

FMBG Annual Report July 2019 – June 2020

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 2019 to 30 June 2020.

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 areas and maintaining and enhancing the established sections of the garden. Then COVID hit in March 2020 and government restrictions came in which greatly impacted our activities. Everyone adapted well so that we could continue with limitations in a COVID safe manner. It meant many of our more vulnerable members and volunteers were not able to participate. We had to cancel all our usual activities and restrict our working at the garden. We do hope to see everyone again when we eventually achieve a “COVID normal” state. On the positive side, COVID has caused a vast increase in people visiting and using the garden, especially for exercise.

We were successful in a number of grant applications: Melton Council Community Grant for IrisBG, a botanic garden database (\$3,500.00), Federal Government Communities Environment Grant (\$21,300.40), Melton Country Club Grant (\$2,189.09), Landcare Grant (\$9,883.39), Melbourne Water Support Grant (\$1,000.00), and a Volunteer Grant (\$3,081.82). Many thanks to Bob Prewitt who prepared some of our grant applications.

Guided Tours and Visitors

This had been another good year for guided tours and presentations but COVID eventually put a stop to these. Visitors participating on our guided tours were from far and wide. We provided tours to both small and large groups.

Guided tours helped bring in donations and plant sales that contribute to our funds. Thanks to everyone who helped with the guided tours and presentations. Public guided tours included: Seniors Festival, Sustainable Living Festival and NAIDOC Week but we had to cancel the National Eucalypt Day and Reconciliation Week tours. We also were not able to host tours on the National Botanic Gardens Day in May as the event had to be cancelled. Thanks go to our tour guides: Alan and Jean Partridge, Barbara Frampton, David and Barb Pye, Steve and Ella Parker, 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 fifth Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand Botanic Gardens Day without holding the normal open day activities but encouraged people to visit the garden and submit photos and videos to BGANZ.

FMBG Meetings

We had a good line up of guest speakers for our meetings, but after our March meeting we had to cease our meetings due to COVID. Four notable presentations were: Warren Worboys in July on “Botanical Names”, Tim Entwisle in August on the “New Arid Garden”, Cathy Powers on “Minibeasts” in November and Tim Uebergang on “Cycads” in March. The monthly meeting raffle continued to provide the group with funds to assist with the meeting expenses and was on track to be a record year until COVID brought a halt to holding our meetings, but the raffle contribution for only 9 months was nearly equal to the previous year. The end of year celebration was again held at the Depot. There was a good turnout of new and longer term members with another great raffle with prizes contributed by members and 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	2019/20 Hours	2018/19 Hours	2017/18 Hours
Creekers	334	538	675
Bushies	6	-	41
Clean Up Day	118	193	129
Botanic Gardens Day	-	219	175
Depot	161	296	279
Schools/TAFE Volunteering	60	210	112
Grow The Garden	153	215	131
Guided Tour Volunteers	193	223	44
Gumnuts	1,509	1,391	1,052
Lakers	1,405	1,018	934
National Tree Day	27	220	150
Nursery	2,150	2,695	3,023
Odd Jobbers	609	670	573
Open Days	-	273	-
SSG (PAG)	44	74	174
Sandgropers	0	-	196
Safaris	548	513	512
Tweeters	5	29	64
VVP	-	12	36
Water Babies	39	160	-
Council Annual Tour	-	20	-
Latham's Snipe Survey	60	29	26
Required hours volunteers	8,765	7,711	4,232
Total Hours	16,186	16,709	12,558

The volunteer hours in the table show we have contributed over 16,186 hours which is a decrease of 523 hours. However, COVID severely impacted the ability to volunteer from mid-March. At the minimum wage rate of \$19.48/hr (1 July 2019) this equates to a value of \$315,303 in volunteer hours. 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 (note: many grants now use \$30 as a base volunteer rate). Also, we have not taken into account all the other activities we do as volunteers, such as: Committee Meetings, Working Party Meetings, other meetings, project management, collecting plants, external events e.g. 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!



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Melton Botanic Garden Inc.**

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 (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 (Ian Barnes/Wayne Fergeus), Tweepers group (Jill Bentley/Margaret Smith), Water Babies (Jill Bentley), Collections and Records Management Team (John Bentley) and the Nursery Team (Anne Langmaid). We have again inducted a good 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. This has especially been much more of a challenge with COVID to try to ensure improved cleanliness and sanitisation.

Many thanks to the leaders and volunteers who participate in the groups as their work can certainly be seen both in the development and maintenance of the garden beds which is reflected in the feedback from visitors.

Nursery

Thanks to Anne Langmaid, 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 about a 10% decrease in overall plant sales from the previous year which can be attributed wholly to the impacts of COVID restrictions. These restrictions presented changes and challenges to our sales operations but allowed us to resume sales on Tuesdays in June following the first lockdown.

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 continued our strong presence on social media and through our web page. FMBG and volunteers appeared in the Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly regularly throughout the year.

Our promotion of the botanic garden continued at the Djerriwarrh Festival, Bunnings Spring Launch, Bacchus Marsh Flower and Garden Show. Unfortunately the APS Geelong and the APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh plant sales were cancelled due to COVID. The Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS), where we had put in all the preparation was cancelled just before the event was due to be set-up.

We continued to give presentations to various groups in Melton and beyond. Presentations focussed on the development, existing gardens and plants of the Melton Botanic Garden.

Externally, John Bentley continued as the FMBG representative on the Plant Trust Committee but had to resign as Vice-President and from the committee of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens.

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

Our corporate members have continued their support and contribution to the development of the MBG. Bunnings Melton and Melton Home Timber and Hardware 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 areas in development include: 1) Lake south east and east sections to eventually complete planting all around the lake edge and freeway boundary 2) Small Lake Project 3) the Eastern Australian Dryland Garden, and 4) the avenue near the North Pond which the Creekers have been tending and planting.

Work on existing gardens continued: 1) some of the crushed rock and scoria paths in the Southern African Garden were surfaced with Tuscan Toppings; 2) further plantings were done in all other garden beds, along the creek and around the lake.

Garden signage

Newport Lakes Native Nursery sponsored a Victorian Volcanic Plains Sign which was installed by Sign Perfection in the VVP Garden. We have been adding plant flag labels to enhance the visitor experience and have placed some wooden angled garden bed information signs into garden beds.

Plant Recording

A number of people expressed interest in joining the Collection and Records Management team. However, some experienced technical difficulties. Jennifer Peters, wholeheartedly took up the challenge to learn IrisBG. She has been diligently entering plant records into IrisBG, our botanic database. Many thanks to Jennifer for her precise and hard work on this project.

Seating

Installation of more garden recycled seating was completed. Seat pads and concreting were done by Daryl, Robert, Milan and John. Rob, Jen and James have installed the seats. We thank them all for their work in the seat installations. The seat donated by our patron, Jane Edmanson was installed on the south side of the Small Lake.

Community Involvement

We have continued to involve the community and other groups in FMBG activities.

The Planned Activity Group have continued to assist each month in planting at the Lake and various other activities. We thank Elaine, Linda, Jill and the FMBG volunteers who work with them.

Bacchus Grammar School Year 9 students worked in the garden. The program is into the seventh year.

The Melton Wildflower Girl Guides assisted in planting the Junior Landcare Grant area.

Council Funding

We received a base funding from the council budget of \$36,000 due to a CPI increase. The funding continues each year until 2023 for the development of the Melton Botanic Garden. It is expended as per the FMBG budget plan and monitored by council. There are responsibilities we have to comply with in expending public funds.

Membership

Our membership has increased to 323 at the 30 June 2020 from 303 individuals the previous year.

FMBG Memberships								
30 June	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Individual	323	303	235	233	251	236	218	207
Corporate	19	16	16	18	10	10	NA	NA
Associate	1	3	4	3	4	4	NA	NA

Social media: Our social media numbers have increased in all areas together with more visitor engagement through reactions, commenting, sharing and posting.

FMBG Social Media Numbers			
	30 June	2020	2019
MBG FB Page Likes		1,631	1,300
MBG FB Page Followers		1,741	-
Nursery FB Page Likes		675	500
Nursery FB Page Followers		725	-
FMBG FB Page Likes		87	DNE
FMBG FB Page Followers		96	DNE
FMBG FB Group Members		493	380
Twitter Followers		137	124
Instagram Followers		454	396

Thankyou

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

Much of our fundraising has been done through plant sales, raffles, and donations in this financial year. Many thanks to everyone assisting in our fundraising efforts as we have been able to commit additional funds to develop the Depot, purchase new equipment and build the botanic garden.

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 volunteer 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 FMBG Committee has 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 marvellous job as Secretary and Public Officer, and her invaluable commitment to continue in this role.



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The Treasurer's role had been covered by John Bentley. Many thanks go 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 superb and pro bono support from one of our Corporate Members has been greatly appreciated. The value of their accounting support contribution is \$3,500.

Thanks to each of our committee members who have worked and supported the management of FMBG through their teamwork, discussion, research, honest feedback and decision making. Many thanks to Jen, Steve, Mike, Rob, David, Barb and Jill for their support, dedication and commitment throughout the year. Each one has contributed a significant amount and used their skills and talents in guiding FMBG.

Lastly, special thanks to those retiring Committee Members: Steve Parker, Mike Coveney and Robin Stewart for their commitment, contribution and diligence on the FMBG Committee. They are not going away, just taking on other roles outside of the committee.

All these achievements and efforts throughout the year provide a strong foundation for us to continue our work to achieve our mission.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 11 November 2020



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.