

AAFBG President's Report 2017-18

After the challenges of 2016-17 this past year has been one of consolidation.

We farewelled Lisa Tuck, our outstanding part time administration officer who has gone on to be the National Executive Officer for the Garden History Society. On behalf of the Committee I thank Lisa for her all her work and guidance and wish her well in her new position.

You may have noticed that Lisa is helping us out at this conference because her replacement, Ro Noone, has a daughter who is being married over this weekend and Lisa very kindly volunteered to help out.

Of course, we welcome Ro back to the Association after a sojourn overseas.

I thank the committee for their commitment and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in the coming year.

I am especially grateful to our Secretary, Elizabeth Gilfillan, for her advice and commitment to the Association. I also particularly thank Kathy Wright, our Treasurer, for keeping our modest finances in order.

Which brings me to the question of ongoing funding. As you will see from the Treasurer's Report, the Association needs about \$14000 a year to undertake our basic functions. About \$4000 of this comes from membership subscriptions and the balance over the past two years has been made up by donations of \$10000 a year from the Handbury Trust. Those donations have ceased as of last year. We have sufficient funds in the bank to sustain ourselves in tickover mode for the next two years. Those funds came both the Handbury donations (which stretched over five years) plus Conference profits, something which did not occur following the 2016 Conference and is likely not to occur following the 2018 Conference where we will come close to breaking even.

This means that for us to be financially sustainable in the long term, we will have to vigorously explore avenues for corporate or philanthropic funding in the coming year as well as ensure that the 2020 conference in Brisbane is more financially successful. Increasing subscriptions to cover the shortfall is not an option as it would see smaller Friends' groups most likely leave the Association.

It is clear that a major effort will need to be made over the next twelve months to rectify this situation and I will be looking to the Committee to play a major role in this effort.

While on the matter of our funding, we have recently become aware of rumours circulating in Melbourne questioning how we spend our funds. An examination of our Treasurer's report clearly shows that each dollar is properly accounted for. As a further measure of accountability the Treasurer's, Secretary's and this report will be placed on our website for all to examine.

Over the past year we have detected a worrying trend of funding decreases for Council-owned regional gardens with more responsibility being put on volunteer input. We have provided a letter of support to the Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens, which we understand assisted in having a proposed funding reduction turned around. We have also written letters to the editors of the Transcontinental newspaper in Port Augusta and the Adelaide Advertiser following a proposed dramatic reduction in funding for the Arid Lands Botanic Garden in Port Augusta. I have not heard the outcome of our efforts in this regard at the time of writing this report.

We are always glad to assist Friends' groups in these circumstances to let them know that they are not alone and have a peak body to assist with influencing decision makers.

Our regular *E-ucalypt News* electronic newsletter continues to be a success amongst our members as is the longer form hard copy *Eucalypt*. What we would like to see more of is the more widespread distribution of the *E-ucalypt* to Friends' group's members rather than have it received by a Secretary and noted as incoming correspondence at their next committee meeting.

Once again I thank all the members of the Committee for their assistance and support over the past year. I am glad that they have all chosen to renominate for their positions as I think it demonstrates that the Association is a worthwhile cause to be identified with.

This coming year will be the last in office for our Secretary, Elizabeth Gilfillan, who will be stepping down at the next Annual General Meeting following a long very productive association with AAFBG. In addition, my term as President will be coming to an end and I will be required to step down also. Filling Elizabeth's position is especially important as the Association cannot operate without a Secretary so identifying a replacement will be a focus of governance responsibilities during the next twelve months.

Finally. I look forward to the coming year with confidence in the Association to address its challenges and to produce good governance for our members as well as to further develop roles and functions to assist our members.

Dennis Ayliffe
President.

15 April 2018