

FMBG Annual Report July 2015 – June 2016

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 2015 to 30 June 2016.

Many notable achievements during the year include: FMBG winning one of the major awards in the 2016 City of Melton Business Excellence Awards for “Best Access and Inclusion” in June 2016, receiving the award for “Victorian Compost User demonstrating innovation and advocacy in Amenity Markets” at the annual Australian Organics Recycling Association Dinner held on the 6 August 2015 and further developing the Melton Botanic Garden in building and commencing new gardens and maintaining the established sections of the garden. There has been a number of improvements to the Depot and Nursery thanks to Dave Peters, FMBG funds, grants and volunteers. Thanks to Margaret Cook, Nursery Manager and her team in managing the propagation and sale of plants. The sale of plants is helping to fund projects and cover operating expenses. Our active groups in the garden and supporting groups are: Creekers (Margaret Peters), Gumnuts (David Pye), Lakers (Jill Bentley), Odd Jobbers (John Bentley), Sandgropers (David and Barb Pye), Safaris (Ella and Steve Parker) and the Nursery Team (Margaret Cook). The volunteer hours recorded for these activities show we have contributed over 6,500 hours with over 2500 sign-ins. Our volunteer hours have increased by 2,000 hours over the 4,500 hours in 2014/1 and the Nursery Team volunteer hours have increased to around 1,500 hours (no wonder the depot often seems busy). These figures do not represent all the FMBG volunteer activities as we have not included meetings, plant pickups, fund raising activities, promotions and external plant sales. 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.

This has been our best ever year for guided tours and presentations with an increase from 14 guided tours in 2014 to 34 in 2015 and we are well on the way to more than match that so far in 2016. In 2015/16 there were over 600 visitors participating on our guided tours from far and wide including groups from Ballarat, Bendigo, Colac, Clunes, and Yarra Yarra.

Guided tours help to bring in donations and sales of plants that contribute to our funds. Thanks to everyone who help with guided tours and presentations. The number of visitors and guided tours shows a clear increase in patronage of the botanic garden. Public guided tours included: Seniors Week, the Sustainable Living Festival, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week all attracting visitors from far and wide. We gave a personal tour to John Fordham, a horticulturalist with the National Trust who was brought along in February by Jane Edmanson our Patron. We held the fourth annual garden tour for Councillor and Melton City Council staff. We provided tours to both small and large groups. Thanks go to our tour guides: Alan and Jean Partridge, Jill Bentley, David and Barb Pye, and Anne Langmaid. Many thanks also to all those who help with tours as we receive positive feedback about our welcoming, hospitality and provision of refreshments.

We participated in the Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand Open Day on 29th May 2016. This was a very successful event and brought new visitors to the garden and included support from local Melton groups which included the Melton Environment Group, District Scouts, Willows Quilters, and CWA Melton Owls Group.



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New garden areas have been created with: 1) The Indigenous Peoples Garden as a District Scouting project with plant sponsorship from Western Water 2) the continued bed construction and more plantings in the Western Australian and South Australian garden beds 3) the commencement of the main garden beds in the Southern African Garden and 4) commencement of the Bushfoods Garden with the landscape design, groundworks and path network.

It is pleasing to see the continuing and increasing involvement of the community and other groups in FMBG activities and the opportunities to help develop 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 Matchworks Work Experience Activity Teams. We thank Mick Hewitt as the team supervisor for works by the WEA Team that can be clearly seen in the garden and depot. We thank Matchworks for their involvement at the garden in what is proving to be a successful partnership after one full year of 5 days per week activity. The Creekers have continued involvement with CaLM. Young PAG (the Planned Activity Group) have continued to assist each month in pot washing, propagation and organising used plant guards for re-use. They bring with them a great sense of enjoyment and we thank Elaine, Jill and the FMBG volunteers who work with them. Centrelink volunteer numbers have decreased from eight to four people due to people meeting their Centrelink requirements. They are invaluable to the development of the garden and operations in managing garden beds, weeding, planting, construction and administrative tasks.

We formed partnerships with the Djerriwarrh Health Services Melton Aboriginal Men's Group and Utsav Malayalee Samaj and as a result featured in an MCC video.

We have worked again with Bacchus Marsh Grammar students in the MBG extending the program to three days. Our involvement with District Scouting led to a very successful National Tree Day with over 100 participants, the majority being Joeys, Cubs, scouts and their families.

The Melton City Council (MCC) allocated \$35,000 in the 2015-2016 budget and following intensive discussions at the Community Consultation Budget Sessions have allocated an increased amount to \$50,000 in the 2016-2017 budget towards the development of the Melton Botanic Garden. We continue to have good communication and positive relationships with MCC. Most of the funds have been used in the development of the Western Australian and South Australian Gardens (WASA), Southern African Garden and the Lake. Many thanks go to David Pye who has managed the expenditure of MCC funds and prepared the project plan and budget for approval by MCC. 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. Without their dedication and expertise I am sure we would have not have achieved so much in the development of the Melton Botanic Garden

We were successful in a number of competitive grants. These included a Melton City Council Collingwood 'The Club' Grant for a split system to heat and cool the depot, a Melton City Council Environment Grant to produce interpretive bird signage for the Garden and the Federal Government Stronger Communities Program for the Bushfoods Garden.

We continue to give presentations to various groups in Melton and beyond. These focus on the development of the Melton Botanic Garden and especially the Eucalyptus Arboretum but we are now also able to include other developing areas of the garden.

Four FMBG members attended the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG) Conference in Geelong in April. We participated in a panel session and did plenty of networking. We also hosted a tour of the garden and a morning tea as part of an AAFBG post conference



tour. John Bentley continues as a representative on the AAFBG Committee. John was able to attend the BGANZ Congress to give a presentation on the MBG and also represent the AAFBG.

Our patron Jane Edmanson has been able to promote FMBG and the MBG on 3AW and other media outlets. We continued our promotion of the botanic garden at the Djerriwarrh Festival, Bunnings Spring Launch, Bacchus Marsh Horticultural Show, APS plant sale events by Geelong, Yarra Yarra, and Melton and Bacchus Marsh groups and the Horticultural and Gardening Festival at the Melbourne Showgrounds. At the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show 2016 (MIFGS) we had a doubling of wall space to 8 metres for our display. We fully staffed the display for the whole show and had plenty of good visitor interaction. The Melton Environment Group hosted a successful Bird Week activity at the depot and a bird walk in the garden.

Our corporate members have continued their contributions to the development of the MBG. We especially thank our corporate members, MCC and businesses who sponsored us for the Horticultural and Gardening Festival – the sponsor's signage board is now on display in the depot. Melton Toyota contributed funds for plants for National Tree Day. Bunnings Melton have assisted through use of their hire equipment and provision of materials.

Our membership has increased to 252 individual financial members plus 9 corporate and 4 Associate members as at the 30th June 2016. Individual members in 2010/11 were 141, 206 in 2011/12, 207 in 2012/13, 218 in 2013/14 and 236 in 2014/15. On the MBG Facebook page we have increased from 300 to 450 likes and have around 230 members of the FMBG Facebook group and 100 Twitter followers. We encourage you to take every opportunity to promote FMBG membership and the Melton Botanic Garden to those in your area and at work. Having a strong membership base helps in obtaining grants and demonstrates commitment to the botanic garden.

The FMBG Committee has again done a marvellous 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.

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.

The monthly meeting raffle continues to provide the group with funds to assist with the meeting expenses and we thank Lyn Nardella and Phil Newman for running the meeting raffles. 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. Much of our fundraising has been done through Bunnings Sausage Sizzles and plant sales. Thanks to everyone who assists with 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 Daryl Akers for collating the articles for each FMBG Newsletter.

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

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



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contributed to the many volunteers hours that go into propagating, maintaining, weeding 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 seem to be giving well over 100%. We held our annual planning day in January which included reviewing the last year and planning the next. It is pleasing to see we are meeting the goals in our strategic plan and continue to be amazed by our list of achievements.

Thanks to all our committee members, Alan, Margaret, Janet, Steve, Jill, Dave and Jen for their support and wonderful work throughout the year. Each has contributed a significant amount and used their skills and talents to shaping FMBG.

However, it is sad to see two of our long term Committee Office Bearers are not re-standing for positions on the Committee. Janet Dyke has been Secretary of FMBG since 2004 and Margaret Peters has been Treasurer since 2007 and both have contributed enormously over that time to support the Friends, our activities and operations. Our records and finances have been well managed by them both. Margaret has taken FMBG into the realm of the GST which whilst being a challenge for most of us has been beneficial for FMBG. We cannot thank them enough for their time, commitment, contribution and the many financial reports, agendas, and minutes that have been produced. Dave Peters is also not re-standing for the Committee. Dave was Vice-President August 2006 to April 2008. Has been on the Committee during 2009 and since 2013. We thank Dave for his contribution and insights in leading FMBG. Dave produced the FMBG OHS Manual 'Home Safe' and this year produced the Volunteers Handbook released in May. They are not leaving FMBG but will continue to contribute through their other activities.

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

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 10 August 2016



Category Winner

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013

sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV

