



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter March 2014

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Dear Member,

Spring into Gardening

On Sunday 13 October 2013 the Friends participated in the successful *Spring into Gardening* event. The stall promoted the work of the Friends and five new members joined the Friends. Thank you to all who assisted on the day and to Jenny Legge who produced the Friends aprons. One person even wanted to buy one!



Christmas Party

A very successful Christmas Party in the Gardens was held on Sunday 8 December 2013. A highlight of the day was the launch of the Friends website by Cr Sam Hibbins. Designed by Nick Hawker the website includes information on the Friends, Newsletter, Membership, History, Projects Trees & Plants and a Gallery. To access this information visit: <http://fovg.org.au>

If you have any other suggestions or have material to include on the website please contact John Hawker on 0438 510 522, or jhawker@bigpond.net.au

RSL Memorial Upgrade

On Tuesday 10 December 2013 the Friends meet with the designer Simon McKenzie-McHarg and Council officers Di Cummins and Conni Gibbons involved in the redesign of the 1953 RSL Memorial and the proposed siting of the Bruce Kingsbury statue.

The Friends of Victoria Gardens have lent their support in a letter for a Council funding application to the proposed project for the redevelopment and renewal of the Memorial Site in the Victoria Gardens.

The Friends however view the redevelopment of the memorial site as a most opportune time for Council to reinstate the garden paths along the periphery of the garden beds along the High St end, as outlined in the *Victoria Gardens Conservation Study and Master Plan 1989*. Such a path along the western periphery (and the matching east path) would give clear pedestrian direction from the front High Street gate to the redeveloped Memorial and provide a more appropriate surface for access to the site. Its reinstatement along the eastern periphery would continue the 'balance' and symmetry that is evident in Sangster's design 1885. The Friends believes the project as outlined by the designers will enhance the Memorial site in the following ways:

- Create an important "sense of place" which enhances the Memorial.

- Allow open access to the RSL Memorial that is currently fenced.
- Provide a visually inviting space with a simple, bold and exciting design.
- The proposed improvements are sensitively planned in keeping with the current landscape and environment.
- Create an important space for both formal and informal occasions.
- Use the very powerful symbolism of the red poppy in a meaningful way.
- Uses construction materials providing texture, contrast and natural colours in harmony with the site.
- Provide unobtrusive seating.

The image below is the proposed design and further plans can be seen at <http://fovg.org.au/rsl-war-memorial/>



Bruce Kingsbury Statue

We have also discussed the possible location of the Bruce Kingsbury statue in Victoria Gardens, and wish to advise Council that the Friends do not see how a statue of its size and prominence can be adequately displayed in the Victoria Gardens. It is our view that the statue needs to be located in a much more 'public' space commensurate with its creative and commemorative values. Perhaps the Princes Gardens or the Grattan Gardens would be more appropriate given that they offer a much wider perspective and public presence for the statue.

Ms Meg Jones, Landscape Architect at Council called a meeting with the Friends on Tuesday 18 March 2014 which was attended by Denise Saville and Vihra Migos. The site meeting included three Council staff, Peter Murray, Rick Kwasek, Simon McKenzie-McHarg and Francesca Valmorbidia. It appears that the Friends are still being 'consulted' regarding the placement of the statue in Victoria Gardens. This is despite the fact that our December 2013 meeting, and subsequent correspondence, made it quite clear to Council that we recommended that a more appropriate garden/park (and not VG) be found. We learnt on the 18March however that Council had made the decision to locate the statue in VG in 2011.

Garden News

The Gardens largely survived the severe temperatures that exceed a record number of days over 40 degrees from mid-January to mid-February. The oval has benefited from the new irrigation system, but other lawns need additional water. Current highlights in the Garden are the massed blue haze of *Plectranthus eklonii* in the west and east beds, and the extensive flowering of the two Tree Gardenia shrubs, *Gardenia thunbergii*. Also take time to observe the first flower spike on the Dragon's Blood Tree (*Dracaena draco*) in the Lumley playground. This is the beginning of the branching of this unusual plant that will now grow two or more shoots at the terminal flowering point and start to form its wide spreading canopy.

NEXT MEETING:

DATE & TIME: Tuesday 25 March 2014 at 7.45pm

LOCATION: The Studio, 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran (opposite the Flying Duck)