



CONFIRMED MINUTES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 9 May 2023 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 – Trish Keller OAM (Chair), John Beagle, Kay Beagle, J Blount, Cynthia Blount, Sue Brown, Ian Chambers, Del Da Costa, David Denham, Alan Doolan, Janet Duncan, Cally Earnshaw (NAC), Thea Fisher, Viki Fox, Helen Hemphill, Fran Hinton, Roger Hnatiuk, Cathy Ikin, Chris Ikin, Viola Kalokerinos, Peter Kennedy, Janet Kay, Tralie Kimlin, Barry Langshaw, Chris Langshaw, Michael Maher, Joanne Maples, Gwen McNeill, Ange McNeilly, Jan Morgan, John Owen, Leigh Palmer, Vivien Palmer, Susan Parsons, Nicole Pietrucha, Alison Purvis, Marelle Rawson, Allan Read, Maureen Read, Lyn Rees, Suzette Seale, Jon Stanhope, Elaine Staples, Agnes Walker, Rosy Pate, Shirley Wilton, Mike Woolley, Vicki Woolley, [+1 undecipherable name] . [49 attending]

Apologies – Margie Bourke, Max Bourke AM, Christine Callen (NAC), Margaret Groube, John Hemphill, Naomi Landau, Hugh Milloy, Linda Muldoon, Jocelyn Plovits, Nick Plovits, Tabitha Plovits, Scott Saddler AM (NAC), Carolyn Thomas.

3. Acceptance of Minutes of 2022 AGM and Matters Arising

Fran Hinton moved and Marelle Rawson seconded that the minutes of the 10 May 2022 Annual General Meeting be accepted without amendment. Carried.

There were no matters arising.

4. Treasurer's Report

The 2022 audited financial statements, which incorporated the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust Fund, were made available at the meeting.

As at 31 December 2022, the Friends had a **balance** of \$94,961 in funds at the bank. This comprised \$54,861 in the working account and \$40,100 in the term deposit.

The National Arboretum Canberra Trust held \$157,791 of which \$114,404 was held in the Trust general transaction account and \$43,387 in the term deposit.

The Friends' total **income** for the year was \$59,242, with the majority coming from Market Stalls (\$16,441); Memberships (\$15,569); Wollemi sales (\$13,085) Income from fundraising, interest and donations (\$1,598); and Golden Wattle Seed sales (\$1,267). We also made a profit of \$11,282 from Calendars and The Arboretum Book sales.

Total donations to our National Arboretum Canberra Public DGR2 Trust Fund amounted to \$71,924 with \$55,000 from seat donations; \$12,854 from General Donations and Interest, and \$4,070 as Donations for Forest 20, Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park.

Total operating **expenditure** for the Friends came to \$44,095. This included donations to the National Arboretum Canberra for the Forest Shelter (\$11,500); payment of the Ngala bus lease (\$10,885); Arboretum Story Project (\$7,141); Market Stall Expenses (\$2,498); General Expenses \$4,784); Bank and Accounting Fees (\$2,834); Donations of \$2,893 (including the value of 1st edition Arboretum Books donated throughout the year); and Guide Uniforms (\$1,560).

The National Arboretum Canberra DGR2 Trust fund made donations to the NAC DGR1 Fund of \$30,388 which included donations for the Forest Shelter (\$11,500); and the provision of funds for the purchase and installation costs for seats and picnic settings to be made available for seat donations (\$18,888).

Summary – At the end of the 2022 financial year, the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra made an overall profit of \$11,615,14737 while the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust fund increased its funds by \$40,099.

In 2022 the Friends embarked on a new project to chronicle the story of the National Arboretum Canberra from 2003 with a total budget of \$30,000. This project is aimed at being ready for launch during the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Arboretum this year. It will include video footage of interviews with people instrumental in the establishment of the National Arboretum, including support provided by the Friends.

2022 also saw the finalisation of the Friends and the Public Trust fund commitment to fund the establishment of the first Forest Shelter at the National Arboretum Canberra with a final combined payment of \$23,000 in 2022. The Friends also continued their commitment to fund the 5-year lease of the Ngala bus at a cost of \$10,885 per year; and funds were provided by the Trust to fund the cost of Seats and Picnic Settings under the Seat Sponsorship Program.

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.

Summing up, at the conclusion of 2022 the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra continue to maintain a healthy financial position with a total equity of \$115,188. The National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust, for which the Friends are the Trustees, also continues to maintain a healthy financial position with an overall equity of \$157,626. This puts the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra in a position to meet existing commitments and to explore future opportunities to support the National Arboretum Canberra.

Trish Keller OAM moved and Del Da Costa seconded that the 2022 Financial Statements for the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc and incorporating the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust Fund be accepted. Carried.

Ange McNeilly moved and Roger Hnatiuk seconded that Hardwickes be appointed auditor for 2023. Carried.

5. Chair's Report

Trish Keller OAM, as Chair of the Friends at the 2023 Annual General Meeting, offered her eighth Chair's Report. The full report appears as an appendix to these minutes.

Fran Hinton moved and Mike Woolley seconded that the Chair's Report be accepted.
Carried.

6. Celebrating Success

Trish Keller OAM showcased the *What We've Achieved!* document, available to attendees which itemises the significant financial and volunteer contributions made by the Friends in recent times.

7. Activity Reports

- a) **Guides' Report** – Cally Earnshaw, Community Engagement Officer for the Arboretum reported to the meeting.

With COVID restrictions being eased from late 2022, it has taken some time for visitor patterns to resemble those prior to the pandemic. The Arboretum has seen a gradual return of international tourists, and visitors once again participating in Guided tours and activities. From summer 2022-2023 there has once again been consistent demand for coach tours, as tourism operators have returned to normal operations.

Recent recruitment has been completed to bolster the Visitor Services team, with a number of new team members in training. We have discussed at recent Guides' meetings ways that Guides and Visitor Services Officers (VSOs) can work together to share knowledge and skills, including having a Guide attend VSO meetings every second month to speak about a forest within the Arboretum, having photos of VSOs with their names so that Guides can better know who they'll be working alongside, and working on new tours together. Once new VSOs have been trained, the Arboretum will be conducting volunteer recruitment to Guiding and other volunteer activities, including a Guides' Coordinator.

In broader volunteering activities, we have welcomed Volunteer Coordinators: Jane Cottee from STEP, Dr Marc Norman from the Cacti and Succulent Society, Alison Purvis for Frogwatch, Peter Dugard and Sharon McAuliffe overseeing Wollemi Seed Counting, Ange McNeilly from the Kitchen Garden, and Maggie Hawes as the Harvesting Group Coordinator, working jointly with Ange for Harvest Stalls.

We would like to acknowledge our outgoing volunteer coordinators Judy Smith, Trevor Rodgers and Colette Mackay OAM for their incredible contributions in supporting the Arboretum's many activities, and Dr Roger Hnatiuk for his continued oversight of Citizen Science projects, not to mention his incredible commitment to looking after associated on-site activities to date.

And a most heartfelt thank you to Trish Keller OAM for the many ways she has supported the success of the Friends and the Arboretum, through countless projects and initiatives. Trish has also offered special support to Guides and welcoming visitors to the Arboretum, through supporting the Ngala bus, including as our very popular bus driver, sponsoring Guides' satchels and chairing Guides' meetings. We will miss you Trish, and we hope that the Village Centre remains your office so that we can continue to keep in touch.

This report has focused on Guides activities as the Guides' report is supplied for the Council AGM. The Community Engagement Officer wishes to recognise the vital role that Friends and volunteers play across the whole of the Arboretum including, the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection, supporting kite-making events and education

programs, Harvest Group, Working Bees, Citizen Science, STEP, Ngala tours, Warm Trees, and so many more.

b) **National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia** – Mike Woolley reported:

- It was a good year for the Collection with the annual celebration Bonsai Reshaped featuring an international bonsai artist for the first time since 2020. . A number of workshops, demonstrations and retail sales also make up the annual event.
- Peter Hanrahan was the winner of the Centenary Bonsai Prize in 2023 for his outstanding native bonsai, *Banksia ericifolia*, Heath banksia. The Centenary Bonsai Prize is offered every 10 years to celebrate the centenary of Canberra as the nation's capital in 2013.
- Four Australian bonsai artists have been awarded artist-in-residence positions for the 2023 and 2024 Autumn and Spring programs. These programs are designed to engage local artists with the Collection, share knowledge and to introduce them to the broader public.
- The Pot Acquisition Prize was conducted again to promote those potters in Australia who are creating locally-made bonsai pots. This year, first prize was awarded to Patrick Kennedy for his stunning handmade pot glazed with his own hardwood ash glaze. The light grey with hints of olive green beautifully complements the tree's natural colouring. The pot is oval and enlarged in all facets allowing for future growth. Patrick's pot will be a permanent feature in the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia
- At the Bonsai Reshaped Awards night, the enthusiasm and dedication for Bonsai was felt throughout the room as the Joe Mifsud Volunteer of the Year award dedicated to the late Joe Mifsud, a strong Collection advocate and volunteer, was awarded to Mark Goddard.
- Maintenance is currently being undertaken on the wooden tops of the cement plinths.
- The autumn trees are now showing beautiful colour and well worth a visit.

c) **Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park** – Cathy Ikin reported:

- Wet weather continued on during the 2022 year. Several torrential summer downpours caused major damage to plants and infrastructure in Forest 20. The eroded paths became an issue of public safety to visitors and sadly STEP was fenced off and closed in February so that repairs to paths and general drainage could be undertaken.
- Half of the species planted in the Central Garden, including many trees, have been lost due to continuously saturated soil and inundation with gravel from eroded paths. A STEP team met with hydrological engineers to discuss remediation. Despite the damage, STEP volunteers were undeterred and worked to remove excess plant biomass and plan for re-establishment and restoration of the area. Volunteer groups from the Arboretum joined us on a couple of occasions to help with the weeding. This increased our progress and was appreciated.
- When winter arrived, some paths had been stabilised by a contractor and it was hoped Reconciliation Day might attract visitors to the Bush Tucker Garden. Alas, rain set in on the day and only 2 intrepid visitors came.
- Forest 20 was re-opened to visitors in time for Wattle Day so we hosted guided tours along the Wattle Walk as part of Wattle Week activities. However, cold and soggy weather caused the demise of several plantings of Acacia species. Hence work was undertaken to dig blue metal and crushed granite into the clay in these sites to improve drainage.
- A positive outcome of the water was a frog chorus from the Ephemeral Wetland.

- Although Forest 20 was closed for some months during the year, visitors continue to enjoy the southern tablelands display of plants. In addition to the Wattle Walk, another destination is the Gallery of Grasses along the northern edge of the Bush tucker Garden; and the Parade of Peas in front of the retaining wall at the Gathering Node by the entrance to STEP is also a new area.
 - Visitors have included staff of Cool Country Natives, Friends of the Arboretum volunteer guides, a large group of U3A members, a film crew producing a history of the Arboretum and guiding delegates from National Parks Singapore. The specific interest of this last group was in the way community groups support biodiversity and they were impressed at how this had been done at STEP.
- d) **Harvest Group** – Ange McNeilly reported:
- This was another cool and wet La Niña year. The moist conditions made many plants susceptible to powdery mildew, particularly the cucurbits. Plants that needed sustained warm temperatures to ripen did so only very late in the season or, as in the case of tomatoes, were harvested green to ripen indoors in order to make relishes and chutneys in time to sell at market stalls.
 - At the beginning of February, strong winds buffeted the garden and blew down tomato plants and their supports as well as the pumpkins climbing up the posts. Productivity this year was low in comparison to previous years.
 - The garden team grew substantially this year with five new members joining: Juliette, Maddie, Sylvia, Jessica and Cathie. This dedicated team continues to maintain the garden looking good throughout the year.
 - There were approximately 1,089 volunteer hours for the year in the Discovery Kitchen Garden.
 - **Market Stalls & Fig Harvest** - There were five Market Stalls held during 2022 to make up for only three held the previous year due to the Covid-19 lockdown. At the 19 March stall, 18kg of fresh figs sold out quickly and there were 10 dozen jars of new fig products made and ready for sale from the 80kg picked in the two weeks just prior to the market stall, a testament to the outstanding effort by the cooks. In total, there were 208.5kg of figs harvested and 191 hours spent cooking the preserves. There were also 11+kg of other produce harvested and cooked. STEP joined the Market Stalls on two occasions selling a range of native seedlings and small baskets made from native grasses all of which sold well. In total, the Market Stalls grossed \$12,577 for the Friends in 2022. An amazing feat!
 - **Accolade Awarded to the Harvest Group** – The Friends' Harvest Group was awarded a Certificate of Recognition for “outstanding voluntary service in the Canberra Region” at the 2022 Volunteers Awards Ceremony held at the National Gallery of Australia on 7 December. Many thanks to the Arboretum for the nomination. While it is gratifying for volunteers to receive recognition for their work, the principal motive for volunteering is the love for this special place and to support it and its people.
 - **Huge thanks to Colette Mackay OAM** who resigned from her role as Harvest Group Team Leader leaving big shoes to fill! We thank Colette for her many years of unstinting service and wish her well.
 - **FNAC Wollemi Pine Propagation Project** – This was the critical test year for the project as the sale of the first 30 trees was to occur at the end of April/beginning of May 2022 to gauge market demand. This timeline also coincided with the Friends' new website going live.
 - The initial sale of the Wollemi was very successful with the first 30 trees selling steadily from 28 April to 4 June. Sales then slowed and only 12 more trees sold by the end of 2022.

- In the first four months of 2023, 14 Wollemi sold. Trees were also donated: five to Government House, two to the New Zealand High Commission and one to the Arboretum for a fundraising auction. Recently, discussions have taken place with the Australian National Botanic Gardens regarding the donation of Wollemi for planting there and at their other sites in NSW such as Jervis Bay.
- To date, the project cost is fully covered and a small profit realised. This profit will increase by further sales.
- The contract with Yarralumla Nursery is due to cease on 31 May 2023 and all remaining Wollemi will need relocating elsewhere. As at 28 April 2023, 44 trees of varying sizes and ages remained at the nursery and 11 in the Bonsai area.
- In summary, it's been an amazingly successful year due in every way to the dedication of the Harvest Group's volunteers. Ange has lived and dreamed this Wollemi Pine Project for over three years and it is a relief that we can cover our costs. A spin-off benefit has been Roger Hnatiuk collecting data of the unusual side-branching growth and he recently published a paper on this item, which all adds to the knowledge base.

e) **Working Bees** – Vicki Woolley (and Des King) reported:

- A typical working bee commences with the horticultural team describing and demonstrating the session's activity. They work alongside the bees, provide guidance, and educate with answers to the bees' questions.
- Working bees revolve largely around a whole-of-forest makeover/maintenance approach where a number of tasks are completed in the one forest before moving on.
- Attendance has ranged from 7 – 19 with an average more recently in the 10 – 12 range. New and returning bees are warmly welcome to participate in the activities after signing-up with Arboretum.
- Activities this last year included spreading mulch, planting, weeding, checking, and repairing irrigation, epicormic growth removal, installation and removal of tree guards, pruning low branches and removing dead wood.
- In the last 12 months the bees worked in the following forests and gardens:

○ Bunya Pines	○ American Yellowwood
○ STEP Forest 20	○ Radiata Pine
○ Dairy Farmers Hill	○ Pagoda tree
○ Californian Fan Palms	○ Grass tree
○ Japanese Snowbell	○ Zig Zag Garden
○ Acacia host of Toothed Lancewood	○ Dawn Redwood
○ Japanese Flowering Dogwood	○ Chilean Myrtle
○ Persian Ironwoods	○ Gallery of Gardens
○ Chinese Tulip Trees	○ Silk Floss Tree
○ Liquidambar	○ Persian Silk Tree
○ Monkey Puzzle	○ Trident Maple
○ European Beech	○ Taiwanese Maple
○ Black Tupelo	○ Callery Pear
○ Totara and Kowhai	○ Date Plum
○ Dove Trees	○ Pod Playground
○ Yunnan Cypress	○ Silver Birch
○ Franklin tree	○ Chilean Cedar
○ Walnut	○ Golden Rain Tree
	○ Osage Orange

On behalf of the working bee volunteers, Vicki thanked the horticultural team for their friendly and helpful approach, providing a range of activities throughout the year.

Vicki also noted that with the growth of the forests, you can now stand in their shade in summer.

f) **Citizen Science projects** – Roger Hnatiuk and Alison Purvis reported:

Unusual Branching in Wollemi Pines – Wollemi pines are known for their characteristically unbranched branches. This means that unless the tip of the branch is damaged or produces a cone, that branch doesn't branch again – it doesn't produce side-branches.

While providing botanical advice to the Friends' Wollemi pine propagation project, I noticed that side branches were being produced. This most unexpected occurrence has been reported to the scientific media in a paper published in the journal 'Australian Journal of Botany', published by CSIRO.

Access to many seedlings plus a little botanical knowledge has made a significant impact on our knowledge of this rare and still little-known species via citizen science work at the Arboretum. The help of Friends' volunteers in data collection was much appreciated.

Seed Production in a large ex situ population of Wollemi pines – For nine years now, a Citizen Science group that I lead has gathered information on the production of cones, seeds and secondary trunks in the Arboretum's population of Wollemis in Forest 32. We have been tracking them since the first trees produced cones at about 10 years of age. The numbers of male and female cones on each tree are recorded. In recent years we have also noted the height of the tree, how high above ground each cone is as well as on which side of the tree is it growing.

Cones are covered with gauze bags each January, for collection over the next several months. Most cones are ripe and fall apart in Feb through March and April, releasing their seeds at this time. In some years, the last cone hasn't come down until December. That shows that it can take up to 3 years for cones and seeds to mature, although for most it is only 2 years. This adds a small bit of new information about this species to what we already know.

The seeds are provided to the Arboretum so that they can respond to requests for seed from not-for-profit groups like botanic gardens and research scientists. A report has not been finished with these data yet. We want to see what impact the three years of La Nina, coming after the flash drought of 2019, has had. With La Nina dissipating and an El Nino predicted, the coming 2 years will be exciting for this work.

There is a dedicated group of volunteers who provide major support to the project by sorting each collection of fallen cones. This year, Peter and Sharon have stepped in to do the organising and provide support at both the Monday and Friday sessions. This is freeing time for me to work on analyses and writing up of projects. These volunteers are highly-skilled at finding the potentially viable seeds, and they record the weights of the cones and seeds as well. From these data we will be able to track how the trees progress through dry and wet years. Canberra appears to be on the margin of good growing conditions for the Wollemis. If they get enough water and some protection from fierce, hot, north-westerly winds in summer, they can grow well. These are the conditions the Arboretum aims to provide. Our data will track how they progress.

These projects are only possible with the help of the volunteers, the Citizen Scientists. The skills they have developed, their dedication to the work each year are vital to the success of such work. Without a science staff at the Arboretum, studies such as these into this nationally-significant tree species just couldn't happen. A very big thank you to each one of you. You are an important part of the history of this wonderful place.

Roger Hnatiuk

Frogwatch at the Arboretum continued for its 12th year in 2022 and provided valuable information about the local frog population and the ecology of the Arboretum.

Frogwatch aims to engage citizen scientists to make recordings of frogs and take observations. Frogs are extremely sensitive to changes in the environment and can give scientists valuable insights into how an ecosystem is functioning.

During 2022, five Frogwatch events were held at the Arboretum. Two events were held in Summer, one in Autumn, one in Sprinter (August-September), one in Sprummer (October-November) and the noisiest, most raucous, most joyful one late in Spring. Volunteers arrive after sunset and visit the Larch, Cork Oak and Gingko Dams and the STEP Ephemeral Wetlands on foot to take observations and recordings.

2022 was the third wet year (with 2020 and 2021 also having higher than average rainfall) and springs emerged across the Arboretum landscape with frogs moving into this changing habitat. Five species of frog were recorded at our Frogwatch sites during the year in greater abundance than in 2021. They were:

- *Crinia signifera* (Common eastern froglet);
- *Crinia parinsignifera* (Plains froglet);
- *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* (Spotted grass frog);
- *Litoria peronii* (Peron's tree frog); and
- *Uperoleia laevigata* (Smooth toadlet).

Six Frogwatch volunteers joined me for the events. Thanks to Roger Hnatiuk, Beth Gibson, Sandra Corrigan, Jessica Schembri, Ines Carrin and Alex Taylor. Roger Hnatiuk also continued to provide me with excellent mentorship throughout the year.

Others provided support to the program with advice and analysis. Thanks to Jennie Widdowson for STEP observations and Jean Chesson for her data analysis.

Frogwatch at the Arboretum is supported by the ACT Frogwatch Coordinator Anke Maria Hoefer from the ACT and Region Frogwatch Program. Our results are provided to this program and pooled with others from 230 Frogwatch survey sites across the ACT. Anke Maria checks our recordings and confirms the species heard. Scientists have used the data to measure the environmental health of wetlands across the region.

In 2022 Frogwatch at the Arboretum found:

- more frogs than any other year since Arboretum frog records began. The availability and persistence of water in the landscape provided excellent breeding conditions for the frogs;
- that due to the dams filling to capacity and overflowing, more aquatic vegetation was present. This led to an abundance of *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* (the spotted grass frog) which attach their egg masses to emergent vegetation;
- *Crinia signifera* (common eastern froglet) and *Crinia parinsignifera* (plains froglet) were the next most abundant species at the Arboretum. These species are highly adaptable to disturbed and altered landscapes; and
- that there was an increase in traffic noise and events at the Arboretum, particularly at the Larch dam from development in the Molonglo valley. The effect on the frog population is an area for further study.

Further research of the frogs would be valuable. A longitudinal study of the frogs calling during the day to learn more about the daily cycles of frogs would add greatly to our understanding of the ecology and the effect of visitors. Provision of funding for the installation of 24-hour recording devices would allow for further citizen science and a

possible scientific project for a student wanting to develop basic skills in data collection, Artificial Intelligence analysis of call identifications and writing of scientific reports.

It is a great privilege to walk in the Arboretum at night, when the crowds have dispersed and the night creatures emerge. With the moon hanging low in the sky, a group of curious citizen scientists work to capture important data which adds to the rich and diverse natural history of this place. We'd love to have you along.

Alison Purvis

8. Election of Office Bearers

Helen Hemphill acted as Returning Officer. She declared ten positions vacant: Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, STEP representative, National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia representative and four Ordinary Members, as well as the non-Council position of Sponsorship & Donations Manager.

Position	Incumbent	Nomination to date
Chair		vacant
Deputy Chair		Mike Woolley
Treasurer	Lynley Rees	
Secretary		Del Da Costa
Publications Editor	Nicole Pietrucha	
Social Media Manager		vacant
Donations and Sponsorships Manager		Trish Keller OAM
STEP Member		Hugh Milloy
National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia Member		Mike Woolley
Ordinary Members (up to 5 Members)	Marelle Rawson	Ian Chambers Maggie Hawes Fran Hinton Barry Langshaw

From nominations received, the following were elected to Council:

Position	Incumbent	Nomination to date
Chair		vacant
Deputy Chair		Mike Woolley
Treasurer	Lynley Rees	
Secretary		Del Da Costa
Ordinary Members	Marelle Rawson	Ian Chambers Maggie Hawes Fran Hinton Barry Langshaw

Membership roles

Donations and Sponsorships Manager		Trish Keller OAM
STEP representative		Hugh Milloy
National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia representative		Mike Woolley

Social Media Manager		vacant
Publications editor	Nicole Pietrucha	

Del Da Costa continues as Public Officer; and Spero Cassidy as Website Manager. Del, Lyn and Mike thanked Spero for his considerable assistance this year in launching and use of our new website through Pictal.

Helen Hemphill moved and Roger Hnatiuk seconded all nominations which were unanimously elected. If needed, Council can co-opt other Members.

Trish Keller paid tribute to outgoing Council members Helen Hemphill and Cathy Ikin (STEP), and presented framed certificates of thanks to Helen and Cathy.

9. **Awarding of Life Memberships** – Trish Keller OAM.

Trish Keller OAM had been nominated and unanimously confirmed by Council as worthy of a Life Membership. She had demonstrated over her eight-year tenure as Chair of the Friends that she had given:

- Significant sustained and high-quality service to promote and facilitate the work of the Friends, which has brought credit to the /friends over many years;
- A positive attitude that is a role model for others; and
- Major contributions to many Friends projects.

The nomination was summarised:

In summary, the Friends' Council say thanks to someone who has been at the core of Friends' interests for so long, who is so passionate about the Arboretum, but who, we know, will continue to use her passion and the esteem which we all hold for her in other pursuits for the long-term benefit of the Friends and the Arboretum.

Testimony was also received from Marelle Rawson who gave an example of her admiration for Trish years ago when the Arboretum was open for Open days.

Trish was presented with a Certificate for Life Membership and a small Wollemi Pine in Bonsai style.

10. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

11. **Close of meeting**

The meeting closed at 6.50pm.

Trish thanked everyone for coming to this meeting, and welcomed everyone to stay and hear our Guest Speaker, Jon Stanhope AO, for his memories of the construction and development of the Arboretum from 2003. This presentation was in parallel with the launch of *The Arboretum Story: 2003-2023* at the Arboretum's Gala Dinner on 5 May.

APPENDIX 1

CHAIR'S REPORT TO FRIENDS' AGM, 9 May 2023

WELCOME - Welcome to you all....thanks for coming along tonight!

It's with great pleasure I offer you my last Chair's Report for this 2023 Annual General Meeting.

COUNCIL THANKS

I'd like to begin my report with a vote of thanks to all elected members of Council:

Mike Woolley - Deputy Chair and Bonsai representative

Del Da Costa - Secretary and Public Officer

Lynley Rees - Treasurer

Maggie Hawes - Harvest Group Manager

Fran Hinton – member

Helen Hemphill- member

Nicole Pietrucha - Publications Officer

Marelle Rawson - member

Ian Chambers - member

Cathy Ikin - STEP representative

Myself – Donations and Seat Sponsorship Manager

We lead the legal entity of the Friends which you know as Council and have responsibilities to you the membership.

As Chair of the Friends, I am surrounded by this group of a highly-competent, trusted and effective team. They provide me with freely given strategic advice on a regular basis so I have never been alone in this role. I want to thank each one of them for all the work they do in their various roles on Council – they are a remarkable team! Their cooperation, expertise and generosity of spirit knows no bounds. My appreciation to them is boundless!

We have a rep from the National Arboretum Canberra (NAC) who attends Council – the Community Engagement Officer, CEO if you will.....it's Cally Earnshaw usually, sometimes with Christine Callen if Cally isn't available and an appearance from Scott once in a blue moon.

Importantly I begin with an update on Membership. We have discussed various strategies at Council to address the issue encouraging new members. One strategy that is having a positive effect is the formation of a Membership Committee. They meet regularly and focus in depth on every strategy they think will entice new members. A new flier appears to be of interest to the public and I saw many of these being distributed to the public at the Mothers Day Market Stall last Sunday.

We encourage you to renew your membership when its due and sign up a friend or family member. In this way, your financial support supports us to achieve many things which in turn will support the NAC. This, as you know, is what the Friends are all about, our purpose – supporting the NAC.

Noteworthy highlights for the year gone by ... and in no particular order ...

Did you pick up the '**What we have achieved!**' paper when you came in? If I miss mentioning something in my report, this document gives you in a page a great overview of the Friends' work. You will find it on our website in due course.

THE LAUNCH OF THE ARBORETUM STORY happened last Friday night during the NAC's Gala Dinner when 2 or 3 small trailers of this 30-minute story was shown. They received a great reception so I urge you to watch it when the details of when and where are available – keep an eye on our website.

The origin of this project was when Council responded to Roger Hnatiuk's email of 31 October 2020 when he suggested the Friends and I quote '*being aware with the passage of time progressively we are losing people who were instrumental to the development of the Arboretum and the Friends should organise for stories and recollections of those still with us to be recorded and made available in a suitable format*'.

That work in progress for the past couple of years has finally been achieved. Council discovered this wonderful, almost hidden treasure, film production company, SRH, tucked away in the Canberra Technology Park in Watson. SRH (Shaun Humphreys and Vivienne O'Connell) – yes, a two-person bundle of expertise and energy, masterfully constructed and presented our story.

We chose the term 'Story' over 'History': 'The Arboretum Story: 2003-2023', as, in reality, this is a collection of accounts of events as recalled by those who were there making decisions and shaping the Arboretum. It isn't the full official history with file records and formal accounts of all the details. Its value is meeting the people involved and listening to their perspectives of the challenges and rewards of being involved in such a significant project.

THE WOLLEMI PINE PROPAGATION PROJECT 2020-2023 is another Friends' highlight which will be wound up at the end of this month. This has been a three-year project to grow Wollemi Pines from seed collected from the Arboretum's Forest 32. The trees have been grown under contract by the Yarralumla Nursery for the Friends, who have a licence issued under Section 273 of the Nature Conservation Act 2014 to sell these endangered and iconic Australian conifers to the public. The purpose of the project is to continue the preservation of the species and to raise funds to support Arboretum projects.

There were 132 trees grown as part of the project and huge thanks to Ange McNeilly who has kept this project humming along with support from Council members, Roger Hnatiuk and Colette Mackay OAM and the friendly Yarralumla Nursery staff.

I want to share with you a couple of recent complimentary remarks about the Friends: first from the Governor General in a note he sent to the Gala Dinner on Friday night since he was unable to attend. He commented 'Linda and I extend a heartfelt thank you to the Friends of the Arboretum for their expertise and tireless efforts that have brought so much joy to all who visit the Arboretum'

And the second by the Special Minister of State, Chris Steel MLA, at the Gala Dinner. He commented "I extend my thanks to the many Friends and volunteers of the NAC. The commitment of these extraordinary people has been critical to the Arboretum's ongoing growth and success since its inception."

HARVEST GROUP Manager – special thanks to Maggie Hawes who stepped into the huge shoes of Colette Mackay OAM when she took over this role. It appears that the Market Stalls are very popular and very successful – and a couple of months ago the Market Day stall at Lanyon Homestead looked amazing. It was the first stall/display the public came across as they entered the Homestead precinct so it was very visible. Thanks to the team who supported Ange on that day.

WEBSITE - Thanks to Webmaster Spero Cassidy and Del, Lyn and Mike for the huge effort they have put in to get the Friends' new website functional. There may be some teething problems but it is up and running. Let us know if you have a problem. We don't know unless you tell us.

The new ARBORETUM BOOKS are selling steadily. And there are several copies of The Arboretum Book 1 available should you need one of those to make up your set!!

CALENDARS were popular and sold well this year with a few leftovers. Thanks to the photo contributors, especially Mike Woolley for his photos and the liaison with Mel at The Curatoreum to get this project completed.

JAKE KELLER SCHOLARSHIP – continues on with another successful CIT winner, Jacob Bamblett, who is ready to work with Owen and the Hort team when the time is right for this year's project. I always enjoy working with Julie Collins, Head of Department, Horticulture and Floristry, Design and Technology at the CIT during the winner's selection process.

WARM TREES – Thanks to Jan Morgan. South Africa will be the diplomatic partner in 2023 - fabulous colours in their flag so the display this year will certainly be bright and heart-warming.

Warm Trees 2022 saw a highly successful liaison with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the Indigenous Marathon Foundation which is led by Aussie icon and legend Rob de Castella AM OBE. The launch coincided with NAIDOC Week so all the stars were aligned you might say.

Displays were much admired including the panels in the cutting leading to the Village Centre. One panel was bought at the auction at the end of last year by a very generous Friend and Ambassador and she donated it to Throsby School where it is hanging in the school foyer with an explanatory note beside it. Great publicity for the Friends and indeed the Arboretum!

I believe, Jon (Stanhope), you were responsible for suggesting this fun and colourful Warm Trees activity brightening up the bare winter trunks, when Jocelyn was the Chair.

WORKING BEES happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays – the Worker Bees' work is invaluable to the NAC. It's amazing the difference two groups of volunteers can make for a couple of hours on a regular basis.

CITIZEN SCIENCE - I'd like to congratulate and thank Roger Hnatiuk for his steadfast commitment to all the really important Citizen Science projects he undertakes around the NAC: the Wollemi project, and a myriad of others. And the confidence he builds and encourages in others to participate in these programs is an asset to admire.

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER - thanks Nicole! She diligently presents such a colourful and interesting newsletter. Nicole is always keen to receive articles and photos. You will find all our Newsletters on the website with one due to appear soon.

Mel at THE CURATOREUM – The Friends thank her most sincerely for her cooperation, expertise, generosity and enthusiasm for our Friends projects.

I would like to extend again our condolences to Ian Sayers OAM, Friend and Guide on his bereavement, the death of his wife Laurel quite recently.

The wheels of the NGALA BUS go round and round. I know the Ionian Club have a group going on a tour this Thursday. I was asked to present a talk to them about the Friends last week and so could give them more information on the Ngala Bus Tour! They were very excited to hear about the walks and the bus tour.

Cally will explain the state of the Guides in her report as the CEO as she is instrumental in maintaining the Guides, their recruitment, their future training, their rosters etc. Grateful thanks to those who work from home e.g. the Parking Passes – thanks to Marelle who recently took on this huge task.

As Manager of the SEAT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM on behalf of the Friends, I am regularly approached by members of the public who want to sponsor seats and picnic settings. It continues to be a slow but nevertheless rewarding process. There have been a few sponsorships taken up this year yielding a positive result for the Friends Trust Fund. And even as recently as yesterday I had three enquiries. Time will tell the end result.

This year, Suzette Searle, the Wattle guru, Cally and Mike Woolley liaised on the seed collection from the Golden Wattles with Friends and Volunteers. This has been a highly successful project and you are able to now buy these seed packets at the Curatoreum. A great gift idea!

Before I end my report, I want to particularly thank and pay tribute to two departing Councillors: Helen Hemphill and Cathy Ikin, (STEP representative). Both have played a big part of the team effort on Council and I wish them well.

I've said all along that you, the Friends members, continue to be worth your weight in gold, solid gold. Each of your generous and unstinting contributions to our Arboretum is hugely appreciated. Scott and the Cally can tell us has the manpower hours and staff equivalent (see Community Engagement Officer's report).

One of the first pieces of correspondence I received was from the previous Chair Jocelyn Plovits. Her message to me read 'CONGRATULATIONS! You will enjoy being the Chair of the Friends. Happy to help if needed.' She was right I have enjoyed this role and she did help me ... many times. Thanks Jocelyn!

I am resolved to do as Ian Warden once said he would do back on 8 Jan 2022, in one of his Canberra Times articles: *I will continue to haunt our National Arboretum, walking at least once a year in each of its 100 forests, talking to the trees and listening respectfully to what their whispering, rattling, swishing, susurrating leaves have to say to me.*

If you can't find me out there, I'll most likely be in my office...see you there!

Trish Keller OAM
Chair of Friends
(to 9 May 2023)

After the AGM, we welcomed Guest Speaker, Jon Stanhope AO for his reflections and memories of the Arboretum from 20 years ago.