

## **FMBG Annual Report July 2023 to June 2024**

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 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who helps and supports FMBG. We have a wonderful and dedicated group of FMBG volunteers committed to volunteering and working hard. It has been another year of outstanding achievements and progress in developing, enhancing and maintaining the Melton Botanic Garden (MBG). We achieved a membership total of 444 financial members on 30 June 2024, concluded our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, and finished planting the trees in the Queen's Jubilee Tree Planting Project.

### **FMBG Meetings**

We had a variety of guest speakers and topics for our meetings in 2023/24. The monthly meeting raffle was well supported, as we raised \$1,461. Thanks to Carlene Vukovic for organising and serving the supper for the meetings, to Jill Bentley and Vee Beatty for the raffle, to everyone who helps set up and pack up, and to Kathy Smith and Barbara Frampton for opening and closing the venue.

Committee Meetings were held at the Brookfield Lifestyle facilities. Thanks to Mike Coveney for opening and closing the Brookfield meeting facility.

### **Membership**

Individual memberships were a little down to 415 compared to the previous year (444). It is very positive to see a strong financial membership base. We received good support from businesses through corporate memberships and our sponsors Edible Eden Design and Newport Lakes Native Nursery.

<b>FMBG Memberships</b>											
<b>30 June</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>415</b>	444	354	312	323	303	235	233	251	236	218
<b>Corporate</b>	<b>28</b>	24	21	22	19	16	16	18	10	10	NA
<b>Associate</b>	<b>1</b>	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	4	4	NA

### **Events**

We held several events during the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year including hosting the 38<sup>th</sup> Western Region Garden Clubs Conference and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration lunch at the Depot. Many thanks to everyone who helped at these events and especially to Jean Partridge for the Anniversary Cake.

Another significant event was the planting of a Lone Pine by Sam Rae MP and Jane Edmanson OAM on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Many thanks to Mt William Advanced Tree Nursery for donating the tree.

### **Garden Development**

We finished planting the last tree in the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Project in September. The Nature Play Space project was completed and the space was officially opened by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

Major areas in development include: 1) Lake south east near the boardwalk including construction of paths and gilgais 2) further planting the Eastern Australian Dryland Garden, 3) mulching and planting in the Queen's Jubilee Tree Planting Project and 4) the paths, beds, mulching and planting in Californian, Central and South American Garden.

We received funding from the Council budget of \$40,000 ex. GST following an FMBG submission for an increase due to rising costs. This funding is specifically to develop, enhance and maintain the garden. There are strict recording and reporting responsibilities we must comply with in expending public funds.



## Garden Groups and Volunteer Hours

We have a range of active groups in the garden and supporting groups as listed in the volunteer hours table. Many thanks to the leaders of all groups and the volunteers in each group.

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

Group/Activity	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Bushies*	70	231	-	3	6	-
Clean Up Days	106	158	75	78	118	193
Creekers	659	511	487	421	334	538
Depot (inc. Admin Team)	292	248	85	56	161	296
Grow The Garden	323	511	193	154	153	215
Guided Tour Volunteers	68	42	43	15	193	223
Gumnuts	1,764	1,935	1,401	1,458	1,509	1,391
IrisBG	56					
Lakers	1,923	2,227	1,099	1,680	1,405	1,018
Mixed Garden Beds North	150	64	17	-	-	-
Nursery	2,466	2,940	2,530	2,005	2,150	2,695
Odd Jobbers	1,579	1,612	714	641	609	670
Schools/TAFE Volunteering	-	-	90	-	60	210
Safaris	364	*309	527	399	548	513
Sombreros	49					
Southerners	1,032	1,200	-	-	-	-
Tweeters*	0	*	67	17	5	29
VVP*/Koori Student Grdn	58	*	-	12	-	12
Latham's Snipe Survey*	9	52	22	11	60	29
Required hours volunteers	5,241	2,885	5,074	6,197	8,765	7,711
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>16,209</b>	<b>14,925</b>	<b>12,678</b>	<b>13,152</b>	<b>16,186</b>	<b>16,709</b>

\*Missing data.

The volunteer hours in the table show we have contributed over 16,209 hours which is an increase of 1,284 hours. At the minimum wage rate of \$23.23/hr (1 July 2023), our hours equate to a value of \$376,535 for volunteer hours supporting the garden. However, the work we do is of a higher value than the minimum wage. The Centre for Volunteering calculator values our contribution as \$701,363. 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, or the conference contributions and all those activities our volunteers do in their own time to support FMBG and the garden. Many volunteers use their own vehicles and are 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 our 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.

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. The nursery helps support new projects and propagates plants for the garden.

### Guided Tours and Visitors

We have led a limited number of tours for specific events, festivals and groups. We have deliberately restricted the number of tours so we can focus on the garden development.

Thanks to everyone who assisted with the guided tours and associated morning teas.

### Collections and Plant Recording

Jennifer Peters, has diligently been entering plant records into IrisBG and producing reports. Many thanks to Jennifer for her precise and hard work on this project. Garden Explorer continues to be used by visitors and volunteers.

The Dryland Eucalyptus Arboretum received international recognition in being accredited by ArbNet.

### Garden Furniture

We undertook installation of garden recycled seating and picnic settings across the garden. Seat pad preparation and installation are undertaken by the Odd Jobbers Team. We thank them for their work in enhancing the garden through the furniture installations. We have received many positive comments about the number of the seats and their locations through Facebook and Google reviews.

### Community Involvement

Kurunjang Secondary College 'Hands on Learning' students have continued working with the Lakers and some community groups have assisted at Grow the Garden Days and Clean Up Days.

### Promotion

We continued our strong presence on social media and through our web page. FMBG and volunteers appeared in the Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly several times. The garden has been mentioned by Council in its communications through printed material, social media, and the local newspaper. We actively monitor Facebook and reviews and analytics.

Our patron, Jane Edmanson OAM, has been continuing to promote FMBG at events she attends and has visited the Friends and Melton Botanic Garden a couple of times during the year.

Presentations to other groups focus on the development, existing gardens, and plants of the MBG.

### Social Media

Our social media numbers have increased in all areas, except Twitter.

	30 June	2024	% incr	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
MBG FB Page Likes*		NA	-	NA	NA	2,024	1,631	1,300
MBG FB Page Followers		3240	11.8%	2,897	2,619	2,174	1,741	NR
MBG FB Check-ins		NA	-	NA	NA	2,493	NR	NR
Nursery FB Page Likes		1300	1.2%	1,284	1,111	923	675	500
Nursery FB Page Followers		1534	3.6%	1,480	1,258	1,027	725	NR
Nursery FB Check-ins		NA	-	110	110	104	NR	NR
FMBG FB Page Likes		204	22.9%	166	136	110	87	NR
FMBG FB Page Followers		246	30.9%	188	151	121	96	NR
FMBG FB Group Members		1036	12.7%	919	818	695	493	380
Twitter Followers		134	-3.6%	139	140	138	137	124
Instagram Followers		923	9.2%	845	793	706	454	396

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

## Thanks

Many thanks to everyone who actively contributed during the year in so many ways. Thank you to every financial member, as you are supporting the Friends and helping to make FMBG one of the larger friends of botanic gardens groups in the State of Victoria.

Thanks to everyone who has volunteered at the botanic garden by propagating, maintaining, weeding, watering, and planting, mulching, making paths etc. which enhance the Melton Botanic Garden.

Thanks to everyone who make our monthly meetings run well by providing supper, helping set up chairs, welcoming and running the raffle.

Thank you to Mike Coveney, who became Treasurer. Mike enters the FMBG accounts each month into MYOB and ensures we meet our ATO BAS requirements. Assistant to the Treasurer's role has been covered by John Bentley.

A thank you to Adrian Cope, the FMBG Liaison Officer at Melton City Council. Adrian helps to address Melton Botanic Garden issues and action them.

Many thanks to everyone assisting in our fundraising efforts. This year we thank Vee Beaty for initiating the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme bin at the depot and taking the containers to the returns site.

Thanks to the Admin Team for their work, which many of us do not see directly. Their efforts ensure we have items such as 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 Melton and the wider community.

Many thanks to Barbara Frampton for a superb job as Secretary and Public Officer, and her invaluable commitment to continue in this role for one more year, it is greatly appreciated. This is her last year as Secretary, so we are looking for a replacement.

The committee members have been Jill Bentley, Adrian Booker, Stewart Brown, Mike Coveney, Barbara Frampton, Jennifer Peters, Kathy Smith, Jenny Stewart, Robin Stewart, Max Thompson and Margaret Wood AM. Thanks to each of our committee members who have used their experience, skills and knowledge through their teamwork, discussion, research, honest feedback, and decision making in the management of FMBG.

All these achievements and efforts throughout the year provide a strong foundation for us to continue our work to achieve our mission.

John Bentley

President, Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

*Report presented at the Annual General Meeting 11 September 2024*

**Mission: To enrich the community and the environment by fostering, promoting and supporting the development and activities of the Melton Botanic Garden.**

