

## **FMBG Annual Report July 2012 – June 2013**

On behalf of the Executive I have pleasure in presenting the annual report for the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden. This report covers the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.

I would like to congratulate all our members and especially those who have been continuous members since the inauguration of the Friends in 2003 as we celebrate 10 years of FMBG during 2013.

It has been another year where we have further developed of the Melton Botanic Garden whilst we also consolidate and maintain the established sections of the garden. The development of the Depot and Nursery has been a significant undertaking. However, this has provided a base for the development of the Melton Botanic Garden and hub for FMBG activities in the garden and is a very positive initiative. Thanks go to David Pye and Dave Peters in establishing the Depot and Nursery. We now have three active groups in the garden: Creekers (Margaret Peters), Gumnuts (David Pye) and Lakers (Jill Bentley). Many thanks to the leaders and volunteers who participate in the groups as the results can certainly be seen.

It is heartening to see the increasing involvement of the community and other groups in FMBG activities and the opportunities to help develop and involve others. We continue to promote FMBG as an organisation which is "Growing Plants, Growing People". This is very much seen in the expansion to 4 days per week of the CVGT Work Experience Activity Teams, the continued involvement of CaLM with Creekers and the commencement of the Planned Activity Group with Gumnuts. We have started discussions with the Rotary Club of Melton and also the Lions Club of Melton on possible projects in the garden with each club. The Koori Student Garden has had preparation work on the area and the garden landscape plan completed in the partnership with the Department of Education through the Koori Engagement Support Officer Michelle Marion and the Melton City Council Environmental Education Officer Linda Bradburn.

We made a successful budget submission to the Melton City Council for 2013-2014 budget and \$30,000 was allocated towards the development of the Melton Botanic Garden. The public toilets were built by the Melton City Council for which everyone is very pleased and the facility has encouraged more in the community to visit the garden.

We were successful in a number of competitive grants. These included a Melton City Council Strengthening Grant for plant benches and a shed to support the plant nursery, Melton City Council Environment Grant to install 3 Fluker Posts to take photos of the garden, Melton City Council Community Grant for a depot security system, Melbourne Water Grant for planting stage 2 of the lake and promotional items, and a CVGT proposal for a bench seat in the Eucalyptus Arboretum which the CVGT team will install.

We hosted a visit by the Australian Plants Society Keilor Plains Group in March 2013 providing morning tea, a garden tour and finishing by having lunch together. This visit helped boost our profile and connections. The Melton City Council Mayor Kathy Majdlik was hosted on a garden tour on very hot day in March as well. We hosted a visit in October 2012 of a number of Melton City Council Officers and the event was very well received. We plan to make this an annual event. In December 2012 Chris Cole the Acting Director and Chief Executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Michael McNabb, Manager, Horticulture visited the garden for



a whole morning. We had a very positive discussions and they were impressed with what FMBG had achieved. Chris in an email said "It was great to meet the team in December, their energy and can-do attitude is commendable. The garden has great beginnings, still a long way to go, but I'm sure a very positive future" and Michael stated "I was very impressed by the quality of what you are achieving given the site conditions. I think that plant selection based on a specific rainfall band is the most sensible approach to developing a site specific botanic garden. I was also impressed with the amount of activity your Friends group is undertaking, you are certainly engaging a wide audience." These are great accolades from high level people in botanic circles.

We continued to give presentations to various groups in Melton and beyond. The focus of these were on the development of the Melton Botanic Garden and especially the Eucalyptus Arboretum but we were also able to include photographs of some of the plants and eucalypts which started flowering from October 2012. In August 2012 a strong contingent of 8 members attended the Conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens at Port Augusta, South Australia and we were able to network and give a short presentation on the Melton Botanic Garden. In May 2013 we had a good turnout of members when we set up our display and presented the project "Growing Plants Growing People" to the judge for the Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Award. We had a similar turn-out when the judges for Powercor Melton Business Excellences awards visited in April. We were a finalist in the Powercor Melton Business Excellence Awards in the Best Community or Not for Profit Organisation category.

Our patron Jane Edmanson OAM has been able to promote FMBG and the MBG on 3AW and Magic and arranged for the FMBG President to be interviewed on the 3AW Big Backyard show in May.

We continued our promotion of the botanic garden in Melton at the Platypus Festival, Djerriwarrh Festival, Bunnings Spring Launch, Bunnings National Volunteers Week, Bunnings Community Days, and the Australian Plants Society Melton and Bacchus Marsh Group plant sale. Further afield we had a display at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show 2013 and a hanging basket in the competition.

Special thanks to David and Barb Pye for their continued contribution to the Eucalyptus Arboretum and their involvement to lead the yet to be established West Australian and South Australian beds. Without their dedication I am not sure we would have achieved so much of the development of the Melton Botanic Garden. Many thanks to our corporate members for their contributions especially Melton Home Timber and Hardware who have continued to support the work of the Friends providing storage space and materials towards our work.

Our membership base has remained around 200 financial members. In 2010-2011 we had 141 and 206 in 2011-2012. At the end of June 2013 we had 192 individual members in categories seniors, students, individual and household; 7 corporate members and one Associate member. On Facebook we have increased from 124 to 128 friends. Again, I would encourage you to take every opportunity to promote the activities and the Melton Botanic Garden to those in your area and at work.

The Executive committee for the past year has done a marvellous job organising speakers, the FMBG dinners, newsletters, the finances and other administrative functions to provide you the members with a group that is vibrant, interesting, active and fun.

Attendance at monthly meetings and other activities has remained steady. Our average meeting attendance for the financial year has been 21, which is slightly more than the previous year. Thanks to Elaine Neely and Verna Reed who have been organising supper at our monthly meetings which everyone certainly appreciates. Grow the Garden Day average attendance increased from 9 to 12 which is good to see as we also have Creekers, Gumnuts, Lakers and other activities. Each group has a core of dedicated members. What is pleasing is not just the number but the diversity of people we are attracting to the various activities. It means volunteers do not feel they have to attend all activities or feel guilty if they cannot attend. We have continued to maintain the relationship with CaLM and Gumnuts has included PAG. The age range at activities is from very young to very senior. We also participated in Keep Australia Beautiful Day in March with over 20 people attending.

National Tree Day on 29 July 2012 saw our most successful participation since we started. We were joined by Caroline Springs and Melton Joeys, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and their families resulting an attendance of 92 on the day. The end of year celebration was well attended and we are grateful to Tony and Janet for hosting this at their home last December and Lynette for sourcing the raffle prizes.

Thanks to Alan Partridge for his continuing work in tracking our volunteer attendances. The summary table for volunteer attendance for the year is presented below:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Average attendance</b>
Monthly General Meetings	Monthly	21
Creekers	Weekly	8
Gumnuts	Twice a month	8
Lakers	Twice a month	4
Grow the Garden and Clean-up Days	Monthly	12
Clean-up Days	Every 2 months	11
Garden maintenance (spraying, miscellaneous work)	As required	5
Clean-up Australia Day	Yearly	20
Bird watch with MEG	Once off	14
Judging Powercor Business Awards	Once off	9
Director of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne	Once off	10
Keilor Plains APS Visit	Once off	9
Judging KABV Sustainable Cities Award	Once off	14
Melton City Council Officers Visit	Yearly	12
Melton City Council Mayoral Visit	Once off	9
National Tree Day	Yearly	92

The monthly meeting raffle continues to provide the group with funds to assist with the meeting expenses. Other fundraising towards FMBG funds has been provided through Bunnings Sausage Sizzles and plant sales which have been on par with previous years. Thanks to everyone who assists with in our fundraising efforts as we have able to commit funds to develop the Depot and botanic garden.

The Executive Committee continued its dedicated work as it has again been another full on year and we seem to be giving 110% (or more). We held a planning day in February which included reviewing and making some minor changes to the Strategic Plan. It is pleasing to see we have

met many of the goals and so it is now time to commence preparing a new strategic plan for 2014-2017

The Newsletter has continued to be a bimonthly publication due to the work commitments of the editor. We have received good feedback from the members and others that it is circulated to. We have continued to distribute the newsletter by email as it saves on paper and postage and we print just a limit number to hand out at meetings.

Thanks to our corporate members for their support: Melton Home Timber and Hardware, Melton Produce, Melton Toyota, Platinum Accounting & Taxation, Satellite City Furniture, SOV Consulting and Western Land Services. Thanks also to Melton City Council, Councillors and staff for their support and encouragement towards FMBG and the continuing development of the Melton Botanic Garden.

Many thanks to all those who contributed articles to the newsletter and those make our monthly meeting run well by providing supper, helping put the chairs, tables and library out, sold the raffle tickets and of course to everyone who has contributed to the many volunteers hours that go into propagating, maintaining, weeding and planting to create and manage the Melton Botanic Garden.

Thanks to all my fellow committee members for their support and great work throughout the year to Alan, Margaret, Janet, Corinne, Lyn, Allan, Jill and to Dave and Myles who joined the executive following the departures of Allan and Lyn in 2013.

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 and we look forward to continuing to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FMBG in 2013.

John Bentley

President FMBG

AGM 14 August 2013



*Volunteers prepared for the KABV Sustainable Cities Judging*