens Revealed***'. Delegates from the Conference were treated to a tour and were delighted at the beauty and standard of the artworks. The six week exhibition was a wonderful showcase for our Botanical Art School and all of the talented artists.

'**Inspired by Nature 4**', the title of our biennial Friends Botanic Art exhibition which was held at the Wintergarden in October 2015 **and the 'Gilded' exhibition** opening at the Friends' 2015 Christmas Drinks also showcased beautiful artworks by the Friends' School of Botanical Art. The very high standard of our students and tutors - is widely regarded and admired.

Thanks must go to Helena Buxton for her impeccable planning and work to make these such successful events. After many years Helena is not re-nominating for Committee this year. We thank her for her many contributions and wish her well.

- **The Friends' Slick**

In 2000 the Friends funded a GBG slick (a vertical retractable banner) to be used as a focal point by the Gardens and the Friends at their activities. In April 2016 the Friends unveiled one of their own – a celebration of the variety of activities offered by the Friends. Beautiful photographs of Friends at work ensured a colourful and eye catching promotional banner. Thanks to Administration staff Tracey and Sally for assisting Committee with this project.

- **History of the Friends**

For many years the Friends have discussed the idea of having a history of the Friends published as a book, to preserve our history and photographic records. In June 2016 a History Sub-committee was formed, bringing together interested members who have begun the task of making this project a reality. This will be a very exciting venture for the Friends and we thank the sub-committee for their commitment to this project.

- **Friends' Publications**

Production of a **Friends Cookbook** commenced in late 2015, incorporating beautiful photographs of the Gardens taken by some of our Friends and recipes from our many talented cooks. The complex technical publishing details are nearing completion. This will be a beautiful keepsake, showcasing our talented members, with an emphasis on creating an artistic and beautiful book. Thanks to Jenny Dean, Judith Kennedy, Luanne Thornton and Judy Parker for their many hours of work.

Our quarterly magazine, *Jubaea*, has undertaken some significant changes since September 2015– it is now produced by the Gordon TAFE in vibrant colour and is also now available to members electronically via email. We thank Luanne Thornton for agreeing to stay on as Editor after her retirement from committee tonight and thank her for the many years on Committee.

The Friends have increased their **Social Media** presence, being now on Instagram as well as Facebook. Our very attractive and informative Website continues to be extensively used and regularly updated. Thanks to Judy Fyfe and Sally Bird for maintaining our website so well and to Helena Buxton and Tracey Tilbury for their beautiful Instagram updates.

The monthly **Committee Update** emailed to members has been very positively received and is a great way to communicate the workings of the committee to everyone.

The reprinting of the Enid Mayfield designed screen printed Friends' **Tea Towels** was a particularly pleasing project. Members who remembered the first printing were delighted to see the lovely design revived. Anthea Williams managed this project and Susanna Keith has been responsible for the marketing of the tea towels and other merchandise. We thank them both for such a successful outcome.

- **Policy Updates**

The review and updating of policies and procedures are essential aspects of good governance and in the past year the Committee has reviewed and updated the documentation of a number of policies and procedures:

- Gifts and Reimbursement
- Staff Position Descriptions/Professional Development/Staff Reviews  
Botanic Art Fees and Reimbursement
- Our **Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy** was ratified in September **2015** after many months of development. This ensures that the Friends are now aligned to the policy requirements of the City and together with our Code of Conduct creates a positive message for all members. Thanks to Janet Fitzell for her

valuable contribution to this important document.

- Helen Rodd has taken on the role of **Volunteer Induction Officer** and ensures a warm welcome to our new volunteers.

- **Friends' Events**

- Our enjoyable September 2015 bus trip to gardens in the **Camperdown** district was very well attended.
- In November 2015 '**Through the Garden Gates**' self-drive tour continued showcasing interesting and beautiful private gardens in the Geelong surrounds.
- In February 2016 we visited **Heide Art Gallery and Garden** in Melbourne. Although not well attended it delighted those members and guests who did attend. They all enjoyed something a little different.
- The March 2016 **Open Garden and Friends Plant Sale** at '**Arundel**' was wonderfully successful and attracted many members and visitors. The **three Conference bus tours** in April/May 2016 were offered to Geelong Friends and all were very widely appreciated for their variety and the opportunity to experience gardens and places not usually available to the public.
- Our **three Botanic Art Exhibitions** – '*Inspired by Nature 4*', '*Gilded*' and '*Geelong Botanic Gardens - Revealed*' have allowed Friends, guests and the public to enjoy events which celebrate our member's considerable talents.
- The May 2016 **Volunteer Week Luncheon** was another very happy occasion, with the presentation of certificates of Service to the Friends, awarded to members who have volunteered for 5 or more years. Congratulations to all for your commitment.

- **Friends Volunteer Activities**

The **Guides**, in particular Co-ordinator Liz Bennetto, are to be commended for the initiative of running a **U3A Guiding course** in March 2016, aimed at attracting new Guides and members, as well as showcasing the Gardens. Those who attended were full of praise for the course, the Guides and the beautiful Gardens. As a successful means of attracting new Guides and members the course may be offered again in the future.

Liz has stepped down as Guides' Co-ordinator and we would like to thank her for the wonderful job she has done in this role. Thanks also to the Guides who have been sharing the role until January 2017.

Since August 2015 the Friends have significantly increased their contribution to the cost of plants for the **Perennial Border**, following extensive disruption from the installation of a new watering system. Many thanks go to the Perennial Border and Heritage Rose volunteers for managing the challenges of disruptions caused by the necessary earth works.

Sales from the **seasonal Plant Sales** in the **Growers' Nursery** have been significantly higher

over the year and Roz and the team are to be congratulated for this. Many new volunteers have enthusiastically contributed to the team.

Our **Library and Plant Data Base teams** have attracted new members in recent times. This is wonderful for the continuance of these important Friends activities.

**Many sincere thanks** to all of the Friends who have helped with these events and the members who have supported them. These events add so much to the experience of being a member of FGBG.

A warm welcome is extended to the many new members and volunteers who have joined in the last twelve months.

Thanks to our wonderful Administration staff for being the helpful first port of call of the Friends and supporting the Committee and members so cheerfully.

We thank all of our amazing volunteers for their tireless work and valuable contribution to the life of the Friends and the advancement of the GBG.

The Friends' Committee of Management have had an extremely busy and rewarding year. They have risen to every challenge and have supported each other and our members whenever it has been needed. It has been a privilege to be part of such a committed team.

Allison Martland

President

FGBG