



CHAIR'S REPORT FOR MAY AGM 2022

With great pleasure I offer my Chair's Report to the Friends' AGM.

Firstly I'd like to acknowledge and thank each and every Council member for their great support of me as the Chair in 2021. Each member played a significant and important role in getting the job done in support of you, the membership. So very grateful thanks to each of you.

And a reminder that this AGM is my penultimate next year will be my last and I'm very keen to get new members nominating for Council with the ultimate aim of a new Chair. Participating in the governance of the Friends is the most rewarding experience I have had had since I retired.

The ramifications of Covid certainly played a part in the reduction of our meeting schedule with no seasonal talks or guest speakers. But things picked up and we are looking forward to a variety of speakers to come in the next seasonal talks in 2022 and none more so than our guest speaker tonight. Thanks to Joanne Maples for 'finding' our speaker tonight. And that's a job all of you can do ... if you know somebody who has expert knowledge and you think would be a good fit with our Friends Seasonal Talks, let us know.

Highlights and low lights... where to begin...importantly I begin with membership!

Since the pandemic, membership has shown its disappointing downward trend.

We discussed various strategies at Council to address this issue and one that is having a positive effect was the formation of a Membership Committee. A few Council members put their hands up to really focus on every strategy they thought would entice new members to join us, and old members to renew. Now in May 2022 the tanker is turning and these strategies are working as the numbers are on the up. The new flier worked really well and more are being printed; word of mouth always works; fliers are on the tables again in the café. Thanks to Ian Chambers who is leading the group.

I could go on but suffice to say we encourage you to renew your membership when its due and sign up a friend or family member at the same time. We can't do all the things we'd like to achieve without your financial and moral support.

I've been taking copious notes since last AGM of the HIGHLIGHTS to regale you with tonight. Many you have heard about in previous newsletters but which I will touch on again tonight ... the first of which was being a finalist and consequently a winner of a HANDBURY AWARD by the Australian Federation of Friends of Botanic Gardens – AFFBG – our peak body. There is a handout to tell you of how the Friends qualified for the award. Well-deserved I'm sure you will agree!

Harvest Stalls go from strength to strength even in the Covid year and huge thanks to Colette Mackay OAM and her Harvest team – and to the STEP team coming on board with their variety of plants and other items for sale their contribution which has enhanced the Market Stalls with their different variety of products. Thanks Harvest Team and STEPPers!

The Friends Gazebo/Forest Shelter, was all but completed and was opened in fine style early March. Thanks to all of you who braved the elements to attend this launch and all agreed that it certainly IS fit for purpose! There was continuing information about this new edifice at the NAC. Meanwhile we continued to pay it off.

The Wollemi Pine Propagation Project has gone from strength to strength. Roger, Ange and Colette have accomplished a magnificent outcome for the Friends in their liaising with the Yarralumla Nursery, Matt Parker and the team over there.

Those of you reading the latest e-newsletter will know that the first Wollemis went on sale on-line and at the NAC at this past weekend's Market Stall. A wonderful achievement to all concerned.

A special note of thanks to the NAC for all their support in achieving this great outcome. I'd particularly point to Michelle McMahon, or Shell as she is known to us for her art – her design work, her talent and expertise in creating the images FOR the WOLLEMI publications which are QUITE REMARKABLE. THANKS SHELL!

Warm Trees 2021 with Singapore as the diplomatic partner was the last Warm Trees with Jocelyn Plovits at the helm as Coordinator/Convenor. It was a huge success and the Singapore High Commissioner and his wife Pearl were thrilled to be involved. They brought several of their diplomatic colleagues to the launch held in July and were most interested in this fun Friends-Arboretum activity. I don't think there will be any difficulty over the next few years to get a diplomatic partner.

A new coordinator was found for 2022... JAN MORGAN put her hand up. AND WE THANK HER VERY MUCH FOR ALL THE EFFORT she is putting in to Warm Trees 2022. It was decided the diplomatic partner in 2022 would be the Indigenous Marathon Foundation created by Aussie icon Rob De Castella, AM OBE and strongly supported by the Ngunnawal Elders Council. The launch will coincide with NAIDOC Week. Have you started your knitting yet? Have a chat to Jan for further instructions or look on our website for the latest Warm Trees Newsletter which has full details.

The new Arboretum Book was launched in December, under the watchful eye of Jocelyn Plovits and her team of expert researchers. It's selling at the Curatoreum and you can also buy a copy/copies on our website. Another note of thanks goes to Mel O'Hanlon for her wonderful cooperation in this venture and for her support of the Friends again. Nothing was too much trouble in getting the book ready for sale from her point of view - thanks Mel!

And the Friends Council agreed to buy a shipping container in which to lodge the new consignment of books and which has the Friends logo attached. It is located near the Depot and has the Friends logo on it. Thanks Deren Signs!

Which takes me to our new website...the website team, Del, Lyn, Christine Keogh with Spero have been working on establishing our new website...watch this space for its launch!
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We had 500 COPIES OF THE 2022 CALENDAR PRINTED AND THEY SOLD LIKE HOTCAKES - YOU MIGHT SAY - WITH NONE LEFT AT THE END OF FEBRUARY! So thanks to Mike Woolley for all the beautiful photos he took and for coordinating this edition and once again working with Mel at The Curatoreum.

The Friends were asked in an email from Roger Hnatiuk on 31 October 2020 to have a history of the Arboretum written. His email says many things including "2023/2024 will be here before you know it . The Arboretum Project was initiated in 2003 which makes 2023 the 20th anniversary and 2024 the 21st anniversary. [And 2023 will also be the 10th anniversary

of the Arboretum opening up to the public.] So what would be a fitting project to have ready for the celebration of either date?"

As Roger pointed out that this particular project has a creeping loss of access to the people component in it and it really needs to be underway as soon as possible. And what can we, the Friends, do to expedite the venture.

I wanted to mention Phil Morrall AM CSC, a close colleague of mine on the National Australian Order of Australia Committee, who lives locally, and who has been making oral histories since his retirement. Phil was invited to Council and gave us some points to consider based on his experiences. I offer him a huge vote of thanks for his support of the Friends and this project. His advice couldn't have been more helpful.

I'll share just a couple of these points the first being THE PLAN! Phil says planning is the key to all this. The next valuable point is to Start at the End.

What were we looking forwell we envisaged a product or products that can be used across multiple platforms – from small cinema through to various web channels.

Our first thoughts were a combination of interviews with key players in the creation and early development of the Arboretum who can tell their stories and visuals that capture that change that has occurred around Dairy Farmers Hill and the various aspects of the Arboretum - the forests, the Gardens, the Bonsai Collection, the Pod Playground etc.

We were very keen to make contact with companies who would, with their services, endeavour to shape our project.

Scott Saddler AM gave us the name and a business contact where we might go to as the company had done work at the NAC. Arron Hage, from Wolflab was invited in to give his perspective. The two partners from another company Vivienne O'Connell and Shaun Humphries, SRH, known to Mike Woolley, also came to talk with us.

Both companies outlined their production processes of our project as they saw it. The upshot of these discussions were taken to a significant meeting with NAC management in April 2022 to discuss how to proceed with this project as it will be a joint FNAC/NAC project.

Well Roger let me tell you what Council will do this week..... we will push the 'send' message to these two companies outlining our preference for how the project will look. We want it to be able to be archived for future generations to discover and enjoy. It would also provide a current snapshot of the first 20 years for the ACT and broader community, in edited packages, that would cover the various facets of the Arboretum. These may be used at other ACT or national attractions, including at the Arboretum for its visitors. The facets of the history to explore would include the Arboretum's inception, design, physical characteristics such as the buildings, the forest and gardens, its role as a public amenity as well as its role as a research/ education/conservation resource.'

The Governor General at our Friends Fundraising Dinner in his speech says it's 'a story to tell' ...we agree! Indeed it isAND WE WILL!!! The launch will be in 2023 in conjunction with the Arboretum's celebration activities.

Speaking of the Friends Fundraising Dinner - it turned out to be a very successful evening on 8 June, complete with the support of the Governor General, His Excellency David Hurley and Mrs Hurley, the NAC team, Ginger Catering and Del herself! Minister Steel and his partner also attended.

Special thanks to Friends Council Secretary Del Da Costa for her extraordinary efforts to make this such a huge success.

Mrs Hurley has composed a song especially for the Friends. Earlier that week we had practised the song when the Governor General planted a tree in the Central Valley. At the dinner Mrs Hurley invited us to sing to the person next to us with feeling the words of You Are My Sunshine. I know some of you have heard me tell this story before and I promise this is the last time, but...never before nor again will I get that opportunity to sing to and gaze into the eyes of a Governor General! And he didn't bat an eyelid!!!!

The total of funds raised at this event was close to \$16,000. I thank you again Del and all of you who supported this event. It helped pay for the Forest Shelter - think Gazebo - considerably!

The Friends Tourist Bus continues to take visitors around the Arboretum. When the new roads are completed, Ngala's journey will be longer and more circuitous...we are still watching this this space!

Cally Earnshaw, the Arboretum's Community Engagement Officer sent out an expression of interest for a Guides Coordinator role. The Guides are the backbone of the Friends engaging daily with visitors to the Arboretum in a variety of specialised tours, talks and walks. There is more about this Coordinator's role and the folk involved in Cally's report.

Dr Suzette Searle, the Wattle guru, Cally and Mike Woolley are liaising on the seed collection from the Golden Wattles with Friends and Volunteers. I can report to you that at this stage in 2022 negotiations are well underway with packaging etc and Suzette and Mike are meeting this Wednesday to confer on progress and possibly production.

As Manager of the Seat Sponsorship Program on behalf of the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra I am regularly approached by members of the public who want to sponsor seats and picnic settings. It continues to be a slow but rewarding process but nevertheless there were a few sponsorships taken up yielding a positive result in the Trust Fund.

Despite the Covid shadow we the Friends of the National Arboretum had a good year and I can only thank each and every one of you for the generous contribution you made for its ongoing success.

Before I end my report, I want to particularly thank and pay tribute to two departing Councillors. Cherie Whan...our Social Media Manager, a mostly behind-the-scenes Councillor. And to Hans van Haalen ...an original Guide ...not many of those left!
A membership team member.

[Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to Cherie and Hans, if they are present]

Thank you!

After the AGM, we welcome Guest Speaker, Trevor Lipscombe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends, I am delighted to have as our guest speaker tonight, TREVOR LIPSCOMBE. Joanne Maples had signified to us ages ago that that Trevor would be a great speaker for the AGM.. and so it comes to pass...thanks Joanne

Trevor will talk about Griffin's Green Hills. Trevor is currently co-convenor of the National Trust (ACT)Monthly Heritage Walks Program and has been from 2017 until 2021. He has researched and led several heritage walks. Last year he researched the Green Hills for a video and talk to Australian Garden History Society. Since then he has uncovered more about the significance of the area of the Canberra story.

Trevor...welcome and thanks for being our special guest speaker to complete our AGM evening.
