

Newsletter

AUTUMN 2025



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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofMcKayGardens>

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Registration No A0050996B

Welcome to the festival edition of the Friends newsletter! We're proud of our festival, and its 10th year was undoubtedly the best yet. Thanks to the many families, friends and neighbours who arrived in force to enjoy the festivities. Thanks, also, to Brimbank City Council for its generous financial support, and also to Douglas Kay Real Estate for its promotional materials, Bunnings Sunshine and Officeworks Maribyrnong for providing prizes and advertising, and St John Ambulance Service and Victoria Police for their support.



The Festival was first introduced by the Friends of the Gardens in 2015 as a Picnic, designed to promote the Victorian Heritage-listed Gardens created in 1909 by the industrialist, Hugh Victor McKay – as a place at which his Harvester Factory workers could relax and enjoy the beautiful location in their spare time (see photo c. 1935 below).



The Friends continue to seek revision of Brimbank City Council's Strategic Management Plan for the Gardens as a member of the Strategic Management Group to ensure its continued adequacy in protecting the integrity of this wonderful heritage asset.

We've unfortunately experienced a spate of vandalism in the Gardens and Church reported to police and council. We also have people experiencing homelessness living in the gardens and have consulted Council as to how they are connecting them with support and alternative accommodation, and in ensuring safety for everyone.

Plans are afoot to install an artwork in the Gardens this year and we have made our preference for some connection with the garden's history known. The Airport Rail link is also back on the table and we'll be keeping a watchful eye on the impacts it might have on the Gardens, and lastly, we continue to improve our website and facebook pages for your information and enjoyment.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter and the photos of the 10th Festival. Be sure you don't miss out next year!

Speroulla Christodoulou, President.



Visitors were able to obtain information about the Friends Group from the Heritage Tent that also displayed some of the extensive collection of historical photos of the Gardens that the Friends and others have collected.

A multi-cultural marvel!

One of the main objectives of the Festival was to bring together representatives from the vast number of multi-cultural groups living in Brimbank who were able to present a diverse range of music and dance on the main stage. This year's performers included the 'Urumuri Burundian Drumming Group' and 'Sounds of Polynesia'.



As in previous Festivals, the stage came alive with dancing from around the world.



The Festival also provided an opportunity for the youngest members of Brimbank to show their performance skills acquired from Westend Performing Arts and Neil Ta's Music School.



Other performances included the 'Bonapasogit Indonesian dance group', 'Women of Brimbank' Indian dance group and 'Au Co' Vietnamese dance group'.



KIDS Corner

With so many children of varying ages at the Festival, the KIDS Corner was a hive of activity. In addition to Wizard Simsalabim, who once again told intriguing stories, Magical Fairies from Magic Words provided face-painting and Curbside Carnies gigantic bubble-blowing!



Circus Curbside and Micky Magic Trickstar provided their own unique entertainment, and various competitions were available with prizes from Yoyo's Lollies and Bunnings Sunshine.



Lynsey Hogan also had a stall with copies of her book 'Sunny & Bobo'!



FITNESS Corner and more



The FITNESS Corner provided a wide variety of activities for people of all ages including the North Sunshine Football Club's 'FootyClinic', 'Walking Football 4 Health Victoria', displays by Westside Gymnastics and the St John's Ambulance CPR training. Chasing gigantic bubbles with the help of Callista also kept everyone active!



This year, we also welcomed the Sunshine and District Historical Society Inc that provided a display outlining their activities and publications. The President of the Society, Dr John Pardy, was able to come to support the Friends Group and to inform the community of the important historical research that the Society does. Contact details are: secretary@sunshinehistoricalsociety.org.au



Once again, a range of refreshments were available from the food trucks including Cravings Food & Beverage, MDA Twista Potatoes, ice cream from Cruising Creams and coffee from Cherry Mouth Roasters of Brooklyn.

Preserving our Heritage

Ensuring that a heritage-listed garden is protected and adequately maintained involves effort and commitment from a wide range of people. The HV McKay Gardens and Church have faced many challenges over its 116-year history including damage to the plants through theft and drought (see photo from 2007 below), loss of land through property and infrastructure development, vandalism to the heritage signs, benches and buildings and failure to respect the Gardens by individuals forced to camp-out through poverty and homelessness.



With the firm encouragement of the Friends Group, the Local Council has responded to many of these concerns, the most important of which has been the funding and installation of an irrigation system (now essential due to climate change) and the provision of salaried Council Gardeners who have provided regular maintenance and development of the Gardens in accordance with the original design.

In 2017, the Council established a Strategic Management Plan for the Gardens to provide direction for the future management and development of the Gardens and to protect its State-registered Heritage status. Two members of the Friends, Helen Reid (representing the Church) and Rainer Linz (on behalf of the Friends) are members of the Group. The Management Plan is currently undergoing revision to ensure it meets the current threats to the preservation of the Gardens. These include the two major risks arising from the housing development adjacent to the Gardens and the likely acquisition of land and changes to the design of the Gardens due to the proposed Airport Rail Link works.

How the community can help

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.

If you would like to support the activities of the Friends in protecting the Gardens, you can become a member. The annual subscription is just \$10.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary 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



Becoming a member will keep you informed about the current state of the Gardens and how challenges to its existence are being addressed.

You might also like to join our Committee of Management to become actively involved in caring for, supporting community activities in the Gardens (such as our annual Festival) and improving the Gardens to guarantee its future.



More information is available from our Website

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or on our Facebook page

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