

# Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden,

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

## Newsletter



### President's Report *by John Zwar OAM*

November 2017



Singing Honeyeaters at AALBG - Kath Vast



Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove & John Zwar at the Civic Reception held at the AALBG - John Zwar

On 24th August I attended a civic reception at the AALBG for his Excellency The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor General of Australia and Lady Cosgrove, along with some other Friends committee and community members. Sir Peter was very impressed by what he saw of the Garden and asked questions about it. Lady Cosgrove is Patron of the Friends of the Australian National BG in Canberra, and they both have an interest in botanic gardens and were involved in the launching of the BGANZ botanic garden Open Days earlier in the year.

In September I was able to attend some of The Australian Plant Society's Eremophila Conference held at Port Augusta. I presented a paper on the AALBG outlining the history of the Garden and its current status, and with other AALBG Friends accompanied delegates on guided tours of the AALBG and Nursery, and attended the dinner in the evening. It was unfortunate that some eremophilas in the Garden were damaged by ongoing frosts this year, but many others were in full bloom and looking magnificent.

The 8th Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) Congress has just been held in Adelaide and I attended for the four days. The Congress was held at the Botanic Garden, Adelaide, and was attended by more than 100 delegates mainly from Australian and New Zealand botanic gardens with some from UK, Malaysia, PNG, and USA also. The Friends of the Botanic Gardens of SA assisted with garden tours, catering, conference registration and other behind the scenes tasks and were commended for their efforts. As well as tours and in depth visits to sections of the Adelaide Botanic Garden there were field trips to Wittunga and Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens, Waite Arboretum and Heritage Gardens, Dean Nicolle's Eucalyptus Arboretum at Currency Creek and Cox Scrub Conservation Park and also a visit to the Adelaide Zoo to inspect landscaping. There were many interesting and inspiring presentations and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet people from other botanic gardens, and to share experiences and areas of common interest. One of the conference themes was "With a little help from our friends" and former AALBG Manager Cherie Gerlach and I presented a paper with that very title, highlighting the role

of the Friends at the AALBG, the ups and downs over the years and how with the active engagement of the Friends by Garden management over the last four years or so, a great deal has been achieved, including the redevelopment of the circular courtyard, the upgrade of the Eremophila Garden, the development of the Reflection Garden, Garden tours, help with plant sales, and the establishment of our wonderful Arid Explorers Garden to mention but some. Our presentation was well received and prompted considerable discussion and several questions. The AALBG is becoming quite widely recognised, even internationally, and people are generally impressed that with a small paid staff, very modest budget and passionate Friends volunteers, we have achieved so much and maintained a high standard of presentation.

During the conference some delegates expressed interest in visiting our garden, so an impromptu post congress field trip was arranged. I accompanied Alan Matchett, Curator of Dunedin BG, Jane Matchett Curator of Oamaru Gardens NZ, and Douglas McDougal of Olive Pink BG, Alice Springs and we visited the Barossa Bush Gardens at Nuriootpa, the AALBG and met some Friends and paid staff, and the Powell Gardens at Quorn. They were each very impressed by what they saw at each of these gardens and by what has been achieved by Friends volunteers at each of them. During the visit to the AALBG we met two other BGANZ conference delegates, Friends of the Australian National BG, Canberra who also enjoyed their visit to our Garden and made very complimentary remarks.

Despite the recent resignation of Cherie Gerlach, the former AALBG Manager, to take up another position that better suited her family situation, the Garden is in excellent condition at present and we hope a new Manager when appointed will follow on from Cherie's achievements. The following points may be of interest:

- Since formation of The Friends of AALBG in 1984 we have donated more than \$1 million to the Garden
- Friends volunteers have provided labour valued at more than \$4 million in the Garden
- In the financial year ended June 30 this year, 99,500 people visited the AALBG
- The AALBG is the number 1 tourist attraction in Port Augusta
- A recent federal government economic survey of regional cities in Australia estimated that AALBG visitors inject \$18 million annually into the Port Augusta economy. (This increases as visitor numbers continue to increase)

I have been advised that the Port Augusta Council has given The Friends two months to try and save the historic Yudnapinna Homestead currently located at the now closed

Homestead Park. It is disappointing that the Council has not been proactive in trying to save this historic building and that with the influence they have, sought government, corporate, community and other assistance to save and relocate the building to the AALBG where it could be refitted and utilised as a multi purpose space. It seems Council has little interest or enthusiasm for saving this important part of the pastoral history of the region and is happy to pass it off to the already overloaded small group of active Friends volunteers to try and save. Council has had years to seek funding from appropriate bodies and has the resources, staff and contacts to do this. I have asked that they seriously investigate all possible options to save and relocate and refit the building at the AALBG at previous AALBG Management meetings. I think it is unrealistic to expect the Friends to do this in two months.

In closing, it was very pleasing to see that the feeling in Port Augusta is much more upbeat than it was a year ago. A new solar power station is being developed, site work has commenced on the huge solar thermal power station to be built north of Port Augusta, and a new copper/gold mine, Carrapateena, north of Port Augusta is to commence producing ore next year. Two pumped hydro power stations are also under consideration.

I look forward to seeing those who are able to attend our December meeting and Christmas celebration afterwards. To all of our Friends and supporters, thanks so much for your support. It really is appreciated and helps with the ongoing development and maintenance of our wonderful Garden and plant collection. My best wishes for a very enjoyable Christmas season and a new year filled with good things! - John Zwar, President.



Boarded up Yudnapinna Homestead at Homestead Park - John Zwar.



Perry Jones shows grafted plants in Nursery to Jane Matchett Oamaru Garden NZ - Doug McDougal Olive Pink BG Alice Springs and Alan Matchett Dunedin BG NZ - John Zwar



# Diary Dates

## Next Meeting of FAALBG:

Saturday 2nd December 2017 - 1.00pm.

Photo Presentation by Peter Hall and Brian Reichelt, "What Friends Have Achieved in 2017".

This will be followed by Nibbles (and drinks at own cost) for our Christmas Breakup.

## Bird Watching Field Trips of the Birdlife Australia & Birds SA Clubs, Port Augusta Group:

Sunday 3rd December 2017 - Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. Meet in the Car Park, 7:30 am Christmas Lunch in Café afterwards.



Red Wattlebird - Kath Vast

Please bring sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection, binoculars, morning tea and lunch if staying longer.

For further info contact:

Peter 8642 5723 / 0457 708 859;

Bernie 0419 863 834 / b.haase@telstra.com

## NEXT MEETING

**Venue:** WMC Herbarium and Meeting Room, AALBG

**Date & Time:** Saturday 2nd December 2017 at 1pm

**Guest Speakers:** Long-time Friends of the AALBG, Peter Hall and Brian Reichelt, both tireless workers and passionate supporters of the Garden, using photos to illustrate their points, will outline what Friends have achieved in the past twelve months in partnership with Garden Staff. You will be amazed and delighted by the scale of contribution achieved by so few Friends.

Please note: At the conclusion of the meeting, after a short break, there will be Nibbles (drinks at own cost) for Friends as an end-of-year and Christmas celebration.



Peter Hall & Brian Reichelt

# Kudos for Garden

## TWO nominations for SATA 2017: Tourism Attraction Award and Ecotourism Award!

As reported in The Transcontinental, Oct 25, 2017: The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden (AALBG) has been recognised as one of the state's biggest tourism draw cards by the South Australian Tourism Industry Council.

AALBG has picked up two nominations for the 2017 South Australian Tourism Awards, including the Tourist Attraction Award, which was won by Port Lincoln's Calypso Star Charters in 2016.

The AALBG team is hoping to go one better in the Ecotourism Award after scooping up silver in the category last year. Arid Lands Tourism Officer Bernadette Reichstein said it was really exciting to be nominated for two awards.

*"It gives you a good feeling knowing that what you're providing is appealing to people and they're really happy to come here."*

*"It's really good because everyone that works here, and we've got lots of volunteers as well, is really passionate about the Arid Lands," she said.*

*"Each year we're getting more and more people visiting from all over the place."*

The AALBG achieved a record number of total visitors in the last financial year, with about 99,000 people walking through the gates – an increase of 8000 visitors when compared to the 2015-16 financial year.

Ms Reichstein said the newly-created Arid Explorers (Children's) Garden, as well as AALBG's wide range of native plants including Eremophilas and Sturt Desert Peas, has led to the botanical garden becoming one of Port Augusta's biggest tourist locations.

*"Nearly every day we hear from people that say they come to Port Augusta just because they want to come to the AALBG, so it's getting quite a following all around Australia," she said.*

*"People are saying in surveys that they're staying two or three nights so that they can spend more time out here."*

Volunteer group Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden played a major role in the development of the Arid Explorers Garden, which has proven to be a popular destination for schools, kindergartens and childcare groups.

The SA Tourism Awards will be held on Friday, November 10 at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

## From Scotland to Adelaide...

*On Friday 4th of August and Saturday 5th of August I had the pleasure of experiencing the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden at Port Augusta whilst accompanying Senior Horticulturist from Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh, a Mr. Robert Unwin.*

*We were amazed and astounded with the significant collection at AALBG and the extremely well versed staff, in particular our Saturday tour guide Jim Hayward. I really look forward to once again visiting AALBG in the future.*

- Nikko Menzel. Horticulturist, Botanic Gardens of South Australia, and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

In further correspondence with John Zwar, Nikko stated that Robert enjoyed his time at Port Augusta immensely and was fascinated with the collection. He thanked John for all his assistance and asked him to send his best wishes to Jim Hayward, who, Nikko stated, is an amazing Botanic Guide and a wealth of knowledge.



Garden Trainee Perry Jones, Friends Vice-President Brian Reichelt, & committee member Ian Hopwood



Nikko Menzel - Adelaide Botanic Garden, Robert Unwin - Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh Scotland & Jim Hayward AALBG.

## Pete Jamieson ▸ AALBG

This place is almost secret but it is WONDERFUL, it's totally mindblowing. Go have a look. Go visit. Get in there any time of the year. Just go.

August 20, 2017 Like • Comment



# Peter's Plants *by Peter Hall*

## ***That's not a Bluebush – this is a Bluebush!***

*Maireana prosthocochaeta* grows naturally in Western Australia in the area between Wiluna and Newman. It grows on hills and salty areas, to about 0.75 x 0.75 metres. *Maireana prosthocochaeta* is a relative of our *Maireana sedifolia* (Pearl Bluebush) that grows commonly around Port Augusta and inland Australia. We have *Maireana prosthocochaeta* growing in our home garden and it is quite spectacular with its large, bright yellow, fruiting perianths.



*Maireana prosthocochaeta* - Peter Hall

# Volunteers at Work *by Brian Reichelt*

Since our August/September Newsletter a lot has been happening in the Garden with support from Garden Staff and the Volunteers.

Caroline (Nursery Supervisor) and Perry (Trainee) have been assisted by Volunteers in propagation and potting-on to produce fantastic plants for sale in the Gift Shop and at Paskeville Field Days and the Burra Garden Festival. The Tour Guides, ably led by Chris and Jim, have continued to provide an important service to the Garden with the tours they conduct, and Mandy is showing off her floral art skills by providing lovely native plant decorations to the Café tables.



Floral Display by Mandy Atkinson - Brian Reichelt.

The Garden staff, Corey (Garden Co-ordinator), Ryan H. (Plants co-ordinator) and Ryan B. (General Duties), along with Volunteers, have been busily constructing a new Propagation Tunnel for the heat beds and growing-on area for plants and it is anticipated that this will be finished early November.



New Propagating Tunnel - Brian Reichelt

Other areas of the Garden to receive attention during this period were the "Arid Smart Gardens", the main Entrance Path and Matthew Flinders Redcliff Lookout.

"The Arid Smart Gardens" received new irrigation, plantings and mulch. These display gardens are already receiving high praise from the visiting public.



Arid Smart Garden upgrade - Brian Reichelt

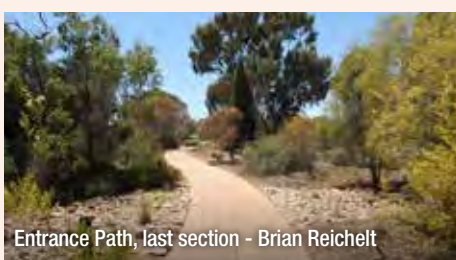
The main Entrance Path from the Carpark to the Courtyard has received a major upgrade along with the two garden beds either side of the Entrance Path.



Entrance Path, 1st section - Brian Reichelt



Entrance Path, middle section - Brian Reichelt

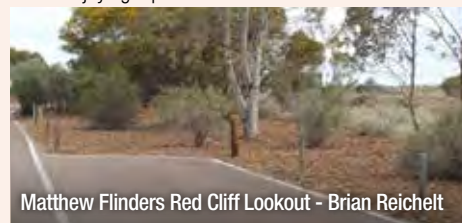


Entrance Path, last section - Brian Reichelt



Upgrade to area on left side of the Shelter at the Front Entrance - Brian Reichelt

Plants at the Matthew Flinders Redcliff Lookout have been pruned and the whole area has received new mulch to improve the appearance of this area, and it is anticipated that by the end of November 2017 a new shelter will be erected over the top of the existing picnic table area. This will enable visitors to this area of the Garden to sit and enjoy the views of the Spencer Gulf whilst enjoying a picnic.



Matthew Flinders Red Cliff Lookout - Brian Reichelt

A rubbish/recycling bin has been added to the main Garden car park area to reduce litter and this blends in well with the area and has proved a winner in encouraging people to keep the area clean and to recycle their cans and bottles.



Recycling bins in the Car Park - Brian Reichelt

The Garden staff and Friends have many projects in the pipeline and we encourage you to continue to support the Friends to see these projects come to fruition and grow the quality and aesthetics of the Garden.

# Chris's Observations



A Praying Mantis on *Allocasuarina helmsii* - Chris Nayda



*Eucalyptus woodwardii* blossom - Chris Nayda



# Bird Talk From the Garden *by Peter Langdon*

## Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*)

The Buff-banded Rail is a new bird species to add to the list of birds sighted at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, bringing the total to 159 species.

This bird was flushed out near the Pond at the Visitors Centre by volunteers working there on 27th September 2017, although it had been reported by a visitor to the Garden about a fortnight before.

They are shy birds, and when disturbed run quickly to cover under shrubs and dense tussocky vegetation in their preferred habitat near swamps, dams etc. So it took a few days of early morning stalking in the new Eremophila Garden before good photos were obtained.

Buff-banded Rails feed on insects, small molluscs, invertebrates and some vegetable matter and seeds.



Buff-banded Rail, Brian Reichelt.

## Snippets

**Sturt Desert Pea *Swainsona formosa*:** Frost took out young Sturt Pea plants several times this year limiting greatly what the Garden had for display and sale for Sturt Pea enthusiasts. Many of us love them and try to grow them, coddling and nurturing them at every step. And yet, they are an enigma, as many times with none of this love and care they will wrestle with the environment and manage to beat the odds and grow beautifully all by themselves - how and where and when they want. That's nature for you!

**Visitor Numbers:** 11537 visitors to the Garden for the month of September! Numbers continue to increase!

**Of all things birds and gardens...** Another tireless and passionate Volunteer in the Garden, our local bird guru Peter Langdon, caught up with David Cox from Arizona, USA. The two of them chatted eight years ago and again this past October. David travels extensively and really enjoys his visits here. He has a travel website/blog [d.t.cox.com](http://d.t.cox.com) which is sure to be of interest, especially for those of you interested in birds.

**Plant Sales:** This last quarter Friends Volunteers assisted at out-of town plant sales and therefore made a valuable contribution to the monies raised by Council at Kadina: \$1328 and Paskeville: \$4300.



Roxby Downs Rubbish Dump  
Sturt Pea - David Zwar



Peter Langdon and David Cox



AALBG stand for plant sales  
at Paskeville Field Days - Chris Nayda.

## Reminder:

Are you financial? Renewals for Corporate Memberships for the 2018 year are due 1st January, 2018. Renewals of Memberships for Friends (singles & families) were due on 1st July 2017, at the start of this current financial year. Discounts for the purchase of meals and gifts in the café and gift shop only apply to the Friends Membership card holder/s and cannot be transferred to family and friends who are not members.

## Join or Renew Subscription & Contacts

### TO JOIN OR RENEW SUBSCRIPTION

Request a form from Contacts or collect one from the Visitor Centre

Or fill in this form and send with remittance to:

**Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Port Augusta Inc.**

PO Box 2040, Port Augusta SA 5700

[www.australian-aridlands-botanic-garden.org](http://www.australian-aridlands-botanic-garden.org)

Enclosed is my:

Subscription \$ .....

Donation \$ .....

TOTAL \$ .....

PLEASE TICK: ☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal of Membership

NAME: Dr / Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms: .....

Address: .....

Date: .....

Email Address: .....

Any donation will be gratefully accepted. Donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible. Please make cheques payable to 'Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc.' Receipts will be posted. A SAE would be appreciated but not obligatory.

### DIRECT DEBIT BANKING DETAILS

BSB: 035-065

Account No.: 164 604

Account Name: FAALBG

Reference: 'name of person banking'

Please notify by email to [friends@aalg.sa.gov.au](mailto:friends@aalg.sa.gov.au)

### MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Individual (1 adult) \$30

Due annually 1st July. Includes 1 membership card.

Family (2 adults & dependent children under 18) \$50

Due annually 1st July. Includes 2 membership cards.  
(2 forms must be filled in).

Corporate \$250 Due annually 1st January.

(includes 1 membership card issued in one name  
nominated by the business)



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