

Number 1, October 2009

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens Inc.

The Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens was established at a public meeting on 6 May 2009. Then a steering committee to deal with the formalities of setting up a Friends Group was drawn from volunteers at the Friends meeting of 10 June 2009. The Friends meeting held on 17 August 2009 voted to accept the purposes and rules for incorporation drafted by the steering committee and also voted that the steering committee members become the inaugural Friends committee.

The committee comprises Sue Murray President, Kim Sawyer Vice President, Geoffrey King Secretary and Public Officer, Diane Robinson Treasurer, Helen Page representative of the City of Hobsons Bay Williamstown Botanic Gardens Advisory Group (WBAG), and Barbara Sloan and Alan Murray as ordinary members.

The new committee has now completed the work of registering the Friends Group as an incorporated association. A bank account has been opened and a Post Office Box obtained. The Friends Group is also in the course of joining the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Inc.

A website has been opened, its address is **<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~wbotanic/index.html>**

The declared purposes of the Group are set out on the web page and are as follows

- To encourage and support the growth of a Friends Group interested in the conservation, development, wellbeing and public appreciation of the Williamstown Botanic Garden.
- To represent the interests of the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens throughout the City of Hobsons Bay and the wider community.
- To work as advocates to ensure that the sustainability and long term development of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens to ensure that they will remain a valued part of the Hobsons Bay community.
- To support the work of Hobsons Bay Council in maintaining these gardens.

Work is going ahead on developing a program of events for our new Friends Group and the committee values your ideas on things you would like to see done.

You are invited to visit the Geelong Botanic Gardens Friends Group on Saturday 21 November 2009 to gain ideas from this very active and successful Friends Group.

We will meet at the teahouse in the Geelong Botanic Gardens cnr Podbury Drive and Eastern Park Circuit, Eastern Park, Geelong (Melway Map 402, Q5) at 11.00 AM and each bring our own lunch. Please register by phoning Helen

Page 9817 2003 or emailing helenpage@bigpond.com by November 14. Helen will co-ordinate car pooling to minimize car numbers and enable those without cars to attend.

If this visit is successful we will organize further visits to other Friends groups next year.

A key aspect of a Botanic garden is its plant collections. The organisation 'Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia (GPC)' registers collections. For some time there has been a desire for Williamstown Botanic Gardens to hold the Crinum collection. We are calling for a couple of Friends to work with Shelley Wood on gaining registration of the Crinums. This would involve maintaining contact with the GPC and organizing the paper work required and presents a wonderful opportunity to get involved botanically. Let us know of your interest by contacting The Secretary, Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens Inc. by post, PO Box 826, Williamstown 3016 or by emailing williebotgardens@gmail.com. You may find it helpful to have a look at the GPC web site <http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/gpcaa/home>

Steven Thorpe, Manager Parks and Recreation, City of Hobsons Bay, addressed the friends at the August 17 meeting. He discussed the immediate past and future of the Gardens and an extract from his address follows. (The full text Stephen's speech is available on the Friends web site and in hard copy in the Williamstown library.)

"Since the preparation of the Conservation Management Plan in 2001, there has been a sustained effort to conserve the Gardens and restore them to the grandeur of the period of significance.

Some achievements to date include:

- restoration of the path system in the pinetum
- □repairing and repainting the main gates
- restoring and protecting the statue of A T Clark
- replanting 'structural' trees lost throughout the gardens
- reinstating a Head Gardener
- designing and installing new garden beds on the main axial palm walk
- designing the new gates for the Giffard Street and Osborne Street entrances

As the 150th anniversary approaches there are other opportunities to take the Gardens forwards for the next 150 years. This includes:

- restoring the pond and providing water from sustainable alternative sources
- creating an annexe to the Gardens beside the bay opposite the pinetum, next to the Hatt Reserve junior cricket ground
- continuing to renew the 'structural' avenues and planting throughout the gardens

- implementing the interpretation strategy
- adapting to the impacts of climate change”

Stephen stressed the importance of engaging the next generation “to contribute towards the Gardens remaining a vital and dynamic place”.

We wish to thank Councillor Angela Altair for her donation of \$500.00 from Williamstown Ward funds to assist with the costs of setting up the Friends group.

You are now warmly invited to formally join the Friends by completing and returning the [membership form](#) and relevant annual fee. We are particularly keen to encourage student membership.

(If paying directly into the Friends Bendigo Bank account please include your account name.)