



DRAFT MINUTES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 10 May 2016 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 – Richard Bear, C Blount, Sue Brown, Jenny Cantlon, Kathryn Cole, Del Da Costa, Sallyann Drucker, Wayne Dunn, Carol Ey, Rob Ey, Jocelyn Fitzhardinge, Bronwyn Halbisch, Roger Hnatiuk, Anna Howe, Trish Keller OAM, Sandra Linsley, Mark Lodder, Colette Mackay, Joanne Maples, Cherie McLean-Whan, Ange McNeilly, Linda Muldoon, Jocelyn Plovits, Suzette Searle, Sue Sheridan, David Shorthouse, Lainie Shorthouse, Carolyn Thomas, Jennie Widdowson, Mike Woolley, Vicki Woolley, Sue Wright, Martin Wright.

Observers – Leigh Taafe, Scott Saddler, Adam Stankevicius

Apologies – Max Bourke AM, Margie Bourke, Nick and Tabitha Plovits, Yvonne Hackman, Jim and Christine Payne, Meredith Hinchliffe, Naomi Landau, Cecily Sutton, Ian Sayers, Shirley Wilton, John and Kay Beagle, Jacqueline Elliott, Susan Parsons, Sanya Richie, Anna Kieltyka, Mary Samara, Ruth Lucas, John Mackay AO, Spero Cassidy, N Plovits, T Plovits, Y Hackman, Yvonne Kilgour

3. Acceptance of Minutes of 2015 AGM and Matters Arising

Cherie McLean-Whan moved and Bronwyn Halbisch seconded that the minutes of the 12 May 2015 Annual General Meeting were accepted without amendment. Carried.

There were no matters arising.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Richard Bear, had circulated the 2015 audited financial statements, which had been accepted by Council. At 31 December 2015, there was income of \$19,317 and an operating surplus of over \$11,000. The Trust Account had \$127,405.

The Treasurer continued that last year, there was a fee of \$3,000 charged by the auditor. This year, the auditor had completed the audit pro bono. Council had gifted him a free parking pass. Our sincere thanks go to Christopher Harding.

In answer to a question from Rob Ey, the stock of The Arboretum Book would remain an asset. To date 1,270 books had been sold in 20 months and sales were steady.

Roger Hnatiuk moved and Kathryn Cole seconded that the Friends audited financial statements for 2015 be accepted. Carried.

Richard Bear moved and Sue Wright seconded that Christopher Harding be appointed auditor for 2016. Carried.

5. Chair's Report

With great pleasure I offer you my first Report as Chair to the 2016 Annual General Meeting.

Thank you all for your attendance tonight.

The first thing I would like to do before I get on to this Report is to offer a huge vote of thanks to all the Friends who made Tree Week 2016 at the National Arboretum such a huge success. I do hope you were able to participate in one or more of the activities that were on offer. As you all know, there is always one person who takes on the responsibility of coordinator. In this instance, I am talking about Anna Howe. What an inspiration! Nothing was left to chance ... every detail was attended to ... including a very full report on Tree Week, which will be in the next newsletter. However, I will refer to only a small section of it right now. Ms Caroline Lambert, Climate and Environment Counsellor in the European Commission delegation to Australia and New Zealand addressed the opening of the Tree Week Exhibition on 2 May.

Anna – I would like to say a very large “Thank You” to you on behalf of us all, and ask you to accept this Certificate of Appreciation.

Moving on to my report –

I would like to pay tribute to my fellow Councillors and thank them all very much for the important roles they are carrying out. We have met regularly since the last AGM and all business is available for your perusal at any time.

Three of our Council members are standing down tonight and I would like to thank each one of them for the remarkable contribution they have made to Council not just in the past calendar year but over many years.

I am referring to Kathryn Cole, standing down as Guides Co-ordinator; Jennie Widdowson, standing down as Deputy Chair; and Max Bourke AM, standing down as a Member of Council. We have a very small token of appreciation for all the work you have contributed to Council and ask you to accept these certificates.

I know that we will see these folk in and around the National Arboretum in other important work they do as Friends and Volunteers.

Our Returning Officer tonight, Jocelyn Plovits, will conduct the Election of Office Bearers at the end of my report.

The year since the last AGM has been remarkable in that there have been so many activities happening and my dilemma is where to begin.

The big news! The good news!! At the recent April Guides meeting, Stephen Alegria announced that a **Volunteer Coordinator** will be forthcoming in the planned restructure and this new position will be formed within the NAC's existing resources. So our persistent lobbying for this position

has yielded fruit at last. There are no details as yet as to how it will be implemented so it's 'watch this space'!

Jocelyn Plovits continues on as the Volunteer Coordinator for the moment. She tells me as of last week (6 May) she had conducted three **Volunteer Registration Induction** meetings for 69 Friends with a further two more to be conducted in June. So if you haven't been through this process, there are more opportunities for you to participate.

Working with Vulnerable People cards are required if you are a volunteer here at the NAC, as in every other organisation where there are volunteers. You might check the end date on your card as I know there is a back-log of renewals happening, particularly in a couple of schools – teachers can't teach without an up-to-date card. So don't wait – get on to it sooner rather than later.

Guides have met at regular monthly meetings. We have been fortunate in having Scott Saddler, Manager at the Arboretum, address these lunchtime Guides' meetings; and in the evening meetings the Executive Manager Stephen Alegria addresses us. Numbers of Guides attending have been very healthy and consequently all Guides meetings will be held in the MWP (or at the end of the café if there is a paying customer in the MWP), as there is more space than the Green Room.

Both Stephen and Scott give an update on the activities around the NAC so Guides are able to add any relevant details to their presentations to visitors. They also answer any questions that have been sent to them via the Guides Coordinator. This role is now being undertaken by Joanne Maples and her advisory group.

The 20-question Online Survey opened on 20 January 2016 and was open to 1 February. Thanks go to all those who responded. Emails were sent to 1150 Friends. Very few questions remained unanswered. There is a report available should anyone wish to read that. One of the most pleasing finds is that the e-Updates were read by 99% of those who completed the survey. Another is that 98% have visited the Arboretum at least once in 2015. Six respondents were interested in the recent Open Gate day.

ACT Volunteer of the Year – the ACT Volunteer of the Year Awards were held last night at the AIS Arena. Scott Saddler and I attended this gathering and the citation in the Group category for the Friends of the National Arboretum reads 'in recognition of outstanding voluntary service to the Canberra region - Volunteering ACT'. We are very proud to have received this Award, which will feature in the next Newsletter for all to see.

Friends Forest – will be maintained by the Working Bees in the future and the new overseer of our Forest is Andrew Carter. I believe he, with Adam Burgess and Max Bourke, have completed a handover.

Friends' Activities over the past year have included –

Warm Trees – Last year's Warm Trees was a great success with the links to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and the Domestic Animal Services. This year the knitting installation will be launched on 1 July in the Sugar Maples. The Canadian High Commissioner is attending because 1 July is Canada's National Day. The leaf in the Sugar Maples is the largest knitted Autumn leaf in the world. Hundreds of knitters are participating from overseas, around Australia and of course locally with participation age-wise from 93 – 7 years!

Seasonal Talks in 2015. Memorable talks were presented by:

- Mr Stephen Midgley on the theme *Australian Acacias*;

- Mr Leigh Taafe, Curator of the Bonsai collection;
- Dr Judy West from Australian National Botanic Gardens;
- Dr Sarah Hnatiuk on the rehab of Mt Painter;
- Mr Rolfe Hartley, Chairman of the Freefall Pin Oak Forest Steering Committee at Engineers Australia;
- Dr Roger Hnatiuk on the findings from the 2014 Forest stocktake; and
- Ms Rosemary Follett AO, former chief Minister, who reminisced on the early days in the development of the NAC.

Our first talk for **2016** was from Jocelyn Plovits whose topic was about her trip to Kew Gardens, London and the comparisons with the NAC.

Our next talk on 20 June will be Max Bourke's talk on his 50 years' experience of working in forests ... we are working on a title for this!

In September we will hear Associate Professor Cris Brack from the Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU. As well as leading the research partnership between the Arboretum and the ANU, Cris brings the latest technology to his research by way of using an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, or drone, to collect data on tree stand dynamics and talk to us about the latest data that he has.

Reciprocal Visit – recently the Friends hosted a group from the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens culminating with a sausage sizzle in the Himalayan Cedars picnic area and a guided tour of the STEP site. Photos of the occasion will appear in the next newsletter.

Talks – In the past year I have presented talks to various groups eg at the Calvary Hospital Ladies Auxiliary group, a Gungahlin Rotary Group and a Probus Club.

Bonsai – Congratulations to all the Bonsai Team – an integral part of the NAC. The NBPCA continues to attract good visitor numbers with approximately 152,000 visitors in the last 12 months. Several interstate trips were made to return and pick up loan trees – Victoria, Queensland, NSW and South Australia.

The NBPCA accepted a number of donations of new trees – including the popular 'Mr McGee' English elm – which was previously only ever on loan to the Collection.

An annual Bonsai Week event was introduced for the first time in March this year. This involved an overseas Bonsai specialist who gave demonstrations, ran workshops and provided input to the design of several of the Collection's donated trees.

The NBPCA continues to receive good support with about 40 active volunteers doing 'meet and greet' activities as well as watering and other maintenance tasks on the trees. This has amounted to at least 5,750 hours over the year.

The "Welcome Garden" which leads from the visitor's centre to the NBPCA entrance was established this year.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park (STEP) – Congratulations to the STEP team. This site is a must-see site when visiting the NAC.

STEP recently hosted the visitors from the Eurobodalla Region Botanic Garden. Most were very interested in its Forest as it is promoted as a regional botanic garden with local native plants.

The group has met with ACT Parks and Conservation Rangers and with NAC management on the plans for the woodland adjacent to Forest 20, and expect to be further involved in practical ways.

STEP is grateful to have had an opportunity to discuss with NAC's consultant the Strategic Plan for the Arboretum.

This autumn, STEP has done quite a bit of planting and volunteers continue to water, water, water.

The Arboretum Book – Sales are steady according to Mel in the Curatoreum. There are several hundred copies still to be sold. Please promote it at every opportunity. They make wonderful gifts!

Harvesting Group – Raoul Middleman and others had worked on a policy paper which was agreed to by Stephen Alegria. Not new but a rebirth of this old idea.

Back in March following all the planning and policy work, the trial of harvesting the figs got underway under the leadership of Colette Mackay. She had many willing helpers who produced jams and chutneys and preserves and fresh produce - all beautifully packaged and presented at two very successful Market Days yielding approximately \$2,000.

This much anticipated harvesting of the fig crops was a huge success and the Harvesting group has a new leader in Bronwyn Halbisch. The next market Day will be 21 May ... don't miss it ... There will also be items that have been made from the produce in the Discovery Garden. All profits generated at these Market Days – mornings really, because everything sells very quickly – will promote the Friends and support the Arboretum in the long run.

So congratulations and well done to the Harvesting Group. Talk to Bronwyn if you need any more information.

Friends Participating in Community events.

- National Trust and Heritage Week – volunteers in a Friends display;
- Connect And Participate (CAP) Expo – at the Old Bus Depot markets;
- Volunteers Week – addressing a group from the Volunteers National Conference in the Green Room, and then Event Terrace talks.
- Friends Banners – two new banners have been made, thanks to Linda Muldoon for her splendid designing talents and chasing up sponsors' logos. The banners are available for promoting the Friends' activities.

Gifts to the Friends – thanks to the generous sponsors of these three items:

- **COLA** – the sliding doors, heating/air conditioning have been installed in the Covered Outdoor Learning Area, and is all set and ready for use by groups particularly school and tour groups who will find this a very useful space.
- **Shoulder Bags** – for the Guides to keep their notes and reference material.
- **Friends Stickers** – please take a couple.

A vote of thanks to you all, those attending, tonight and to all those folk unable to be here tonight, to all of the Friends, I would like to say **Thank You** for the time and energy you spend at the NAC – you are gold, pure gold!

At a recent Working Bee the organiser of one of the tasks for the group was quite overcome by the goodwill and readiness of the group to get the job done. It's amazing the difference 14-20 volunteers can make in 2 hours!

In the data that went to TAMS Departmental Report for 2014-2015, our Volunteer Coordinator presented these figures – a total of 18,861 hours of volunteer work contributed. How amazing! At least half a million dollars' worth!

And of course this year while there has not been the tree auditing, there have been many other contributions to requests from the NAC including harvesting, the training relating to the new Volunteer Management Framework, Tree Week, Open Gate Day, the Volunteer Induction process and more and more participants at the Working Bees.

Current but Issues for Future Consideration

Membership numbers over the past five months:

October 2015 – 700;	November 2015 – 705;	December 2015 – 701	
February 2016 – 675;	March 2016 – 684;	April 2016 – 686	May 2016 – 693

Numbers took a tumble over the Christmas-New Year period but are building again, albeit slowly.

We need to actively seek new members so please have a handy bundle of Friends Membership brochures you can distribute at any time to friends and visitors, or suggest online membership which is an easy option. There is a new streamlined online membership process. However, for the future, a Membership push/drive is on the cards.

We need the income to maintain the services and we want the NAC to be the best iconic place in the ACT and eventually in the country ... this is something to aim for but will take time.

The business name **Festival of the Forest** came to our attention for renewal. April Council agreed to keep this business name because the Friends can use it again at other activities. Perhaps it could be used at the next Open Gate Day, although this name will probably be changed.

The NAC are currently holding individual and group consultation to build their **Strategic Plan**. Many of you have had the opportunity, if not yet, soon, to have input into this process as the Friends are seen as key stakeholders at the NAC. The four discussion points that the consulted presented us with were:

1. Why are we here?
2. What are your aspirations for the NAC in the long term?
3. What do you see as the strengths, opportunities and challenges to achieving that long-term vision?
4. What next?

I know that our Guest Speaker, CMTEDD Director, Adam Stankevicius, will address this topic in his remarks. So if you have a question regarding this process, note it down for later. Once this Strategic Plan is complete then, we, the Friends, will be able to align our Strategic Plan with theirs. At this point our draft Strategic plan has come to a standstill until we can see the future together. Council and a few invited guests spent a day in discussion with a facilitator towards the end of last year constructing our new Strategic Plan which, as I just mentioned, is all but complete, but in Draft form, waiting for the final touches.

Trish then presented three Certificates of Appreciation to Jenny Widdowson, stepping down as Deputy Chair, Max Bourke AM, stepping down as a Member, and Kathryn Cole, Guide Coordinator. All three have shown great leadership in their roles.

6. Election of Office Bearers

Jocelyn Plovits acted as Returning Officer. She declared three positions vacant.

Position	Status	Nomination to date
Chair	Trish Keller OAM	N/A
Deputy Chair	<i>Vacant</i>	
Treasurer	Richard Bear	N/A
Secretary	Del Da Costa	N/A
Publications Editor	Linda Muldoon	N/A
Social Media Manager	Cherie McLean	N/A
Donations and Sponsorships Manager	Colette Mackay	N/A
STEP Member	Lainie Shorthouse	N/A
National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Aust. Member	Mike Woolley	N/A
Guide Coordinator Member	<i>Vacant</i>	
Member (up to 5 Members)	<i>Vacant</i>	Rob Ey

Rob Ey was unanimously elected. Jocelyn noted that Council can co-opt a Deputy Chair and other Members.

Presentations

Trish presented two awards of Volunteer of the Year:

Joanne Maples – for extraordinary commitment to the Arboretum not only sharing the roster coordination role with Kathryn, but also in other roles such as Guiding, leading hour-long forest walks, Working Bees, developing guide information, and volunteering for school holiday activities. She had the respect of Guides in her leadership role and commitment to the Friends as a multi-tasking volunteer.

Jim Miller – Jim has volunteered over 400 hours in 2015 with the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia. He was on the original planning group for NBPCA in 2004 and became president of the Canberra Bonsai Society for eight years, influencing and encouraging support of the local Bonsai community. He was a member of the Bonsai Management Committee established to advise the ACT government on operational matters in the establishment of the national collection. Since opening, Jim was one of three people who ensured the collection was open at weekends until the number of volunteers was sufficient to spread the load. He has always generously contributed his time and bonsai artistry for the benefit of the collection.

There was no life membership award in 2016.

7. Other Business

There being no other business, Trish, as Chair, introduced as Guest Speaker, Adam Stankevicius, Director, Arts and Events, in the department of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development, responsible for the Arboretum. He spoke about the diversity of the Arboretum – that is it both a park and a national collection and cultural institution.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm.