

FMBG Annual Report July 2024 to June 2025

On behalf of the FMBG Committee I have pleasure in presenting the annual report for the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden (FMBG). This report covers the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who helps and supports FMBG. We have a wonderful and dedicated group of FMBG volunteers committed to volunteering and working hard. It has been another year of achievements and progress in developing, enhancing and maintaining the Melton Botanic Garden (MBG).

FMBG Meetings

We had a variety of guest speakers and topics for our meetings in 2024/25. The monthly meeting raffle was well supported, as we raised \$1,461. Thanks to Carlene Vukovic for organising and serving the supper for the meetings and those who assist, to Jill Bentley and Vee Beatty for the raffle, to Boro Vukovic and everyone who helps him set up and pack up, and to Barbara Frampton and Rob Stewart for opening and closing the venue.

Committee Meetings were held at the Brookfield Lifestyle facilities. Thanks to Mike Coveney for opening and closing the Brookfield meeting facility.

Membership

We achieved a membership total of 441 financial members on 30 June 2025 (previous year 444). Individual memberships were maintained at 414, the previous year was 415. It is positive to see us maintaining a strong financial membership base of over 400 individual members. We received support from businesses through corporate memberships and especially our sponsors Edible Eden Design and Newport Lakes Native Nursery.

FMBG Memberships											
30 June	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Individual	414	415	444	354	312	323	303	235	233	251	236
Corporate	26	28	24	21	22	19	16	16	18	10	10
Associate	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	4	4

Events

We held several new events during the year, we commenced nature sketching workshops at the garden, and, the nursery continued with their external sales events at Bacchus Marsh Flower and Garden Show, APS Geelong, and APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh.

Garden Development

Major areas in development include: 1) boardwalk area east with final toppings on paths, further planting and mulching; 2) further planting the Californian, Central and South American Garden; 3) replanting of some beds in the Mixed Garden Beds North; 4) redevelopment of the Western Australian and South Australian central beds; and 5) Sensory Garden informational plant signage.

We received funding from the Council budget of \$41,400 ex. GST, an increase on the previous year's amount as Council applied CPI. This funding is specifically to develop, enhance and maintain the garden. There are strict recording and reporting responsibilities we must comply with in expending public funds.

Garden Groups and Volunteer Hours

We have a range of active groups in the garden and supporting groups as listed in the volunteer hours table. Many thanks to the leaders of all groups and the volunteers working in each group.

Volunteer hours contributed (source: sign-in sheets):

Group/Activity	2024/2025	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Admin Team Depot	202	292	248	85	56	161
Bushies	78	70	231	-	3	6
Clean Up Days	65	106	158	75	78	118
Creekers	691	659	511	487	421	334
Grow The Garden	301	323	511	193	154	153
Guided Tour Volunteers	94	68	42	43	15	193
Gumnuts	2,195	1,764	1,935	1,401	1,458	1,509
IrisBG	39	56	-	-	-	-
Lakers	1,752	1,923	2,227	1,099	1,680	1,405
Mixed Garden Beds North	113	150	64	17	-	-
Nursery	2,989	2,466	2,940	2,530	2,005	2,150
Odd Jobbers	919	1,579	1,612	714	641	609
Schools/TAFE Volunteering	-	-	-	90	-	60
Safaris	66	364	309	527	399	548
Sombreros	86	49	-	-	-	-
Southerners	187	1,032	1,200	-	-	-
Sunseekers	10	-	-	-	-	-
Tweeters [!]	0	0	!	67	17	5
VVP/Koori Student Garden	63	58	!	-	12	-
Latham's Snipe Survey*	0	9	52	22	11	60
Required hours volunteers	5,583	5,241	2,885	5,074	6,197	8,765
Total Hours	15,433	16,209	14,925	12,678	13,152	16,186

*No snipe surveys due to other commitments. [!]Missing data.

The volunteer hours in the table show we have contributed over 15,433 hours which is a decrease of 776 hours. The Centre for Volunteering Calculator values our contribution as \$724,734. We have not reported all the other activities we do as volunteers, such as: Committee Meetings, various other meetings, project management, collecting plants, external events e.g., presentations, fundraising activities, and all those activities our volunteers do in their own time to support FMBG and the garden. Many volunteers use their own vehicles and are covering their running costs in many of our activities and in the garden. We have many volunteers who purchase or donate items without re-imbursement to support FMBG and our activities. All these contributions demonstrate what a dedicated and committed team of volunteers we have in FMBG. Congratulations to everyone!

We continued our program for volunteers on required hours. Without their wonderful assistance across the garden and in administration we would have difficulty developing and maintaining the garden.

Thanks to Anne Langmaid, Nursery Manager, and the whole nursery team in managing the propagation and sale of plants. The nursery had its largest ever sales revenue of \$31,487 ex. GST. The sale of plants continues to be the major source of funds at 63% of total operational revenue.

Thanks, and appreciation to Gayle McKerral for recording the volunteer hours from the sign-in sheets.

Guided Tours and Visitors

We have led several tours for specific events, festivals and groups. We have deliberately restricted the number of tours so we can focus on the garden development. Many thanks to everyone who has led tours, assisted with the guided tours and associated morning teas or lunches.

Collections and Plant Recording

Jennifer Peters has diligently been entering plant records into IrisBG and producing reports. Many thanks to Jennifer for her precise and hard work on this continuing work and for conducting a training session for volunteers. Paula Willy, our admin assistant, has been learning some aspects of IrisBG. Paula undertook a project to enter the details and location of all the garden seats and picnic tables onto IrisBG together with a photo of each installation. Garden Explorer continues to be used by visitors and volunteers. We have continued to add more information about the plants and features to Garden Explorer.

Garden Furniture

The Odd Jobbers installed 5 recycled plastic seats and one picnic setting in the garden. We thank them for their work in enhancing the garden through the furniture installations. We receive many positive comments about the number of the seats and their locations through Facebook and Google reviews.

Community Involvement in the Garden

Kurunjang Secondary College 'Hands on Learning' students have continued working with the Lakers.

The Lakers commenced having 4 Melton Special School students working with them on Thursday mornings. These students are undertaking their TAFE Certificate II in Horticulture and gaining practical experience at the botanic garden.

Promotion

We continued our strong presence on social media and through our web page. FMBG and volunteers appeared in the Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly several times. The garden has been mentioned more by Council in its communications through printed material, social media, and the local newspaper.

Our patron, Jane Edmanson OAM, has been continuing to promote FMBG at events she attends and has visited the Friends and Melton Botanic Garden a couple of times during the year.

Presentations given to other groups focus on the development, existing gardens, and plants of the MBG. Thanks to Max Thompson who has commenced giving presentations to groups this year.

Social Media

Our social media numbers have increased in all areas, except X(Twitter).

*30 June	2025	% chg	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
MBG FB Page Followers	3330	2.8%	3240	2,897	2,619	2,174	1,741
Nursery FB Page Followers	1566	2.1%	1534	1,480	1,258	1,027	725
FMBG FB Page Followers	293	19.1%	246	188	151	121	96
FMBG FB Group Members	129	-87.5%	1036	919	818	695	493
Twitter Followers	123	-8.2%	134	139	140	138	137
Instagram Followers	977	5.9%	923	845	793	706	454

*NR – Not Recorded. *NA -Not Available. *FB have ceased likes on MBG page (only Followers is used)

Farewell

Sadly, we had to say farewell to Steve and Ella, who were curating the Southern African Garden, as they had to move to Maryborough, but they remain FMBG members. Chris Trippet, who curated the Mediterranean Region Garden, sadly passed away due to cancer.

Thanks

Many thanks to everyone who actively contributed during the year in so many ways. Thank you to every financial member, as you are supporting the Friends and helping to make FMBG one of the larger friends of botanic gardens groups in the State of Victoria.

Thanks to everyone who has volunteered at the botanic garden by propagating, maintaining, weeding, watering, and planting, mulching, making paths etc.

Thank you to Mike Coveney, who became Treasurer.

A thank you to Adrian Cope, the FMBG Liaison Officer at Melton City Council. Adrian helps to address Melton Botanic Garden issues and action them.

Many thanks to everyone assisting in our fundraising efforts. Thanks to Vee Beaty for managing the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme bins. The scheme has raised over \$500.

Thanks to the Admin Team for their work, which many of us do not see directly.

The **FMBG Committee** continued its dedicated work and operated as a strong team. The Committee has ensured we are a well-run volunteer organisation in Melton and the wider community.

The committee members have been Jill Bentley, Stewart Brown, Mike Coveney, Barbara Frampton, Jennifer Peters, Jenny Stewart, Robin Stewart, Max Thompson and Margaret Wood AM. Thanks to each of our committee members who have used their experience, skills and knowledge through their teamwork, discussion, research, honest feedback, and decision making in the management of FMBG. Special thanks to Jenny Stewart for her contribution to the Committee. Jenny is not re-nominating.

Many thanks to Barbara Frampton for a superb job as Secretary and Public Officer since 2016. Barbara is now stepping down from the committee after continuing an extra year and has completed 9 years as Secretary. Barbara initially took on the role for 3 years. It has been her invaluable commitment in this role supporting the committee and FMBG that has helped be a well-run organisation. Everything Barabara has done is greatly appreciated.

All our achievements and efforts are due to your support, dedication and contribution, providing a strong foundation for us to continue our work to achieve our mission and goals. Many thanks.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 10 September 2025

Mission: To enrich the community and the environment by fostering, promoting and supporting the development and activities of the Melton Botanic Garden.