



CONCISE
ANNUAL REPORT
FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.
FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019



MELBOURNE FRIENDS
ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS VICTORIA



CONTENTS

Reflections from The President	1
Our Support for RBGV	2
The Friends	3
Our Volunteers	4
Events, Workshops and Classes	5
Friends' Financial Report	6
Friends' Trust Fund Financial Report	7

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Reflections from the President

Last year we spoke of changes and consolidation. The 2018/2019 Financial Year has seen further consolidation of new and existing processes along with expansion by way of new initiatives. We are particularly indebted to our Marketing & Relationships Manager, Jill Scown who, with the assistance of everyone in our Gate Lodge office, has been instrumental in driving most of these new projects.

Some notable achievements this past year have included a concerted push to boost memberships, the refurbishment of the Plant Craft Cottage, the move to weekly plant sales at the Growing Friends Nursery and the consolidation of art classes and workshops in Domain House.

To help with growing the membership, and also retaining current members, our systems have been streamlined and incentives introduced to encourage prompt renewals. New members have been welcomed at the Plant Craft Cottage, where we can utilise different days and times to allow more scope for attendance. The Passionate Friends category is starting to grow and so too is the awareness of Gift Memberships.

The Growing Friends plant sales were initially expanded from the regular autumn and spring weekend sales to include the first Friday of the month and then from November 2018 they were increased to every Friday morning, except around major sale times. Both members and the public are able to take advantage of these opportunities to purchase plants, with Friends' members benefitting from their 10% discount. The Autumn and Spring sales continued to flourish, generating gross revenue in excess of \$60,000 across the weekends involved.

The annual art exhibition was opened in October 2018 by our Patron, the Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency the Hon. Linda Dessau, AC. The exhibition featured The Art of Botanical Illustration (TABI), and although overall income was slightly lower than usual at a little over \$40,000, the people attending were treated to a very high standard of botanic art. We were delighted that Celia Rosser was able to attend the opening night to present the Celia

Rosser medals and other awards in person. During TABI, \$5,000 is donated by the Friends to purchase works for the State Botanical Collection.

Events are an important way of engaging with current members and encouraging new members to join. Once again the variety of walks, talks, excursions and workshops has provided something for everyone, from children's workshops in school holidays to talks that have taken us from Melbourne to the Mediterranean and beyond. A particularly popular talk was the one given in February by Prof. Rob Adams, AM, on Central Melbourne's Changing Urban Landscapes. Basketry workshops at the Plant Craft Cottage have become increasingly popular and Talking Plants always draws a crowd.

The Friends' Photo Group has continued to expand and their work provides a ready source of illustration for our Botanic News. The Plant Craft Cottage continues to offer visitors an opportunity to observe and participate in plant-based crafts and we are proud that the Cottage has taken part in Open House Melbourne since its inception in 2008, drawing hundreds of visitors over the weekend.

Support from the Friends for the RBGV comes in many forms and this year included nearly \$20,000 for the refurbishment of the Plant Craft Cottage, which involved a new kitchen, furniture, plus electrical and painting work. The Friends' Trust Fund however, continues to support projects in the Melbourne Gardens through grants, staff scholarships and the Helen McLellan Research Grant. During 2018/19, the available allocation of grants towards the new Sensory Garden was held over until 2019/20, as detailed in the Trust Fund Report, due to delays in approvals from Heritage Victoria. In addition to the \$5,000 for purchasing artworks for the State Botanical Collection, \$10,000 was awarded through scholarships for RBGV staff and \$6,000 for a general purpose grant.

These achievements would not be possible without the time and commitment of so many of our members who volunteer in so many ways. We are indebted to you and we thank you; you are the lifeblood of our organisation.

Our Support for RBGV

The Friends of the Gardens continued to provide financial support to the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (RBGV) via the Friends' Trust Fund.

During 2018/19, a grant had been earmarked for the development of the Sensory Garden but this grant had to be deferred since the requisite approvals from Heritage Victoria were delayed. It is anticipated that the backlog in distributions for this project will be made in 2019/20, in addition to the annual mandated minimum distribution for that and other projects.

The Friends' Trust Fund also continued to support the professional development of the RBGV staff, awarding three scholarships totalling \$10,000.

During the year a further \$5,000 for the purchase of artworks from *The Art of Botanical Illustration* for the State Art Collection, was provided to the Gardens along with a \$6,000 general purpose grant.

The Friends of the Gardens has also provided funding to support a much needed renovation of Plant Craft Cottage, including a new kitchen.

RBGV Staff Scholarships

Bret Pritchard, Horticulturalist, for a tour of arid gardens and natural environments throughout California and Arizona, USA

Kate Roud, Horticulturalist, for safeguarding the New Zealand Collection at RBGV Melbourne Gardens

Kimberly Colman, Learning Facilitator, to attend a Therapeutic Garden and Horticulture Therapy Workshop.

Continued support for Sensory Garden

Refurbishment of Plant Craft Cottage, including a new kitchen
\$20,000

Contribution to State Art Collection
\$5,000

Artwork by Rochelle Caligiuri

The Friends

The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne (The Friends) continued to offer a rich and varied event program, enabling Members to learn more about the Gardens, meet new friends, volunteer and support the Gardens in a meaningful way.

New workshops, focussing on sustainability, recycling and trending crafts were added to appeal to new and youthful groups.

One major initiative this year was the refurbishment of Plant Craft Cottage, which included the installation of a brand new kitchen, painting of internal walls and the purchase of new furniture. The Cottage is a positive and welcoming space for visitors and is now better equipped to host regular craft workshops as well as member gatherings.

The events program offered by the Friends this year saw two international visitors deliver exceptional talks and workshops. Author, Jon Drori presented a fascinating illustrated talk about his book *Around the World in 80 Trees* and Jess Shepherd, international botanic artist, presented both a talk and workshop on her *Blue Flowers Project* and painting *Larger than Life Leaves*. The events program also offered exclusive tours to areas of the Gardens rarely seen by the general public, including the Herbarium.

Our photography group continued to record different aspects of the Gardens, across the seasons, through beautiful photography, whilst our volunteers at Plant Craft Cottage shared historical facts and stories about the Cottage with visitors during open days.

The Growing Friends worked tirelessly around the propagation benches to prepare for the Spring and Autumn plant sales, and this year also opened the gates of the Friends' Nursery on most Fridays, to enthusiastic gardeners seeking quality plants.

During 2018 the Friends presented *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, one of the leading botanical art exhibitions in Australia. The exhibition, open to international and Australian artists, showcased many talented artists including those from the Friends' Botanical Art Program, demonstrating the ongoing high standard of teaching provided through the program.

At the core of our organisation are our volunteers and one of the highlights of the year was a celebration of their generous contribution, in May during National Volunteers Week. The event was filled with positivity and friendship, which defines the culture of the Friends.

Here are just a few highlights from this year:

Welcoming new friends

Botanic art classes and workshops

Exclusive tours and guided walks

Specialist Illustrated talks

Our Volunteers

The foundation of the organisation, our volunteers, have had another busy year generously providing over 15,000 hours of their valuable time to support the RBGV. Their roles this year were varied but ultimately, our volunteers contribute because they want to raise funds to financially support the Gardens and encourage others to enjoy the Gardens the way they do.

How have our volunteers supported the Friends and the Gardens this year?

- ▶ Welcomed 100's of visitors to Plant Craft Cottage
- ▶ Coordinated volunteers for plant sales and art exhibitions
- ▶ Beautified and nurtured gardens at key locations within the Gardens
- ▶ Diligently prepared and proofed our popular quarterly magazine, *Botanic News* and other publications as well as calendars and cards
- ▶ Welcomed visitors and assisted with sales at *The Art of Botanical Illustration* and the biannual plant sales
- ▶ Prepared marketing material to promote the benefits of the Friends
- ▶ Coordinated committees and groups providing leadership and direction for members
- ▶ Welcomed new members, made 1000's of bookings into events and provided significant support to the office staff
- ▶ Catered generously for many events
- ▶ Attended various committees
- ▶ Guided tours of members highlighting some of the most popular and also some lesser known interesting features of the Gardens
- ▶ Propagated and tended to plants weekly to provide only the very best plant stock for the Friends' plant sales

- ▶ Provided guidance and strategic direction for the Friends
- ▶ Prepared a successful schedule of events and workshops for all members to enjoy

Our volunteers are hardworking and generous people and this is just a snapshot of the many roles our volunteers embrace with enthusiasm.



Promoted the Friends at events

Processed memberships and booked hundreds of members into events, art classes and activities

Over 15,000 volunteer hours



Weeded, mulched and nurtured gardens



Prepared 1000's of plants for sale

Events, Workshops and Classes

The diverse program of events, the highly regarded art exhibition, craft and specialised botanic art workshops and our highly successful plant sales provide opportunities for the Friends to engage with other members and the local community, to learn and also share knowledge and passion for the Gardens.

Many members and guests value the 'Illustrated Talks' presented by the Friends and one of the favourites this year was *Super Salvias* with Meg Bentley. The members-only annual bus tour and 'behind the scenes' tours of the Gardens are also always very popular.

The *Art of Botanical Illustration* was an exceptional showcase of scientifically accurate botanical art and was viewed by several thousand visitors. Botanical art classes continue to run seven days a week with more than 120 students enrolled in the program. Specialised art workshops were hosted by talented tutors including international guest, Jess Shepherd.

Plant Craft Cottage, whilst impacted over several months by the renovation of the kitchen, continued to deliver workshops for adults and children with a focus on natural materials, recycling and repurposing to counteract the 'War on Waste.' Basketry workshops in particular were regularly booked out and we introduced several 'sustainability' themed activities to complement the ethos of Plant Craft Cottage. The renovated cottage is now, more than ever, an inviting, creative space.

The Friends' biannual plant sales have again proven to be a highlight on everyone's calendar with members and locals purchasing from a wide variety of plants propagated by the Growing Friends. The sales successfully generated over \$60,000 gross revenue for the Friends.



120 Students in art classes / wk



International guest artist



\$60,000 income

Friends' Financial Report

The financial result for the year ending 30 June 2019 was an operating loss of \$16,722, which is \$9,785 better than the budget for the year (loss of \$26,507). This is the first operating loss since 2014 and was expected following the implementation of the office restructure in 2018, the appointment in June 2018 of a Marketing and Relationships Manager to focus on membership expansion and retention, and the refurbishment of the Plant Craft Cottage. After allowing for the Plant Craft Cottage refurbishment cost, the "real" trading result is a loss of \$5,654, which is comparatively modest given the range of rejuvenation initiatives implemented during the financial year.

Total Income on the Statement of Profit and Loss is \$504,216, which is \$8,914 below budget. The below budget income is primarily due to receipts from the TABI art exhibition being \$19,102 lower than expected. Other income variances are Growing Friends (positive \$2,076), Functions and Events (positive \$2,735) and Plant Craft Cottage (under \$3,416).

Membership subscriptions is \$93,337, which is an increase of \$3,511(4%). This is the first increase in a number of years and was a key target for management.

Total Expenditure on the Statement of Profit and Loss is \$520,938, which is \$18,698 better than budget. Expenses in most areas were contained and in line with or better than budget.

The total assets of the Friends as at 30 June 2019 was \$461,743, compared with \$483,152 in 2018, a decrease of \$21,409 over the financial year. This decrease can largely be attributed to the operating loss and is reflected in a decrease of \$14,713 in cash and term deposits held and a reduction in prepayments of \$7,731. Liabilities remained relatively stable at \$122,127, although there was a decrease in payables of \$9,980, offset by an increase in staff provisions of \$4,844. The level of accumulated staff leave is being managed closely.

The financial position of the Friends is very sound with just over \$425,000 in cash and financial investments.

CONCISE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
	2019	2018
INCOME		
Membership Subscriptions	93,337	89,826
Botanical Art Tuition	204,685	191,347
Growing Friends	72,776	69,962
Events and Activities	79,868	64,062
Exhibition Revenue	43,063	17,995
Interest	10,487	9,410
TOTAL INCOME	504,216	442,602
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	198,444	145,813
Membership Expenses	12,124	10,816
Botanical Art Tuition	133,006	120,266
Growing Friends	21,674	17,765
Events and Activities	86,682	61,628
Exhibition Expenses	17,060	11,517
Administration Expenses	51,948	64,429
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	520,938	432,234
OPERATING SURPLUS	(16,722)	10,368
BALANCE SHEET		
	2019	2018
ASSETS		
Cash	50,491	25,204
Term Deposits	375,000	415,000
Receivables and Prepayments	16,436	24,762
Plant & Equipment	19,816	18,186
TOTAL ASSETS	461,743	483,152
LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	94,176	104,156
Provisions	27,951	22,658
TOTAL LIABILITIES	122,127	126,814
NET ASSETS	339,616	356,338

The Friends' Trust Fund Financial Report

The financial position of The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Trust Fund (the Fund) was significantly strengthened over the year, by strong income returns and steady growth in the value of its corpus.

A partial contributor to this state of affairs was because the Fund was not able to make significant grants towards the Sensory Garden project – its funding priority – due to lack of progress in the project caused principally by difficulty and delay in obtaining Heritage Victoria approval.

The Trustees expect that in the 2019/20 year, the backlog of funding for the project will be paid, in addition to the annual mandated minimum distribution for that and other projects.

Partly as a result of the pause in this project funding, but also because of strong income returns and capital growth in the Fund, the Fund's value stood at \$4.2 million at 30 June 2019, an increase in 7.6% over the year.

However, the uncertain investment climate in both Australian and international markets provides constant challenge to continued strong financial performance of the Fund.

GRANTS PAID BY TRUST FUND TO THE GARDENS 2018/19	
General Purpose	6,000
Purchase Artworks from Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition	5,000
Scholarships	10,000
TOTAL GRANTS PAID 2018/19	\$21,000

SCHEDULE OF ALL GRANTS PAID 1985 - 2018	
1985 - 1989	67,172
1990 - 1994	213,892
1995 - 1999	371,154
2000 - 2004	670,010
2005 - 2009	323,064
2010 - 2014	610,347
2015 - 2019	511,108
TOTAL GRANTS PAID 1985 - 2019	\$2,766,747

CONCISE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
	2019	2018
INCOME		
Dividends & Distributions	267,292	141,555
Franking Credits	100,772	29,110
Donations & Bequests	13,123	23,385
Realised Profit/(Loss) on Deposits	(80,901)	38,967
Interest	6,661	10,348
TOTAL INCOME	306,947	243,365
EXPENDITURE		
Audit Fees	4,650	4,500
Management Fees	43,406	42,973
Other Administration Costs	3,750	4,212
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	51,806	51,685
PROFIT	255,141	191,680
Unrealised increase (decrease) in investments	61,213	159,659
Less grants to the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria	-21,000	-147,052
COMPREHENSIVE PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	295,354	204,287

BALANCE SHEET		
	2019	2018
ASSETS		
Cash	336,247	167,566
Receivables	99,938	29,100
Other Financial Assets	3,745,509	3,759,088
TOTAL ASSETS	4,181,694	3,955,754
LIABILITIES		
Creditors	6,833	76,247
TOTAL LIABILITIES	6,833	76,247
ACCUMULATED RESERVES	4,174,861	3,879,507



ABN 43 438 335 331
Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

ABN 78 402 826 907
The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Trust Fund

Gate Lodge, 100 Birdwood Avenue,
Melbourne Vic 3004