



**DRAFT
MINUTES**

**GENERAL MEETING
Held on Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 2.00pm
in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion, National Arboretum, Canberra**

1. Welcome – Mike Woolley, (Chair)

Mike welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Attendance:

Mike Woolley (Chair), Max Bourke AM, Max Bourke AM, Sue Brown, Sandra Corrigan, Del Da Costa (Secretary), Rhu Donald (NAC), Angela Heanes, Steve Heanes, Helen Hemphill, Fran Hinton, Roger Hnatiuk, Cathy Ikin, Frank Kelly, Yvonne Kilgour, Barry Langshaw, Joanne Maples, Hugh Milloy, Linda Muldoon, Barry Nash, Rosy Pate, Nicole Pietrucha, Lyn Rees (Treasurer), Scott Saddler AM, Chun-Chiang Shih, Vicki Woolley. [26]

Apologies: Ian Chambers, Maggie Hawes, Naomi Landau, Trish Keller OAM, Jocelyn Plovits, Marelle Rawson, Shirley Wilton.

3. Minutes of the last General Meeting held on 11 July 2023 were accepted without change: Moved: Roger Hnatiuk; seconded Max Bourke AM. Carried.

There were no Matters Arising.

4. National Arboretum Canberra report – Scott Saddler AM, Executive Branch Mgr

Scott provided an update on what's happening around the Arboretum.

- A second Forest Shelter is almost completed. This has been sponsored by funding on behalf of Mr Fluffy via the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate of the ACT Government.
- Sculpture at entrance dam (within Gingko forest) – there is a confirmed local artist who will be announced in two weeks. This sculptor was chosen from a short list of five and an original list of 47 expressions of interest.
- Green Tracks prototype - Work has started to install a green track prototype as a part of Light Rail Stage 2A City to Commonwealth Park. Green tracks are areas where tracks sit within a bed of specifically selected grass or plants instead of concrete. Green tracks help reduce glare and the urban heat island effect, as well as blending in with surroundings, reducing noise and absorbing rainwater. Construction is expected to be completed in December 2023 and will be on public display for 9-12-months for monitoring and community review. It is located at the end of Gallery of Gardens.
- Boundary Road asphaltting is now complete. Next up is the section of Boundary Road leading to the depot.

- 2nd entry/exit to the Arboretum – this will no longer be to/from Bindubi Street. Instead it is likely to be via William Hovell Drive to the back of the depot.
- Tracks and Trails Audit – many tracks are wearing out and in need of maintenance. The Arboretum has received \$200,000 to re-grade all the tracks.
- Wollemi Pines Planting – thanks to the Friends, 12 trees were recently planted in the Wollemi Pine forest.
- Staffing – The Indigenous Tourism Officer has moved on; Rhu Donald is acting Community Engagement Officer during Cally Earnshaw's temporary role elsewhere.
- Kite Fest – there were over 8,800 people through the doors of the Village Centre for this recent event and over 700 kites flown!
- Japan visit – Scott and Leigh Taafe (Bonsai) will be making a business trip to Japan to sign an MoU with Omiya Bonsai Village. This will be a good opportunity to promote Australian native trees as Bonsai and to gather expertise from the host.
- The MoU with the Friends is being reviewed and updated and should be finalised by year's end.

In answer to questions from the audience, Scott responded:

- Rock Garden – continues to experience difficulties but will probably be in place in early 2024.
- Toilets are not high on the Arboretum capital improvements list, given that after 10-15 years, items are starting to fail and funds needed for correction. Toilets are an expensive proposition: the one located in the Himalayan Cedars cost \$400,000.
- Just announced – University of Canberra has signed a five-year, \$1.3 million agreement for naming rights at Stromlo Park.

In summary, Scott thanked the Friends for all they do to help produce this world-class facility.

5. Chair's Report

Mike reported on a number of activities with which the Friends are involved:

- Warm Trees this year was highly successful; and we are liaising with the Chilean Embassy as diplomatic partner for 2024.
- Wollemi Pines Propagation Project – this initiative has reached its completion with the recent planting of the last 12 trees into the Arboretum's Wollemi Pine forest. Friends raised approximately \$12,000 from this project, and also gained considerable kudos – and scientific knowledge – from this exercise.
- The Arboretum Story (video film) – provides a great recap of events over the past 20 years. The production company (SRH) will cut in snippets from the interview with the landscape architects, Taylor Cullity Lethlean, scheduled for 6 November. We will then be submitting a package to ACT Heritage as a documentary, with records of interviews.
- Memberships – work continues on our database and we are now able to remind members of their upcoming expiry date. We will shortly have a new Membership Officer and there is a new Parking Pass Officer in training now.
- Website – Council is working with the Arboretum to provide updated Guide Resource information.
- The Arboretum Book, 2024 Calendars and Wattle Seed packets are all selling well.
- Harvest Group – this very active group provides considerable income for the Friends with the Market Stalls. We all appreciate their energy and commitment.

- Friends' projects – Council is working on a list of proposed projects for which Friends funds could be used (think - Friends Garden atop Dairy Farmers Hill, lease of Ngala Tourist bus, the first Forest Shelter). Suggestions have been invited from the broader Friends community. In the next month or so, Friends will meet with Arboretum management to discuss the projects and priorities.

Mike invited comments or questions from the floor:

- Linda Muldoon asked whether the Newsletter archives could be listed in chronological order. [Del offered to investigate.]
- Max Bourke AM said he thought it important that Taylor Cullity Lethlean (and the interview with Perry Lethlean) was included in the final version of our documentary film, from historical and equity viewpoints, so say nothing of completeness of providing the whole Arboretum story.
- In response to a question as to when Boundary Road would be open to vehicles, Mike thought it would likely be some time yet. Only Ngala bus tours would have access for the time being.

6. Finance Summary

Lyn, as Treasurer's, summarised the Friends' financial position.

As at 30 September 2023, the Friends had a balance of \$92,069 in funds. These are held in the following accounts:

- Friends Working Account - \$11,173
- Business Transaction Account - \$20,133
- Friends Term Deposit #1 – \$40,764
- Friends Term Deposit #2 - \$20,000

Year-to-date, we have recorded a deficit of \$2,892 (compared to a deficit of \$11,674 at the end of September 2022).

Trust account – As at 30 September 2023, the National Arboretum Canberra Trust Fund had a balance of \$181,337 in total funds, which are held in the following accounts:

- Trust Savings Account - \$77,233
- Trust Term Deposit #1 - \$44,105
- Trust Term Deposit #2 - \$60,000.

Year-to-date, the Trust is showing a positive gain of \$23,546, compared to a gain of \$12,675 as at 30 September 2022.

Payments have also been finalised for two major ongoing projects: the Arboretum Story documentary film (total cost \$27,489) and the Wollemi Pine Propagation Project (total cost \$15,290 – total received to date from sales: \$26,565 - profit of \$11,275 – *Note – these figures have been updated to be the final figures for the project overall*).

Total funds committed currently to June 2025 are \$60,939 (Friends and Trust).

It was interesting to note in the pie charts for Friends Income and Expenditure that Memberships have provided 33% of our income; Wollemi Pine sales 25% and Market Stalls 18%. Friends' expenses have been 37% for The Arboretum – 20-year story (film); and Wollemi Pines 19%.

Trust income is mostly Seat Sponsorships (74%).

Max Bourke remarked that he is keen to use Friends funds on projects rather than sitting and earning interest.

Max Bourke moved and Vicki Woolley seconded that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Carried.

7. Arboretum Volunteer Summary

Rhu Donald, acting Community Engagement Officer, briefly updated the meeting on a number of current activities:

- Floriade – thanks to the Guides for facilitating the additional coach tours and Forest Walks. There has been much positive feedback.
- Working Bees – in recent weeks, the groups have been busy in the Lancewood (forest 89), Tilia small leaved lime (forest 38), Soap bark (forest 94), Toromiro (forest 77), Liquidambar (forest 72), and planting Wollemi pines (forest 32).
- Kite Fest – as Scott mentioned earlier, this was a huge success on 1 October with kite-making workshops sold out. Success would not have been achieved without the assistance of Friends and volunteers that day.
- 10-year Celebration Breakfast, 13 October – this will be an opportunity for the Arboretum to thank active Friends and volunteers for their hard work over the past 10 years (and longer). The Arboretum staff have also been invited.
- Planning has begun for the Friends and Volunteers End-of-Year Thank You event on 12 December, which will celebrate the hard work and dedication of these people over the past year.
- Volunteer hours for September alone were 568 (not including meetings and admin tasks).

In response to a question, the Arboretum is hoping to launch Adopt-A-Tree by Christmas.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

- 9. Next Meeting** – The next General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 12 March 2024 at a time TBD. Guest Speaker to be advised.

- 10. Close of meeting** – 2.50pm

The Guest Speaker after the meeting was Dr Roger Hnatiuk, a long-time and Lifetime Friend, who re-capped the Wollemi discovery story leading up to 30 years in 2024. Roger updated the meeting on their distribution and status, as well as recent research emanating from the Friends' Wollemi Pine Propagation Project. It was a fascinating talk.