

Friends of the Cairns Botanic Gardens

Annual General Meeting 13 March 2024: President's report

I am pleased to present this report as we head into the 35th anniversary of the formation of the Friends' committee in 1989. At a time when volunteerism is in decline nationally, we are doing well in attracting new members, keeping our committee functioning and enhancing our much-loved Gardens.

The removal of the kauri tree near Friends' House early in 2023 was a big disruption to our most effective fund-raising activity: the propagation of plants for the weekly trolley sales and 3 big sales at Easter, Carnival on Collins and Christmas. Our hard-working **Gardeneers** have had to adapt to significant changes and purchase a **mist house, benches** and **fencing**. They will also be contributing to **irrigation**.

Committee: Our committee in 2023 was stable with only one new member: Bridgette Gower. Business has continued as usual with monthly meetings and talks, guided walks, shop operation, fundraising and organising events to increase awareness of the Gardens. We had a stall at Ecofiesta for the first time.

Enhancements

- The new system of **plant identification - a labelling machine and software** – purchased in 2022, got off to a slow start with Gardens staff unable to access a laptop to implement the system. This much-needed project is now underway following the purchase of a new **laptop** by Friends.
- Early last year, we took delivery of the **facsimile copy of the 1880s Accessions Register** which we had restored two years ago.
- Members need to find a time to visit the Conservatory where they will see the new, **large hanging baskets** overhead. These have been specially designed with pulleys to enable them to be lowered, changed and raised without ladders being needed.
- Friends have also approved **new signage for the main Collins Avenue entrance** to the Gardens and for **10 interpretive signs** which will highlight significant trees in the Flecker Gardens; eg, sausage tree, cannonball tree, cycads, the jade vine arbour, the tar tree and giant rain tree.
- A new **native beehive** was purchased for the Friends House balcony and Zac Peterson, of Cairns Native Bees generously donated a new hive to replace the one on the pedestal in the Indigenous garden.
- When our nomination of Del van Mielo for an award from the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens was successful, we funded Del and Friends' Vice-President, Elaine Harrison, to **travel to the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens Herbarium**.
- We also funded the curator to attend the Global Botanic Gardens Congress in Melbourne and paid the fees for two staff members to attend Australian Institute of Horticulture workshops.

Active service awards: Norma Wright does not like having a fuss made, so we surprised her with a morning tea, chocolate cake and a long service award. Also awarded for the length of their commitment were Lorraine Smith, Lothar Ross, David Rentz, Rae and Rod Garrett. Ten years of active service was notched up by Del Van Mielo, Therese Rufi, Rita Sheldrick and Annabelle Symes, and Megan Lilly, Jenn and Barry Muir, Michael Hyde, James Sing and Jacqueline Kvello were recognised for five years of active service.

Starry Nights cinema: At the end of 2023 the Friends and End Credits film club donated our share of the profit from the last film to the flood appeal. Friends' contribution of **\$1,815** helped the hundreds of people adversely affected by the flood disaster that occurred following Cyclone Jasper.

We would like to thank curator Charles, supervisor Dave and all the Gardens staff who we work with during the year and again offer our biggest thanks to Louisa Grandy who is one of Council's greatest treasures. And of course, thank you to all you members for your on-going support.

Val Schier, President