



CONFIRMED MINUTES

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 11 May 2021 at 5.30pm

held in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion, National Arboretum Canberra

### 1. Welcome

The Chair, Trish Keller OAM, welcomed all to the meeting and made the Acknowledgement of Country.

### 2. Attendance and Apologies

*Attendance* – Malise Arnstein, John Blount, Cynthia Blount, Margie Bourke, Max Bourke AM, Debbie Cameron, Meryl Causebrook, Wygene Chong, Annette Cronin, Alan Doolan, Christine Callen, Del Da Costa, Helen Hemphill, Roger Hnatiuk, Cathy Ikin, Janet Kay, Trish Keller OAM, Frank Kelly, Yvonne Kilgour, Naomi Landau, Joanne Maples, Anne Meade, Linda Muldoon, Shelley O'Neill, Vivien Palmer, Nicole Pietrucha, Marelle Rawson, Rob Rawson, Alan Read, Maureen Read, Lyn Rees, Liz Swain, Carolyn Thomas, Cherie Whan, Shirley Wilton. [35 attending]

*Apologies* – Christine Brill, Sue Brown, Jenny Cantlon, Valentyna Crane, Janet Duncan, Elizabeth Grant AM, Maggie Hawes, Meredith Hinchliffe, Fran Hinton, Colette Mackay OAM, John Mackay AM, Ange McNeilly, Jan Morgan, Barry Nash, Rosy Patan, Jocelyn Plovits, Scott Saddler AM, Sue Sheridan, Hans van Haalen, Mike Woolley, Vicki Woolley.

### 3. Acceptance of Minutes of 2020 AGM and Matters Arising

Lyn Rees moved and Margie Bourke seconded that the minutes of the 30 June 2020 Annual General Meeting be accepted without amendment. Carried.

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Treasurer's Report

The 2020 audited financial statements, which incorporated the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust Fund, were available on the Friends' website.

At 31 December 2020, the Friends had a balance of \$80,232 in funds at the bank. This comprised \$40,498 in the working account and \$39,734 in the term deposit.

The National Arboretum Canberra Trust held \$85,331 of which \$42,340 was held in the Trust general transaction account and \$42,991 in the term deposit.

The Friends' total income for the year was \$26,023, with the majority coming from memberships (\$15,437).

Total donations to our National Arboretum Canberra Public DGR2 Trust Fund amounted to \$57,309 with \$50,000 from seat donations.

Total operating expenditure for the Friends came to \$35,388. This included donations to the National Arboretum Canberra for the Ngala bus lease (\$2,721); the bus wrapping (\$4,233); funding for the Wollemi Pine Propagation Project (\$4,250); and 50% of the first payment towards the Forest Gazebo (\$12,500).

The National Arboretum Canberra DGR2 Trust fund made donations to the NAC DGR1 Fund of \$51,569 which included donations for the final payment of the Friends' Zigzag Garden (\$2,000); 50% of the first instalment of the new Forest Gazebo (\$12,500); and the provision of funds for the purchase and installation costs for seats and picnic settings to be made available for seat donations (\$18,778).

At the end of the 2020 financial year, the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra made an overall loss of \$9,364 while the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust fund increased its funds by \$5,741.

2020 saw the fruition of a commitment made by the Friends Council in 2019 to fund the lease of the Ngala Bus for the first five years at an annual cost to the Friends of \$10,884. The bus arrived in July 2020 and the first quarterly payment towards this was paid in November 2020. Friends also agreed to provide the Arboretum with funding to pay for a forest Gazebo - the first of 12 for which the Arboretum is seeking donors. The total funding for this will be \$98,000 and it was decided to pay this over two years with six-monthly payments of \$25,000. The funds will be provided by both the National Arboretum Canberra Trust Fund and the Friends' general funds. In addition to this the Friends have also approved the provision of funding for the Wollemi Pine tree propagation project to a total of \$17,000 with the first payment of \$4,250 paid in 2020. We have also approved the setting aside of a budget of \$25,000 towards the cost of funding a new edition of The Arboretum Book which will hopefully be ready for publication in 2021.

To help fund these projects the Friends Council hope to undertake a membership drive to increase our Membership and holding additional fundraising events during 2021 including Market Stalls, possible Bunnings BBQ and a Fundraising Dinner.

These funds are being provided in keeping with the Friends' Mission to provide the National Arboretum Canberra with funds *to enhance and develop the Arboretum* and to help the public to engage with the establishment and growth of the Arboretum.

Overall at the conclusion of 2020 the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra continue to maintain a healthy financial position with overall assets of \$95,171 less liabilities of \$6,769 leaving us with a total equity of \$88,402. This should enable the meeting of commitments already agreed to by Friends Council for 2021. The National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust also continues to maintain a healthy financial position with an overall equity of \$85,330 which will also enable the meeting of commitments already agreed to by Friends Council and the Trustees of the Trust Fund for 2021.

The Treasurer thanked the auditor, Christopher Harding, for completing the audit pro bono. Council had gifted him a free parking pass.

Roger Hnatiuk moved and Cherie Whan seconded that the 2020 Financial Statements for the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc and incorporating the National Arboretum

Canberra Public Trust Fund be accepted; and that Christopher Harding be appointed auditor for 2021. Carried.

## 5. Chair's Report

Trish Keller OAM, as Chair of the Friends at the 2020 Annual General Meeting, offered her sixth Report. The full report appears as an appendix to these minutes.

Max Bourke moved and Del Da Costa seconded that the Chair's Report be accepted. Carried.

## 6. Activity Reports

- a) **National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia** – A year to remember, as is the case for many organisations and their staff in and around Canberra.
- There were several occasions in January when the NAC and the Collection were closed for the safety of the staff and volunteers due to the low air quality due to smoke produced by the bushfires.
  - On January 20, the hailstorm hit. Fortunately, it had only a minor impact on the Collection, in part because the Collection missed the main path of the severe hail and also because of the partial deflecting effect of the mesh roof over the Collection.
  - Late March saw the pandemic lockdown begin and not end until the beginning of June. During this time there was a significant volunteer input to the basic maintenance tasks such as watering and fertilising and monitoring plant health.
  - The annual Bonsai Week, normally held at the end of March, involving international bonsai artists was cancelled.
  - The inaugural Pot Acquisition Prize was awarded in May. This event is sponsored by the Collection to promote those potters in Australia who are creating locally made bonsai pots.
  - From June, visitors were again welcomed to the Collection, but with the appropriate health regulations being in place. As state borders opened, the visitor numbers gradually rose and they all learned how to walk in a clockwise direction through the Collection – to assist with physical distancing requirements.
  - Late winter and spring saw a great deal of re-potting activity – about 60 trees were given a new inorganic medium to grow in, allowing consistent drainage after watering and more precise control of fertilisers.
  - Spring and summer also saw the planning for a replacement for Bonsai Week in 2021 as a large function and international guests were still unlikely to be allowed. A smaller, 3-day event focussing on Australian bonsai artists and tree species – as well as a market stall and other bonsai related events – was programmed.
  - A new Artist in Residence programme was created – to be held each year in autumn and spring. The first was held in April 2021.

Mike Woolley

b) **Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park** -

- A damaging hail storm, bush fire smoke and periods of consistently high temperatures in early months, then heavy rains in Spring have presented challenges for the plants in Forest 20, a regional botanic garden reflecting the forests and woodlands of the Southern Tablelands. A forest inventory undertaken noted “alive”, “dead”, or “needing attention” across each of the central garden areas to allow removal and replanting.

- COVID-19 restrictions halted normal volunteer activities. However, as NAC regards STEP as part of the “living collection” needing to be maintained, a group of core STEPpers continued to water, prune, plant and weed, adhering to protocols developed to ensure social distancing to ensure the Forest was maintained.
- Although NAC actively promotes bicycle riding on its tracks and trails, bikes have caused damage to plants and gravel paths at STEP and can impact volunteer working in Forest 20, hence a dedicated bike path was constructed by NAC along the allee between Forest 20 and the Mesa Oakes to divert the bikes, which are now prohibited in the garden.
- 2019 marked 10 years since the first plantings at STEP. Hence a new 2020-2030 Strategic Plan was discussed and developed at a workshop in July. Later, NAC and STEP signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding covering their respective responsibilities for Forest 20.
- With construction of the new lower carpark, a new entrance to STEP was required and this was built by NAC in cooperation with STEP volunteers. Landscaping the entrance has been a major undertaking for STEP, with associated remedial work to address drainage problems.
- As Forest 20 develops, it is increasingly popular to visitors wanting to learn about regional plant species. With this in mind, additional rocks have been placed to provide resting places for quiet contemplation, sketching, bird watching, taking photos and chatting with friends. STEP volunteers continue to provide guides for small groups interested in the regional botanic garden, including assisting Friends’ guides gain experience for NAC walks in Forest 20.
- Volunteer STEPpers attend weekly Thursday morning Working Bees, stopping work at 10am for a BYO morning tea break and chat. We welcome you to join us.

Cathy Ikin

c) **Harvest Group** – (January to April 2021 report)

The Harvesting Group has had a wonderful start to 2021-year with an outstanding effort in the Garden and also in the Fig Forest. We are about to have our first Market Stall on 8 May and another on 22 May.

Canberra had good rain January through March and this really affected how the Garden and the Fig Forest presented in this season.

The Garden continues to be a stunner. The Garden has always presented beautifully and produced lovely vegetables. This year it has been affected by lack of sun and put pressure on our volunteers to get those flowers blooming and the tomatoes ripening as well as they have in dryer, hotter summers. The Garden helpers are reliable and hard-working volunteers who work in any weather and are delighted to talk to passing visitors about their beautiful garden. It is a credit to how Ange manages.

The Fig Forest flourished this year. The trees didn’t have the ant infestations of previous years and they grew strong and healthy. While the crop did not start producing until the end of February, it has been a bumper year with about 330kg of big, delicious, ripe figs harvested. The last harvest day was 21 April. About 70 dozen jars were purchased for the season. I had difficulty purchasing jars because of the China supply issues but managed to keep supply going throughout the season.

Thank you to my wonderful pickers and cooks that helped with this harvest. It was at times quite gruelling with one day harvesting 100kg and two other days harvesting 50kg. To put this in perspective about 3kg of figs makes 20 bottles of jam. My cooks have been amazing, creative and prolific in dealing with the boxes and boxes of figs. Lorraine Nicholls again

experimented with the Cornus Kousa (Dogwood) fruit to produce a delicious glaze. The Harvest Shed is now full of beautifully labelled preserves ready to sell at our Stalls.

Cally, Tim, Franchesco and members of the Arboretum team helped us out of the Forest three times bringing the truck in to take out the figs. Thank you to Cally and the Arboretum Team for your ongoing help.

A standout feature for this year is Ange McNeilly's Wollemi Project. Tubes having the biggest healthiest plants have now been potted into 200mm pots. Not all of the original seeds germinated to make up the contracted 100 plants and extra seed was sown to provide contingency backup. Thank you to Roger Hnatiuk who has provided support and expertise to Ange throughout the Project so far. The Project is progressing well and we expect to be able to meet the targets initially set by Ange.

Another thank you to Ange who continues to manage the Discovery Garden as well as the Wollemi Project with a natural confidence and expertise. Our Stalls will contain Ange's beautifully made relishes, pestos and preserves, dried herbs and seeds, sprayed artichoke flowers, pumpkins, decoy butterflies and various plants for sale ... all harvested from the Garden.

Our outlook is good for our Stalls and we hope to progress to a permanent cashless payment system for this year. Thank you to Lynley Rees for her work to achieve this.

Scott Saddler recently offered to pay a contribution to our cost of jars and has approved a reimbursement of \$332.85 that will significantly reduce the costs of production this year.

Scott has also offered to purchase all of our jars for next year's harvest. It will be a big help not only with costs but also with my volunteer hours.

And finally I commend our active volunteers for the period January through April, as recognition of their exceptional service in this past season.

Colette Mackay OAM

#### d) **Working Bees report**

- Working bees resumed in the second week of February 2020, with a whole of forest makeover/maintenance approach to the working bee activities.
- The horticultural staff describe and demonstrate to the bees the activity at the beginning of each working bee. They work alongside the bees, provide guidance and educate with answers to the bee's questions.
- The trailer has been a great investment with all the different tools onboard.
- Activities have included spreading mulch, weeding, checking, and repairing irrigation, making irrigation loops, basal shoot pruning, and branch pruning.
- Mid-March saw the pandemic lockdown come into play and working bees were suspended for 3 months.
- Mid-June the working bees resumed after the restrictions were eased. First activity was in Forest 44 the silver birches. Strip mulching, weeding, and checking irrigation. Two months down the track the whole forest makeover was completed.
- There was curiosity amongst the volunteers as to the amount of time for this task. A few calculations and it all became clear. NAC staff estimated that they delivered 600 cubic metres of mulch. The wheelbarrows had 100-litre tub capacity, which means approx 6000 instances of barrows loaded, wheeled, dumped and then spread. No comparisons with swimming pools or the Sydney harbour but instead imagine 6km of barrows lined up end-to-end.

- Forest maintenance continued through to mid-December 2020 with the working bees undertaking activities in the following forests: European Larch, Chilean Myrtle, River Birch, Californian Fan Palm, Toothed Lancewood and Acacia, Drooping Sheoak (Friends forest), Persian Silk Tree, Chinese Tulip tree, and Parana Pine
- The last activity for 2020 was to start pruning the lower branches in the Himalayan Cedar forest. The impact of the pruning is visually pleasing. Work in the cedars would continue into February 2021 where in the heat of summer, the cedars would provide a cool location to work.

## 7. Election of Office Bearers

Max Bourke acted as Returning Officer. He declared the relevant positions vacant.

Position	Incumbent	Nomination to date
<b>Chair</b>		Trish Keller OAM
<b>Deputy Chair</b>		Mike Woolley
<b>Treasurer</b>	Lynley Rees	
<b>Secretary</b>		Del Da Costa
<b>Publications Editor</b>	Nicole Pietrucha	
<b>Social Media Manager</b>		Cherie Whan
<b>Donations and Sponsorships Manager</b>		Trish Keller OAM
<b>STEP Member</b>		Cathy Ikin
<b>National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia Member</b>		Mike Woolley
<b>Ordinary Members</b> (up to 5 Members)	Hans van Haalen Helen Hemphill	Fran Hinton Ian Chambers Maggie Hawes

Del Da Costa continues as Public Officer and Spero Cassidy as Website Manager.

Max Bourke moved and Roger Hnatiuk seconded the nominations. All these nominations were unanimously elected. If needed, Council can co-opt other Members.

Trish Keller paid tribute to outgoing Council member Sandra Linsley, and presented a framed certificate of thanks to Sandy for her huge contribution to the Friends. Sandy established the Guide-secure Resources website, a one-stop shop for all Guides resources; she liaised with Guide trainers; managed monthly Guide meetings; managed orientation training; developed resources for the Guides Forest Walks and Bus Tour Groups and she developed an Online Training Survey. Her Lunch & Learn sessions were very popular because they were Guide-specific. They were a Guides Forum to discuss, learn and contribute to Guide specific issues. And she originated Ongoing Learning Sessions, and so much more. She will be sorely missed.

## 8. Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 6.15pm.

-----

Guest speaker after the AGM was Max Bourke who presented a lively journey on the "Trees of North Africa and Spain - Wandering in the Modern Almohad Caliphate".

## Chair's Report AGM 2021

With great pleasure I offer you my Chair's Report of the FNA for 2020. Thank you for your attendance this evening.

I'd like to acknowledge Christine Callen from the NAC Management Team for her attendance this evening.

Well, 2020 certainly had its ups and downs for us all one way or another. I won't dwell on those but the ramifications and requirements that Covid had on us all were significant. It put paid to our meeting schedule for the year, no seasonal talks etc and everything kept to the bare minimum under the rules.

I recall Mike and Del and I met in the Himalayan Cedars on 23 March last year to work out how we would proceed ... we got the social distancing right!

The following items are all noteworthy and in no particular order:

**Membership** trended down in 2020 from a reasonably healthy 693 in February with a drop of 45 in November to 648. Do check your membership card and renew if you are unfinancial - we need you all!

The current **Arboretum Book** went on sale in 2020, reduced to the bargain price of \$20.00 and they are selling like hot cakes. Don't miss out because a new revised version of The Arboretum Book was undertaken by Jocelyn Plovits. She undertook this huge task and selected a team of expert researchers. The timeline is very strict and we are told that this refreshed version of The Arboretum Book will be on sale well before Christmas 2021. You could have the matching set!

Our colleague on **Council**, Mary Arnold, died very unexpectedly on 11 September 2020. The Friends held a Celebration of her Life BYO picnic with her family under the Cork Oak canopy a few weeks later. The haunting sound of the didgeridoo played by Duncan Smith OAM at this occasion was beautiful. Mary made a significant contribution to the Friends as you know being, for one thing, the Editor of the Friends newsletter. May she rest in peace.

A new Editor was found from among the Council ranks. I thank Nicole Pietrucha for stepping in so graciously to the vacant big shoes. As you know Nicole is producing a very delightful, newsy, colourful editions. They are all on our website.

During the year Friends Council made some serious financial decisions with membership funds. You may recall at the AGM in 2020 one member strongly suggested that we spend the money, so we did! How have we done this?

**The Bus** – a 12-seater tourist bus was leased for the NAC by the Friends paying regular lease costs. The bus features artwork on its wrapping by local artist Krystal Hurst which includes symbolic elements of the NAC. It's the same artwork featured on NAC staff uniforms. The bus was given a Smoking Ceremony of its own, performed by Ngambri Elder, Matilda House on 4 August 2020. Ngala Tours (Ngala meaning any tree in the Ngunnawul language) around the

Arboretum are undertaken Wednesdays-Sundays, on public holidays and there are plans for other special tours..... no detail on those at the moment.

**The Gazebo** - Friends undertook to support the very first (of 12) Gazebo which will be a strategically located with magnificent views to the lake, Government House and around the city. An MOU was signed at the End-of-Year Celebration, attended by the Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA between the Friends' Chair (myself) and Scott Saddler AM. The first payment has been made. All financial details are in the Treasurer's Report.

**The Wollemi Pine Project** – the Friends Council approved this project in Feb 2020 and significant milestones have been recorded including:

- Order signed in March 2020;
- Seeds delivered to Yarralumla Nursery March 2020
- Seeds sown 1 April 2020
- 1st inspection and replacement seed delivered 14 July 2020 (an issue with mice!)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> inspection 29 September
- 3<sup>rd</sup> inspection 16 December
- 4<sup>th</sup> inspection due 6 April 2021.

Ange McNeilly, who initiated this project, from the Harvest Group is taking detailed notes on this project and keeping a close eye on its progress.

The **new Arboretum Book** required upfront funding – an amount of \$25,000 granted to Jocelyn for all the expenses needed: editor, stationery, photocopying paper, etc. I was asked to pen a preface for the book on behalf of the Friends.

**Friends' Volunteer of the Year 2020**, was awarded to Ange McNeilly. She is the most remarkable Friends Volunteer who spends hours tending the Discovery Garden (and overseeing the Wollemi Project just described) which is looking quite magnificent right now with her Friends volunteers in support.

**Outreach** – As the Covid restrictions were loosened I was invited to address two community groups to the Friends: the Lions Club, Brindabella Branch, and the Probus Club, Belconnen. The audience at this function had all visited the NAC. Their burning question was about the birds, and which ones are now being seen at the Arboretum. To this end Tony Lawson has been invited to be our seasonal talker at the lunchtime General Meeting on 13 July 2021. I intend to let this community group know and perhaps some will attend.

No **Warm Trees** in 2020 unfortunately! The Singapore High Commission was our diplomatic partner and they have agreed to be the same in 2021. Jocelyn reports red and white knitting flowing in.

**The Jake Keller Scholarship** was awarded at the End-of-Year ceremony. This is a very special partnership with the CIT and NAC. Coincidentally I was contacted just last week by CIT Manager Julie Collins to enquire if the Scholarship will be held again this year. It will.

**Market Stalls** are a hugely successful Friends' activity and Colette Mackay OAM and her team who prepare the produce for these Stall are a remarkable group. We thank them very much for their efforts on behalf of the Friends. Two Market Stalls were held toward the end of last year with a remarkable profit being made. Thanks again to Colette and her team. A remarkable effort all things being considered.



**Working Bees** were held irregularly. However thanks to Vicki Woolley and Des King for leading the two groups and working all around the Arboretum when and where their assistance was requested by the staff.

Again I offer grateful thanks to those Friends who work from home: the folk who process the memberships, the parking passes, the website gurus, those who process reports, write minutes, make phone calls, do the banking etc. So much!

The **2021 Calendar** was a runaway success – thanks to Mike Woolley who led the process, took many of the photos and worked with the NAC and Mel at the Curatoreum. This edition sold out very quickly and another Calendar is proposed for 2022.

As Manager of the **sponsorship** of seats and other infrastructure around the NAC I can tell you it is a very slow process and requires much patience and good listening skills. I had 11 expressions of interest in 2020 and of these two yielded a positive result. Funds go to the FNAC Trust Account. Other enquiries were still going on into 2021 which may in time yield a positive result.

**Oral history project** – It was drawn to our attention in 2020 that now with the passage of time requires a recording of the development of the Arboretum to be undertaken before all the significant history is lost. The Arboretum project was initiated in 2003 which makes 2023 the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and 2024 the NACs 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Time is of the essence to record this history. I'm telling you tonight that it's a work in progress. Back in March the Canberra Times reminded us all that the National Museum is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We at the Arboretum are charged with representing the history of this magnificent place. If you have ideas or stories – that you know and we don't – people you know that should be part of this storyline, let us know so all can be included in the history. A podcast, an oral history, however it will be done, it is another work in progress, under construction you might say.

Thanks to my Friends Council colleagues for the huge contribution and important roles they carry out over the course of the year. I appreciate, very much, their support of me in my role as Chair. Our meetings were few and far between in 2020, but we got the basic and important jobs done when required. 2021 will be a different story!

And to you, the Friends, you continue to be worth your weight in gold....solid gold...each of you. Your unstinting, generous contribution to the NAC is hugely appreciated.

Trish Keller OAM  
Chair

-----