



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Celebrating 30 years – 1987-2017

Newsletter November 2017

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Dear Member,

On Sunday 8 October at *Spring into Gardening* the Friends, and all the other stall holders, experienced delightful weather which brought out large numbers of people. As usual the free punnets of herbs, vegetables and succulents were an attraction and saw a long queue being formed. The Friends had a very successful day with several members renewing membership, new members joining and the sale of the postcards. The raffle of a book and plant was well supported and raised \$220 for the Friends.

Our new volunteer coordinator Alex Ralton had a very successful day with over 80 people registering an interest in becoming a garden volunteer. The background to this proposal arose out of a chance meeting between Vihra and Alex who had recently arrived in Prahran and was looking at a community project that he could be involved with. Alex works for the Defence Department and has had experience in coordinating volunteers for the Wendy Whiteley garden in Lavender Bay, Sydney and involvement with a Gippsland garden as part of the Open Garden Scheme.

The volunteer program is seen as a way of building community engagement and support, and importantly contributing to the upkeep of the Gardens. The proposal is that the volunteers would work on a Saturday morning 8.30- 12.30 once or twice a month under the direction of Head Gardener Adam De-Zoete, and Alex. The volunteer group would perform tasks like weeding, watering, mulching and planting. All equipment, except gloves, would be provided and a membership fee and self-funding of the group is being explored.

The Friends met with Simon Holloway, Manager Parks & Environment and Dominic Mazza, Parks Coordinator on the 21 November and discussed ways to implement the volunteer program. Simon indicated that Council welcomes the proposal to establish a volunteer arrangement with the Friends and is open to exploring what this might look like – both in principle and practice. Council's internal discussions on this identified the following, which would need to be further explored:

- Risk management, resourcing, budget impact and liability / insurance will be at the forefront of any consideration
- Any activity in the park would need to be supervised – Council's parks unit does not currently operate on weekends. This needs to be considered in terms of resource capacity, budget impact and employee agreement arrangements
- Some garden maintenance activities would be suitable – others would not
- Council would need to retain full management responsibility for the park and management decisions on park design, maintenance and upgrades.

Council has agreed to discuss the proposal further with their insurance and risk assessment staff. Simon and Alex agreed to meet in January 2018 to further progress the proposal.

\$20,000 Project Funding:

During the meeting on 21 November the Friends discussed with Council possible projects for the expenditure of \$20,000 the Friends were successful in gaining from Council. The highest priority was the funding of an Information Board, similar to the signs which occur in the Malvern Gardens and at Hedgley Dene. The information will include a site plan, an old photograph, brief history, a list of important features and trees, regulations, and provide information on the Friends of Victoria Gardens. The draft text has been written and in the new year the Friends will meet with Council to finalise the design and agree to a location for the sign.

Another project discussed was the repair and re-lettering of the original fountain marble plaque dating from 1888. The plaque is in very poor condition making it hard to read and is partially buried. The name of a conservator has been passed onto Council to scope the project and obtain a quote for the conservation works.



Infrastructure Projects:

Council is continuing to investigate future use and development of the Depot site. Currently the site is non-compliant in a number of areas for staff and does not make best use of the limited space that is available. As this involves a number of areas of responsibility for Council, the project is in the very early stages and is yet to be fully scoped. The Friends and garden staff will be consulted during the design stage. Works will be included in the 2018-19 budget. Progress with this project is important to the Friends as the facility will be used by the volunteers and to store garden tools.

The poor state of the two shelters on the east side of the sunken oval was identified in the May inspection. Council has agreed to undertake the building repairs to timber, roof, spouting and down pipes as part of their routine building works program.

In mid October the pipe and timber frame around the Weeping Camperdown Elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii') was removed. Originally installed to support the weeping branches of the tree, it was no longer required as the tree grew and is now able to support all branches within the established tree structure. Deadwood and elm suckers were removed and the circular seat levelled.



The Weeping Camperdown Elm history is that it appeared as a seedling at Camperdown House, Dundee, Scotland in the early nineteenth century. The cultivar was available from Lang's Nursery Ballarat in 1865. A broader weeping elm occasionally seen is *Ulmus glabra* 'Pendula' (Horizontal Elm). The largest tree in Victoria grows at Kamesbugh (Anzac House), Brighton and both cultivars occur in the Ballarat Botanic Gardens.

30th Birthday and Christmas Party:



I hope you have all noticed the 30th year anniversary banner on the High Street Fence. Thank you to Nobby Seymour for the artwork. The Friends look forward to seeing many members at the 30th Birthday and Christmas Party on Sunday 3 December from 3.00 to 6.00pm