

Chairman's Report 2016

Welcome to the second AGM for SHBG Ltd. Although it is not a requirement to hold an AGM the Directors agreed it would be the best way to communicate "the year in review" to members.

Over the past year we have been very busy both managing the Company and continuing to develop the site of the Botanic Gardens. Legal and accounting advice has been sought on the structure of our company ensuring we continue to operate in accordance with regulations and to transition our move to obtain our own DGR status.

Board Directors

Frank Nevill and Jacqui Page have retired as Directors of the Board although they remain members of the Company.

I would like to thank both Jacqui and Frank for their commitment to our gardens. Jacqui worked tirelessly as our Secretary for the past 6 years both for the Company and for the previous Incorporated Association. Over this time Jacqui has been a mainstay in helping get us to where we are today. Frank was instrumental in opening the lines of communication to the local schools which will allow us to move forward to develop our school education programs.

Newly appointed directors include Chris Blaxland, Grant Blanchard, Lyn Collingridge and Peter Rowe. They have joined Barry Barford, Chris Webb and myself to take the company and the gardens into the future.

We also welcome Sue Oberman, who diligently manages our bookkeeping, as a member of the Company.

Liaison with Wingecarribee Shire Council

We continue our close working relationship with Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC), our landlord. We thank them for their sterling effort in managing the regular mowing of our 12 hectare site.

Apart from our regular communications with various members of WSC staff, we have met with Noel Ferguson, WSC Economic Development Officer, to strengthen our links to Tourism activities in the Southern Highlands

Work is continuing by WSC to complete the consolidation of the multitude of Lots that make up the site to provide one single Lot. It is anticipated the consolidation will be completed in the coming months which will allow the lease to be registered.

Workshop with Directors from Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

A full day workshop with John Siemen (Mt Anan Director), Greg Bourke (Mt Tomah Director) and members of the Board provided an opportunity to discuss and receive information. Guidance was provided to help with the development of our gardens from two well established Botanic Gardens. As our climate is similar to Mt Tomah, opportunities will exist for much sharing of plant material between the two gardens. At the conclusion of the day Greg Bourke was given a *Buxus sempervirens* 'Pendula'

(weeping box) and a Buxus sempervirens 'Aurea Pendula' (golden weeping box) from our collection.

Partnerships

Southern Highlands Foundation continues to support SHBG by providing Deductible Gift Recipient status for donations for the gardens.

BDCU Alliance Bank have invited SHBG to join with them in the establishment of My Community Saving Account to benefit both SHBG and the community support of BDCU Alliance Bank

Fundraiser

Thanks to the generosity of the Paul Ramsay Foundation SHBG is able to appoint the first salaried fundraiser to commence in December this year.

Volunteer Office Administrator

Susan Ingram, a new Volunteer office administrator has now joined the SHBG team. We look forward to a productive year of increasing the presence of SHBG throughout the community and managing the eager Friends and Volunteers.

Site activities

After we signed our 21 year lease with Wingecarribee Shire Council in June 2015, activities on the site have been very busy including:

- Construction of the amenity block, including a chemical storage room with grants from NSW Government and IMB Community Foundation, along with generous support both in kind and financially from
 - Rotary Club of Berrima District
 - Mittagong Home Hardware
 - Beaumont Tiles
 - Wingecarribee Shire Council
- Construction of the Inscribed paver path Stage 1 which includes 135 personally inscribed pavers. A number of these pavers represent numerous generations within families, the largest of which covers 7 generations. Support both financially and in kind was given by the NSW Government, Argyle Landscapes, and Steve Bensley
- Commencement of the Oak Rondel, including Stage 2 of the Inscribed Paver Program which is scheduled for completion over the next few weeks.
- Commencement of the first gravel paths on the site. Stage 1, extending from the nursery to the eastern pedestrian gate, was completed last week. Stage 2 will be undertaken after our final events on the site in December 2016
- Installation of 2 sculptures donated by Tony & Ann Emmett. These sculptures were dedicated by the Emmetts to the Founders of the gardens and to Tony Davis & Maureen Purtell.
- Installation of 2 garden benches donated by Highlands Garden Society and Bowral Garden Club
- Commenced construction of the new shade sail over Pioneer Square, due to be completed within the next few weeks.

- Commencement of the planting of the new winter woodland
- Expansion of the Birch collection with new plantings
- Extension of the Autumn Woodland
- Planting of the Entry garden
- Installation of water line and taps in the south east of the garden, allowing further plantings to be undertaken in this area. Installation of drainage around the nursery

A number of events have also been held in the site including:

- Opening of the amenity block, chemical storage room and Inscribed Pavers Project stage 1 in April 2016
- SHBG Plant Fair held for the first time on the site, with approximately 2000 visitors
- 'Music in the Gardens', a concert by over 100 local musicians and community groups to celebrate the inaugural open day for BGANZ (Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand). Thanks to Julie & Grant Blanchard for organising this well supported event
- Dedication of the first sculptures and the first benches in the garden

Plant Collections

The first of our collections have been acknowledged. The Buxus and the Betula collections were given National Collection status with Garden Plant Conservation of Australia Association (GPCAA)

New equipment

- Over the past year we have been fortunate to receive a grant from Department of Social Services and various donations to allow us to purchase equipment to make it easier for our Volunteers to work on the site including 2 tents, various motorised garden equipment such as hedge trimmers and post hole digger, and plant trolleys for use both in the nursery and to move plants around the site.
- A defibrillator and new garden seats have been funded by a grant from Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Sponsors & Donations

- Organic Life has been very generous with the donation of various types of fertiliser for the gardens and nursery.
- Various private gardens have been independently opened, with funds from gate money and various visiting groups donated to SHBG. These include the gardens of Les & Elaine Musgrave, Clive & Meg Probyn, Noel and Joan Dubois.
- New merchandise line donated by Wendy & Ted Duncan – coffee mugs
- Continuing donations by individuals

Friends and Volunteers

The Friends Committee has worked tirelessly over the past year with the guidance of Chris Webb, Chairman of the Friends. Now in its sixth year, the Autumn Open

Garden weekend and Plant Fair is the major annual fundraising activity. This event continues to grow in popularity and profitability with over \$90,000 raised for 2016.

The Plant Growers Group (PGG) continues to provide support to the gardens through production of plants for use in the gardens and plant sales. Over the past year sales have been held regularly on the site during working bee mornings. Off site plant sales include Harper's Mansion Plant Fair and the Highlands Garden Society's Camellia Show.

The SHBG newsletter, a major communication tools for the gardens, continues to grow in popularity. After 6 years at the helm, Meg Probyn and her able assistant Clive Probyn, retired as Editor of Operculum. Sue Hand is the newly appointed Editor, assisted by Ralph Suter.

Monthly working bees on the site have been regularly supported by at least 30 Friends and Volunteers who continue to develop the planted areas while maintaining the plants, garden beds and nursery.

Organised tours and bus groups visiting the gardens during the year are growing. Training is now underway for Volunteer guides to lead these groups around the gardens. As the site develops and the confidence of the new Volunteer guides increases the opportunity exists to actively promote visits to the gardens.

The Friends held their Biennial dinner, with guest speaker Kate Cullity from Taylor Cullity Lethlean Landscape Architects. Kate gave a wonderful presentation on the design she and her company have prepared for our gardens.

Web Site

We have been fortunate to have the help of Geoff Prosser as our volunteer Webmaster. Over the time Geoff has continued to improve our website which is an important element in the communication and marketing of our botanic gardens.

The Year to Come

We look forward to an exciting year to come as we commence the Design competition for the Visitors Centre. Under the guidance of Philip Taylor, proposals are now being received from appropriately qualified architects to direct an Architecture competition for the proposed Visitors centre. This project will be our major focus for 2017.

Site development will continue with the commencement of the native areas and continued development of the existing garden.

We look forward to cooperating with local schools by offering education opportunities in the garden. It is anticipated the gardens will open on a regular basis in the coming year.

Charlotte Webb

Chairman SHBG Ltd

21/11/2016