



**DRAFT  
MINUTES**

## **GENERAL MEETING**

**Held on Tuesday 10 September 2024 at 12.30pm  
in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion, National Arboretum, Canberra**

**1. Welcome – Mike Woolley, (Chair)**

Mike welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged First Nations people.

**2. Attendance:** Mike Woolley (Chair), Malise Arnstein, Linda Beveridge, Sandra Corrigan, Del Da Costa (Secretary), Peter Demaine, Alan Doolan, Maggie Hawes, Helen Hemphill, Barry Langshaw, Chris Langshaw, Naomi Landau, Sophie Lindeyer, Mike Maher, Joanne Maples, Ange McNeilly, Paul Meyer, Jan Morgan, Diane Mutch (NAC), Rosy Pate, Alison Purvis, Marelle Rawson, Lyn Rees (Treasurer), Jayne Simon (NAC), Liz Swain, Carolyn Thomas, Susan Thomson, Judy West (AFBG), Vicki Woolley. [29]

*Apologies:* Ian Chambers, Fran Hinton, Roger Hnatiuk, Stuart Jeffress, Trish Keller OAM, Mark Lodder, Nicole Pietrucha, Jon Stanhope AO.

**3. Minutes** of the last General Meeting held on 9 April 2024 were accepted without change: Moved: Barry Langshaw; seconded Joanne Maples. Carried.

There were no Matters Arising.

**4. National Arboretum Canberra report**

Stuart Jeffress, Acting Executive Branch Manager, had sent his apologies. See Arboretum Volunteer summary report at Agenda Item 7.

**5. Chair's Report**

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

- NAC Staff changes – Stuart Jeffress has become Acting Executive Branch Manager and Alison Stewart temporarily took over Christine Callen's role. Jayne Simon has now filled this permanent position and Rhu Donald's job as Community Engagement Officer has been temporarily filled by Diane Mutch. Mike thanked Stuart, Alison, Jayne, Di and all the other NAC staff who have competently navigated their way at the Arboretum over the past six months, including engaging with the Friends on many topics.
- At the AGM, Mike listed a number of projects with which the Friends have been active. The first was a very successful and popular Warm Trees with the Chilean Embassy. There were interesting activities held in July connected to the WT event

– several talks by Polly Cevallos and some special paper folding workshops run by Egg Picnic. As a result of the success of this year, we have agreed with the NAC to extend the period of the Warm Trees installation by two weeks into August. And the Friends have already locked in a very enthusiastic Warm Trees partner for next year – The Republic of Korea, commonly referred to as South Korea. There are apparently seven species of tree in the Arboretum that grow naturally in Korea.

- Also, during July we hosted public viewings of *The National Arboretum Canberra: A 20-year Story* in the Bugang room. Over 3 Sundays, between 10am and 2pm, 177 visitors came and watched all or part of the documentary – some even watched it twice! This led us to propose to the NAC that this could happen on a regular basis – say one Sunday a month. We also suggested that it could be an offering for community groups booked in advance. Guides could host a Sunday session or a specific booked session – introducing the documentary and answering questions after a viewing.
- Friends are pursuing an opportunity for more scientific research based on the Arboretum's unique collection of trees and consistent with one of the original reasons for the establishment of the Arboretum. After discussions with Stuart Jeffress and Roger Hnatiuk, the Council has proposed to the NAC, that the Friends could establish a funding stream through the existing trust fund to support NAC endorsed research. Stuart has engaged with the ANU and the University of Canberra and there is a great deal of interest in establishing an expert group to seek and evaluate appropriate research projects. To be clear, the Friends are not proposing to choose or manage research projects. We would only be providing a funding mechanism that would be managed within and along with any other trust fund expenditure.
- In May, we sent a letter to all ACT MLAs and federal MPs advocating for funding and further investment in the Arboretum. Several meetings have resulted from these letters.
- Thanks to all the Friends who contribute to running our association and help me standing up here to share these updates with you!

## 6. Finance Summary

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

As at 31 August 2024, the Friends had a balance of \$112,391 in funds. These are held in the following accounts:

- Friends Working Account - \$26,664
- Business Transaction Account - \$20,388
- Friends Term Deposit #1 – \$42,486
- Friends Term Deposit #2 - \$20,852

Year-to-date, we have recorded a positive net cash movement of \$8,215.

*Trust account* – As at 31 August 2024, the National Arboretum Canberra Trust Fund had a balance of \$174,088 in total funds, which are held in the following accounts:

- Trust Savings Account - \$65,563
- Trust Term Deposit #1 - \$45,968
- Trust Term Deposit #2 - \$62,557.

Lyn noted that we 43% of our income comes from memberships; and the Market Stalls provide 24% of our income at over \$9,000 this year – a significant amount. Friends are very thankful to the Harvest Group team for these funds. The Trust income of \$23,000

comes primarily from seat sponsorships; and expenses (just over \$14,000) pay for the seats and associated expenses.

Lyn Rees moved and Del Da Costa seconded that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Carried.

## 7. **Arboretum Volunteer Summary**

Di Mutch updated the audience on recent events. She has only been in the role (acting) for a short time. An additional staff member will be appointed as front-of-house supervisor (including staff rosters). Priorities for the Community Engagement Officer include developing a new training program for Volunteers and Guides, an induction manual for new Volunteers, and making the Volunteer program more inclusive. Just under 1,000 volunteer hours were tallied in August. The National Rock Garden is likely to have a soft launch at the end of November.

## 8. **Any other business**

*Presentation of the Handbury Award.* Linda Beveridge, immediate past president of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG) introduced herself and spoke about the role of the AAFBG. This includes advocacy to governments, encouraging Friends in various ways, eg managing water; encouraging Friends to celebrate anniversaries of their botanic gardens and recognising Friends with awards. Communications between and among Friends are facilitated via newsletters such as E-ucalypt; annual conferences and regional seminars are popular; their website shows events, history and has a facility enabling arranging visits to other botanical gardens; and they build and maintain links with other international bodies such as BGANZ.

Judy West accompanied Linda to the meeting. Judy was formerly Director of Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) for 13 years and is now the Friends of ANBG's Patron. She spoke about Geoff Handbury AO, a Victorian philanthropist who had a passion for plants and botanical gardens. The award is named in his honour, as a major benefactor of the AAFBG and who gave a sum of money over a period of five years for the administration and support of Botanic Gardens through Friends of Botanic Gardens, Australia-wide.

Linda and Judy presented representatives of the Harvest Group – Ange McNeilly and Maggie Hawes – with the Handbury Award for 'exceptional contribution of a member organisation (Friends group) to its Botanic Garden, Park or Arboretum'.

Abstract from Award nomination:

The **Harvest Group** has been operating under the umbrella of the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra (FNAC) since 2016. The Group offers a very hands-on experience for about 40 active volunteers. These volunteers pick fruit in some of the National Arboretum Canberra's (NAC) forests and also work in Discovery Garden. They harvest and cook delicious preserves which are later available for sale at the Market Stalls. Importantly, the Group also provides a social network for like-minded volunteers to work together. Garden volunteers are rostered to plant, care for, pick and water the plantings. The Arboretum has about 170 fig trees that were planted in 2008 and first harvested by the Harvest Group in February 2016. In recent years, over 350kg of figs have been harvested annually by volunteers and processed by up to 14 cooks, resulting in over 1,000 jars of jams and preserves are prepared for sale at Market Stalls held at the Arboretum during the year. In 2022, over \$9,000 was raised by the Market Stalls; in 2023, over \$15,000 was raised and, to date this year, the Stalls have raised more than \$4,000 which makes a substantial offering to the Friends' income.

Ange thanked AAFBG for this Award and Friends thanked Judy and Linda for making the presentation in person.

**9. Next Meeting** – The next General Meeting will be held in 2025 at a date and time to be advised.

**10. Close of meeting** – 1.20pm

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The Guest Speaker after the meeting was Robert de Castella AO, former world champion marathon runner, winning back-to-back Commonwealth Games Gold Medals. De Castella is widely known as "Deek" or "Deeks" to the Australian public, and was honoured by having a road in the Arboretum named after him: Deeks Drive – the Arboretum's hills proved an excellent training ground for him.

Fifteen years ago, he set up the Indigenous Marathon Foundation which identifies indigenous talent for running. To date there have been 142 graduate athletes who have finished the New York marathon – the epitome of the program. Each year, six men and six women are accepted into the program (out of over a hundred applications) which comprises a whole and complete education program with specific subjects including media training as well as the athletic side. The program highlights three focus items: positive health and wellbeing will create resilience that can be passed to others; life is unpredictable – it's never a straight line; and the importance of keeping connected with friends and family – support others.

Mike thanked Rob for his insights into his life and the Indigenous Marathon Foundation.