



DRAFT MINUTES

**GENERAL MEETING**  
**Held on Tuesday 13 April, 2021 at 5.30pm**  
**in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion, National Arboretum, Canberra**

1. **Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country** – Trish Keller, OAM (Chair)

Trish welcomed everyone to the meeting and made the Acknowledgement of Country.

2. **Attendance:** Christine Callen (NAC), Valentyna Crane, Del Da Costa (Secretary), Alan Doolan, Cally Earnshaw (NAC), Margaret Groube, Maggie Hawes, Fran Hinton, Trish Keller OAM (Chair), Christine Keogh, Naomi Landau, Joanne Maples, Nicole Pietrucha, Lyn Rees (Treasurer), Alan Reid, Maureen Reid, Carolyn Thomas, Mike Woolley, Vicki Woolley. [19]

*Apologies:* Jenny Cantlon, Cathy Ikin, Helen Hemphill, Jocelyn Plovits, Hans van Haalen, Cherie Whan, Shirley Wilton.

3. **Minutes** of the last meeting held on 10 March 2020 were accepted without change (moved: Del Da Costa; seconded Christine Keogh). Carried.

There were no **Matters Arising**.

4. **Chair's Report – Trish Keller OAM**

Trish highlighted the following items:

- The Friends have just been given a Handbury Award by the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG). The award is named in honour of the late Geoff Handbury AO, a major benefactor of the AAFBG, to recognise exceptional contributions to an Australian Botanic Garden, Arboretum or Park, by an AAFBG member group or individual from a member group. *Category 2: A Friends Group who has made a major contribution to their respective garden/s through fundraising for major works, or by creating improvements by collective volunteer effort or through a significant financial contribution.* Trish noted the Friends ticked all three boxes!
- Seat sponsorships – This year, Trish has received 19 inquiries about seats. Four have been paid; two are about to pay; and 13 are considering the matter.
- The Arboretum Book (next edition) is progressing well and is being checked by various parties at the moment. Mike Woolley showed the cover photo featuring a drone shot of the Arboretum. The Book is due for publication in September/October this year. Copies of the current Book are selling very well from The Curatoreum at the sale price of \$20.
- Congratulations to Andy Russell, long-time STEP enthusiast who has been made a Life Member of the STEP Association.
- Warm Trees 2021 – The Singapore High Commission is very excited about being our diplomatic partner in 2021. Potential launch date is 2 July.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

Lyn Rees, Treasurer, presented the Finance Report. Movement for the Friends' funds from 1 January – 31 March 2021 was \$6,567 resulting in an increase to the Friends' funds to \$86,799. The net cash movement for the Trust Fund for the same period was \$12,761 resulting in an increase of Trust funds held at the bank to \$98,093.

Friends' increased income for the period (\$6,567) resulted from memberships and Market Stall income from those held in November last year, less payments for the Ngala bus lease and advance membership payments.

Trust funds' increased income for the period (\$12,761) was due to money received for Seat Sponsorships less payment to the NAC for new seats for future sponsorship.

Proposed and committed projects for future spending include future picnic settings and seats; budget for the new Arboretum Book; balance of the 5-year annual lease of the Ngala bus; balance of funds needed for the 3-year Wollemi Propagation Project; and balance of the Forest Gazebo. This totals \$206,283 over the next four years.

Vicky Woolley moved and Joanne Maples seconded that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Carried.

## 6. Arboretum Update

Christine Callen updated the attendees with the latest news from the Arboretum:

- Over the 4-day Easter period, there were 24,000 visitors through the Village Centre – one of the biggest numbers and busiest ever. Thanks to the Friends for volunteering and taking on extra shifts during this time.
- There has been horticultural growth in the forests after recent rains, and publicity growth thanks to the ABC, Riot ACT and Canberra Times.
- The Forest Sculpture Advisory Committee, comprising seven members, meets quarterly to suggest suitable artwork for the Arboretum site.
- The Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park participated in a Canberra Tourism initiative for a new SBS TV show highlighting cycling across Canberra.
- David Williamson will be doing a Hero Tree Planting on 27 May. Fiona Wood was the last one (11 March) and also Ricky Stuart.
- A change in VSOs (Welcome Desk staff) is underway with new recruitment to result in having an additional three casual staff (total six) and three part-timers.
- A coffee-table-style book is being created by Samantha Gibbs on Bonsai.
- Horticultural update – the Discovery Garden is undergoing renovations (including cactus and succulents); some ceremonial trees are being replaced as they are not suited to our climate (and relevant embassies/people being contacted); trident maples' valves and irrigation loops are being replaced/expanded; relevant trees are being checked for boron; sugar pines are being planted as co-hosts into the Giant Sequoias forest; and acacias are being added to the lancewood forest to draw down moisture into the soil.
- Capital funding update – road sealing is expected to be completed by the end of December; and the Friends Gazebo (for which the Friends are holding a fundraising dinner – see later Agenda Item 9) by the end of June.
- Future priorities – Education centre to be developed; Bonsai relocation; expansion of Margaret Whitlam Pavilion (increased seating; restaurant) and Village Centre; and external bollards now have lighting. The Eco-lodge project is on hold because other hotels are not yet back to capacity after the pandemic.

- Wollemi Wanderers program for young children will resume in Term 3.
- A second entrance/exit to/from the Arboretum is under discussion regarding the route.
- A question from the floor sought more outside toilets. Christine asked for suggested locations eg Cork Oak forest.

## 7. Volunteers Update

Guide training is going well with Part A being completed. There were over 3,500 visitors and 1600 vehicles onsite for the RAAF centenary flyover on 31 March. Total volunteer hours for the first quarter of the year have reached almost 1,000. Canberra Tree Week will be celebrated from 30 April – 9 May.

## 8. Friends Reports

### a. Guides Report

As above Item 7.

### b. Bonsai Report

Mike reported that *Bonsai Reshaped* (26-28 March) was very successful. The Artist-In-Residence for autumn is Jeff Barry (22-24 April) and Jeff Barrie in the spring. On Easter Sunday, there were 2,500 visitors through the Bonsai exhibits and the doors had to be shut for a short period. As part of the school holiday program, there were workshops for kids on Bonsai. And finally there was a plea for more Bonsai volunteers.

### c. STEP

Trish read the STEP report: March activity in Forest 20 centred on work to the new entrance from the lower car park, dead-heading Dianella plants and frenzied weeding in the central garden beds. With good rains and a big thunderstorm, weeds have continued to flourish and unfortunately a number of established plants have died. Hence, new plantings have begun, and will continue, to fill the gaps. So far these have made in Area D, The Clearing and lilies planted in the Bush Tucker Garden. Thus, weeding, pruning, mulching, planting and generally tidying up have kept STEPPers busy in March quarter.

### d. Harvesting Group including Discovery Garden

The Harvesting Group are very busy making jams, chutneys etc from the record kilos of figs from our forest. From the Discover Garden, Ange made the following preserves one day:

8 x 250ml jars of Eggplant Chutney  
 15 x 250ml of Green Tomato Chutney  
 22 x 100ml hexagonal jars of Basil & Pine Nut Pesto

### e. Working Bees Report

Vicky Woolley gave this report, saying that working in the Working Bees is like a gym session, (adding that the Friends' Trailer is a successful investment). The hort team are the personal trainers for the work-outs: removing epicormic growth and irrigation checking; sawing dead wood, back and forth, is like rowing; a good body workout is the spreading of mulch in the Himalayan Cedars (cool and shady in summer) and Gallery of Gardens.

## 9. Friends Activities

- Del spoke about the launch that day of the ticketing process for the exciting Friends Fundraising Dinner, with guests of honour, the Governor-General and his wife. The event will be held in the Village Centre on Tuesday 8 June. The

fundraising effort is in aid of the Forest Gazebo that the Friends have agreed to sponsor. This is effectively a multi-purpose shelter providing sun and rain protection, on-site interpretation for visitors and seating suitable for educational groups. It will be the first of twelve Gazebos scattered around the Arboretum site in locations with wonderful views. Del encouraged everyone to come and support this event and bring their friends.

- Trish reported on highlights of the Wollemi Pine Propagation Project, which was going well, given differing timelines and seedling growth rates.

**10. Other business**

There was no other business.

**11. Next Meeting – Tuesday 11 May 2021 – Annual General Meeting.**

The General Meeting closed at 6.30pm and was followed by congratulatory drinks and nibbles, celebrating the Friends' accolade of a Handbury Award by the AAFBG.

-----