

FMBG Annual Report July 2018 – June 2019

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 2018 to 30 June 2019.

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who helps and supports FMBG. We had another year with many outstanding achievements which include: developing new garden beds and maintaining and enhancing the established sections of the garden. We celebrated our 15th Anniversary year with a number of activities including an Open Day in September and a celebratory lunch in November at the garden. The anniversary cake was donated and made by Jean Partridge. Many thanks to Jean for the cake which was enjoyed by everyone.

FMBG submitted its first charity annual report to the ACNC in March 2019 as a requirement of our being granted charity status in late 2017.

We were pleased to be nominated as a finalist in the Keep Victoria Beautiful Awards and then to be announced the winners of the 'Protection of the Environment' Award for the island project. Congratulations to the Lakers and Islanders group.

The trivia night raised funds for a discreet project in the Melton Botanic Garden. The project chosen was to paint the dead tree in the Southern African Garden 'Aloe Red' in May and the tree was officially launched by the Mayor Cr. Bob Turner at the BGANZ National Botanic Gardens Day. The red tree has attracted lots of admiration and drawn people to the garden. It is used as a meeting point at the botanic garden.

Planting commenced along the south side of the lake along the Botanic Trail (Lake Walk) on National Tree Day with over 100 participants including our patron Jane Edmanson, Deputy Mayor Cr. Ken Hardy and district Scouts.

Guided Tours and Visitors

This has been another good year for guided tours and presentations. It is consistent with previous years but with new groups of visitors and some returning groups. Visitors participating on our guided tours were from far and wide. We provided tours to both small and large groups.

Guided tours have helped to bring in donations and plant sales that contribute to our funds. Thanks to everyone who helped with the guided tours and presentations. The number of visitors and guided tours shows an increase in patronage of the botanic garden. Public guided tours included: Seniors Festival, the Sustainable Living Festival, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week all attracting a range of visitors. We held the seventh and eighth annual garden tours for Councillors and Melton City Council staff in October 2018 and again in March 2019. Thanks go to our tour guides: Alan and Jean Partridge, Barbara Frampton, David and Barb Pye, Steve and Ella Parker, Jill Bentley, Anne Langmaid and Jen Eldridge. Many thanks to everyone who help with tours as we receive positive feedback about our welcoming, hospitality and provision of refreshments.

We participated in the fourth Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand Botanic Gardens Day on 26th May. This year we had reasonable weather including some sunshine. The big hit of the day was the guided tours on the Lions Club of Bacchus Marsh train. Thanks to Greater Western Community Band for the live music, Melton CWA Owls for providing refreshments and Bunnings and the Artist's Collective of Melton for the Children's activities. Thanks to everyone who made this day a success.

FMBG Meetings

Over the year we had a good line up of guest speakers at our meetings. Four notable presentations were John Arnott in August on the “Care for the Rare” program, Attila Kapitany on “Succulents in Future Garden Design” in November, Simon Rickard in March on “Heirloom Vegetables” with this meeting sponsored by Western Water and Stephen Ryan in May on “Rare and Unusual Plants”. Getting these speakers, organising meetings and preparing the calendars happens because of the great teamwork in Committee on these tasks and the roles the Committee members take on.

The monthly meeting raffle continues to provide the group with funds to assist with the meeting expenses. The end of year celebration was held at the Depot and was our last event in our anniversary year. There was a good turnout of new and longer term members with another great raffle with prizes contributed by local businesses. Many thanks to Vee and Jill for doing the raffles.

Volunteer Hours

The table below shows the volunteer hours contributed through the Depot sign-in sheets and school/TAFE contributions:

Group/Activity	2018/19 Hours	2017/18 Hours
Creekers	538	675
Bushies	-	41
Clean Up Day	193	129
Botanic Gardens Day	219	175
Depot	296	279
Schools/TAFE Volunteering	210	112
Grow The Garden	215	131
Guided Tour Volunteers	223	44
Gumnuts	1,391	1,052
Lakers	1,018	934
National Tree Day	220	150
Nursery	2,695	3,023
Odd Jobbers	670	573
Open Day	273	-
SSG (PAG)	74	174
Sandgroppers	-	196
Safaris	513	512
Tweeters	29	64
VVP	12	36
Water Babies	160	-
Council Annual Tour	20	-
Latham’s Snipe Survey	29	26
Required hours volunteers	7,711	4,232
2018/19 Total Hours	16,709	
2017/18 Total Hours		12,558



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The volunteer hours in the table show we have contributed over 16,709 hours which is an increase of 3,931 hours or 31% over 12,558 hours in 2017/18 9,100 hours 2016/17 and 6,500 hours in 2015/16. At the minimum wage rate of \$18.93/hr (1 July 2018) this equates to \$316,301 of volunteer hours value. However, the work we do is of a higher value than the minimum wage and many grant applications cost the volunteer contribution at \$25/hr which adds \$100,000 value to the total minimum wage value. Also, we have not taken into account all the other activities we do for volunteers activities such Committee Meetings, Working Party Meetings, other meetings, project management, collecting plants, external events e.g. MIFGS is about 130 hours, presentations, fundraising activities such as Bunnings etc. and all those activities our volunteers do in their own time to support FMBG and the garden. We must not forget the volunteers who use their vehicles covering their running costs in many of our activities and in the garden. We have many volunteers who purchase or donate items without re-imburement to support FMBG and our activities. All these contributions demonstrate what a dedicated and committed team of volunteers we have in FMBG. Well done everyone!

We continued a strong 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. Many have taken on specific curator roles for parts of the garden. Special thanks to Daryl Harris who helps coordinate these volunteers and he generously gives extra time to open and close the Depot and gates from Tuesday to Thursday at 8am and closing up at 1.30pm.

Our active groups in the garden and supporting groups are: Bushies group (Steve Leyden), Creekers (Alan Partridge), Gumnuts/Sandgropers (David and Barb Pye), Lakers (Jill Bentley), Odd Jobbers (John Bentley), Safaris (Steve and Ella Parker), Sun-seekers (Wayne Fergeus), Tweeters group (Jill Bentley), Water Babies (Jill Bentley) and the Nursery Team (Anne Langmaid). Many thanks to Steve Parker who volunteers for Safaris on Saturdays as he works during the week. We have again inducted an increased number of new volunteers.

Thanks to Elaine Neely as Depot Housekeeping Coordinator and her helpers for cleaning the depot and toilets. The cleanliness we experience is due to their effort and diligence. However, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the Depot and areas are kept clean. Many thanks to the leaders and volunteers who participate in the groups as their work can certainly be seen both in the development of the garden beds and the visitor experiences. We continue to receive positive comments from new and returning visitors about the development of the garden, the great work by the volunteers, the ensuing beautification of the area and the plant collections.

Nursery

Thanks to Anne Langmaid as Nursery Manager and her team in managing the propagation and sale of plants. The sale of plants continues to be the major single source of funds to cover our operating expenses and helps support new projects and plants for the garden. There has been an increase in overall plant sales from the previous year.

Promotion

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

We appeared in the Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly regularly throughout the year. We have a strong presence on social media and through our web page.

We continued our promotion of the botanic garden at the Djerrivarrh Festival, Bunnings Spring Launch, Bacchus Marsh Flower and Garden Show, and APS plant sale events by Geelong, Yarra Yarra, and Bendigo groups. At the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show 2019



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(MIFGS) we set up under the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens banner in a marquee in the gardens. We had a reduced space for our display but being outside we had greater engagement with visitors than previous years. We fully staffed the display for the whole show and had plenty of visitor interaction resulting in memberships, visits, guided tours and requests for presentations. The Discovery Table was popular and attracted visitors to the marquee. We got to work with volunteers from other Friends groups. The FMBG marquees, tables, and display boards were used for the AAFBG stand. Thanks to Daryl and Jill in helping set up and pack up the stand and to those who volunteered during the show.

We continue to give presentations to various groups in Melton and beyond. These focus on the development, existing gardens and plants of the Melton Botanic Garden. The Melton Environment Group again hosted a successful Bird Week activity and a bird walk at the MBG.

Externally, John Bentley continued as a Vice-President of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens and as the FMBG representative on the Plant Trust Committee.

Many visitors are taking photos and writing reviews of their visit supplying positive feedback and encouraging others to visit.

Our corporate members have continued their support and contributions to the development of the MBG. Bunnings Melton have assisted with provision of materials for our activities, the depot and garden.

Garden Development

New garden areas have been created and others further developed. Major activities in development include: 1) the Mixed Garden Beds in the north section of the garden by the Matchworks Work Experience Activity Team and this project area is now being completed by regular volunteers – all beds have plants in them with many more plants to be added; 2) the preparation and planting of the south side of the Lake along the Lake Walk concrete path.

Work on existing gardens continued: 1) the remaining crushed rock paths in the Eucalyptus Arboretum were surfaced with Tuscan Toppings; 2) further plantings were done in the main garden beds in all our established gardens, along the creek and around the lake.

Melton City Council completed the shared path from High St into the MBG along Ryans Creek North.

Garden signage

We have been adding plant flag labels to enhance the visitor experience and have started to create wooden angled garden bed information signs. The first was installed in the Mediterranean bed in the Mixed Garden Beds North area. Many thanks to Robin Stewart for this work with Odd Jobbers on constructing the angled signage.

Seating

Installation of seating was completed by Morgan Roberts with a seat to commemorate the 15th Anniversary of FMBG at the North Pond, a Lions Club of Melton 50th Anniversary seat near the Lake and two seats with one recognising the work of the volunteers and the other the work of Barb and David Pye in developing and supporting the garden. We thank Morgan for his work and dedication in the seat installations and all our seat donors for helping improve amenities in the garden for our visitors.

Work Experience Activity Team

The Matchworks' Work for the Dole program finished in July. We have achieved much development of the garden through this government program since 2011 and appreciate working with the team over the years. Some team members have continued on as FMBG volunteers. The program's achievements can be clearly seen in the garden and depot.

We said farewell to Morgan Roberts as the Team Supervisor in July 2018 when the program ended. Morgan continues to help in the garden as a regular volunteer.

Community Involvement

We have continued to involve the community and other groups in FMBG activities. We are constantly seeking opportunities to develop relationships and involve others. We continue to demonstrate our motto "Growing Plants, Growing People" in what and how we do things. This is very much seen in the diversity of our volunteers and groups we work with.

The Planned Activity Group have continued to assist each month in pot washing, propagation, and planting on the Lake Walk. We thank Elaine, Linda, Jill and the FMBG volunteers who work with them.

Bacchus Grammar School Year 9 students worked in the garden at the end of each term as part of their community involvement program. The program is into its sixth year with FMBG.

Our involvement with District Scouting led to another successful National Tree Day with over 100 participants, the majority being Joeys, Cubs, Scouts and their families planting on the Lake Walk on the south side of the lake. Many thanks to Janet Dyke for organising the participants.

The Melton Wildflower Girl Guides applied for and received a Junior Landcare Grant to revegetate a section of the Lake. We look forward to working with the Girl Guides on this project. FMBG volunteers commenced the weed control in preparation for planting.

Council Funding

We now receive base funding from the council budget of \$35,000 each year to 2023 for development of the Melton Botanic Garden and it is expended as per the FMBG budget plan.

Working Party

Thanks go to David and Barb Pye for their continuing oversight of the MBG Working Party with Barb as Chair and David as Secretary to the group. There is always an action list produced and detailed minutes to keep us on track and record the matters discussed. Three Working Party Meetings were held during the year.

Membership

Our membership has increased to 303 individuals at the 30 June 2019. This is a significant increase from the 232 at 30 June 2018 and 233 in 2017. We also have 14 corporate members and 3 associate members. Individual members were 141 in 2010/11, 206 in 2011/12, 207 in 2012/13, 218 in 2013/14 and 236 in 2014/15 and 262 in 2015/16. Having a strong membership base helps in obtaining grants and demonstrates commitment to the botanic garden and over 300 members helps us achieve this.

Social media: On the MBG Facebook page we have increased to over 1,300 likes, the FMBG Nursery and Depot page has increased to over 500 likes, we have around 380 members of the FMBG Facebook group, 124 Twitter followers and 396 Instagram followers up from 200 last year.

Child Safe Policy

The FMBG Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct is now an established practice and we continue to promote FMBG as a child safe and child welcoming organisation. All regular volunteers have a Working With Children Check and it is a requirement to become a regular volunteer, this also helps us comply with the National Standards for screening volunteers.

Thankyou

We thank Councillors and Melton City Council staff for their support and encouragement towards FMBG and their support for the continuing development of the Melton Botanic Garden. We thank Adrian Cope from MCC as our Liaison Officer who helps to address issues and actions.

Much of our fundraising has been done through plant sales, Bunnings Sausage Sizzles and donations in this financial year. Thanks to everyone who assist in our fundraising efforts as we have been able to commit funds to develop the Depot, purchase new equipment and build the botanic garden.

Thanks to Barbara Frampton for initiating and leading our new Education Group which was a suggestion from our last Planning Day. In time, we would like someone to volunteer to be the FMBG Education Co-ordinator.

Many thanks to all those who actively contributed during the year in so many ways. To those who make our monthly meetings run well by providing supper, helping set up chairs, tables, welcoming, managing the library, and selling the raffle tickets. Finally to everyone who has contributed to the many volunteers hours that go into propagating, maintaining, weeding, watering and planting to create and manage the Melton Botanic Garden.

The **FMBG Committee** continued its dedicated work and operated as a strong team as it has again been another full on year and we all seem to be giving well over 100%. The team approach and working positively on initiatives and issues through research and discussion has led to good outcomes for FMBG in its mission to enrich the community and the environment by fostering, promoting and supporting the development and activities of the Melton Botanic Garden.

The Committee has been guided by the FMBG Strategic Plan 2014-17 though we are still to translate all the ideas and feedback into a new strategic 5-year plan from our last Planning Day. We are meeting the goals in our strategic plan and have fulfilled many of the actions set out and added new initiatives through the Committee process in line with the suggestions from the Planning Day.

The FMBG Committee has again done a wonderful job in planning activities plus organising speakers, applying for grants, preparing flyers, organising field trips and social events, making and managing partnerships, managing the finances and all the other administrative functions to provide a well-run organisation.

Many thanks to Barbara Frampton for a wonderful job as Secretary and Public Officer and her invaluable commitment to continue in this role. Barbara seems to have increased what she has been doing for FMBG from previous years and we appreciate this.

The Treasurer's role had been covered by John Bentley with many thanks to Corinne Cole, Manager, Sheryl Cole and Lauren Sim from Platinum Accounting & Taxation, a Corporate Member for entering, reviewing and maintaining our accounts in MYOB and organising our BAS for GST with the ATO. This wonderful and pro bono support from one of our Corporate Members has been greatly appreciated.



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Thanks to each of our committee members who have worked and supported the management of FMBG through teamwork, discussion, research, honest feedback and decision making. The team has a diversity that brings and gives insight into our decision making. The Committee includes people who still have a regular working life and spans a few decades in age. Many thanks to Jen, Steve, Mike and Jill for their support, dedication and commitment throughout the year. Steve has provided insights and advice and especially as he is working which gives us a view of the other side of life; Mike with his accounting and bookkeeping background he has assisted with the Treasurer tasks and provided advice on our accounts and reports; Jen has given invaluable support with the Nursery Banking, her organisation skills and Nursery Team liaison; Jill has done wonderful job as Membership Secretary and liaising with council and community groups. Vee Beatty has been attending meetings throughout the year in preparation for joining the Committee knowing we were expanding the committee size. Vee has been our community liaison person with a number of community groups including the Artist’s Collective of Melton and she brings a bundle of energy with each task she takes on. Each one has contributed a significant amount and used their skills and talents in steering FMBG.

Lastly, thanks to Alan Partridge in his role as Vice President and Assistant Secretary for his continuing support and contribution. Alan has made the decision not to continue on the Committee. Alan has been Vice President since 2010 and a Committee Member since 2005. So we give extra special thanks to Alan for his commitment and for a job well done over 14 years on the FMBG Committee.

As many groups struggle to get members for their committee and have aging representatives it is pleasing to see at this AGM we will have elections for the Vice President and Committee positions. In the past we have tried to ensure we have one young representative under 30 such as Sarah Baldacchino to give the Committee a heterogeneous (diverse) representation rather than homogenous (all similar) and to give them the opportunity to learn. We said farewell to Sarah as she ventured off to work in Greece in 2019. Unfortunately this year we did not receive any younger person nominations. Currently the Committee spans people in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. Though some of us ticked over into the next decade during 2019.

All these achievements and efforts throughout the year provide a strong foundation for us to continue our work in the development of the Melton Botanic Garden and in achieving our mission.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 11 September 2019



Category Winner
Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013
2016 and 2018
sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV



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