

THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA INC
ANNUAL CHAIR'S REPORT
January – December 2018
AGM 14th May 2019

MEMBERSHIP You will be pleased to hear that membership numbers this year are trending up. Right now membership numbers are 700. This time last year they were 683.

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES- there is always such a great deal to report to you so in no particular order I'll begin with the **MOU and the Strategic Plan.**

At the beginning of the year Council met with John Hemphill, who had offered his years of experience as our Facilitator to start the process. And at no cost for which we are very grateful indeed.

John is Director of the company Voyager Strategies Pty Ltd and he has been engaged in this facilitating work for many years. I thank John again for the countless hours he has worked with us and guided us along the path to fulfilling our undertaking to you last year that we would have a newly revitalised Strategic Plan for you this year.

The MOU came to light to be revamped at the same time so we dealt with both. It was obviously the right time to revisit and revise our processes and governance and move with the times. The NAC had a new Strategic Plan and so should ours be up to date aligning our priorities and methods to support and be congruent with theirs.

With the NAC Strategic Plan close at hand and bearing in mind what their key priorities where, we, the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra (FNAC) were identified as key stakeholders, we got started.

Our key points were that the FNAC wanted to strengthen our partnership with the NAC, support the NAC position itself as a world class destination through a high quality visitor experience and to continue to assist the growth of the NAC, building this strong partnership wherever and whenever we could.

The FNAC pool of expertise is second to none and underpinned by immense goodwill.

The brainstorming that evolved from those first two Council meetings kept coming back to two phrases....visitor experience (has favourable view of the Arboretum, looks forward to coming here, enjoys the experience and learns from it and communicates joyfully about the experience afterwards) and volunteer experience (self-realisation, adding to the joy of life – part of something good, making a difference, looks forward to next task or opportunity, learning good things, camaraderie and communicates joyfully about it) that would be engaging and rewarding.

Council and their teams were tasked with writing a rationale and key elements to sit alongside their area of expertise. All this fine detail would be our 'go to' document in the future and what we are proposing to call the Annual Partnership Program.

Everything was ready after many meetings with John and Mike Woolley and I we were able to send NAC Management (and to Council) our proposed documents so that all would be able to study same before our first meeting and conversation.

Unfortunately the first meeting was postponed and then came a request from NAC management to send the SP and MOU in Word and they would get back to us with their changes, their 'areas of concern' and their points of difference.

So, Friends, unfortunately this is where we are at....no conversation, nothing to show you despite our best intentions to do just that. We are very disappointed to say the least. I will keep you posted on progress, probably at the next General Meeting later in the year or online sooner if we can.

WARM TREES 19 is progressing well under the Coordination and leadership skills of Jocelyn Plovits. Thanks Jocelyn for keeping everybody up to speed with the timeline for this years partnership with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

_The theme this year is ...you guessed it...bikes and tulips...the choice of the embassy. Our CM, Andrew Barr has agreed to launch WT19 on Tuesday 2 July. There are still many opportunities to support Jocelyn with all the craft activities that she has on the go ...ask her...she's here...you'll remember last year you all worked on the pohutkawa blossom.

WORKING BEES continue each Tuesday and Thursday mornings under the direction of the Horticultural Staff member, Ryan Mallard.

Thanks to Des and Mike for their organising of the groups with weather alerts, job descriptions for the day, sign-on and off's and all the administrative tasks that come with being an organiser of groups.

Thanks to all the worker bees, for your ongoing commitment each Tuesday and Thursday.

THE HARVEST GROUP – more Friends who are engaged in their passion of gardening and other tasks relating to this group.

Thanks to Organiser, Colette Mackay and her team of committed members of this group.

The most recent Harvest Day on 4 May yielded the tidy sum of \$1521-60....

The Discovery Garden is an inspiration to us all and many thank too, to Ange Mc Neilly who you will find at the Discovery Garden most mornings in amongst the butterflies and beans and weeds working alongside the other volunteers.

THE JAKE KELLER SCHOLARSHIP- this year's winner Andrew Colwell, will be working with Owen Bolitho and the Horticultural team on a significant irrigation scheme in a couple of months probably late July/August placement.

SEASONAL TALKS – there have been a variety of these over the past year with the most recent being delivered by Professor Kate Auty, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability. She spoke to us on environmental reporting and communicating the science to the public. It sounds like a very dry old topic but to the contrary it was the most interesting and engaging presentation and previously a talk by Amelda Keys who took us on a journey though the history of labyrinths and the story behind our very own labyrinth in the Gallery of Gardens.

SUBMISSION – Friends, Max Bourke, AM and Roger Hnatiuk were invited to the ‘Legislative Assembly’s Standing Committee on ‘Nature in our City’ very ably led by Ms Suzanne Orr, MLA. The presentation is on the LA’s website and the submission also.

Sincere thanks again to these superb submission writers.

The ARBORETUM BOOK – steady sales (20-25 plus each month) are reported by Mel at the Curatoreum and particularly over holidays like Easter, Christmas and other festivals like Floriade.

I am regularly asked about the next Arboretum Book...when is it happening...when will the old book go on sale etc, ...this is not for me to judge or say... a much wider conversation needs to be undertaken by those stakeholders and those who know about these things. So, it’s not happening yet...and once again I will keep you posted on this. It has been noted as Friends activity in the new SP so ...all in due course.

FRIENDS FOREST - a report recently from Andrew Carter said how pleasing it was to see such a good survival rate from the last planting/working bee. His quick assessment suggests better than 95% of seedlings within the two enclosures have not only survived but have grown very strongly which all in all is a great result. Thanks Andrew for your liaison with Owen and your general oversight of our Friends Forest 100.

GUIDES - I’d like to thank firstly Lauren Brown, the Community Engagement Officer for overseeing rosters and getting information out to our Guides; also to Sandy Linsley for her oversight of the Guides meetings, arranging agendas, providing PD sessions within the guides meetings...the monthly Guides meetings are going very well by the way... Thanks to all the Guides who put their names on the roster on a regular basis. We thank you for your most generous contribution and time commitment to the Arboretum in all-weather keeping our visitors entertained and educated.

STEP – the 10th anniversary of the plantings at STEP, Forest 20, was held on a very balmy Friday evening quite recently. The gardens with their new signage, beautifully swept paths, sponsored seat and garden looked magnificent.

Chief Minister Andrew Barr attended this memorable event and planted a *Eucalyptus melliodora* to mark the occasion. The new shed is a highlight down there....if you haven’t been to the STEP forest take the opportunity. Thursdays are their working bee mornings down there.

SEAT SPONSORSHIP- The about to start Tracks and Trails project will have locations for several seats and there are 8 names on the waiting list already for these seats, Forest Seats are valued at \$5,500.

There are a couple of seats on the Event Terrace and in the Children’s Garden awaiting sponsorship as well and a picnic setting in the Pod Playground available for sponsorship. One of these has been sponsored by the Kakatu Foundation in the USA.

CITIZEN SCIENCE- I’d like to congratulate and thank Roger Hnatiuk for his steadfast commitment to Citizen Science and in particular the Wollemi Seed Project. He has a team of volunteers who meet twice week in the TR on this seemingly laborious task.

Roger and the Arboretum are moving forward with this Wollemi Citizen Science project and no doubt we'll hear more about it in the near future.

BONSAI WEEK- was a huge success this year. Congratulations to Leigh and his team. This year the highlight was the two internationally renowned female Bonsai artists, Heike and Grlica. One of them was persuaded to part with her much admired t-shirt...quickly replaced by a Friends logoed shirt, and the t-shirt went on to make \$180 at the auction!

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER Thanks to our Newsletter Editor Mary Arnold who presents a quarterly newsletter. The latest is due out soon and Mary is keen to have you submit articles and photos of interest.

CHAIRS TALKS – I'm occasionally asked to present a talk to various community groups, other Council members too. We love being Ambassadors for the Arboretum and can speak well over the allocated time! My next gig is for Sue Brown's travel group at the Southern Cross Club on June 6.

Friends Garden- in Central Valley – last, but not least...the launch of our garden took place in the MWP on 13 November last year. Bec Cody MLA came along to name the garden which was, as you all know now is The Salt Bush Garden and cut the Zig 19 celebration cake. She talked about what a vibrant group the Friends were with a passion and strong commitment to the NAC.

Then on 28 March this year our Zig garden 19 was formally launched in Central Valley (along with two other gardens). It was indeed a very special day in the Friends History.....Friends Forest, Friends Garden on DFH and now the Friends Garden in Central Valley. We have made a huge contribution to the Arboretum and are very proud of this. All we have to do now is pay for it...I note to date donations have reached \$12,000 but there is still a way to go. Join us with your personal contribution and make the Friends Garden your garden... we are very happy to share! Del can take donations tonight!