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## Change of Guard at AGM

At the Annual General Meeting of the Friends, a number of changes were made to the Officers and Committee, with Speroulla Christodoulou being elected as President and Ros Savio as Vice-President.



New President Speroulla (l) and Vice President Ros (r) at the AGM on 5 August 2017

Other members who were elected were:

- Melinda Mockridge - Secretary
- Angela Ganley - Treasurer
- Michelle Edwards - Media Officer
- Russell Smith - Newsletter Editor
- Helen Reid and Robyn Flett - Committee members

Later in this edition are notes of thanks to Catherine McDonald who stepped down as President, and Helen Reid, Vice-President, but who will remain as members of the Friends' Group.



(l-r) Ros Savio, Michelle Edwards, Russell Smith, Melinda Mockridge, Robyn Flett, Catherine McDonald, Helen Reid, Speroulla Christodoulou, Angela Ganley

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## President's report

In my first official report as President, I would like to thank Cathy McDonald as previous President and a founder of the Friends group. The Gardens are a reflection of Cathy's excellent work over eight years. Cathy tirelessly advocated for the development of a Management Plan for the Gardens that would provide the basis and direction for its future management. On 15 August 2017, Brimbank City Council endorsed the release of the draft Management Plan for community consultation and feedback. This is encouraging progress and testament to Cathy's vision and persistence. The draft Plan is available at:

<http://records.brimbank.vic.gov.au/ExternalLinkAPI/api/document/?docKey=MDMzVU1peGxRTkJjOWlxV2pzQlZVVG5QQXhyamkzTkhOL0tYeHhc3FZeXNGRllmI3c2dWp5WjdFcm5ROFRYVw2>.

After four weeks, the Council will then consider the final plan for approval.

As we move a step closer to having the Management Plan formalised and an irrigation system in the gardens that will nurture plants in the warmer summer months (again thanks to Cathy's lobbying), we can look forward to a bright future for the Gardens. We plan to hold festivals and events in the Gardens and encourage everyone to attend.

Speroulla Christodoulou, President

## *'Voices from the HV McKay Memorial Gardens'*

As part of the Australian Heritage Festival, the Friends organized a community gathering to hear the oral histories of the Gardens recounted by people who worked, played and married in Australia's oldest remaining industrial gardens. Their recorded stories echoed through the auditorium as projected pictures brought their memories to life - the migrant family's wedding, the young man who enjoyed a nightcap or two with friends in the gardens after a local dance not ready to go home - and more!

The stories spanned almost ten decades, reflecting the way the residents of Sunshine lived and the use they made of the Gardens. Over 20 attended on Tuesday 25 April 2017 at the Albion 'Eco Living' Community Centre in Selwyn Street for the event which formed part of the Australian Heritage Festival, supported through funding from the Australian Government's National Trusts Partnership Program.



Melinda Mockridge presenting the oral histories

Oral history interviews with Lex Gray (dec'd), Jean McDonald (dec'd), Gilbert Bell, Helen Reid, Brian O'Reilly (dec'd), John Willaton, Tony Menhennit, Alan Dash, Em Novak, Mary Phillipou, Jim Learmouth, Gary Collins, Catherine McDonald, Speroulla Christodoulou and Ros Savio were presented on the evening and edited extracts can be heard on the Friends' Website at <http://www.mckaygardens.com.au/activities/oral-histories/>



Melinda Mockridge, Secretary

## Update on the Chaplin Reserve development

Brimbank City Council has been preparing an amendment to the Brimbank Planning Scheme which involves the land immediately to the south of the HV McKay Memorial Gardens, formerly a privately owned soccer ground which has been purchased by a developer. The Amendment, known as C148, proposes that the land be rezoned Residential Growth Zone Schedule 1 and a Development Plan overlay - Schedule 8 be applied at the request of the developer.

This amendment, which included an actual development concept plan plus a draft Schedule 8 about which the Friends had a number of objections, was considered by Council in April and, as there were still some objections to the proposal, resolved that a Planning Panel be held in June at the DLEWP, which considered various reports made by expert witnesses on behalf of both the Council and the developer and to which the Friends again contributed.

The report from the Panel has just been made available on the Council website and makes for interesting reading:

<https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/brimbank-planning-scheme-amendment-c148>

While the Panel did not always agree with some of the points made by the Friends, it would seem that the Friends' presence helped to emphasise the heritage aspect of the Gardens, largely ignored by other presenters, and some amendments have been proposed for the Schedule which will help lessen the impact of the development on the Gardens. Of particular interest is the recommendation that Council (and VicRoads) adopt the entry traffic solution for the entry road made by a Council expert witness which does not require a small section of the Gardens to be acquired, which originally the Friends violently objected to.

While it looks like the Amendment will go ahead, it is hoped that Council will accept other Panel recommendations for Schedule 8 such as limiting the building height to 3 storeys and a 5 metre minimum building setback along the Gardens' boundary, although the Council request for designated centralised visitor parking and a centrally located park was not supported.

Ros Savio, Vice-President



## Catherine McDonald: A tribute

The Friends' committee is sad that Catherine McDonald has stepped down from the presidency and has become an ordinary member from the date of the annual general meeting on 5 August.

Cathy, to you I can say genuine thanks from me and from everyone else for keeping the group going since 2007. We admire your tenacity in commitment, your ability to write letters with a touch of brilliancy, your passion for the cause, your knowledge of how to respond when the gardens are threatened by the neighbours and those who think nothing of taking a piece of our space to achieve their purposes.

You've governed with a voice that roars when provoked, argued with clarity, let no one think they can walk all over us while routinely ignoring the garden the rest of the time and its reason for being there. You've been a visionary, a protester, you stand up for what's right, and all this with great courage as the face of Sunshine takes great strides to keep up with the rest of Melbourne. Your achievements speak for themselves. The Bollywood movies in the garden never happened (sad about that one), the rain was an organiser's nightmare, the common view of the community that this is a place where you are invisible: so do as you please, the "seven stages of aging" in news photography: in all it's been fun tackling the big problems.

Take a bow, Cathy. Thanks a bunch.

Helen Reid



Former President, Catherine McDonald, August 2017

## Gardens Plan 1944



An important discovery was made recently in the archives of the Presbyterian Church. This was a copy of a plan of the layout of the Gardens drawn by 'B. King' and dated 17 October 1944.

The plan shows some of the principal features of the Gardens including the location of two Tennis Courts and Pavilion, the Bowling Green, Band Stand, Glass House and Gardener's House. Importantly, it also shows the placement of garden beds, paths, hedges, gates, fences and large trees - all with dimensions. This provides a useful indication of how the Gardens looked during the Second World War and give important ideas of how the design could be reinstated.

Thanks to Helen for circulating the plan.

Russell Smith



Winter sun on a cold day in August 2017

## Helen Reid – A tribute

Helen Reid attended the inaugural meeting of the Friends in 2007 and was a founding member of the group. It is not too excessive to say that without her membership of the committee, the Friends of the McKay Gardens would not have occurred. I certainly could not have done without her. Helen has been an effective and knowledgeable treasurer, secretary, vice president and president. From the very beginning, her extensive network of friendships and voluntary associations in Sunshine and beyond has been essential and much appreciated. She continues to be an invaluable source of horticultural knowledge and her movement to the position of ordinary committee member continues an unparalleled level of commitment to the Friends.

Catherine McDonald



### *Why not join us & renew?*

New members are always welcome!

The annual subscription is just \$10.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary, Melinda at:

Email: [contact@mckaygardens.com.au](mailto:contact@mckaygardens.com.au)  
 Post: Friends of the McKay Gardens  
 PO Box 154, Sunshine, VIC 3020

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## Meeting dates 2017

The Friends of HV McKay Gardens will continue to meet at the Sunshine Presbyterian Church Hall, 120 Anderson Road, Sunshine each second month alternating with an evening meeting at the Sunshine Library, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine at 6.30pm.

Dates for the rest of 2017 are:

Thursday 7 September, 6.30pm (Sunshine Library)  
 Saturday 7 October, 10.00am (Church Hall)  
 Thursday 2 November, 6.30pm (Sunshine Library)

Saturday 2 December, 10.00am (excursion to Kyneton, meet at the Kyneton Botanic Gardens, main gate, 4 Clowes Street, Kyneton (below))



Kyneton Botanical Gardens was established in 1858 and covers nine hectares around the Campaspe River. Edward Gray was the inaugural curator of the Kyneton Botanic Gardens and his son, Harold Gray, was Head Gardener at the HV McKay Gardens in the 1940s. Harold's son, Lex, took part in the Friends' Oral History Program prior to his death in 2015.

### **‘Hear the Vice-President!**

Ros Savio was the landscape architect engaged by the City of Brimbank in 2007 to prepare a landscape concept plan for Heritage Victoria of the restoration and replanting of the bowling green area after the Bowling Club had been closed and was to be demolished. She subsequently went on to implement other restoration works in the Gardens, under the ‘H V McKay Memorial Gardens Conservation Analysis and Management Guidelines (1994), prepared by Jill Burness et al. Since leaving the Council in 2015, she has maintained an active interest in the Gardens. Listen to her oral history interview with Melinda Mockridge recorded in 2016 at [www.mckaygardens.com.au/activities/oral-histories/](http://www.mckaygardens.com.au/activities/oral-histories/)

