

Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Inc.

Victoria has about 25 regional botanic gardens, many established thanks to the prosperity created by the gold rushes of the 1850s and the support of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, the first Government Botanist in Victoria and the first Director of the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. Mueller supplied many of the new gardens with exotic plant material as part of his acclimatisation program. His legacy is a very significant collection of mature trees (often conifers) in these gardens today.

In 1985, for Victoria's 150th anniversary celebrations, and to acknowledge Mueller's outstanding contribution to botany and horticulture in Victoria, fifteen botanic gardens were given much needed and long overdue assistance for rejuvenation by 15 German/Australian companies.

One of the stipulations for this grant was that botanic gardens had an associated group of Friends to act as future watchdogs for the gardens. This led to the formation of many Friends' groups in Victoria at that time. Other Friends' groups in Victoria and interstate had already been

established. The Friends of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens were the first in 1977, followed by the Melbourne and Sydney Friends in 1982. The Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens was founded in 1985 and subsequently the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Canberra (1990) and Friends of Kings Park, Perth (1993).

Early in 1991, the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne invited representatives of botanic gardens

led to the incorporation of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Victoria) Inc. in January 1993. The aim of the Association of Friends was to continue to hold annual conferences and publish a newsletter, *Campsis*, twice a year for the benefit of members which then numbered eighteen. Where possible, the Association has also provided support to, or acted as an advocate for, members.

Conferences, which are now held every second year, are

other gardens and their operations. These conferences, which are open to all with an interest or involvement with botanic gardens, are always stimulating and friendly occasions. The next conference is to be held by the Friends of the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens, Mildura on 21-23 May 2010.

In 2001, the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Victoria) Inc. became a national body, the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Inc. It now has 46 members from every Australian state and territory and one member from New Zealand and is an associate member of the Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand Inc (BGANZ).

The Melbourne Friends have been represented on the Association's Committee since 1993. Our former Secretary, Lawrence Cohn, was Secretary of the Association from 1993 until 2005. I am the current representative, having been elected to the Committee in 1999.

Janet Thomson



The AFBG Committee, pictured standing in front of a picture of the Albury Botanic Gardens from L - R

Betty Lindsay, Benalla; Elizabeth Gilfillan, Ballarat; Annis McGeachy, Geelong; Cavo Webster, Sydney; President Alex Smart, RBG Cranbourne; Janet Thomson, RBG Melbourne; Patricia Bannatyne, Orange; Warwick Wright, ANBG, Canberra

Absent: Amanda King, Warrnambool; Ken Mansell, Australian Inland Botanic Garden, Mildura.

throughout Victoria to a seminar to discuss matters of common interest. Some who attended were friends, some represented local authorities. The seminar was so successful that another was held in Melbourne the following year. There was strong support for the establishment of an umbrella organisation and this

hosted by a different Friends' group each time. The conferences have allowed the hosting group the chance to involve appropriate local authorities, obtain significant speakers, organise workshops, create wonderful opportunities for networking with other friends' groups, garden managers and staff, and view

(The above article is based on a paper written by Jayne Salmon OAM, Immediate Past President, Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, for the BGANZ Congress in October 2003).