

Annual Report 2018/'19

It is with pleasure that the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens [the Friends] present the 2018/'19 Annual Report. The Annual Report provides an opportunity to reflect on the main purposes of the Friends, to report on the ways in which the Friends have worked towards fulfilling these purposes over the last twelve months and to give an opportunity to express sincere appreciation and acknowledgement of those who have assisted along the way.

Purpose of the Friends

- to act in partnership with Gardens Management and support the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park [The Gardens]
- to encourage community support and appreciation of Geelong Botanic Gardens
- to promote membership of the Friends and activities for the benefit of members
- to carry out activities to raise funds for the Friends and Geelong Botanic Gardens
- To act as Trustee of the Gift Fund

The Friends' primary purpose is to support Geelong Botanic Gardens. This report will put the Friends' current support of The Gardens into a perspective based on the City of Greater Geelong's long-term vision for The Gardens. Since the days of the first Curator each manager of Geelong Botanic Gardens has left their own mark on the development of the Gardens, within the context of the City of Geelong's vision for the Gardens, at that time.

In 2007 **Annette Zealley** commenced as Director of Geelong Botanic Gardens, having previously been Manager of Gardens in the Dandenong Ranges for Parks Victoria. In 2008 the **Strategic Plan** for The Gardens was signed off, after many years of planning. The Strategic Plan is a long-term action plan to guide the future direction of Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park. It includes strategies to improve the quality of the landscape and recreational facilities, and to guide the conservation and management of the built form.

Annette's background, in Gardens Management with Parks Victoria and a Bachelor of Applied Science [Horticulture], made her well suited to the range of technical and horticultural projects that the Strategic Plan was committed to. Since 2007 many of the actions from the plan have been, or are in the process of being realised, and whilst the Strategic Plan was being implemented other projects relating to the conservation of heritage structures, directional signage and building maintenance were also carried out.

The following **milestones, since 2007**, provide a historical background that gives members an idea of the types of projects that the Friends support, either through grant applications, financially or through advocacy and education.

- The Gardens included on the Victorian Heritage Register
- "Water for the Future" storm water harvesting project in Eastern Park
- Pedestrian and cyclist paths linking the City to the "Tan" tracks
- Tree planting and restoration of original avenues of trees in Eastern Park
- Establishment of the educational Central Bed themed display garden

- Restoration, development and landscaping of the Walter Conservatory
- Automated watering systems throughout the Gardens
- On-going project with Greening Australia propagating indigenous grasses
- Visitor Facility/ Sewerage project for administration buildings and gardens
- Development of overall plant collection, with historical emphasis and bioclimates
- Heritage projects: restoration of the Ladies Kiosk and Raddenberry Fern Book; maintenance of the Cabmens and Raddenberry Shelters;
- Re-roofing Meeting Room; establishment of Bunce private conference room
- Major signage at The Gardens front entrance and directional signage

It is extraordinary that so many infrastructure and horticultural projects of such significant scale have been carried out in a relatively short time. It is a testament to the capabilities of Director Annette Zealley and her staff, as some projects required specialist technical training and extended absences from regular duties. Managing all the constraints of major infrastructure work, on an on-going basis, whilst managing the day-to-day business of The Gardens, as well as Annette's commitment to external horticultural bodies such as the peak body for Botanic Gardens [BGANZ], deserves our admiration and sincere thanks.

In **2019** the Friends approached The Gardens Director and the Manager of Parks and Gardens, to initiate discussions regarding future Gardens projects that the Friends may be able to financially support. The extent to which the Friends may be able to contribute to significant projects is directly related to the Gift Fund.

- **Friends Gift Fund**

Donations made to the Friends are received into the Gift Fund, for which the Friends are the Trustees. This fund has statutory obligations. Funds can only be spent on projects for the benefit of the Geelong Botanic Gardens and a percentage of the fund [currently 4%] must be dispersed annually to Geelong Botanic Gardens. The Committee works with Gardens management to agree on appropriate projects for the dispersed funds. The Friends' role in the relationship with The Gardens is a supportive one. It is not the Friends' role to mandate how funds will be utilised.

In 2018/'19 the Gift Fund funded the purchase of a plant labelling machine to enable The Gardens staff to more efficiently produce labels linked to their plant data base.

The Gift Fund has grown considerably in recent years, due to the generosity of many donors, who we acknowledge with gratitude and thanks. In 2018 the Friends received a substantial gift [approx. \$289,000] from the estate of a Geelong resident. As this has significantly increased the Gift Fund, the Friends will work with Gardens Management, the Manager of Parks and Gardens and the City of Greater Geelong to consider funding projects that fit within the City's plans for The Gardens.

Support and Advocacy for Geelong Botanic Gardens

In June 2019 the Friends were delighted to receive notification of an award from the **Heritage Council of Victoria**, in recognition of the Friends' advocacy and promotion of the heritage of Geelong Botanic Gardens and the Friends' support of conservation of heritage structures within The Gardens, over thirty-four years. A \$2,000 award was received and a certificate of appreciation will be presented prior to the 2019 AGM.

In May 2019 the Friends once again supported Geelong Botanic Gardens in BGANZ's national celebration of **Botanic Gardens Day**, promoting The Gardens and the diversity of volunteering opportunities offered by the Friends. The Gardens provided educational activities for children and their families, whilst all volunteer groups participated with activities that showcased their volunteer roles. Many thanks to The Gardens staff and Friends who participated so willingly on this successful occasion.

In July 2018 representatives of the Friends attended the **farewell** function for retiring Manager of Parks and Gardens **Grant Baverstock**. The Friends have valued Grant's support and the collaborative relationship has been a very positive one for the Friends and Geelong Botanic Gardens.

It was with pleasure that the Friends **welcomed** incoming Manager of Parks and Gardens **Heath Chasemore**. The Friends look forward to a productive and collaborative relationship with Heath and wish him well in this role.

Representatives attended a morning tea, hosted by City of Greater Geelong, to acknowledge volunteer groups who held activities during **2018 Seniors Month** in October. The Friends had provided a Seniors morning tea and guided walk to promote the The Gardens and the Friends.

Membership of the Friends

Overall membership of the Friends has remained constant, with approximately 360 individuals, including a volunteer base of approximately 62 members. It is pleasing that, as our membership ages, new members and volunteers have been steadily joining the Friends.

With the demise of the Geelong Pelargonium Society our corporate membership now sits at four. The Friends continue to share the Meeting Room facilities with our remaining corporate members: Geelong Field Naturalists; Geelong Orchid and Indoor Plant Club and Geelong Organic Gardeners and the Herb Society.

Professional Development

To remain viable and relevant, organisations must regularly offer professional development and training to active members and staff.

During this financial year the Friends funded:

- the registration fees for five Guides to attend the biennial Guides Conference, to be held in Perth in late 2019.
- six volunteers to attend a First Aid update training course. Approximately twelve volunteer first aiders have their qualifications updated on a rotational basis.
- three volunteers to update their Responsible Serving of Alcohol certificates.

Geelong School of Botanical Art

The Geelong School of Botanical Art provides the Friends with a source of income and an opportunity for members and the public to receive tuition from nationally and internationally recognized artists.

The Geelong School of Botanical Art is a registered business governed by the Friends Committee. The School is administered by the Friends Office, working with a sub-committee comprising Representatives from the Friends Committee and from the School. For the last twelve months convener Judy Lavery and office manager Tracey Tilbury have worked with the Friends Committee and the sub-committee, preparing for the School's biennial art exhibition, to be held in August 2019.

The exhibition of students' artwork, held at the Friends' 2018 Christmas Drinks, again showcased beautiful works created from the Geelong School of Botanical Art.

In November 2018 the School hosted eminent British artist Jess Shepherd to conduct a well-attended botanic workshop, which supplemented workshops provided by the School's tutors.

In January 2019 new contracts for the School's contract tutors were negotiated, which better reflect the value of their expertise and experience in the field of botanic art.

In January 2019 the School welcomed botanic art tutor Deb Chirnside. Deb joins John Pastoriza-Pinol, Amanda Ahmed and Dolores SK Malloni, forming a team of tutors with outstanding artistic and teaching ability.

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.

Publications

One of the purposes of the Friends is to publish and disseminate, among members and the community, a newsletter relating to Friends activities. From 2018 **Jubaea magazine** is published three times a year instead of quarterly, to allow the production team, Editor Luanne Thornton and Tracey Tilbury, the ability to produce a more substantial magazine. It continues to be printed by Gordon TAFE and distributed electronically to most members.

The History group, that formed to write a **History of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens**, took the decision in 2018 to concentrate on completing an extensive timeline of events, rather than the exhaustive project of writing a book. Many thanks to Annie McGeachy, Jayne Salmon, Luanne Thornton and Marilyn Roberts for the painstaking task of recording and completing the documentation in 2019.

Promotion of the Friends

The Friend's **Social Media** presence on Instagram, Facebook and Website continues to extensively promote activities and events related to the Friends and GBG. Thanks to Judy Fyfe and staff members Tracey Tilbury and Sally Bird for maintaining the website and regular Facebook and Instagram updates.

5000 promotional DL cards have been printed and distributed to local businesses and Information Centres, along with colourful events flyers and regular advertising in Geelong "What's On" magazine. These successfully promote Friends activities and events.

Interviews throughout the year on local radio have given the Friends opportunities to promote particular events that are of interest to the public

In 2018 the Friends' Guides initiated the production of **screen-printed fabric tote bags**, featuring the Friends' logo, for use during guided walks, to further promote the Friends.

Friends Volunteer Activities

Another of the Friends' purposes is to provide events and activities for members and the public.

Volunteers provide opportunities for members and the public to actively participate and engage in Friends events. Volunteering provides opportunities to advocate for the Gardens and strong participation is essential to generating income, which in turn allows the Friends to support the GBG. Sincere thanks to our amazing volunteers for their tireless work and valuable contributions to the Friends and to the advancement of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

The Friends Committee continues to meet monthly, being responsible for the smooth management and governance of the Friends. Two members meet monthly for briefings with the GBG Director. In 2018/'19 Committee undertook a complete review of the insurance needs of the Friends, staff, the Geelong School of Botanical Art and the art tutors. A comprehensive suite of insurance now covers all Friends' affairs and events.

The Guides continue to be vibrant and innovative. In 2019 Cherry Collins passed the role of Guides

Coordinator to Gwen Anderson. Many thanks for Cherry's invaluable contribution. The Guides' successful U3A course and Guides Training Course have continued in 2019. Professional development at meetings educates Guides to a very high standard of training.

Perennial Border, Heritage Rose and Silver Border volunteers work with GBG staff to maintain some of the most admired aspects of the Gardens. These groups have successfully increased their volunteer numbers this year and the beautiful results of their work are appreciated by all who visit the Gardens.

The Growers' Nursery continues to set record high sales at the seasonal Plant Sales. In 2018 Coordinator Leanne Barnes joined Roz Hill and Liz Moss to form a management team in the Nursery. Emphasis has been on creating a safe and productive workplace and a practical Growers Handbook has assisted volunteers. This year has seen greenhouse temperature monitoring and the purchase of new display shelves.

Library and Plant Data Base volunteers support Nursery Growers, members and GBG staff. Librarian Luanne Thornton has overseen the cataloguing and distribution of many books that have been donated to the library. Marilyn Roberts has managed the collation and archiving of hundreds of documents from founder George Jones' collection of horticultural notes and recorded Friends history.

Sub-groups

- Finance Committee assists the Treasurer and Office Staff with financial matters and budgets, making financial recommendations to Committee.
- Publications Committee publishes the Friends magazine Jubaea
- Marketing and Promotions Committee makes recommendations to promote GBG and the Friends, and to attract membership and participation in Friends activities.
- The Botanic Art Sub- Committee manages the Geelong School of Botanical Art
- Events Committee organizes events and activities for members and the public. Events in 2018/'19 have included a movie nights; guest speakers, featuring Dr Pina Milne, Liz Bennetto, Beth Ross, Lachlan Forbes and Alison Pouliot; cooking demonstration; permaculture workshop; bus trips to Colac and Werribee areas; Through the Garden Gate; Mt Rothwell Conservation Park tour; Winter Lunch; Volunteer Week lunch; Seniors' Week morning tea and guided walk; Annual Christmas Fair and members' Christmas Drinks.

Thanks:

The Annual Report acknowledges, with thanks, Friends administration staff-members Tracey Tilbury and Sally-Ann Bird, who provide great support to the Committee, the members and the public. Their professionalism and welcoming dispositions are much appreciated by all.

The Friends would like to thank the Management team and staff of Geelong Botanic Gardens for their collaboration and assistance throughout the year.

After seven years Friends Vice President Anthea Williams is retiring from Committee. Ro Richards and Glenda Guest are also finishing their time on Committee. On behalf of the Friends we thank them for their outstanding contributions and wish them well.

Sincere thanks to all volunteers who have contributed to the Friends affairs, events and activities and to the members who have supported them. Active participation of members contributes not only to the advancement of Geelong Botanic Gardens but enhances the experience of being a member of the Friends.

It is a pleasure and privilege to report on and lead such a vibrant and diverse organization as Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Allison Martland

President FGBC

August 2019