



## Annual General Meeting 2024

### President's Report

The Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG) was incorporated in 1993, and its financial year is 1 April to 31 March. The highlight of this financial year was celebrating AAFBG's 30 years. The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and colleagues kindly hosted our day of celebrations on 5 May 2023, and provided guided walks in the gardens for the people who came. As part of the celebrations Members of the AAFBG Committee of Management also arranged, with the assistance of Jon Baines Tours Pty Ltd a very enjoyable day excursion to the Cranbourne Friends of Royal Victorian Botanic Gardens and to Cruden Farm. The Cranbourne Friends were also celebrating, it was their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### **Advocate, encourage and represent friends of gardens**

In our advocacy role we have supported members, and assisted with grant applications, which have been successful. As part of our program to encourage and support the growth of societies or associations interested in botanic, heritage and conservation of gardens, we have been identifying friends of gardens that would benefit from being involved with AAFBG, and recognising outstanding members.

We congratulate Friends of Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden in on their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and Friends of the Waite Arboretum for their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Both of these members are in South Australia.

A special feature of each year is the presentation of the **Handbury Awards**. These awards are named in honour of Geoff Handbury who made a significant donation a few years ago. They are not only recognition of the contribution of individual or Friends' member groups, the awards add to the reputation of Friends' groups and enhance acknowledgment from their Botanic Gardens management organisation, and local communities. Congratulations to this year's recipients:

Lisa Steven. Friends of Royal Botanic Garden Melbourne, VIC.

For outstanding contribution and dedication to the promotion, administration and wellbeing of RBGM through volunteering.

Glenys Bishop. Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, ACT.

For major contribution to education and research fostering the cause of Botanic Gardens through Guiding and volunteering.

Valerie Richards. Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens VIC.

For significant contribution to community leadership through the art and science of Botanical Art volunteer effort.

The Harvest Group. Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra, ACT.

For major contribution to community engagement, horticultural endeavour and fundraising through volunteer effort.

The Growing Friends. Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens VIC.

For long-standing significant contribution to horticulture and financial contribution through volunteering for major works.

The Bushland Restoration Project. Friends of Kings Park. WA.

For outstanding innovation and preservation of the natural environment by community engagement and volunteer effort.

### **Facilitate communication**

Communicating and sharing ideas, successes and challenges are important for all of our members. This sharing could be organizational and individual contacts, meetings, as well as our biennial conferences, and our publications *e-ucalypt newsletter* and *Eucalypt magazine*.

One of the attractive features of AAFBG for our members is the **tours** of gardens. They are another wonderful way to share ideas, successes and challenges not only at the gardens we visit, but also among the members of the tour group. As well as the tour to Cranbourne and Cruden Farm, we had a very enjoyable and successful tour of the Southern Highlands gardens 29 October – 4 November 2023.

### **Maintain a website**

Another special highlight of the year was launching the new map of AAFBG members on our website in May 2023, and it has been enhanced since then with direct links connecting to members' websites and the facility to plan a trip to several of our members' botanic gardens. Many of us have enjoyed using this as a way of planning our trips away to various parts of Australia. I would like to especially thank WordsWorth Communicating for professionally managing the AAFBG website and for valuable administrative assistance.

### **Publish and disseminate with members and community**

AAFBG publications are appreciated by our members, for being accessible in both electronic and print formats. Members contributed to our publications; a steady number of 25 members contributed several times this year to the *e-ucalypt newsletter*, and 12 of our member groups contributed articles to the *Eucalypt magazine*, an increase on previous years.

We thank WordsWorth communicating, the Secretary, and other members of the Committee of Management for their excellent respective roles with these publications. We also thank Anne Rawson for being an outstanding editor of the *Eucalypt magazine* for several years. She retired as editor during the year, then WordsWorth communicating carried the role until November, and we are now looking forward to Kate Heffernan being editor in the coming year.

### **Coordinate conferences**

One of the special features of the AAFBG is the biennial conferences and other get togethers. Friends of Maroochy Bushland Botanic Garden's conference team have been doing outstanding work in planning the conference 2024. This conference will be a real influence in addressing the challenges of change.

### **Build and maintain links with the national body representing Botanic Gardens**

AAFBG has encouraged members to participate with the Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ). Arrangements were made for a webinar on Friends involvement with Botanic Gardens as part of the program for Botanic Gardens Day in May 2024. John Bentley of Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens, and Tracey Whitby of Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens were representatives on that webinar.

BGANZ and the AAFBG agreed to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) several years ago. And progress was made during the year for an updated MOU, which is coming to fruition in the new financial year.

As far as reporting on the health of the Association I am pleased to say that it is in good health from both membership and financial perspectives. I would like to say a special thank you to all of our members, and to Bob Ducrou, the Secretary, and Neville Page our Honorary Accountant for their respective roles with the membership.

The Committee of Management is itself a marvellous group of people who very generously volunteer labour and intellectual power on a weekly basis to plan and organize things and solve problems along the way. All of them step up when an issue arises to contribute in various ways. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with them and I would especially like to thank Bob Ducrou, Secretary, Neville Page as our Honorary Accountant, Elizabeth Gilfillan, Gill Simons, Jill Brownlee, Kate Heffernan, Lynsey Poore, and Merrill Shulkes. I thank them warmly and sincerely for their support and guidance during this year.

There are impressive people involved with Friends of Botanic Gardens and the AAFBG for many years, and I pay tribute to them to.

Elizabeth Gilfillan is not renominating to be on the committee at this AGM, after more than a decade of outstanding work. Elizabeth received the Handbury Award in 2022, and she is planning to continue to be involved in projects related to the vision and goals of AAFBG. Nevertheless, she will be missed very much by committee members.

I had the pleasure of meeting Annie McGeachy OAM at the AAFBG's celebrations of 30 years. A remarkable representative of the AAFBG, for a very long time, Annie passed away recently. Although it happened after the official reporting period for this AGM, AAFBG would like to record this with much sadness. Annie was a valuable Friend, a colleague, and passionate Botanic Gardens advocate, and will be greatly missed.

A huge thank you all the people at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens for their wonderful work for this very enjoyable conference where we have shared and learned so much and for hosting us for the AAFBG AGM 2024.

A clear message from the conference is to seize the opportunities of change. We will be pursuing our objectives in the coming year and looking forward to our next AAFBG conference in 2026.

Linda Beveridge  
President