

FMBG Annual Report July 2017 – June 2018

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 2017 to 30 June 2018.

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 also commenced the celebration of the 15th Anniversary of FMBG in 2018 and appeared on national television. The Melton Botanic Garden was officially opened by the Governor of Victoria The Honourable Linda Dessau AC on 11th October 2017. We thank Council for organising the opening.

FMBG was granted charity status by ACNC in December 2017.

Keep Victoria Beautiful judging for the island project took place in May where we took the judge across to the island to see the work of the Islanders followed by morning tea at the rotunda.

Our second Separation Tree descendent was planted in June by the Mayor Cr Bob Turner in 2018 adding to the existing tree. Both are growing well.

The Tweeters observed a record 17 Latham's Snipe on Ryans Creek in the January national survey.

The Botanic Trail around the lake and a bridge link to the Toolern Creek shared path was officially opened by Council in December. The Botanic Trail has greatly increased the number of Melton residents using the whole path for walking, dog walking, running and cycling around the main lake.

Guided Tours and Visitors

This has been another great year for guided tours and presentations. Visitors participating on our guided tours were from far and wide.

Gayle Tierney MP visited the garden in March 2018. Evan Gaulke and Claire Coulson from Ochre Landscapes the award winning designers of the Bridge Road Children's Play Space visited the garden in May. They were very impressed by the garden and the work of the volunteers.

Guided tours have helped to bring in donations and sales of plants that contribute to our funds. Thanks to everyone who helped with guided tours and presentations. The number of visitors and guided tours continues to show an increase in patronage of the botanic garden. Public guided tours included: Seniors Festival, the Sustainable Living Festival and NAIDOC Week all attracting visitors from far and wide. We held the sixth annual garden tour for Councillors and Melton City Council staff. We provided tours to both small and large groups. Thanks go to our tour guides: Alan and Jean Partridge, 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 third Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand Open Day on 29th May. This year we had much better weather including sunshine and being 2 weeks after we appeared on national television boosted our visitor numbers. This year we had scaled down our activities to the Nursery sales, guided tours, discovery table and FMBG volunteers serving refreshments.

FMBG Meetings

Over the year we had a strong guest speaker program at our meeting with some memorable poetry recitals by Steve Parker. Two notable presentations were Jane Edmanson in March on 'The Joy of Gardening' and Karen Sutherland from Edible Eden Design on Bushfoods in September.



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 with a good turn out and another great raffle with prizes contributed by local businesses.

Volunteer Hours

The table below shows the volunteer hours contributed through the sign in sheets at the depot.

| Group/Activity | Hours |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Creekers | 675 |
| Bushies | 41 |
| Clean Up Day | 129 |
| Botanic Gardens Day | 175 |
| Depot | 279 |
| Education Schools | 112 |
| Grow The Garden | 131 |
| Guided Walk Volunteers | 44 |
| Gumnuts | 1,052 |
| Lakers | 934 |
| National Tree Day | 150 |
| Nursery | 3,023 |
| Odd Jobbers | 573 |
| SSG (PAG) | 174 |
| Sandgropers | 196 |
| Safaris | 512 |
| Tweeters | 64 |
| VVPUAG | 36 |
| Water Babies | 26 |
| Centrelink Volunteers | 4,232 |
| Total Hours | 12,558 |

At the minimum wage rate of \$18.29/hr (1 July 2017) this equates to \$229,686 of volunteer hours value. However, the work we do is of a higher value than the minimum wage and we have not taken into account all the other activities we do for committee meetings, Working Party meeting, other meetings, project management, collecting plants, external events, presentations and all those activities our volunteers do in their own time to support FMBG and the garden. Also 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 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.

We continued a strong Centrelink Volunteer program and without their wonderful assistance across the garden and in administration we would have difficulty developing and maintaining the garden. We said farewell to Wendy Johnson in 2017 as our administration assistant and welcomed Heather Pongracic in 2018 as a wonderful replacement.

Our active groups in the garden and supporting groups are: Creekers (Margaret Peters/Alan Partridge), Gumnuts/Sandgropers (David and Barb Pye), Lakers (Jill Bentley), Odd Jobbers (John Bentley), Safaris (Ella and Steve Parker), Bushies group (Steve Leyden), Sun-seekers (Wayne



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Fergeus), Tweeters group (Geraldine Kelly) and the Nursery Team (Anne Langmaid). We commenced the Water Babies group (Jill Bentley) monitoring water quality at the lake. The volunteer hours recorded for these activities show we have contributed over 12,550 hours which is an increase of 3,450 hours over 2016/17 where we recorded 9,100 volunteer hours and 6,500 hours in 2015/16. We have also 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. Many thanks to the leaders and volunteers who participate in the groups as the results can certainly be seen both in the development of the garden beds and visitor experience. We continue to receive positive comments from new and returning visitors about the development of the garden, 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 significant source of funds to cover our operating expenses and help support new projects and plants for the garden.

We received a donation of a heated bed propagation unit from one of our corporate members Hexima. This allows the nursery team to grow some of the harder to propagate plants, to propagate earlier and over winter. Thanks to Bruce McGinness for dis-assembling and delivering the unit and to Wayne Fergus who helped in re-assembling of the unit.

Promotion

Our patron Jane Edmanson has been continuing to promote FMBG at events she attends. She helped get us on national television and was the presenter with the **ABC Gardening Australia** Small Eucalypts story with Barb Pye and the Gumnuts in May. This TV presence has helped attract many additional visitors to the garden. The segment on small eucalypts was filmed in September 2017 and went to air in May 2018.

We appeared in the Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly regularly throughout the year.

We were the focus of an article called 'Melton your heart' by Karen Sutherland (Edible Eden Design) about the Melton Botanic Garden in the Jan/Feb 2018 edition of ABC Organic Gardener.

We continued our promotion of the botanic garden at the Djerriwarrh Festival, Bunnings Spring Launch, Bacchus Marsh Flower and Garden Show, APS plant sale events by Geelong, Yarra Yarra, Bendigo and Melton and Bacchus Marsh groups. At the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show 2018 (MIFGS) we had a reduced wall space of 4 metres for our display but being on the ground floor level we had greater exposure than previous years. We fully staffed the display for the whole show and had plenty of visitor interaction resulting in visits, guided tours and requests for presentations.

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 hosted a successful Bird Week activity and a bird walk at the MBG.

John Bentley continued as a committee member of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens and from April as the Vice-President and is 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. An MBG Walk has also been added to Walking Maps by D Burt.



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Our corporate members have continued their support and contributions to the development of the MBG. Bunnings Melton have assisted with provision of materials for 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 as the defined project by the Matchworks Work Experience Activity Team. Many thanks to Kathryn Fitzgibbon, Landscape Architect MCC for preparing the schematic plans for this area and arranging the installation of the green wall at the Amphitheatre 2) the construction and planting of the Mediterranean Garden surrounding the Amphitheatre and along the concrete path 3) planting and weed control of the Lake Island 4) weed control and preparation for planting along the Botanic Trail.

Work on existing gardens continued: 1) the final understorey planting in the Indigenous Peoples Garden as the District Scouting project 2) further plantings in the main garden beds in all our established gardens, along the creek and around the lake 3) more crushed rock paths in the Eucalyptus Arboretum have been surfaced with Tuscan Toppings.

We restored the damage caused by the Lakewood Boulevard and Mavi Avenue housing development. There was damage in the Indigenous People's Garden and the Victorian Volcanic Plains Garden and the storm water drain to the lake. We agreed on a settlement of \$10,000 with the developers to do the restoration.

Garden signage

Two Eucalyptus information signs in the Information Shelter and plant list signs in most beds in the Eucalyptus Arboretum and Western Australian and South Australian beds were installed. Ten information signs on birds, minibeasts, moths and butterflies, Southern African Plants, Victorian Plains and Koori Student Garden were installed in the garden adding to the five existing bird signs.

Many plants have been labelled with flag labels to enhance the visitor experience.

Seating

Installation of seating was completed by the Matchworks Work Experience Activity Team with two seats at the Boomerang Garden and one at the small lake from the Melton Country Club Grant, Ladders Family donation on the main concrete path, Margaret Barrie donation on the Botanic Trail and Melton Residents Association seat on the Botanic Trail. We thank all our seat donors for helping improve amenities in the garden for our visitors.

Work Experience Activity Team

We said farewell to Mick Hewitt in August 2017 and welcomed Morgan Roberts as the new Matchworks team leader. We also learnt in May that Matchworks would not be continuing a group project once the January to July project had completed. We thank Mick and Morgan as the team supervisors for the projects done by the WEA Team. Their achievements can be clearly seen in the garden and depot. Our Work for the Dole program was the topic of a presentation called 'More than Volunteers' at the BGANZ Congress in October.

Community Involvement

We have continued involvement of the community and other groups in FMBG activities and opportunities to help develop and involve others.



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We continue to demonstrate our motto “Growing Plants, Growing People” in what and how we do things. This is very much seen in the Matchworks Work Experience Activity Teams, volunteers and Centrelink Volunteers.

Young PAG (the Planned Activity Group) have continued to assist each month in pot washing, propagation, organising used plant guards for re-use and have planted near the lake on a couple of occasions. We thank Elaine, Linda, Jill and the FMBG volunteers who work with them.

We have had Bacchus Grammar School Year 9 students work in the garden on a number of occasions as part of their community involvement program. Their Year 12 VCE Environmental Science class visited for an educational tour on biodiversity and adaptation in February.

Our involvement with District Scouting led to another successful National Tree Day with over 60 participants, the majority being Joeyes, Cubs, scouts and their families. We have now completed the planting of the Indigenous Peoples Garden for this scout project. Many thanks to Janet Dyke in organising the participants.

Council Funding

We prepared a budget submission and project plans to 2023 then presented these to council at a Pre-budget Community Engagement session in November 2017. A subsequent motion was presented at a council meeting by Cr Sophie Ramsey to fund FMBG with base funding of \$35,000. It is pleasing that in June 2018 the council budget allocated FMBG a base funding of \$35,000 each year to 2023 for development of the Melton Botanic Garden.

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.

Membership

Our membership has decreased slightly from 233 individual financial members in 2017 to 226 at 30 June 2018. We also have 16 corporate members and 4 associate members. Individual members in 2010/11 were 141, 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 so it would be good if members could help sign up new members to boost our individual membership total to over 250 again.

Social media: On the MBG Facebook page we have increased from 830 to 1000 likes, the FMBG Nursery and Depot page has increased to 380 likes, we have around 320 members of the FMBG Facebook group, 125 Twitter followers and 200 Instagram followers. Our website has reached 34,300 visits since 2004. Karen Austria has been promoting the MBG and FMBG through social media channels including LinkedIn. We encourage you to take every opportunity to promote FMBG membership and the Melton Botanic Garden.

Child Safe Policy

In March we released the FMBG Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. Many thanks to the FMBG Committee who worked on this and attended workshops and seminars. We have been congratulated by Council on our policy. It has been used as an exemplar policy at Melton City Council (MCC) workshops and as a model for other groups.

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 really helps to address issues and actions.

Much of our fundraising has been done through plant sales 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.

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 as it has again been another full on year and we all seem to be giving well over 100%. We held a strategic planning day in September but are yet to translate all the ideas and feedback into a new strategic plan, so we continue with our current plan until we approve the new plan. We are meeting the goals in our strategic plan and have achieved many of the actions set out.

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 her commitment to continue in this role.

Thanks to Alan Partridge in his role as Vice President and Assistant Secretary for his continuing support and contribution. Alan prepares and sends the many FMBG thank you letters throughout the year, so here is a thank you to Alan for a job well done.

Thanks to all our committee members, Alan, Barbara, Jen, Sarah, Steve, and Jill for their support and wonderful work throughout the year. Each has contributed a significant amount and used their skills and talents in steering FMBG. The Treasurer's role had been covered by John Bentley with many thanks to Corinne Cole, Manager, Platinum Accounting & Taxation, a Corporate Member for entering and maintaining our accounts in MYOB. This has been greatly appreciated.

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.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 11 August 2018



Category Winner

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013
2016 and 2018

sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV

