



AAFBG PRESIDENT'S REPORT - AGM 19 JULY 2019

This will be my last Report as President of the Association. I have reached the limit of my term as set by the Rules of the Association.

Highlights of the past year have been:

- The success of the Conference at Benalla in Victoria in April 2018 which saw the introduction of the format of giving small regional friends' groups an opportunity to canvass their gardens to other likeminded members in short presentations. This was a conspicuous success and has provided a template for continuing this trend at future Conferences.
- The second major success was the sponsoring of a gardens tour of Singapore. Modeled on a tour carried out by the Friends of the National Arboretum we made a very useful \$5500 for a small outlay on advertising.
- Thirdly, with a lot of help of John Bentley, our Vice President, we partnered with his Friends of Melton Botanic Garden group to mount a display at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. It attracted a lot of interest from attendees and should become a regular fixture on the Association's calendar in future years.

The challenges that faced the Committee in the past year are not new:

- Firstly, we produce high quality interesting stories about our member groups and their gardens both through our *E-ucalypt* and *Eucalypt* newsletter and the challenge is how do we get them read by the members of our groups? Too often *Eucalypt* is sent to the Secretary of a group and sits on a table somewhere until it is binned.
- There is surprisingly little understanding about the role of the Association as a warehouse of information and a genuine peak body for all our members that advocates, facilitates and communicates. We have worked out that it costs each member of a Friends group around 40 cents per year to belong to the Association and they get a service where they can find out what other groups and their gardens are up to for that amount, fortnightly in the case of *E-ucalypt* and twice a year in the case of the *Eucalypt* and biennially at our Conferences. Very good value by any yardstick!
- The Conference in Brisbane next year promises to be a "cracker" involving celebrations of the visit of Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander to this country 250 years ago, some outstanding garden visits and a full program of related activities. Something not to miss and I strongly recommend that you attend.

It has been a privilege working with the Committee over the past three years and I thank them for their commitment and support, none more so than Elizabeth Gilfillan whose herculean efforts on your behalf were inspiring.

I also thank John Bentley for his commitment, advice and for the outstanding job he did in representing us at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. I also thank him for his generosity in offering to accomplish the same thing for next year's show as well as manage our presence on Facebook even though he has stood down from the Committee.

Kathy Wright's steady hand on the rudder of our modest finances was always reassuring and I thank her for sage advice over the past three years.

I must thank Ro Noone for her going above and beyond as our part time Administrative Assistant. She has kept the show on the road with a deft touch and quiet determination.

During my time as President I have visited several of our members especially in southeast Queensland while on short breaks from the Canberra winter. These gardens and their Friends groups have always been inspiring and I understand that several of them will be included in the tours associated with next year's conference. I urge those attending the event to make the effort to visit these gardens as you will not be disappointed.

Finally I congratulate Dr Wayne Harvey and the new Committee on their election success and I think you will find that the Association I hand over on behalf of the former Committee is in a reasonably robust state.

Dennis Ayliffe

President
2016-2019