

Newsletter

SUMMER 2023



Website: <http://www.mckaygardens.com.au/>

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Community Festival Edition

Welcome to the Festival edition of the Newsletter of the Friends of the HV McKay Memorial Gardens! On a hot (and windy) Sunday 5 March 2023, around one hundred people participated in our annual Festival. Young children have loved coming to the Gardens, going back to the early years when the HV McKay Massey Harris Children's Party was held in 1948 (as this Museum Victoria photo shows)!



Seventy-five years later, the children of Sunshine and beyond had an equally good time, with sporting events, competitions and the Festival Wizard, *Simsalabim*, there to inspire, intrigue, amaze and entertain.



Music and dancing for all!

This year's Festival was sponsored by Brimbank City Council that provides a small team of gardeners to keep the plants and lawns in trim. The gardeners, Tia Hobbs-Little and Sam Pignatelli, were both at the Festival this year to see the State-listed Heritage Gardens being enjoyed just as the industrialist, HV McKay, would have wanted.



This year the Sunshine Community Brass Band performed a number of works in much the same way that the original Sunshine District Band had done since the 1960s, as we can see in this original photo provided by John Willaton.



The current Band will be travelling to Newcastle in April to compete in the Australian National Band Championships.

A vibrant display of dancing!



As in previous years' Festivals, a diverse range of community groups performed traditional dances including the Vietnamese Group, Au Co (above), Verchovyna Ukranian dancers (below), Bonapasogit / Widya Lutari Indonesian dancers and the Women of Brimbank Indian dance group.



The Festival's performance line-up finished with the exotic Belly Dancers who performed for the first time at our Festival!



In addition to these Community dancers, the main stage also provided a space for aspiring young singers to perform some karaoke routines, while others enjoyed the food provided by Cruising Ice Creams, Cherry Mouth Roasters and the Grand United Cricket Club sausage sizzle.



CPR demonstrations were also given by the St Johns Ambulance Service CPR Lab / Lab Lite.

Melbourne Airport Rail

Members of the Friends Group may be aware that the McKay Gardens will be affected by the proposed works in connection with the Melbourne Airport Rail project.

Because the proposed works impinge on the Gardens, particularly the land adjacent to the Straight Six path and the northern entrance area, Heritage Victoria must approve the proposed work. Rail Projects Victoria has recently applied to Heritage Victoria for such approval and you can read the Heritage Impact Statement and Plans at:

<https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/protecting-our-heritage/currently-advertised-permits>

The Friends Group will be making a Submission in response to the application before the due date of **21 March 2023**. We encourage our members to make their own written submissions on the form available from the above Website. We will circulate our submission shortly by email to members of the Friends Group and you may choose to endorse our submission or write your own personal submission.

Petition to Save the Gardens

You may also wish to support the Petition to the Hon Ben Carroll, Minister for Public Transport, concerning the preservation of the Gardens that has been prepared by our former President Catherine MacDonald. This is available for signing online at:

https://www.change.org/p/save-the-hv-mckay-gardens?source_location=search

An extract of the Petition is as follows:

Dear Member,

As a parliamentary representative in the Western Suburbs I write to you to express my distress at the proposals by Melbourne Airport Rail and the Victorian Department of Transport for the HV McKay Memorial Gardens. Contrary to all previous information provided to the public, Melbourne Airport Rail proposes to slice off a section of the Garden along its entire length (removing a famous existing garden bed and remaining heritage items), construct a batter embankment, removing the most historically significant relationship between the Gardens and the Harvester factory site (the visual connection) and to add insult to injury, declines to provide even minimal sound mitigation although the noise source from trains will now be both far more frequent and intruding into the Gardens by an additional ten meters.

As I am sure you are aware the McKay Memorial Gardens are of great historical significance. The McKay Gardens are the oldest and most significant remaining industrial garden in Australia. They are a significant element of the cultural development of Victoria and a physical representation of the complex relationship between urban planning, manufacturing (HV McKay) and workers conditions (the Harvester Award). This relationship can only be understood so long as the visual connection between the Sunshine Estate, the McKay Gardens and the factory site remains. Heritage Victoria's statement of significance includes:

“The H V McKay Memorial Gardens ... are a key component of a wider complex envisaged by McKay, which also included the factory, offices and a housing estate for the workers. The McKay Gardens and associated elements in Sunshine are a rare and early example of the application of garden city planning principles. The role of the Gardens in the scheme can still be appreciated as the fabric of the Gardens is relatively intact and the spatial relationship of the gardens to the factory site and housing estate is still readily understood.”

I respectfully call upon you to make representations to oblige Melbourne Airport Rail to revert to the proposal originally put to the community: to move the Airport Link to the outer edge of the rail corridor away from the Gardens, to maintain a clear space between the Gardens and the rail corridor the width of the Exxon Avgas line, to use modern, refined pier and beam construction methods to elevate the link in order to maintain some visual connection between the Gardens and the Harvester site and to install sound mitigation measures not less than those provided by the elevated rail developments in the Eastern suburbs.



Supporting the Festival

We were delighted to have Brimbank Councillors Sam David and Thomas O'Reilly at the Festival along with RSL President Garry Collins and Chris O'Reilly who are shown with Melinda Mockridge at the site of the Airport Rail Link development.



Thanks to everyone

This Festival was organized on behalf of the Friends Group by Speroulla Christodoulou, the Events Coordinator, assisted by volunteers, Jemma and Suzanne. Neil Ta was our energetic host for the performances who also coordinated the construction of the stage and tents. We would also like to thank each of the performers, all the kids who sang, the refreshment providers, the Grand United Cricket Club members, the Brimbank District Girl Guides, and the fabulous Magic Word Fairies who undertook the spectacular face-painting of the kids!



Preserving our Heritage

In addition to making sure that everyone enjoyed themselves, the purpose of the Festival was to let everyone see how wonderful the Gardens are and to raise awareness of the need to protect our heritage. Former Presidents, Helen and Melinda were available to explain the history of the Gardens and to show some of the photographic archive we have collected. Other members of the Friends Group, Robyn, Rainer and Russell, also joined in to discuss the Gardens with visitors.



Catherine McDonald's Petition (on page 3) provides an opportunity for Community members to express their concerns to government about the potential harms that could result to the Gardens by the current Airport Rail Link Plan. We also encourage everyone to express their views to Heritage Victoria (as explained on page 3). The Friends believe that further consultation is needed to ensure that the heritage interests of the HV McKay Gardens are not adversely affected and that its value for the community is preserved.

If you like what we do, join us!

The annual subscription is just \$10.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary by email at:
contact@mckaygardens.com.au

and send an electronic funds transfer for \$10 to:
Name: Friends of the McKay Memorial Gardens
Bank: Westpac; **BSB** 033-085; **Account** 385640

If you REALLY like us – come onto the Committee to help keep the Friends Group alive and well!

More information is available from our Website
<https://www.mckaygardens.com.au>