



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter March 2018

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Dear Member,

What a challenging summer for the Gardens with plenty of very hot days above 40° C and very little rain. The 2mm of rain on Tuesday 13th March morning ended a period of 41 days in which no rain fell. The February average in Melbourne is 48mm but only 1.6mm of rain was received. Despite these challenges the Gardens are looking spectacular. It's a real credit to Adam De-Zoete and Ian Amess's regular maintenance program of one day per week over the past 3- 4 months, and Mark Schneider and Brad Atkinson, who looked after Victoria Gardens for 4 weeks while Adam was away in February, that the Gardens are in such excellent condition. An important maintenance change has been the extra water the Gardens is now receiving which has kept the lawns green and beds in good condition. Taking pride of place is the kidney shaped flower bed planted with colourful Impatiens/Balsam (*Impatiens walleriana*) inside the High Street entrance and shown below.



23/2/2018

You may have noticed that a few dead grass strips appeared on the oval after the Opera in the Park event in early February. Advice received indicated that the strips coincided with rubber matting that had been installed to cover cables. This method had been previously used and it is thought that the higher percentage of rye grass and/or heat of the black matting caused the temporary grass burning. The turf will recover in the next few weeks.



The new planting in the Eastern Garden Beds and mulching will help to improve the condition of these beds past the drinking fountain and around the two shelters. The area is very shaded and establishing plants is made difficult due to competition from the London Plane trees and established trees and shrubs in the bed.

Shelters:

The two stone shelters constructed 1942-3 on the eastern side of the Gardens are being upgraded as part of the \$20,000 project funding. Dominic Mazza has advised that the shelter works will include;

- supply and installation of new timber and removal of old rotted timber
- supply and installation of timber to enclose the top of the brick wall
- painting of all timber surfaces in Brunswick Green
- removal and disposal of old gutters and downpipe
- supply and installation of new zinc plated gutters and downpipes
- installation of arm rests

The installation of lining boards will prevent rubbish being left inside the shelters on top of the wall. The construction of three arm rests on each seat will make the seats more comfortable and accessible, especially for the elderly.

Melbourne Shakespeare Theatre Company:

Victoria Gardens play host to Stonnington Council public events such as Opera in the Park and Spring into Gardening. The latter is a one-day event in October whilst Opera in the Park takes place on one evening in February. These are very popular public events that draw large crowds and are fully sponsored by Stonnington. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that a private theatre company had been granted access to the Gardens for what were to be fifteen paid performances to be held over three weekends in March. Residents were not impressed with the rehearsals that were being conducted metres away from their back fences. The FoVG was not impressed by this use of the Victoria Gardens for paid performances, not only for one but also for fifteen such performances, and the potential for this to set a precedent into the future.

Our thanks go to Councillor Judy Hindle for taking up residents' and FoVG concerns, and for the approach taken by Stonnington staff who were quick to acknowledge that they may have erred in recommending such paid events and had failed to consult with the FoVG, let alone residents who would be affected by them. Unfortunately the Stonnington staff were not able to cancel the first weekend's five paid performances and these went ahead on the East Lawn (March 2,3 & 4). Our FoVG General Meeting on Tuesday 20th March will discuss this unprecedented use of the Victoria Gardens.

30th Anniversary 1987 - 2017:

A big thank you to all members who assisted in celebrating this very important milestone. The year saw new members join the Friends, discussions on establishing a Volunteer Group and culminated at the Christmas Party with an anniversary cake.



Volunteer Program:

Alex Ralton the coordinator for the program is continuing to liaise with Stonnington Council over the establishment of a volunteer group for the Gardens. Further information will be shortly available and thank you to all who have indicated an interest in joining this group.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday 20 March at 7.45pm at 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran, opposite the Flying Duck Hotel.