

# **ATTACHMENT TO AGENDA ITEM**

**Ordinary Meeting**

**18 April 2017**

**Agenda Item 7.2      Australian Botanic Gardens Committee 2015/2016  
Annual Report**

**Attachment 1      Australian Botanic Gardens 2015-2016 Annual Report ... 198**

# 15/16 Annual Report



**The Australian Botanic Gardens Shepparton Section 86 Committee acknowledges the support and commitment of the Councillors of Greater Shepparton City Council in the development and management of the Botanic Gardens project. As one of the newest botanic gardens in Victoria, the ABGS is rapidly growing in reputation as a legitimate tourism destination and a recreation and educational resource for Greater Shepparton's residents.**

### **Mission Statement**

The goal of the Australian Botanic Gardens Shepparton is to provide an inspirational, sustainable and unique landscape which showcases local, regional and other Australian plants in a diverse environment for the purpose of enjoyment, tourism and community strengthening.



**Governance:**

The Australian Botanic Gardens Committee is a Section 86 Committee which operates under an Instrument of Delegation which determines its functions and delegated authority.

During the 2015/16 year the ABGS Committee members were:

**Council representative**

Cr Jenny Houlihan: Chairperson

**Community representatives**

Karen Kilgour: Secretary

Karen Kilgour: Treasurer

Jill Grant

Ed Scholl\*

Geoff Dobson

Audrey Hurst

David Chew

\* Ed Scholl resigned from the Committee during the year. The ABGS Committee is appreciative of Ed's service to the development of the botanic gardens over several years.

On behalf of Greater Shepparton City Council I would like to acknowledge the dedication, contribution and expertise of these committee members and thank them for their outstanding efforts and achievements during the 2015/16 year.

The work of the Committee is complemented and assisted by Council officers in relation to budgets, governance, maintenance tasks, OH&S advice and implementation. The assistance of Council staff has been most appreciated. Special thanks to Katie Wallace and Paul Dainton for their understanding, due diligence and co-operation.

Cr Jenny Houlihan:

Chairperson

**Development and Management Plan and Master Plan:**

The Committee is working from this plan to deliver a project which encompasses designated principles which are reflected in the design, implementation and style of the gardens as well as the activities associated with the bushland areas.

These principles are:

- Community involvement
- Sustainability
- Use of Australian Plants
- Accessibility
- Use of local and recycled materials
- Local themes
- Healthy lifestyles
- Tourism
- Appreciation of our rivers
- Public Art

**REVIEW OF PLAN**

A review of the plan will take place during the 2016/17 year to ensure ongoing relevance. The Master Plan for Honeysuckle Rise has been enhanced by additional detail relating to themed gardens, as each garden is developed.

For the considerable native bush areas of the site, a partnership now exists with the GBCMA and works are being governed by agreed actions for two zoned areas.

Planning is continuing to progress the provision of public toilets, a large car park, a planted avenue from Riverside Drive to the ABGS entrance and an addition of a building to the Master Plan.





**The Friends of the Botanic Gardens Shepparton (FABGS):**

On behalf of the ABGS Committee I wish to thank the people involved in FABGS for the great work they have been doing to support the development of the gardens and encourage people to become involved in many different ways. This organization is independent of Council but works in partnership with the Committee. The Committee provides a standing invitation to the President (or other representative) of FABGS to attend the Committee's monthly meetings to give a report, discuss issues, put forward ideas and provide information. Members of FABGS and Committee members often work in partnership at events and with fundraising activities and at fortnightly working bees. The Friends group has funded and built an interesting and attractive garden, The Turtle Garden which was officially opened by Mayor Dinny Adem this year. It is located inside the front entrance to the botanic gardens.



**The CVGT Work Program:**

The ABGS Committee is very grateful to have this program located at the gardens. The Committee has developed an excellent relationship with CVGT. The work carried out by the on-site manager and the workers assigned to the project has been outstanding. This has added greatly to the rate of development and the presentation of the gardens. Thank you to all involved.

**Activities and Achievements****July 2015**

**Website link:** Considerable work was completed in order to update the ABGS link on the GSCC website. Council staff have been helpful in advancing the website presence. The ABGS Committee recognizes that the website needs more constant updating than is possible at this stage and it is hoped that a new committee member with the skills and energy to take on the task of improving the ABGS website will help improve this current situation. Botanic gardens are a popular tourism destination and many potential visitors now seek information online prior to making travel arrangements. GSCC needs to be effective in that space to capture a larger share of the tourism market.

**The Residence Garden:** Damien Preston from Preston's Turf & Garden completed the construction of the next phase of the Residence Garden, ready for the CVGT Work for the Dole workers to begin the sand, soil and granitic sand fill. As an experiment in creating an area which would substitute for a 'lawn', weed mat was laid in a large section of the Residence Garden and planted with a native prostrate myoporium. This has been very successful as there is now a 'lawn' area which requires almost no watering, weeding or mowing.

**Toilets:** Two Council owned portable toilet blocks which were once located at Deakin Reserve, were inspected for possible adaption for reuse at the ABGS site. Additional research needed to be carried out on location, provision of septic lines and water, as well as available funding to refurbish the two blocks to a standard suitable for use by the public.

**August 2015**

**Directional Signage on public roads:** With the co-operation of Council staff and Vic Roads, directional signage was placed along the Goulburn Valley Highway and in Riverview Drive.

**Assistance from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority:** This assistance has been readily forthcoming from the beginning of the botanic gardens development, in the form of advice and funding. In August, the GBCMA supplied tree guards, wire frames and weed-mat free of charge.

**Gallery Kaiela staff visit:** Staff from Gallery Kaiela noted the progress of the Weaving Garden and the plants which were ready for harvesting should the gallery artists need them for weaving activities.





**Entrance roadway upgrade:** It is planned to request an eventual upgrade of Kialla Tip Road, including reducing potholes and muddy parking areas, inspecting and measuring the roadway for the location of services when funding becomes available and to plant an avenue of trees along the roadway to ensure that the entrance to the gardens meets an expected standard for tourists and residents visiting the gardens.

**Notre Dame student planting:** With the assistance of members from the 'Friends of the Australian Botanic Gardens Shepparton' (FABGS) students planted dozens of Silver Wattles in the natural bushland in the northern area of the gardens.

**Activities in the Park:** Council staff are using the gardens for an increasing number and variety of activities such as bird walks, meditation, art and Tai Chi.

**Children's Play Area:** Due to the increasing number of visitors bringing children to the gardens, the Committee decided that it was appropriate to begin planning an imaginative, nature based space. Louise Costa was asked to work with the Committee to plan an appropriate concept design.

**The Residence Garden:** The construction of the next stage of the Residence Gardens was completed. The Committee was very appreciative of the enormous amount of work done by the CVGT workers who shifted and spread large amounts of soil, mulch and granitic sand. Additional plants were now being sourced and planted during the fortnightly Sunday volunteer working bees.



### September 2015

**Cap Maintenance:** It was noted that there needed to be a strategic plan for the maintenance of the landfill cap, which is good practice for all landfill sites. There had not been one developed previously because when the Kialla Landfill was rehabilitated there was no EPA requirement to do so. In conjunction with Malcolm Styles, an engineer working for GSCC, a detailed inspection of the site was carried out, a report produced and a strategy for dealing with incremental erosion and vegetation cover devised. Rectification works were completed by a contractor and further works will be carried out as required.

**Interpretive Signage:** The Committee approved the following Interpretive and directional signage for construction and placement:

- a. 2 large Entrance Signs
- b. Directional Sign with location of tracks and gardens to be located inside the main gate
- c. Lectern signs for The Weaving Garden, The Food Garden, The Residence Garden and The Turtle Garden.
- d. Poles with Finger Blades to point visitors to the various gardens and walking trails.

**New brochures:** Running low on brochures was considered to be a positive, as more people were visiting the gardens and the brochures were being used in the Greater Shepparton Visitor Information Centre. The Committee arranged to have additional copies printed and began planning for a new, updated brochure which would reflect the development of the gardens and utilize the on-site signage currently being manufactured.

**Children's Play Area:** A brief was prepared for this important stage of development. In the brief, the instructions to the designer were to.... *'create spaces that allow children to create 'adventure' in their own minds through unstructured play areas. The gardens should be fun, exciting and present new challenges, allow for sensory play, user experience and consideration be given for all abilities'*

### October 2015

**People and Parks Foundation:** Establishing partnerships is one of the strengths of the botanic gardens project. People and Parks Foundation is a crowd-funding organisation and arrangements were made for the CEO, Rob Anderson, to inspect the site to look at the possibility of funding a children's play space or a labyrinth.

**Keep Victoria Beautiful Awards:** Representatives travelled to Beechworth to attend the annual KVB Awards night. ABGS won the Cultural Heritage Award, was highly commended in the Protection of the Environment category and was presented with a \$1000 Gift Fund prize to be put towards seating in the gardens. The ABGS Committee recognized the considerable work put in by Greater Shepparton resident and Committee member Audrey Hurst to arrange the entries for the KVB awards.

**Communications and media:** This component of the botanic gardens development has been recognized as both necessary to the ongoing success of the gardens and as a way to respond to growing public interest and requests. Communications officer and ABGS committee member Jill Grant has been very active in expanding the positive messaging about the gardens including in National Botanic gardens publications, local newsletters, a regular spot on local ONE FM radio, on-site tours, speaking at meetings held by various local organizations, and notifying local newspapers of notable events and milestones which has resulted in some quality newspaper articles for the public to read.

**The Refugee Garden Progress:** Arrangements were made for the delivery of 12 Dethridge Wheels donated by Goulburn Murray Water and the materials from the Shepparton Transfer Station selected by the landscape designer to be used in the design. This strategy has resulted from the use of recycled materials being a defined principle in the establishment of the gardens.



**Plant Collections Management Strategy:** Defining and displaying specific botanical collections is a core strategy for any authentic botanic gardens. Committee member David Chew presented a draft Collections Management Policy which defined the Living Collections of the Australian Botanic Gardens Shepparton. The relevant guiding principles are

- a. Plants will be restricted to indigenous and other Australian species.
- b. Four specific local themes which reflect the dominant characteristics of Greater Shepparton will be featured
- c. Develop an understanding of our environment and encourage the use of indigenous plants in home gardens.

The proposed Living Collections for the ABGS are:

- a. Genus Acacia of Australia
- b. Faboideae that will thrive in the Goulburn Valley
- c. Rare and threatened plants of the Goulburn Broken Catchment
- d. Australian succulents
- e. Food, fibre and medicine plants
- f. Thomasias
- g. Plants from the four Bio-regions of Greater Shepparton





## **November 2015**

**Road name change:** Due to public confusion associated with the name of the road leading from Riverside Drive to the ABGS, the Committee started the process of consideration of a name change from Kialla Tip Road to one more closely associated with the botanic gardens, by writing to Council requesting that the process be commenced.

**Potable water preliminary investigation:** The possibility of bringing potable water to the site was initiated by requesting a discussion with GV Water regarding the availability and relevant maps records and other information. It has been recognized that potable water will be required in the future due to the increasing number of visitors coming to the gardens, and the eventual need for toilets, drinking water and a café.

**Toilets :** Many people are now visiting the gardens and the provision of one builders toilet is completely inadequate and not in keeping with facilities expected by the public when they visit a city's botanic gardens. Council officers and a local engineer who agreed to draw up a plan, met on site to examine possibilities. Septic toilets were judged to be the best option and an appropriate location was selected.

**The Refugee Garden Works Plan:** It was pleasing to know that adequate funding had been committed in the 2015/16 budget to enable this large themed garden to be delivered. As a result a plan for delivery was agreed to and a works program authorised.

**Accessible Furphy picnic setting:** For the first time, sufficient Council funding allowed for the purchase and installation of a picnic setting to enable public use of the gardens to be expanded. The Furphy picnic setting has been a positive addition and it is planned to purchase several more to provide additional comfort and rest zones throughout the gardens.

**Development of Signage:** A suite of signage is vital to the success of authentic botanic gardens, required for directions, walking tracks, interpretation of gardens, information about individual species and feature plant collections and public donations. The considerable progression of the gardens development dictated that a concerted effort to provide signage across the site needed to commence and as a result, a strategy was produced.

It was pleasing when Council approved a \$100,000 budget allocation for the ABGS project. As a result, plans to advance the construction of the next major garden, The Refugee Garden, and for interpretive and directional signage were advanced.

As a means of demonstrating the importance of recycling (a stated goal in the ABGS Development and Management Plan) the possible use of materials from Council's Transfer Station was advanced, with the identification of available materials completed by photographing what was available and sending that information to the landscape designer, Alexandra Lee from Spiire.



### December 2015 and January 2016

**Restoration of western access roadway:** Contractors were engaged by Council to repair and resurface the winding track on the western slope of Honeysuckle Rise. As it had been part of a competition 4 Cross bicycle track which had washed away during the heavy rains of 2012, it was unsafe for vehicle access and needed to be re-instated as a functioning roadway which would also be suitable for pedestrians. The top sections of the road have been completed, with the remainder to be completed by Council during the 2016/17 year.

**Septic toilets /renovation project:** As a community service, Pat Feehan from Feehan Consulting in Shepparton, progressed the planning and design work for the Septic Toilets renovation project free of charge. The Committee was very grateful for Pat's generosity. This is yet another example of the willingness of many people and organizations in the Greater Shepparton community to donate money and time to the development of the botanic gardens. This makes the ABGS project very important in terms of being able to garnish involvement and commitment from local people. This, in turn, leads to community strengthening and a collective 'buy in' which gives many people a feeling of ownership and interest.

**Garden Maintenance:** It was becoming obvious that the dual roles of the committee and volunteers in both developing and maintaining the gardens could not continue on volunteer hours alone, although that remains an important component. It was agreed that more of the work needed to be carried out through the engagement and funding of professionals and contractors to ensure that volunteers were not required to take on too much responsibility, become tired and then leave. The CVGT 'Work for the Dole' program has been instrumental in maintaining the site in a neat and tidy condition. Without that program more Council-provided time and funding would have to be allocated to keep up with the workload. The partnership between CVGT and the ABGS Committee has been very valuable. It is sincerely hoped that it is able to continue.



**Myer Foundation Grants:** In keeping with the need to further strengthen partnerships to fund additional assistance and expertise, several Committee members prepared an application which, if successful, would provide funding to use for activities and to strengthen organizations so that they, in turn, could provide assistance to the gardens. The Friends of the Gardens and the Shepparton Mooroopna Urban Landcare were selected to be the organizations to receive support should the funding application be successful.

**Plans for a labyrinth through People and Parks funding:** Dr Helen Malcolm from Shepparton and the CEO of the People and Parks Foundation agreed to work together on a plan for a labyrinth suitable for the gardens. A site within the native bushland area had been selected and will be held for that purpose while the planning and funding for a labyrinth proceeds.

**Children's Play Space:** A concept plan from Louise Costa was accepted by the Committee and the planning will be progressed and costings provided. In keeping with the principle of reuse of materials, Louise visited the Council Depot on Doyles Road and selected materials suitable to use in the new play space area.

### **February 2016**

**The Refugee Garden:** The Committee agreed to continue the engagement of a contractor towards delivering the whole of the infrastructure for the Refugee Garden, a large and complex garden which would complete the delivery of gardens which would cover approximately half of the top of Honeysuckle Rise. This was advantageous to the project as it would provide a block of three major gardens which were linked together, more clearly demonstrating to visitors the intent of the thematic design approach. Hopefully, people would develop a strong interest in repeat visits to experience further additions.

**Business Plan:** At this stage in the development of the gardens, and with budget discussion for the 2016/17 Budget having commenced, it was important for Councillors to be made aware of the sound progress being made in the proposed targets and goal for the first 5 years of development. A further Two Year Business Plan was documented and it was arranged that Committee member Geoff Dobson would present that to councillors at a briefing in March.

### **March 2016**

**Confirmation of the 'No Dogs' policy:** A pets survey carried out by BGANZ (Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand) confirmed the appropriateness of having a 'No Dogs' policy at ABGS. Some gardens which allowed dogs stated that they wished they could return to a 'no dogs' policy but it was too late once dogs have been allowed in. Our experience has been, with a few minor incidents that people understand and are co-operative once they know the reasons for the rule.

**The Refugee Garden Plant Species list and design:** There are hundreds of different species and individual plants required for the Refugee Garden. A start was made to sourcing the plants from several different nurseries and volunteers planted them at the fortnightly working bees. This is a massive project and will continue over many months. The provision of the \$100,000 budget has meant that a greater numbers of plants and some more established plants were able to be purchased which is a means of making an impact sooner. Also, the larger plants are not as vulnerable to destruction by rabbits.

**Business Plan presentation to Council:** Geoff Dobson (ABGS Committee member) and Geoff Thompson (FABGS President) presented the ABGS latest two-year Business Plan to the Greater Shepparton councillors, CEO and the Directors. This appeared to be very well received. The Council's draft budget was due to be presented in April and it was hoped that an allocation of

\$100,000 would be made for developing the gardens for the next financial year to enable the plans to be realized.

**Plant Collections:** The work continued in this important aspect of developing records and an educational resource for schools, tertiary institutions and the general public. David Chew proposed an Excel software system be used with the ability to add GPS positions.

**Keep Victoria Beautiful:** Member Audrey Hurst proposed that the strategy for 2016 should be to enter the larger category 'Sustainable Cities'. It was proposed to enter the gardens projects in one or more of the categories.

### **April 2016**

**Council Budget Submissions:** As there was an amount of \$100,000 in the Draft Budget for the development of the botanic gardens and as the Committee felt that little progress could be made without that amount being invested in the projects from the Business Plan presented by Geoff Dobson in March, it was decided that a written and verbal submission would be made in support of the budgeted amount. The Friends of the Botanic Gardens decided to support the draft budget allocation by organising a public petition, which resulted in over 800 signatures of support.

**Proposal to change the name of 'Kialla Tip Road' to 'Botanic Gardens Avenue':** The Committee sought advice from Council officers about correct procedure and an application was made. At this stage there has been agreement from the Office of Geographic names that this name is able to be used, the Council put the application out for community consultation which has now concluded. A final decision will be made by the newly elected Council.

**The Children's Play Space:** Designer Louise Costa presented the plans for this new area to the Council on April 29<sup>th</sup>. She noted the unique design elements and the use of recycled materials. It was hoped that a sufficient budget allocation would be made to allow at least part of the play space to be delivered. This project also presents an opportunity to pitch to Service Clubs for some funding. Member Jill Grant agreed to approach local clubs for this purpose and has made several presentations.



### May 2016

**Presentation from CEO Peter Harriott:** Peter had inspected the site and commented that it looked magnificent and that he supports the project. He discussed the technical responsibilities of landfill site management. The Committee agreed that a close working relationship is required between the Section 86 ABGS Committee and the Council staff. The earlier report was the basis for developing a strategy which requires a strategy and a communication system which leads to maintaining the integrity of the Landfill cap, identifying priority works and ensuring that plans and works are a sympathetic use of the site. This was welcomed because it leads to a more formalized but complimentary management of the site.



**Geelong Botanic Gardens Forum:** Keeping a high profile within the national botanic gardens network is important in order to establish and maintain a level of credibility for Greater Shepparton's Australian Botanic Gardens. Cr Jenny Houlihan presented an update about the ABGS project at the Australian National Friends of Botanic Gardens, held in Geelong, which was a valuable opportunity to promote the creation of a relatively new botanic garden.

**KVB Sustainable Cities Award:** After much work by member Audrey Hurst and Council staff we were pleased to be notified that Greater Shepparton had been successful in becoming a finalist in seven different categories, including the ABGS Refugee Garden.



## June 2016

**Plant Signage:** Investigation of options has now begun in earnest because there are now many people visiting the gardens who want to know the names of the plants they are looking at. Selecting affordable, professional looking and botanically accurate signage which explains each plant species used in the garden has not been an easy task. It has required seeking advice from many different places, including liaising with other botanic gardens. This work is continuing.

**Myer Foundation Grant:** After several attempts to obtain government and philanthropic grants over the past several years, the ABGS Committee was finally successful and received confirmation of \$60,000 over 2 years to be used to strengthen two supporting organizations, the Friends of the Gardens (FABGS) and the Shepparton Mooroopna Landcare Group. The funds are not for infrastructure projects but do allow for education, governance, organisation of events and administrative support, which enables the two supporting groups to be more effective.

**Labyrinth:** Dr Helen Malcolm is working with designer Michael Hatton to progress a suitable design for the labyrinth. The materials to be used are governed by the location, which is surrounded by native trees and grasses and subjected to an occasional flood event.

**Open Day:** The Friends of the Gardens (FABGS) are to be congratulated on their organization and running of an Open Day, which included the official opening of the FABGS garden project 'The Turtle Garden. Over 200 people visited the gardens on that day, some for the very first time. FABGS sold plants, ran a barbeque and sold raffle tickets. Congratulations to retiring FABGS President Geoff Thompson for his enthusiasm and hard work, which he is now continuing as a member of the group. Congratulations to Jill Grant for being elected as the new president of FABGS. Jill is also a member of Council's Section 86 Committee.

Cr Jenny Houlihan

Chairperson

Australian Botanic Gardens Shepparton Special Committee

**Independent Report**

To Australian Botanical Group Shepparton

I have reviewed the attached special purpose financial report of the Australian Botanical Group Shepparton for the year ended 30 June 2016.

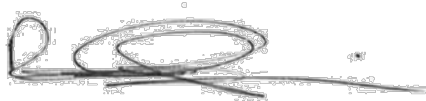
The committee of management is responsible for the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies used are appropriate. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion.

Procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report and the evaluation of significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material aspects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with the accounting policies. These policies do not require the application of all Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory reporting requirements.

My opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

**Opinion**

In my opinion, the financial report presents fairly the financial position of the Australian Botanical Group Shepparton for the year ended 30 June 2016 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended.



**Ross M Opie**  
**CPA Member 9245762**  
**15th August 2016**

**Australian Botanical Gardens Shepparton  
Statement of Financial Performance  
as at year ended 30th June 2016**

|  | <u>2016</u><br><u>\$</u>    |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                                      |                             |
| Contribution Greater Shepparton City Council       | 113,300.00                  |
| Bank Interest                                      | 12.14                       |
| Donation   | 100.00                      |
| FABGS  | 20.85                       |
| CVGT Work for Dole                                 | 23,615.98                   |
| KVB Gift Fund Prize                                | 1,000.00                    |
| <b>Total Income</b>                                | <b><u>\$138,048.97</u></b>  |
| <br><b>Expenditure</b>                             |                             |
| Botanical Gardens Australia New Zealand Membership | 200.00                      |
| Operating expenses                                 | 1,838.41                    |
| Plantings  | 29,396.76                   |
| Works  | 101,802.93                  |
| Equipment  | 3,461.20                    |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                           | <b><u>\$ 136,699.30</u></b> |
| <b>Operating Result</b>                            | <b><u>\$ 1,349.67</u></b>   |

**Bank Statement Reconciliation**

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Opening Bank Balance 1/7/15</b>       | <b><u>\$8,161.66</u></b> |
| <b>Plus Income per Bank 2015/16</b>      | <b>\$138,048.97</b>      |
| <b>Less Expenditure per Bank 2015/16</b> | <b>\$144,100.80</b>      |
| <b>Less Unpresented Cheques</b>          |                          |
| 263 480.00                               |                          |
| 269 1900.00                              |                          |
| 270 110.00                               |                          |
| 271 1017.25                              | <b><u>\$3,507.25</u></b> |
|  | <b>\$140,593.55</b>      |
| <br><b>Closing Bank Balance 30/6/16</b>  | <br><b>\$5,617.08</b>    |

  
15/8/16

