

MANAGEMENT PLANNING NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE ANBG'S DIRECTOR

The vision for the Australian National Botanic Gardens is taking shape. The national planning process over the last nine months has given me confidence that Australians see the possibilities and relevance of a national botanical institution. It is a vision that sees the Gardens inspiring and connecting Australians to our unique botanical heritage through leadership in science, education, horticulture and conservation.

Now is the time to suggest a way forward for the ANBG. The draft management plan is developing and laying out a future path for the ANBG's critical work in science, conservation and education.

Building sustainability is one of our goals and so appropriately this month we report on our efforts to secure water to help us manage and conserve our precious living collections. Our water issues have been a concern to us and our community for some time and we are pleased that a resolution has been found. Another goal is to showcase Australian plants and create an inspirational place for enjoyment and learning. In this issue, we highlight our role in a long-term national visitor study that helps to guide priorities for managing our visitor services. We are taking a rigorous approach to the living collection review which is underway. The value of our collection is more than aesthetic and developing a tool to assess its values has been a rewarding challenge. Read on to get an update on this important work.

Finally I would like to let people know that I am leaving the ANBG to pursue personal and other career interests. I would like to thank all stakeholders for their continuing support of the ANBG and for their considered inputs into this important planning process. Given the solid base of consultation and review, I hope that the new ANBG Management Plan will set a direction which will allow the Gardens to grow towards a sustainable future as a dynamic national institution.

Anne Duncan
Director



WHERE TO FROM HERE WITH THE ANBG PLANNING?

When the draft Management Plan is ready for public comment we will publish a notice in the Commonwealth Gazette, *The Australian* and *The Canberra Times*. Our website will have details on how to get a copy of the draft plan and we will email everyone who receives this newsletter.

If you would like to discuss the ANBG's management planning process, please contact:

Planning Officer
ANBG Management Plan
GPO Box 1777
Canberra, ACT 2601
Email: anbgplan@anbg.gov.au

LISTENING TO OUR VISITORS

How do adult visitors to the Australian National Botanic Gardens interact with the Gardens? What are the demographics of adult visitors to the Gardens? What motivates visitors to visit the Gardens? An understanding of visitor motivations and engagement with the Gardens' programs and services help us in our management and marketing.

Through the Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management, University of South Australia, the Gardens will be undertaking a visitor services evaluation in October, 2009. This survey follows an earlier study in 2007. This second study will provide important base-line data and contribute to a longitudinal study of the Gardens visitors. The base-line data will help us develop strategies to correct any deficiencies in visitor services; whilst the longitudinal data will gauge how well the Gardens has responded to issues raised in the previous survey.

VALUING THE LIVING COLLECTION – WHAT A CHALLENGE!

In the previous newsletter we wrote about the context to the living collections review and gave you a report on our progress. We said that we would develop a tool to evaluate our national living collection. This has involved extensive consultation with gardens staff and our advisory panel of external experts.

Valuing any collection is challenging, but few have faced the challenge of valuing a living collection. Working towards attributing a value to the ANBG living collection involved developing an evaluative scoring system against such criteria as conservation, education, interpretation, research, relevance to our new mission and the clarity of theme. One of the challenges has been to develop objective criteria whilst trying to capture all the values of the collection to the institution and the nation.



Horticulturalist Terry Conway assists with the annual plant-out at the ANBG. The use of annual plants contributes to the horticultural theme of our living collection



As a result of feedback on the proposed evaluative criteria and scoring system, we have made some changes. Gardens staff are now assessing several sections against these criteria in an attempt to highlight any issues in the scoring system. This scoring system will help to provide a value for the sections of the gardens and it will also be the basis for assessing the value of the individual plantings in the longer term.

We have held several meetings with staff groups within the ANBG and plan to meet with two more groups by early October. Some of the Friends of the ANBG have provided information on the various stories they tell to visitors about the gardens and the living collection. Our Friends have added depth to our understanding of the 'educational' value and criteria to assess it.

A living collection stocktake involves assigning a yellow tag to those plants that have an undetermined origin. These plants are then investigated and decisions are made on their value to the collection. Horticulturalist Julie Percival is one of a team of specialists who undertake this important process.

SEEKING WATER SOLUTIONS

Water use is one of the biggest challenges facing managers of botanic garden in Australia. The situation at the Australian National Botanic Gardens is no exception.

The National Capital Authority have recently provided a temporary abstraction licence for non-potable water from Lake Burley Griffin to irrigate our living collection. The welcome news was the result of successful discussions between the ANBG, National Capital Authority and the ACT Government. This means that the Gardens water infrastructure improvements can finally go ahead.

In the next month, we will be finalising planning and environmental approvals, in order to advertise a tender to upgrade the ANBG's internal water reticulation system and install a pipeline between the Gardens and Lake Burley Griffin. Construction is likely to commence early in the new year. This means we will be irrigating the Garden with non-potable water by summer 2010-11!

GARDEN STORIES

What stories should the Australian National Botanic Gardens be telling through its visitor services and programs? This question was addressed at a recent workshop attended by staff from the Gardens, Parks Australia, National Museum of Australia and Museum of Australian Democracy.

The draft Australian National Botanic Gardens goals were used as the stimulus to focus thinking about the key stories for the Gardens future interpretive and educational activities.

A range of stories was discussed from Indigenous bush food to Australian plants in art, music and literature. Other stories which captured participants imagination included:

- Telling why *ex situ* conservation is important/valuable
- Showcasing the Gardens research and why this research is relevant to all Australians
- The symbolic value of Australian plants
- The Australian story, linking Australian heritage with Australian culture
- The role of botanic gardens
- Plants are valuable resources – food, amenities, resources
- Weird plants with weird stories – the many facets to a single plant
- Climate change
- Biodiversity
- Innovative and sustainable landscape design
- Australian plants as inspiration.