

BGANZ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

24 November 2008

AGENDA ITEM 5: PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2007-08

The highlight of the past year has been the BGANZ Congress hosted by Hamilton Gardens in October 2007. This conference continued BGANZ's record of informative, well-attended and thoroughly enjoyable biennial meetings. I am most appreciative of the outstanding work of the Organising Committee led by Peter Sergel, Director of Hamilton Gardens, which ensured that the conference had an inspiring range of sessional themes and speakers, including three overseas keynote speakers - Sara Oldfield (Botanic Gardens Conservation International, London), Brian O'Neill (Golden Gate Park, San Francisco) and Scott Medbury (Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, New York). This was the first biennial Congress to be held in New Zealand, and many Australian participants took the opportunity to appreciate the quality and variety of local botanic gardens.

The membership of the BGANZ Council for 2007-09 was finalised at Council's meeting at the Congress. Under the BGANZ Constitution, Council comprises a representative from each Australian State and Territory, two representatives from New Zealand, and two representatives from the Australian capital-city gardens. These representatives are elected or appointed by their regional networks, and the Council office-holders are elected by the Councillors.

After considerable preparatory work by Siobhan Duffy (web contractor) and Virginia Berger (BGANZ Executive Officer), I was delighted to launch the BGANZ website at the Hamilton Congress. The website is the key information portal for BGANZ – current pages include information on regional networks, membership, conferences and meetings, an interactive forum, current news, issues of *The Botanic Garden*, and links to other relevant sites. Visit www.bganz.org.au to see the range of information available.

In February 2008 BGANZ entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of South Australia to support our co-operative activities in surveying visitor satisfaction and behaviour in regard to services at botanic gardens. A number of gardens on both sides of the Tasman are collaborating with Dr Gary Crilley at the University to undertake annual satisfaction surveys to assess and improve performance. The surveys, now in their second year, are proving informative and cost-effective, and new gardens are encouraged to join the program (BGANZ members receive a discount on the annual fee).

Regional activities have continued through the year, and BGANZ now has energetic groups in New Zealand, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In recognition of the growing strength of regional groups, Council is recommending that the BGANZ Constitution be amended so that these groups can be formally established and recognised. The relevant amendments to the Constitution will be presented for consideration at the AGM in November.

Three issues of *The Botanic Garden* were edited by Virginia Berger and distributed during the year. The newsletter is now published only on the BGANZ website, from where copies can be downloaded. Notification of the up-loading of each new issue is emailed to members. In addition, BGANZ New Zealand distributed two issues of its own

newsletter, which can also be accessed via the website. I am most grateful for the work of the editors and contributors in preparing these informative publications.

The year ahead has plenty of opportunities for BGANZ. A particularly important one is likely to be joining with the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens (CHABG) in implementing a climate change strategy for botanic gardens. Given the millions of visitors passing through our gates each year, the hundreds of thousands of school students attending our education programs, and the credibility we have as plant experts, we are in a prime position – indeed, we have a responsibility - to inform and inspire our communities to take action to mitigate climate change. CHABG has developed a strategy which will be considered for endorsement at the meeting in November of the Natural Resources Ministerial Council, a high-level trans-Tasman committee involving ministers from state and national governments.

Regional groups have plans for conferences and workshops in 2008-09 – and several in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have already taken place in the past two months. Planning is well advanced for the next Congress to be held at Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens from 8-11 October 2009. It is very pleasing to see such active and committed supporters of BGANZ – but the more members we have, the more we can do. Make sure your garden is a member – and join yourself as an individual member!

I thank my fellow Councillors, members of the committees of regional groups, our Executive Officer, Virginia Berger, and everybody who has contributed to making 2007-08 such a successful year for their dedication and support for BGANZ.

Philip Moors
President
BGANZ
October 2008