



## Annual General Meeting 2023

### President's Report

At the last AGM I was elected to the AAFBG Committee of Management. Afterwards I accepted the invitation to fill the casual vacancy of President. It is wonderful that many members of the committee had more experience with AAFBG and they have been wonderful during my strong learning curve.

The AAFBG was incorporated in 1993, 30 years ago, and we are grateful to the Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and colleagues who are not only hosting our Annual General Meeting this year, but have also arranged celebratory events. This included a day tour to Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and Cruden Farm, the morning tea celebrating people who have played integral roles in AAFBG over the years, and guided walks in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Such arrangements certainly make this AGM a very celebratory get-together.

AAFBG has greatly appreciated the wise patronage of Phil Moors AO for the past ten years and we were sorry to hear that he is now retiring from formal responsibilities. He told me that he felt it to be a real honour and privilege to be patron of the AAFBG, and has been delighted to see how the organisation has grown in its activities and membership over the years. Although the last few COVID years have been tough, Phil is confident that AAFBG will flourish now. Phil was unable to attend this Annual General Meeting because he is overseas, but kindly sent a message of farewell, thanks and best wishes.

It is a great pleasure that Dr Judy West AO has agreed to be patron of the AAFBG, and we warmly welcome her to that role. During her career Judy has promoted plant systematic research in Australia and raised the profile of Australian plant systematics through her participation on numerous national and international associations and committees. In 2009 Judy was appointed Executive Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens and head of Parks and Biodiversity Science in Federal Government. She has a great appreciation of the role that Friends organisations play in large and small botanic gardens.

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 the members and the Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens for their respective contributions to the AAFBG, and to Bob Ducrou, the Secretary, and Ahmed Rashedi for their respective roles with the membership.

Sharing ideas, successes and challenges are important for organisation that rely on collaboration. This sharing could be organisational and individual contacts, meetings, as well as our biennial conferences, *e-ucalypt newsletter* and *Eucalypt magazine*.

The Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) and the AAFBG agreed to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) several years ago. We are looking

forward to continuing with the MOU in the coming year.

There are members of AAFBG in every state and territory, and there have been times when we have been asked where they are. It is a great pleasure to see not only the list of members on the website, but also the map which is now on the home page of our website, and we launch that as part of our celebrations. In the next phase of this map, we shall have the facility to plan a trip to several of the Friends' botanic gardens that you wish to see, too.

I would like to especially thank WordsWorth Communicating for professionally managing the AAFBG website and for valuable administrative assistance.

During the year many of our gardens dealt with bad weather, and it is wonderful to see how the theme from the Eurobodalla conference 2022, *Thriving together: Resilience and Renewal in a Changing World*, has been evident in these locations as they made significant efforts to repair damage done by excessive rain and floods. We have liaised with various members about water management and put them in touch with other groups who have been addressing sound ways for water to be collected, stored, managed and used for the benefit of the gardens.

Friends of Maroochy Bushland Botanic Garden's conference team have been planning the next conference 2024. Bob Ducrou, the Secretary, is a member of that conference team and will be sending us more information. This conference will be a real highlight in a different area from others in recent years. The dates of 23-25 August 2024, plus tour on Monday 26 August are well worth saving.

We are also starting to look forward to our conference in 2026. We are looking forward to hearing from you if you wish to host the conference in that year.

Our publications are appreciated by our members, who like to hear about other Friends activities and they are very much appreciated for being accessible in both electronic and print formats. Twenty four of our members have contributed to the *e-ucalypt newsletter* this year, and 8 of our members contributed articles to the *Eucalypt magazine*. We thank the Secretary and Wordsworth Communicating for their excellent roles with these publications. We also thank Anne Rawson for continuing to edit the *Eucalypt magazine* at a high level.

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. Arrangements have been made for the tour of Southern Highlands gardens that will occur in 29 October – 4 November 2023. Preliminary information has been circulated and we anticipate that people will be booking early for this tour.

A special feature of the year is the presentation of the Handbury Awards. These awards are not only recognition of the contribution of individual or Friends' member groups, the awards add to the reputation of Friends' groups and hopefully lead to acknowledgement from their Botanic Gardens management organisation, and local communities. Congratulations to this year's recipients.

The committee of management is itself a wonderful group of people who volunteer labour and intellectual firepower on a weekly basis to plan and organise 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, Ahmed Rashedi, Treasurer, Elizabeth Gilfillan, Gill Simons, Jill Brownlee, Kate Heffernan, Lynsey Poore, and Merrill Shulkes. I thank them sincerely for their support and guidance during this year.

Linda Beveridge