

FBBG Annual General Meeting 21st February 2019

President's Report

As my first term as President comes to an end, I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report for 2018.

Whilst the year has been challenging in many ways, I believe good progress has been made on several fronts.

After a flush of excitement at the beginning of the year when Mayor Samantha McIntosh and the Council became re-engaged with **the Fernery**, the long drawn out saga rolls on into 2019. Whilst a contract has been let to Resicare, apparently there are still some issues which need to be finalised by Heritage Victoria.

The latest information is that construction will commence straight after the Begonia Festival.

In the meantime the existing structure will be wrapped up in shade cloth for the Festival, and new signage installed to indicate an imminent start. Once commenced, construction will take place fairly quickly, as it will be mostly fabricated off site & assembled in sections.

As the contract price was considerably less than the \$1.4mill. allocated by Council for stage 1, there is now some funding left over for a commencement of stage 2. Over the coming months discussions will be reactivated between the Friends and Council to establish our possible financial contribution to the further development.

Through this process we will have the opportunity to site plans and documentation for both stages, although stage two is yet to be developed. Of particular concern is the spacing of the timber slates to provide the right environmental conditions for sustainable planting.

On the other hand good progress has been made during the year on **The Gate Keepers Cottage**. A contract was signed with local builder Peter Broadhead in November 2018, and the project is due for completion by the end of April. I would like to compliment Michael O'Connell from the City of Ballarat for his interest and commitment to the project. Michael Chairs the Project Control Group, who have been meeting on a monthly basis since April 2018. Also thanks to Peter Marquand for his input into the Committee.

One of the most significant developments during the year has been the establishment of the **Ballarat Botanical Gardens Foundation**. The purpose of the Foundation is to raise funds to provide a strong, sustainable financial basis to support and preserve the heritage of the Gardens, as a horticultural museum.

The Board has now been formed consisting of the following Directors: Chair Elizabeth Gilfillan, legal representative Peter Wilson, Corporate Governance specialist, Mark Shultz, Accountant Daina Macleod, and myself as President of the FBBG. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank Directors, for volunteering their time and skills to drive the Foundation, particularly Elizabeth for taking on the role as Chair.

The separation of the Foundation from the City of Ballarat involved several discussions with City representatives throughout the year, and I commend the Council for their understanding and support of our request to establish the new Entity.

For the Foundation to be effective it will have registration with the Australian Charities and not for Profit Commission (ACNC), and will have a DGR tax deductibility status, which in the language of the Taxation Department stands for Deductible Gift Recipient.

The existing funds of some \$136,000 which have been held in Trust by the City of Ballarat have now been transferred to the Foundation. Even at this early stage we are finding great support for the Foundation, and already we have one significant contribution. Also, monies collected from the Donation Box in the Conservatory will now be deposited into the Foundation Account, and Brian Hay has kindly offered to be the "Minder of the Box".

To support the Foundation two people have been approached to become Patrons. One is John Hawker who has spent 36 years in Horticulture and 23 years as a heritage officer in horticulture with Heritage Victoria. John was previously with the planning department of Environment Land Water and Planning and as now retired. Our thanks go to John for accepting this position, he will be a great advocate for the Foundation. At the time of writing this Report the other Patron is yet to be confirmed.

A dedicated website and a new logo have been developed and a Foundation brochure is in the process of being printed. Planning is underway for an official Launch Dinner at Pipers on 26th March, and invitations will be sent out shortly to members and a wide selection of the Community.

Another important decision by the Committee during the year has been the appointment of Sheree Murray, as **Promotion and Public Relations Co-Ordinator**. Sheree has been employed on a part time basis and comes with strong communication and social media skills. She will be of great assistance in working with Convenors and co-ordinating the functions of the Friends various interest groups, all print material, and the recruitment of new members. She will be an additional member of the Committee as Promotion and Public Relations Co-Ordinator.

Significantly, she will also be liaising with the City of Ballarat to develop a more collaborative working relationship.

Her early responsibilities will be assisting in the launch of the Foundation.

Welcome Sheree, we look forward to working with you.

The major fund raising event during the year was **Garden DesignFest**, organised by the Rotary Clubs of Kew, North Brighton and Central Melbourne, in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Ballarat West. A total of five gardens were open over the week-end of November 10th & 11th.

The agreement between the Clubs was that 20% of all gate receipts be donated towards the Gate Keepers Cottage. This resulted in \$5,000 being raised, which has since been deposited into the Foundation Account and tagged for the Cottage restoration. Many thanks to all Rotarians and members of the Friends who volunteered their time to achieve this result.

The new **Memorandum of Understanding** between the FBBG and the City of Ballarat which replaces the one that expired on 31st January 2019, has yet to be signed. The delay is due to my request for the inclusion of an extra clause, which I believe will provide a more balanced relationship between both parties. Unfortunately to make any changes to the M.O.U. involves a very long winded and tedious bureaucratic process. However, discussions with the City will continue until we find some common ground.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all Committee Members for the enormous contribution of their time and dedicated support over the last 12 months. Their guidance has been of significant value which has led to an enjoyable year.

Robert Selkirk.