



## AAFBG SECRETARY REPORT 2016-17

### **Moving forward and looking back.**

A predominant feature of the Friends organisation is warmth and goodwill. In a rapidly changing world, the role of Friends has never been more crucial and necessary as we enjoy and contribute to our environment, we adapt to the changes around us.

Sincere thanks to our President Dennis Ayliffe for his steady leadership and work for your Association. The changes to the Rules and Purposes will stand in good stead for the future.

We thank our Patron Phillip Moors for his continued patronage and valuable message of welcome on the new website.

Sometimes it is good to refresh the memory of our past and re connect with the beginning, some will be familiar with our history. There are numerous Botanic Gardens Australia wide, in 1985 for Victoria's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, in conjunction with the State Gov. botanic gardens were given much needed long overdue assistance for rejuvenation to acknowledge Von Mueller's outstanding contribution to Botany and Horticulture in Victoria, \$10,000 was donated to 15 Botanic Gardens by 15 German/Australian companies. One of the stipulations of the grant was that botanic gardens had an associated group of Friends to act as future watchdogs for the Gardens. In 1991 the Friends of RBG Melbourne in particular Secretary Lawrence Cohn invited representatives of Botanic Gardens throughout Victoria to a seminar to discuss matters of common interest and with local authorities. The seminar was so successful it was repeated the following year, resulting in the establishment of an umbrella organisation and the formation of AFBG incorporated in 1993 with 18 members. In 2001 due to increasing interest your Association became the National body, AAFBG. The new Rules changes will better reflect this.

As pointed out by past president Janet Thompson OAM we cannot live in isolation we should always look at the broader picture, believing it would be to our detriment not to do so. It is the major Gardens with strong infrastructure and support that we look to.

We are not always Friends ! One of our members Janet O'Hehir from Camperdown, so succinctly adds. In the course of advocacy we often take a role not quite so familiar, as we battle funding cuts and changing management structures. A collaborative approach holds an extremely strong message.

Our major Australian Botanic Gardens have always been involved in and part of your Association, with representatives from nearly all states on committee. Over the past six months it has been a great pleasure to meet with Sydney Foundation and Marketing Louisa Goodall and speak with CEO of Friends Debbie Mills, also meet with Mary Ward new president of Melbourne Friends, we are all working together to form closer ties to benefit all our members.

Your Association enjoys a close relationship with BGANZ and together we can develop ways to effectively support our Gardens.

So what is happening ? it was alarming to read recently that there are no botany degrees offered in UK universities now, in Australia courses are being cut, Burnley in Victoria the latest. Botany and Horticulture go hand in hand. Staffing and professional development potential is being lost, especially in regional areas. Is it lack of inspiration in our society ? it would appear there is a lot of work to be done and the connection of our Botanic Gardens can play a vital role.

Historically the community has been pivotal in the establishment of Botanic Gardens old and new. The development of Memorandums of Understanding with administrative bodies is crucial to protecting Friends identity from ever changing management structures.

You are Your Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens, we welcome your contributions and feedback. The new website is very fluid and more content from you will be added. The new E-ucalypt News is already generating good response. Thank you to Lisa Tuck and Wordsworth Communications, who have worked hard to ensure this.

The last of the Handbury Gift donations has now been received, totalling \$50,000 over the last 5 years this has been a wonderful asset and security for AAFBG. We give our sincere thanks to Dr Geoffrey Handbury for his generous belief in your Association.

Funding will be a continued focus for the committee to enable the Association to fulfil its purposes. The Strategic Plan will be an item for the year ahead.

Visiting Botanic Gardens on travels, and attending conferences is always an enjoyable pastime, meeting and learning all the time, we look forward to the Conference in Benalla next year and working with the Robyn Saunders and the Benalla committee as they plan the event. This is the first alternate AGM to be hosted outside Victoria, grateful thanks to ANBG, Dennis Ayliffe and Lesley Jackman ANBG President for generously hosting this year and for arranging such an enjoyable programme and thank you to all Garden representatives for travelling to join us here in Canberra.

Hope to meet you and you meet each other before too long. Best wishes to everyone in their Gardens for the year ahead.



Elizabeth Gilfillan  
AAFBG Secretary