

FGBG ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2014-15

The past year has been another busy one for the Friends.

* **FGBG President** : the FGBG Committee of Management received and reluctantly accepted the resignation of our President, Judith Trimble, early in May. We are very grateful for Judith's long service to the FGBG, particularly for her involvement in the restoration project for the Ladies' Kiosk in Eastern Park and her work in early planning of the AAFBG Conference to be held in 2016. The two Vice-Presidents, Allison Martland and Susanna Keith, have been sharing the role of Acting President, prior to election of office bearers at the AGM.

* **30th Birthday Celebrations**: the FGBG have celebrated 30 years since the first meeting in 1985. In April volunteers enjoyed a walk in the Gardens, followed by a delicious morning tea to celebrate the occasion. The Scottish Piper and pearls were a lovely touch.

* **AAFBG Conference 2016**: the FGBG are hosting the biennial national conference of the Aust. Association of Friends groups in April/May 2016, based at the Geelong Conference Centre in Eastern Park. The theme is "Geelong – Regional Relevance: Botanic Environments and Their Survival in a Time of Global Warming". The Conference Committee has been very busy organising a programme of guest speakers and social activities, as well as pre- and post-conference bus tours to showcase the Geelong region.

* **Open Gardens**: "Arundel" (Helena Buxton and Gerard Mullaly) and "Aroha" (Gwen and Malcolm Anderson) were two of the last gardens opened before the end of "Open Gardens Australia", which wound up on 30th June 2015. In addition several gardens belonging to FGBG members were opened for "Through-the-Garden-Gate" in Nov. 2014. A very successful Composting Workshop was held at "Arundel". Special thanks to Helena & Gerard for catering for this. Our thanks go to all of these members who generously welcomed visitors into their gardens, promoting the Friends and raising significant funds for the FGBG.

Guest Speakers: we welcomed several guest speakers who visited Geelong to speak to our members. Dr Anne Vale, spoke about "Designing with Australian Plants" when she told us about a number of well known garden designers.

Local gardener, Lorna Martin, spoke about her experiences assisting physical and emotional bush fire recovery through gardening, at Labourtouche in 2009. Lorna is also involved in the establishment of a Community Garden at the new Karingal development in East Geelong. Janet O'Heir, our guest speaker at our wonderful Winter Solstice Lunch at Jack Rabbit Winery, spoke passionately about her involvement with the Camperdown Botanic Garden.

Library: our well organised Library and Plant Data Base volunteers provide an important role within the Friends. Meticulously kept Newspaper files have been well used this year.

* **FGBG Guides**: under the leadership of Liz Bennetto, a number of new Guides have completed their training and are now part of the Guiding team. The Guides' programme is a very active one with regular walks on Wednesdays and Sundays, as well as special occasion

walks. We do appreciate the time and effort the Guides put into showcasing our excellent Botanic Gardens to visitors from far and wide, now including travellers from the cruise ships.

* **Growers, Perennial Border and Heritage Rose Growers:** these groups of FGBG volunteers are always very busy and this year has been no exception. Plant sales at the Open Gardens supplemented the takings of the seasonal Plant Sales and regular Wednesday nursery sales. Thanks to Roz Hill and the Growers, takings in the past year have been record breaking. The Perennial Border and Rose Gardens continue to delight Members and the public alike.

* **Botanic Art:** the Botanic Art classes are a major source of pride and income for the Friends. Helena Buxton coordinates the exceptional exhibitions during the year, including the beautiful “Vessels” exhibition held during our Members’ Christmas drinks last year. The “Inspired by Nature” exhibition will be held at the Wintergarden in October. We also look forward to an exhibition at the Geelong Gallery as part of the 2016 Conference programme.

* **Ladies’ Kiosk:** meetings have been held with CoGG staff to co-ordinate progress on the restoration of the Ladies’ Kiosk. Work is due to commence in September and hopefully will be finished before the end of the year. Thanks to Annie McGeachy and Judith Trimble for all their hard groundwork in securing and establishing this project.

* **Events:** bus trips such as the one to Lambley Nursery and Creswick are always very popular and well supported. Our annual “Through the Garden Gate” featured gardens in the inner Geelong suburbs, as well as the Geelong College Environmental Garden and the Geelong West Community Garden. Our first Cinema fundraiser, “Gardening with Soul” at the Pivotonian, was a great success. The change of venue and format of the Winter Lunch were also very successful and our Patron, Dr Philip Moors, was delighted to attend.

* **Committee:** has been revising a number of important policies, including our Professional Development Policy for Members and Staff. We have been working with GBG Director, Annette Zealley, on a range of OHS policies and procedures. These are necessary to ensure the safety of everyone involved with the Gardens, in particular our Volunteers. An updated Friends’ Members’ Handbook, a Code of Conduct and a Harassment and Bullying Prevention policy are recent Committee initiatives that make us a truly modern workplace. However, the friendship and passionate advocacy for the Gardens that the Friends are so well known for are still at the heart of all decision making.

Thanks: staff Tracey Tilbury and Sally Bird deserve special thanks for their excellent work maintaining our Office and supporting Committee and Members. We thank all our tireless Volunteers for their dedication and our Members for their support during the year. In the Friends’ 30th year it’s with pleasure that we recognise and thank Jayne Salmon for her outstanding 30 years on the Committee. Finally we thank all members of the Committee of Management for their ongoing support, contribution and commitment to the Friends.

Allison Martland and Susanna Keith

FGBG Vice-Presidents/Acting Presidents