



Annual General Meeting 2023

Secretary's Report

Twelve months ago, at the Eurobodalla Conference, there were eight committee members in search of a Secretary. According to our Rules, we must have a President, a Treasurer and a Secretary to keep functioning. Anecdotal evidence suggests many Friends groups (and other incorporated Associations) have difficulty filling executive positions, something I'll come back to later. To complicate matters our Administration Officer had resigned.

After some protracted discussions, I agreed to try to fill the role of Secretary, but with some differences to the way we had been operating. Firstly, it was decided to try functioning without an Administration Officer, with a subsequent saving in operating expenses. Secondly, some of the functions of the Secretary and the Administration Officer would be taken on by Committee members to reduce the Secretary's workload. I have to say I fully supported this proposal. Also, our accounts were changed to MYOB and membership renewals generated by this platform were sent out for the first time.

Our President's Report has comprehensively covered the activities of the Association, so I don't intend to duplicate that. Speaking of our President, I would like to both congratulate and thank Linda for the huge role she has played in keeping this last year's transition on track. Linda was new to the Committee, but has been ever positive, ever enthusiastic, ever quick to acknowledge the efforts of others and ever full of ideas to advance the Association. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members for lightening my load and keeping me on the straight and narrow. A special thank you to Barb Schriver and Adel Urie from WordsWorth Communicating, who update and improve our website, monitor the mountain of emails we somehow generate and put together and publish the e-ucalypt newsletter. Thank you to Anne Rawson, our Eucalypt editor for many years and so good at the gentle reminder to members to contribute their news and promote the profile of their Gardens.

Mentioned above are three ways AAFBG reaches out to members – website, e-ucalypt news and Eucalypt magazine. We encourage all our members to access and distribute these valuable sources of information about your events, happenings and achievements (which we will only find out about with your input).

Speaking of input, one of the tasks of the Secretary is maintaining a register of members, which is why we ask a number of questions on the membership renewal form. The answers have revealed significant milestones achieved by our members in 2022/23:

40 Years	Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens Inc. Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Inc. Friends of North Coast Regional Botanic Garden Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens Ltd. Sydney
30 Years	Friends of Burrendong Arboretum Friends of Kings Park Inc Pangarinda Botanic Garden
20 Years	Friends of Burnley Gardens Inc.

Friends of Moama Echuca Botanic Gardens Inc.

10 Years Friends of Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum Trust Inc..
Friends of Noosa Botanic Gardens Inc.

Our next AGM will be held on 25 August 2024 at the Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens on the Sunshine Coast, as part of the 2024 AAFBG Biennial Conference. Now I mentioned at the start the problem of getting volunteers for committee positions. Indeed, mid-COVID, it seems to have become the problem of getting volunteers. COVID appears to have accelerated the rate of change in the 'world' we Friends inhabit. Changes in how to attract, keep and nurture our volunteers, changes in Friends /owner relationships (owner being Council for most of us), changes in how technology affects our interaction with gardens and visitors and, of course, climate change. That's what our Conference will be about - the challenge of change.

I ask that you all consider contributing, by way of presentation or workshop/discussion group, to how Friends can meet and overcome these challenges. We'd also like to hear from you about your successes in these areas so we can all benefit.

Looking forward to seeing you in 2024 on the Sunshine Coast.

Bob Ducrou