

FMBG Annual Report July 2021 – June 2022

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 2021 to 30 June 2022.

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who helps and supports FMBG in what has been another difficult time due to COVID and lockdowns. Overall, we have come through the period well compared to some other groups we know of. Many thanks to the skeleton crews who worked during the lockdowns and those who changed from their normal time at garden to the afternoon to help. We have seen a downturn in volunteer numbers and hours from the pre-COVID period. Fortunately, we have a great crew of FMBG volunteers committed to volunteering and working hard. COVID resulted in an increase in people visiting and using the garden, especially for exercise and they commented on the hard work done by volunteers in providing a great place for them. Many people still say “It was my special place to go during lockdown.” Some have now joined FMBG as volunteers and/or members.

We received funding of \$20,000 for the Queen’s Jubilee Tree Planting Project from the Federal Government. FMBG Patron, Jane Edmanson provided a significant donation of nearly \$4,000 for the freeway signage.

Despite COVID, we still had a year with many outstanding achievements in developing new garden areas with the continuing work on the Eastern Australian Dryland Garden and commencement of the work on the Queen’s Jubilee Tree Project plus maintaining and enhancing the established sections of the garden.

Guided Tours and Visitors

We were able to hold the National Botanic Gardens Day at the end of May this year with tours on the Lions Club of Bacchus Marsh Train.

From mid-July 2021 we had to cancel and reschedule guided tours and presentations as COVID restrictions put a stop to most of these. Recommencing in 2022 we led tours for the Sustainable Living Festival, National Eucalypt Day, Ballan Seniors, Lifestyle Brookfield, MCC Heritage Festival, Mediterranean Garden Society, Castlemaine Garden Club, Moorabool Shire Council Support Group, MCC Carer’s Group, APS Heathcote, Swan Bay Environment Association and Nature Stewards.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the guided tours and presentations we were able to do.

FMBG Meetings

FMBG meetings were more off than on or held by Zoom. Committee Meetings were all online until February when we started to use the Brookfield Lifestyle facilities. We held the 2021 AGM in September by Zoom. We did not have any face-to-face meetings in 2021 (July to Dec). We were able to get together for monthly meetings at the Depot in February with a BYO picnic and have been holding monthly face to face meetings since at the Bridge Road Community Centre. Thanks to Carlene for taking over from Elaine to organise the supper for the meetings, to Jill and Vee for the raffle and Jen and Barbara for opening and closing the venue.

We had a good line up of guest speakers for our meetings in 2022.

The monthly meeting raffle was well supported, as we raised \$470 on the occasions we were able to meet.



Volunteer Hours

The table below shows the volunteer hours contributed through the Depot sign-in sheets:

Group/Activity	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Botanic Gardens Day	132	-	-	219	175
Bushies	-	3	6	-	41
Clean Up Days	75	78	118	193	129
Creekers	487	421	334	538	675
Depot (inc. Admin)	85	56	161	296	279
Grow The Garden	193	154	153	215	131
Guided Tour Volunteers	43	15	193	223	44
Gumnuts	1401	1,458	1,509	1,391	1,052
Lakers	1099	1,680	1,405	1,018	934
Mixed Garden Beds North	17	-	-	-	-
National Tree Day	-	-	27	220	150
Nursery	2530	2,005	2,150	2,695	3,023
Odd Jobbers	714	641	609	670	573
Open Days	132	-	-	273	-
Schools/TAFE Volunteering	90	-	60	210	112
SSG (PAG)	-	-	44	74	174
Sandgropers	-	-	-	-	196
Safaris	527	399	548	513	512
Tweeters	67	17	5	29	64
VVP	-	12	-	12	36
Water Babies	-	5	39	160	-
Council Annual Tour	-	-	-	20	-
Latham's Snipe Survey	22	11	60	29	26
Required hours volunteers	5074	6,197	8,765	7,711	4,232
Total Hours	12,678	13,152	16,186	16,709	12,558

The volunteer hours in the table show we have contributed over 12,678 hours which is a decrease of 474 hours due to COVID lockdowns impacting the ability to volunteer from July to November and the completion of many Required Hours Volunteers. At the minimum wage rate of \$20.33/hr (1 July 2021) this equates to a value of \$257,737 in volunteer hours supporting the garden. However, the work we do is of a higher value than the minimum wage. The Funding Centre using ABS data, values volunteer contribution at \$46.62/hr, using this rate it means our volunteer contribution is \$591,033. Also, we have not reported all the other activities we do as volunteers, such as: Committee 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. Also, many volunteers 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. Congratulations to everyone!

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. In 2022, a significant number of our Required Hours Volunteers completed their requirements. We thank each one of them for their contribution. The pleasing outcome is that many have remained as regular volunteers at the garden. Special thanks to Daryl Harris who helped coordinate these volunteers. Daryl gave extra time to open and close the Depot and gates from Tuesday to Thursday. Since Daryl finished, Annie Williamson, David Pye and Pamela O'Mara have assisted in opening and closing, as well as the nursery team in closing on Tuesday and Thursday.

Our active groups in the garden and supporting groups and coordinators are: Admin (Janet Dyke), Bushies (Dianne Tran Winkworth and Rob Baird), Creekers (Alan Partridge), Gumnuts (David and Barb Pye), Lakers (Jill Bentley), Odd Jobbers (John Bentley), Safaris (Steve and Ella Parker), Sun-seekers (Ian Barnes), Tweeters (Margaret Smith/Jaden Fanari), 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 the leaders of these groups and the volunteers in each of those groups.

Nursery

Thanks to Anne Langmaid, Nursery Manager, and the nursery team in managing the propagation and sale of plants. The sale of plants continues to be the major source of funds to cover our operating expenses and helps support new projects and plants for the garden. Pleasingly, despite lockdowns, there has been a 20% increase in overall plant sales from the previous year. Well done to the sales team.

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 a number of times. The garden has been mentioned more by council in its communications through printed material, social media, and the local newspaper.

Our external promotion of the botanic garden at events had to be put on hold due to cancellation of events. It was wonderful to see the nursery able to have sales tables at the APS Geelong and the APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh plant sales in April and May.

We continue to give presentations. These were ceased in 2021 with lockdown but have resumed in 2022. Presentations focus on the development, existing gardens, and plants of the MBG.

Externally, John Bentley continued as the FMBG representative on the Plant Trust.

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

Garden Development

New garden areas have been created and others further developed. Major areas in development include: 1) Lake south east near the freeway boundary 2) the Eastern Australian Dryland Garden, and 3) the eastern MBG boundary in preparation for an avenue of native trees along Collins Road for the Queen's Jubilee Tree Planting Project.

Garden signage

We have been adding plant flag labels to enhance the visitor experience. We have placed some wooden angled garden bed information stands into garden beds. The WASA Garden through Gumnuts has placed new signs on these stands.

Plant Recording

Jennifer Peters, has continued developing her IrisBG capabilities and has been diligently entering plant records into IrisBG and producing reports. Jennifer has prepared a draft IrisBG Procedures Manual. Many thanks to Jennifer for her precise and hard work on this project.

We acquired in April the Mapping Module and Garden Explorer at reduced cost through a sponsorship arrangement with IrisBG. This has allowed us to place on a satellite map exactly where the plants are and to make the database information available on the web (melton.gardenexplorer.org).

Seating

Installation of more garden recycled seating and picnic settings was completed. Seat pads and concreting were done by Daryl, Robert, Stewart, and John. Rob, Stewart, and James have installed the seats. Vee also helped install the Working for Victoria Team seat. We thank them all for their work in the garden furniture installations.

Community Involvement

We have generally not been able to involve the community and other groups in FMBG activities due to COVID. However, Kurunjang 'Hand on Learning' students have been working with the Lakers and TAFE students have assisted in the garden with Gumnuts.

Council Funding

We received funding from the council budget of \$36,550 ex. GST. This funding is specifically to develop and maintain the garden. The funding continues each year until 2023. It is expended as per the MCC budget plan and monitored by council. There are recording and reporting responsibilities we must comply with in expending public funds.

Membership

Individual memberships increased to 354 from 312 the previous year. It is very positive to see an increase. It is also good to see the support from businesses through corporate memberships.

	FMBG Memberships									
30 June	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Individual	354	312	323	303	235	233	251	236	218	207
Corporate	21	22	19	16	16	18	10	10	NA	NA
Associate	2	2	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, check-ins, sharing and posting.

	30 June	2022	% inc	2021	2020	2019
MBG FB Page Likes*		NA	NA	2,024	1,631	1,300
MBG FB Page Followers		2,619	20.5%	2,174	1,741	NR
MBG FB Check-ins		NA	NA	2,493	NR	NR
Nursery FB Page Likes		1,111	20.4%	923	675	500
Nursery FB Page Followers		1,258	22.5%	1,027	725	NR
Nursery FB Check-ins		110	5.8%	104	NR	NR
FMBG FB Page Likes		136	23.6%	110	87	NR
FMBG FB Page Followers		151	24.8%	121	96	NR
FMBG FB Group Members		818	17.7%	695	493	380
Twitter Followers		140	1.4%	138	137	124
Instagram Followers		793	12.3%	706	454	396

*NR – Not Recorded. *NA -Not Available. *FB have ceased likes on MBG page (only Follow is allowed)

Thanks

A big thank you to Mike Coveney who volunteered to enter the FMBG accounts each month into MYOB after Platinum Accounting informed FMBG they were unable to continue providing the accounting service after 30th June 2021. Mike's contribution has been invaluable in his new role as Assistant Treasurer and ensuring we meet our ATO BAS requirements. The Treasurer's role had been covered by John Bentley.

We thank Adrian Cope from Melton City Council, the FMBG Liaison Officer who helps to address MBG issues and actions them.

Thanks to Bunnings for donating equipment and plants for our activities.

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

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 (and sanitising the furniture), welcoming, QR Code checking-in and running the raffle.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the many volunteer hours that go into propagating, maintaining, weeding, watering and planting, mulching, making paths to create, enhance and manage the Melton Botanic Garden.

Thanks to the Admin Team for their work, which many of us do not see directly. Their efforts ensure we have items such as the volunteer hours diligently recorded.

The **FMBG Committee** continued its dedicated work and operated as a strong team. The FMBG Committee has done a wonderful job in helping to achieve a well-run and well-respected volunteer organisation in the Melton and the wider community.



Friends of the
Melton Botanic Garden Inc.

The Committee released the new Strategic Plan 2022-2026. The Action Plan, which we are working on, will support the Strategic Plan by listing what actions we aim to do over coming years to help achieve the plan.

Many thanks to Barbara Frampton for a superb job as Secretary and Public Officer, and her invaluable commitment to continue in this role, it is greatly appreciated.

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 Adrian B, Barbara F, Barb P, David P, Jen E, Jill B, John W, Sharon V and Mike C for their support, dedication, and commitment. Each one has contributed a significant amount and used their skills and talents in guiding FMBG.

Lastly, special thanks to all our retiring Committee Members. We have four members retiring: David Pye (Vice President), Jen Eldridge, John Woof and Sharon Vis. Each one has shown and provided commitment, insight, and a valuable contribution to the FMBG Committee. Jen is the longest serving member to retire, having commenced on the Committee in 2015, so big thanks to Jen.

All these achievements and efforts throughout the year provide a strong foundation for us to continue our work to achieve our mission, especially as 2023 is our 20th Anniversary year.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 14 September 2022



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.

