



Southern Highlands
Botanic Gardens

OPERCULUM

December 2019

OUR FEASIBILITY

Have you ever wondered how economically feasible a fully completed Southern Highlands Botanic Garden will be for our local region? Exactly what benefits will it bring?

In mid 2019, the SHBG board commissioned a report to be undertaken by URBIS, a Sydney company that conducts economic and social research and evaluation. This work follows on from the SHBG Business Plan that was completed in September 2018, in which we undertook a rigorous investigation into the cost of establishing the Garden and constructing the Visitor Centre. Developing the business plan cost SHBG considerable money as we needed substantial input from the landscape architect, Kate Cullity and John Wardle Architects and a quantity surveyor to estimate the cost of both of these very large projects. Everyone is probably aware by now, that the cost of the Garden was estimated at \$15 million and the cost of the Visitor Centre and car park was also estimated at \$15 million, giving a total project cost of \$30 million.

The URBIS report builds on the business plan and looks at the net economic and social benefits attributable to the completed Garden and Visitor Centre, ie benefits to the local community.

In summary, URBIS estimates that the completed Garden will deliver a net benefit of \$56.6 million to the region over 20 years. In addition, every \$1 invested is estimated to produce a benefit of \$2.50 – this is a benefit-cost ratio of 2.5, which compares very favourably to the normally accepted benefit-cost ratio of 1, ie equal return for money invested.

The \$56.6 million net benefit over 20 years is made up from a number of factors. The construction period of 3 years is expected to generate \$16.8 million economic benefit; on completion of construction, \$25.1 million economic benefit will be generated over 20 years from the operation of the Garden and Visitor Centre; increased tourism spending in the region following completion of the Garden is expected to generate \$17.9 million over 20 years; a completed Garden will provide a social benefit of \$35 million over 20 years in social value for visitors and local residents.

In addition, there will be a substantial increase in jobs. During the construction period of 3 years, 40 full time jobs will be created; over the 20 years following the completed development, 19 full time jobs will be generated from the Garden's operation; and an additional 18 full time jobs will be created in the tourism industry over the 20 years following the completed development.

URBIS describes the social value as including 'amenity value' of visitors enjoying the green space, stress relief and relaxation; health benefits to visitors, including psychological benefits of stress relief and physical health benefits of low-intensity fitness activities of visitors such as walking; educational and conservation value that visitors derive from visiting a botanic garden; and cultural and community value generated by well-frequented public-access events such as the plant fair, musical events, cultural events, etc.

The URBIS report is useful in helping the board understand how we can 'sell' the Garden to individuals, corporations and government and encourage them to help us fund the establishment costs of the Garden and Visitor Centre. Together we are actively working on this very big task.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

What a difference a year makes!

My Chairman's column for December 2018 celebrated the rain we received, enabling plantings to continue over summer. This year we are surrounded by choking smoke and the sounds of sirens racing to fight the out of control fires.

Sadly, the reality of these devastating fires was felt at the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens, with the 186 ha conservation area and part of the garden impacted by the fires. This demonstrates the urgent need for the establishment of a 'Disaster management plan' for the valuable collections in our own Gardens.

Our major fundraising appeals for the coming year will include the building appeal for the Education Centre.

This centre will enable greater visitation to the Gardens by local schools with an all weather facility. Currently school visits have to be cancelled if the weather turns inclement.

Much has been achieved in the Gardens over the past 12 months, including the opening of the Gardens to the general public daily. Recently we installed a people counter at the entry gates, which indicates an average of 10 to 15 visitors to the Gardens daily. We anticipate these numbers will increase substantially when the children's playground and our first picnic shelter are completed early next year.

Merry Christmas to all.

Charlotte Webb OAM

GRANTS UPDATE

During the 2019 calendar year we have made nine grant applications. Four of those were unsuccessful. We were successful with a playground (\$200,000) and picnic setting (\$9,000) and just announced is the environment grant to start substantial planting in the native garden (\$20,000). We are awaiting the outcome of two others and are in the process of applying for two others. The two grants we are holding our breath for are \$40,000 to extend the distribution of power and irrigation throughout the



Garden and \$500,000 to build the Education Centre. Keep your and toes fingers crossed. The accompanying photo is Lyn Collingridge collecting the “cheque” from Veolia Mulwaree for their contribution to a picnic setting. The community supported this grant application with over 450 signatures in the letter of support. The picnic setting is a wheelchair friendly picnic table with benches and a free-standing shelter installed onto a concrete slab. This setting should be installed late January.

PLAYGROUND UPDATE

Progress is being made on the establishment of our playground. We have ensured that a number of local contractors carry out much of the work on this project as this is consistent with SHBG’s policy to use local providers whenever that is possible.

Our Funding Deed has been accepted by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and we have placed an order for the playground equipment with Proludic. The work will commence in early 2020 and should be completed before mid-year.

NATIVE GARDEN – HELP FROM LEND LEASE



The design of the Botanic Garden includes about one-third of the area being devoted to native garden. The location of the native garden is at the eastern end, along the cycle path outside the fenced area.

In 2017, the triangular stone walled garden was installed and planted out with small native shrubs. In October 2019 more substantial planting was undertaken when Lend Lease sent a team of around 10 employees to spend the day planting

out the area from our entrance sign at the south-eastern corner up to the triangular garden. These young and fit workers spent a ‘community’ day at our botanic garden as part of the Lend Lease program for their employees. Lend Lease also paid for the cost of the plants that were planted. The immediate neighbourhood is delighted with this new planting and has been very supportive with helping care for the plants, including watering them. We would like to sincerely thank Lend Lease for their contribution to the garden and to the East Bowral neighbours for being so supportive.

NEW ERA CHRISTMAS PICNIC

The 2019 Christmas picnic has a new look. It was a lovely warm night and people flocked to the shelter of the birch trees to set up their tables and rugs. Many people brought their own picnic but there were many who bought something from the BBQ tent.

The plant sale was popular with people coming just to buy their Christmas plants, making the nursery very busy. The music was fabulous and people just gathered there to listen to the bouncy music.



A BIG THANK YOU

We thank people a lot because those people do a lot for our botanic gardens. Many of those people go unnoticed and are unknown. Here are a few of those people who have recently made considerable contributions to the gardens and no-one would ever know about it.

John Webb, cousin of Chris Webb, is a local draftsman and has spent endless hours drawing the plans for the Education Centre and endless more hours dealing with council to get the DA through and the construction certificate from council. This is still ongoing. John has done all this work without charge. Greg Eeles is a local traffic engineer and has been extraordinarily helpful in drawing up our traffic management plan and using his connections in council to get it through the maze of bureaucracy that exists with traffic management. He has always been responsive and obliging and, while we were waiting for his bill to arrive, he told us that work was gratis.

Tim Copes has lived in the local district for some years and is an avid supporter of SHBG. He has opened his private garden for the Autumn Garden Weekend on two previous occasions and it will be open again in 2020. Tim was the brainwave who suggested we seek a report from URBIS. We followed his sound advice and were thrilled with the result, and Tim has now made a large donation to SHBG that more than covers the cost of the report. So, thank you, thank you, thank you to each of John, Greg and Tim for providing extremely valuable services, sound and wise advice and being so generous of heart.

SHBG is also a participant in the Corrective Services NSW program that requires minor offenders to give some hours of their time to community service. These individuals have not committed serious offences and have been given the chance to make amends with community service rather than receiving a gaol sentence by the court. These individuals come to the garden on a regular basis each year to give their weekend time by doing work that we would otherwise have to pay for and that is sometimes beyond the physical ability of our volunteers. We are very grateful to be part of this program.

WATER, WATER, ALLUSIVE WATER

We are all feeling the effects of the drought this season. At the Botanic Garden, one important project is to install some substantial water infrastructure. This includes drilling a bore, excavating a very big hole and installing a 200,000 litre underground water retention tank and installing a bore pump (for the water to be pumped from the bore to the tank) and an irrigation pump (for the water to be pumped from the tank around the garden). The cost of this project is around \$160,000.

We have failed with three attempts to gain funding for this important project. Despite these setbacks, we are going ahead with drilling the bore as our licence for that part of the work expires in January 2020. We are paying for that cost ourselves, which will be in the order of \$45,000 and the work will be done December 2019. The remainder of the project will have to wait until we get adequate funding.

PROFILE – PETER SCOTT, FRIENDS COMMITTEE MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER



Peter is a staunch supporter and volunteer at the Garden. He also volunteers with other not-for-profits like Retford Park and, in the past, worked on the local JP community desk.

Peter was originally a dairy farmer in Berry for 10 years, then a sheep and cattle farmer on 2,500 acres in Scone for 27 years before moving to Bowral in 2003. He has downsized a couple of times from his original home at Linden Cottage, Bowral, which was one of the first gardens in the Autumn Open Garden weekend in 2011.

He has always loved the gardens in the Highlands and its general beauty, which is what drew him to this area for holidays and then deciding to move here once he gave up farming.

Peter is the bloke either pushing the mower or riding it at the Garden. He is always there to help with any event going. As a member of the Friends Committee, Peter supervises one of the gardens at the Autumn Open Garden Weekend. In 2020 he will be located at the garden in Bundanoon, which was designed some years ago by Chris Webb.

For some years, Peter has managed to wrangle lots of fertiliser for use in the Garden. Through contacts he made while working at the Bowral Co-op, he organises an annual delivery of 40 x 25kg bags of Organic Life from Terra Firma Fertilisers, a Queensland company, as well as Seasol and Powerfeed from Seasol International, a Victorian company. These products are valued at well over \$1,000 and SHBG really appreciates sponsorship from these companies.

Peter still misses farming a bit but visits Scone most years to see family. He is happily settled in East Bowral with his wife, Carol, and has four children, six grandchildren and SHBG to keep him off the streets. Thanks, Peter, for your constant support and happy help over the years.



BOWRAL HIGH SCHOOL PLAQUE

'Growing Together. Growing Community Relationships'. That's what the lovely plaque presented to us by Bowral High School in early December says. They also gave us some key tags that they had made. Bowral High School and SHBG have developed a great relationship and we are thrilled about this. Have a look at this lovely plaque, where they have included our logo together with that of the school. Very touching. We are proud to be involved with the school and look forward to our future of growing together.

MOVIE IN THE GARDEN

On Saturday 15 February, we are having our first Movie in the Garden.

The movie is Hidden Figures – all about the team of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the US space program. A must-see and a must-see-again if you have already seen it.

The gate price is \$45, which includes a gourmet salad dinner, with choices of salads or other options and a choc top. A bar will be available. Gates open at 5pm, movie screening at 7.30pm. So, save the date.

SCULPTURE IN THE GARDEN – EARTH HOUR

Our inaugural Sculpture in the Garden, including a sculpture competition, will be held to celebrate Earth Hour on Saturday 28 March. Entries in the sculpture competition must include at least 80% recycled materials and be suitable for outdoor exhibition. Monetary prizes are being offered for winners of the Open Section and practical prizes will be awarded to winners of the School Sections. There also will be a People's award, so come along on Earth Hour and vote for your favourite sculpture. Entries in the sculpture competition are encouraged from emerging artists as well as established artists. All the details of the competition are on the website www.SHBG.com.au. More details on the Earth Hour event on 28 March will be on the website soon.

HELPING WITH CHILDREN

We are calling for Volunteers to help with the children visiting and working at the Garden.

If you would like to become involved with these new enthusiastic supporters, you will need to get a **Working With Children Check** which is **free** and then register the number with SHBG.

It is easy to register.

Log on to the website:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check> and follow the links to apply.

Then go to the Service NSW office in Mittagong to show your photo ID and your Notification will come through in a couple of hours.

Forward the approval number and your date of birth to info@SHBG.com.au for the register

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 15th February

Movie in the Garden

Commencing at 5pm - Movie starts 7.30pm.



Saturday 28th March

Sculpture in the Garden & Earth Hour

Commencing at 5.45pm



Sat 18th April & Sun 19th April

Autumn Garden & Plant Fair Weekend

Gates open 9am



Working Bees

1st Tuesday of every month

9am - 11am

Early birds are welcome from 8am.

The first working bee for 2020 will be on 14 January.

Wear comfortable clothes, hat & gloves

Enjoy a friendly chat over a cup of tea.

Thank you in advance for your support - it is always appreciated

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