

**FETHERSTON GARDENS FRIENDS**  
**FGF AGM 10 SEPTEMBER 2015**  
**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES FOR 2014-15**

**BY TREVOR WILSON, CONVENER, FETHERSTON GARDENS FRIENDS**

During 2014-15, Fetherston Gardens Friends continued their dedicated efforts to restore, refurbish and maintain Fetherston Gardens. As a result of the high number of volunteer hours achieved, FGF was nominated among the leading volunteer groups in the ACT in May 2015, although we did not win the top award.

The first large-scale public event in the gardens – in the form of a Family Fun Day fund-raising event – was held on 22 February 2015. With the focus on family-oriented activities (petting zoo, face painting, jumping castle). The Family Fun Day was a great success, and far exceeded our expectation in almost every way. More than 400 adults, and at least the same number of children attended. The high number attending attests to the value the community places on such an attractive, and universally accessible, public asset. The specific purposes of the event were:

- to raise funds for the ongoing work of the Fetherston Gardens Friends volunteers group;
- to encourage more members of the community to sign on as volunteers;
- and to raise the public profile of the gardens, which have only been open to the public since October 2013.

The Fun Day event was very much a collaborative community event: sponsors, or providing assistance in some way were: Defence Housing Australia (whose Fetherston Ridge Housing Estate adjoins the gardens, and from which recycled storm water goes into a large recycling tank DHA built in the gardens; the Weston Creek Community Council; Rotary (both Weston Creek Rotary Club and Tuggeranong Rotary Club); Raiders Football Club, of which DHA is a sponsor and where FGF holds its monthly meetings; the local Bees for ACT Group, which meets regularly at Orana School beside the Gardens; the ACT Council of the Ageing (COTA); the Weston Garden Centre; and Mirvac/Coolman Court Shopping Centre; and of course the media (not only *The Chronicle*, but also ABC Radio 666 Garden Show and 2CC Garden Gurus; and the *Canberra Times* journalist Susan Parsons).

With generous funding from DHA, we printed more information brochures about the gardens. The gardens now feature on two websites, one is the ACT Government's public gardens website; and second, the Weston Creek Community Council website, where FGF provides all content related to the gardens; we also have a Facebook page (or two).

On Family Fun Day, Fetherston Gardens Friends volunteers provided the first-ever tours of Fetherston Gardens for members of the public (We had done tours previously for a number of garden groups visiting the gardens privately, but not for the general public).

The gardens are gradually becoming more of a feature of community life in Canberra, and especially Weston Creek. Three outdoor weddings were held in the gardens in the 2014 spring season, and receive positive informal feedback from those concerned. Two local children's play groups met periodically in the gardens. Some local walking groups also used the gardens from time to time. Local residents are using the gardens to exercise their dogs, for walking. Worth recording is that no incidents or issues involving the safety and well-being of visitors was reported during the 12-month period.

FGF maintained their focus on improving the overall amenity of the gardens. With support from the Parks and City Services, additional table settings were installed in the gardens. TAMS/PCS also supported the installation of improved signage for the gardens on Heysen Street and in the gardens.

FGF continued to monitor conditions in the gardens closely throughout the year, informing TAMS/PCS staff of any important matters affecting the gardens. We still hope we can find the means to fund the construction inside the gardens of a modest information centre and public toilets in the gardens. Such a building would provide a place to store our tools securely.

FGF continued its outreach activities with various Canberra garden groups, emphasising the education role the gardens can play. We have organised tours of Fetherston Gardens by other garden groups such as the Friends of the ACT Botanical Gardens. Canberra media organisations continue to be interested in the gardens.

Relations with our key stakeholders and neighbours. The gardens continue to receive strong support from the Weston Creek Community Council. We maintain close working relations with TAMS/PCS in the ACT Government; and our immediate neighbours, the Islamic School of Canberra, and Defence Housing Australia (DHA). We also maintain contact as necessary with Orana School and with the ANU. Discussions with DHA about a memorandum of understanding as a basis for our long-relationship with DHA are ongoing.

FGF was successful in winning two Community Grants in 2014-15, an ANZAC Centenary Grant for the construction of a Gallipoli Garden inside the gardens, with the support of local MP Gai Brodtmann and the Department of Veterans' Affairs; and an ACT Government Community Support and Infrastructure grant for improved publicity materials.

We are most grateful for the continued support and backing from the Weston Creek Community Council. Our standing with the ACT Government is certainly helped by this strong WCCC support. WCCC assistance has helped us financially, with networking and relationships with other community groups, in hosting garden information on their website, and posting our public notices. Finally, we are immensely grateful to all our volunteers, from Weston Creek and some from much further afield, without whose help we could not be effective.

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