



FBBG President's Report – AGM February 2023



I am pleased to provide the annual Report for FBBG for its 40th year in 2022. With this report you will find an accompanying attachment with summaries from all the different groups and individuals that contribute so generously of their skill, time, and effort. Consider the contribution these people are making if all the volunteer hours were translated into dollar value! Ballarat citizens, Ballarat City Council and many others acknowledge our important contribution and I hope all FBBG members take pride in being part of this active volunteer organisation.

Committee members make a substantive impact and when they need to step away from that committee position, we feel the loss. Fortunately, Wendy Taylor, Doff Kemp and Michael Bird although stepping away from committee will continue to play an active role within the organisation. Wendy will be helping steer the Wellingtonia with our new editor, Andrew Thomas. Many will be familiar with Andrew's photography and graphic work with many FBBG publications. Andrew is now located in Tasmania, but location is largely irrelevant today with modern communications. Wendy will also continue to use the contacts she has developed to assist with our publicity. Michael will continue with Guiding and similarly Doff will be assisting when she can with hospitality and other events. These three committee members were all very active in contributing to the work of FBBG and its impact on our community. Michael as editor of the Wellingtonia for 10 years has made a huge contribution. Wendy with publicity, corporate members and Doff with convening the Hospitality Group and both on the 40th subcommittee have also made very significant contributions. Thank you from all FBBG members for helping develop our organisation.

In 2022 FBBG reached out to local business and educational institutions to take up corporate membership of FBBG. Corporate membership was taken up by Loreto College, Clarendon College, Ballarat Grammar, Sovereign Hill, Heinz Law, Nicholson Construction, The Gull Group Country Club Living and Haymes Paint. We are very appreciative of the financial support that this gives to the work of FBBG, but it also strengthens our advocacy for these gardens when discussions take place with City of Ballarat.

Some successful succession planning has taken place and pleased that Heather Boyd has picked up the baton and taken on the role of convening the Hospitality group. Heather is also an ambassador. Ro Bancroft from Ballarat Botanical Artists will also join the committee. This secures committee representation for two important groups, Botanical Artists and Ambassadors. It is important to have broad representative input and perspective to our committee discussions. We look forward to also welcoming two new general members to our committee. Profiles on our new members will appear in the Autumn issue of Wellingtonia.

The Friend's advocacy is future focussed and promotes the gardens relevance and communal connection in this changing world. It is remarkable that this 40-year-old organisation continues to bring people together with passion and drive for these gardens. Our membership base grows and is strong and loyal. Green shoots keep appearing in the organisation where individuals are stepping forward and making positive impacts within the organisation. We are very pleased that Julie Bradby has agreed to move into the Vice President position and so another important part of our succession planning is secured. Some of the groups would still like more active volunteers and the request for this is communicated fairly frequently.

Our thanks to Carole Haines and her team for all the work that went into our wonderful colourful 40th Gala celebration. Our 40th year was a time for celebration and engagement but also gave us time to gain a clearer sense of where we need to put our energies. Honouring our volunteers was an important part of our 40th celebrations and this will now become part of every AGM. FBBG has strong impact when the different FBBG groups come together supporting each other as was evidenced in 2022 with our exhibitions and the 40th celebrations. The Ballarat festivals – Australia day, Begonia, and Heritage - are the opportune times for the different groups to consolidate FBBG's impact. A range of activities on the same day for different generations and interests seems to work well.

Capturing the environmental concerns and interests of our members, especially our younger members is an area we are developing. Botanikids have been very successful with their nature activities. Choice made with guest speakers linking into environmental issues and the formation of the new group – the biodiversity group – with its focus on the wilder part of the garden (well less manicured) are other ways we are doing this. We are changing some of our meeting times to cater for working Friends. More conversations with our new members at special morning teas has been a successful development. During 2023 a new Members Handbook was developed in a simple and easy to read format introducing incoming members to the FBBG and its many subgroups.

FBBG have continued to widen its memberships of other related organisations in 2022. We are members of BGANZ, Australian Garden History, AAFBG, Gardens Club of Australia and AMAGA. Access to this richer information flow supports the work of many of our groups and is motivating and source for new ideas and approaches. The various newsletters are available to all members and shared online.

All groups are finding it easier now to operate without the interruptions and impact of the pandemic. It is encouraging to see the more regular return of volunteers and new volunteers. The spots on the Ambassador roster are filling up and Tuesday with the Growers is very busy. Botanikids, Guides and History have achieved a lot in 2022 and all have laid the foundations for more contributions in 2023. The nursery is the business that provides considerable funds for FBBG. The profits made clearly show the amazing leadership, teamwork, and sustained efforts to achieve this by the Growers Group. The recent installation of the Point tap for payment of plants we anticipate will strengthen sales further. The other tap point in the Conservatory is for donations that support the Foundation. Brian Hay looks after this and the donation box in the conservatory.

FBBG has wide support because it is active. It is the convenors of the various groups that we depend on to develop the resources and events/activities that generate this action. A big thank you to all our convenors for taking on the commitment. This thanks extends to individuals who also have also taken on a commitment by putting up their hand for a particular job although they don't convene a group.

FBBG needs a supportive culture to work well and all of us can contribute to this in our own way. Being a member is support. Others add to this with attendance at activities, buying plants from the nursery, helping man the stalls at Begonia Festival time, joining groups and helping with tasks. We want more smiles and laughs and so be kind and help make sure our volunteers are not overworked.

We also want FBBG to be an efficient organisation. For this we tend to rely heavily on the office and our thanks to Kim Nolan who manages the Office and Ann who brings her extensive experience to many of the administrative tasks. The efficiency and organisation performed there is an enormous contribution to our organisation. Likewise, Natalie Radomski, our Committee Minute Secretary is a very efficient communicator and recorder of our deliberations.

In 2022 we didn't have a vice president and so I relied very much on Kim Nolan, our Treasurer and Office Manager, and Robert Selkirk, our Immediate past President for support. The three of us are the Executive team in between committee meetings and I am very appreciative of the mentoring that is part of this process.

All the different FBBG groups have plans in place and there will be many opportunities in 2023 to connect and support Ballarat Botanical Gardens. 2023, FBBG's 41st year, will be another important year for FBBG

Terry O'Brien, FBBG President