

Friends of the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens Inc

Chair's Report to Annual General Meeting 19 May 2009

On behalf of the Council, I am proud to present this report to the *Friends of CIAG* at our first AGM since incorporation. As the Chair, I have been fortunate to have enjoyed a positive working relationship with people as passionate about this project as I am.

What a year it has been. As voluntary supporters and workers of the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens, we have achieved a great deal. We could not have achieved this without the wonderful and active support from you, our members. You have contributed thousands of volunteer hours, and I know the ACT Government is grateful. I believe this work has cemented the *Friends* future in moving toward a successful and growing profile in the community. To recognise this I offer a special vote of thanks for the work of our dedicated Council members - without whom our success would not have happened.

I encourage members to become involved in the Council experience, especially as our association is young and growing. There are so many worthwhile activities in which to participate.

Whilst the support of the ACT Government arising from the CIAG project has been strong, our contribution has been to work with, and encourage the community to embrace this wonderful project.

I would particularly like to thank John Mackay who has been a very supportive Patron – We thank him for taking on this role and we look forward to continuing to work with him. The work of a Patron, particularly at the strategic level, cannot be underestimated in assisting us to achieve our goals.

At our inaugural AGM we set a work program to achieve in our first year. Here is the 'report card' about the strategic and detailed goals we set ourselves and achieved in 2008/09.

Incorporated on 25 Feb 2008.

Bank accounts were established and our first independent audit shows that we have managed our funds appropriately.

Our establishment budget included \$10,000 sponsorship from Yarralumla Nursery, \$2,000 corporate membership from ACTEWAGL and thanks to our members and membership fees to help meet administrative costs such as newsletters, insurance, mail-outs and volunteer training materials.

Insurance was obtained for our volunteers through the Gardening Clubs of

Australia.

We have developed a marketing plan through our involvement in Floriade 08 where approximately 22,000 people attended our display and even more attended the bonsai display. From the Floriade experience, the *Friends*' initiative grew with a focus to deliver the *Festival of the Forests* Gold Coin fund raiser open day. This day resulted in attracting approximately 5000 people to the site. Both the Floriade display, and the *Festival of the Forests* Day were very well received.

The *Friends* obtained significant sponsorship for the *Festival of the Forests* from the Hellenic Club of Canberra, Supabarn, Yarralumla Nursery, ACTEWAGL and Bell Air Drycleaners - our thanks go to our valued sponsors for their support.

We established a wonderful and supportive relationship with Carers ACT. I am pleased to announce funds raised from the *Festival* were a total of \$5,538.64 of which \$1,850.00 will be going to support the work of Carers ACT.

On behalf of *Friends*, I would like to acknowledge our stakeholder partners who have supported us strongly through Floriade 08, and the *Festival of the Forests* 09. The National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia was opened at its temporary site in Commonwealth Park. This too, could not run without the dedicated volunteers that ensure the display is open almost every day of the year.

The Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park commenced its planting program with a special opening during the *Festival of the Forests*. It was wonderful to see their five years of hard work come to fruition, and we are pleased to support them.

Friends of ACT Arboreta have continued to maintain a very supportive role toward *Friends* at both Floriade and the *Festival of the Forests*, and the ANU Research program continues to share dialogue with *Friends* about valued information regarding the selection process and management of the chosen trees.

The Council members and I have provided a large number of presentations to interested organisations, taken the role of guides on many bus tours, and encouraged increasing participation in working bees. Some of these activities have resulted in a donation to *Friends*. We continue to seek sponsorship and greatly value their support.

I would especially like to thank Jocelyn Plovits, who has worked with me in her capacity as Secretary over the past 20 months, beginning with our first *Friends* gathering in August 2007, through to now, and to Roger Hnatiuk, our Vice Chair, who has also greatly contributed and supported me through my time in the role of Chair.

The Council members have developed our logo, we have secured our volunteers

presentation vests, we have created our primary pamphlet, as well as specific material for events like the *Festival of the Forests* being developed. If you visited Floriade or the *Festival* you would have seen our display banner - an asset we expect will be useful for many years.

We now have the use of two facilities; the Temporary Visitors Centre at the Arboretum which is furnished with chairs and tables donated to the *Friends* by the Southern Cross Club, and the use of space in the Cottage at Commonwealth Park - an office to house our equipment as well as a display space for the next Floriade.

Through two volunteers, Leonard Wise and Daniel Payne we now have a very effective website - this proved very valuable during the *Festival of the Forests* as well as being a contact point for interested members of the community. On this website are also links to related bodies including the Chief Minister's Department website for up-to-date project information. Thanks to Jocelyn and John (Mackay) for organising sponsorship through Grapevine to run the site.

Three newsletters were distributed in 2008 and the first one for 2009 was distributed last week. *Friends* strives to produce a broad information bank regarding the arboretum, our activities, and conservation issues related to the site. I encourage all members to contribute articles for future newsletters.

We have set and met a high standard in the organisation of volunteers, including the more than 80 people who have now completed the initial Volunteers training package, more than 60 who have completed the Bonsai training package, and the 45 who have completed the *Festival* training package. We have had good attendance at our working bees - and plan to move onto developing a master class to better assist the curator on planting and maintenance tasks.

We are also developing the next training module for those interested in the botanical aspects of the trees where people can be involved in research and reports for the documentation of the plantings on site - another real contribution our botanically minded volunteers can make.

Our membership is now approximately 400 members, two corporate members bringing more than 1030 people, and three associate members bringing more than 1050 people. I feel confident we will continue to grow as a strong and active Association. This will occur with both the continued support of all members, and a continued sharing of information with the community.

The continuing task from 2008 is the achievement of tax deductibility status.

For the Governing Board we have completed a report from the *Friends* perspective about the *Festival* in which we highlighted the work of *Friends* in making the *Festival* such a success. We have recommended, among a number of things, that the *Friends*

continue to host the *Festival of the Forests* for the next five years.

Finally, regretfully, due to health issues within my family and extended commitments, I am stepping out of the role of Chair. Thank you all for your overwhelming support, and I look forward to continued involvement on the Council, and working with our new Chair.

Sherry McFrdle - English