



Annual Report 2020-2021

It was another year dominated by Covid lockdowns! Bili Nursery continued to propagate and supply plants thanks to hard-working staff and a skeleton crew of volunteers however work largely stopped in the Park with Parks Victoria applying restrictions for all volunteering. Work for the Dole also ceased.

At the same time, frequent rain benefitted our indigenous plants which grew well and produced rich floral displays but the level of weed growth was unprecedented and will take years to bring back under control.

The positives were the number of people who flocked to the park, many discovering it for the first time.

The Gardening Australia episode featuring the Park was filmed in December, and broadcast in May – a definite highlight of the year and doubtless a factor in bringing more folk to the Park. For some time GA used our photos of indigenous plants on their Facebook site and accredited them to Westgate Biodiversity.

Bili Nursery

In 2020, demand for our plants was greater than supply, highlighting the importance of a new, bigger nursery and exploring ways of making the best use of space. Clean-up weekends and skip loads of accumulated 'stuff' were removed.

A mouse plague in the nursery destroyed seeds and halted propagation for a time and required steel cages over propagation beds costing \$1,500.

The CoPP renewed the lease for the nursery in Williamstown Road for another 3 years.

We acquired two new big customers - Elsternwick Park ordered 20k plants, mostly for their wetlands and we now



supply a small range of 'edible' indigenous plants to Melbourne Bush Foods and the revenue from these sales has grown to over 30% of our total nursery income.

New banners were produced for Williamstown Road fence and plant labels with photos and information on each species are now in use in the nursery.

Governance

We welcomed two new members to the Committee of Management - Hannah Carle who joined in March, and Andy Webster in June. We suspended sub-committees in Nov because our numbers on the committee were small and moved back to monthly CoM meetings.

In May, we held a very useful strategy day for members, volunteers and staff in the Port Education Centre (the results of which are presented at the AGM).

An application was made for us to have Deductible Gift Recipient Status and the gift fund committee was set up for this purpose.

We improved our agenda and minute recording templates and adopted a central document management system on Drive.

Seventeen new members joined during the year.

A significant bequest of \$14,000 was gratefully received from the estate of Tony Flude and we will use this for a special tribute to his work when a suitable project is identified.

Bili Landcare at Westgate Park

We remain hopeful that the City of Melbourne will apply to take over management of Westgate Park and meetings were held during the year with the CoM, and with Parks Vic and the CoM at which it was said that direct expenditure on the park by PV was just \$7,000 a year - spent on mowing and toilet cleaning. This compares with our expenditure on the Park in 2018-19 of \$166,000!

There was no progress on the all-important move to the Wharf Road Triangle but at least the City of Melbourne has agreed to facilitate this should they take over the Park.

We were advised that Landcare Australia would be winding down their management of corporate volunteering which is expected to reduce corporate activity overall and limit our income from this source.

In 2019 we were advised that fire service testing for Westgate Bridge would mean the release of several thousand litres of potable water into the Yarra River. Vic Roads agreed to our request to redirect this water into the Park and has supplied water tanks and piping to them. The remaining work on a pipeline to the Southern Wetlands is to be done by PV but this has yet to be implemented.

We approached the Port of Melbourne during the year about the parlous state of the extensive strip of indigenous planting along Todd Road that forms an all-important nature link between the foreshore and the Park. We pointed out that PoM had given an undertaking to maintain this landscape. Some improvements have been made and we will keep watch over progress. The link is clearly functioning for birds as the group of Superb Fairy Wrens sighted there recently will attest.

Of more concern is the Port's 2050 Development Strategy, which embeds a rail freight line, in part along the existing alignment with the likelihood that it will cut off the current opening under the bridge and access to the river section. It will also take over the eastern end of the Southern Wetlands.

In June, PV announced that all volunteers at the Park would be required to have Working With Children Checks, amongst other new requirements. Whilst WWCC are not unreasonable for staff and volunteer leaders of work groups, this blanket requirement will be onerous to manage and a likely deterrent for volunteers, and there is currently a long wait time for their issue.



Thanks

Thanks to all our volunteers who helped with pricking out, weeding, seed-cleaning, sweeping the floor, sorting, chucking out rubbish, picking up litter, planting, more weeding, cleaning pots, cleaning equipment, being cheerful, coming along to sub-committee meetings. We are so grateful to you all!

Thanks to the WaterWatch crew who tested when they could. Thanks to the diligent bird survey group, their monthly reports, and the gorgeous photos.

Thanks to our staff who distanced, wore masks, kept themselves and others safe, lifted production, found new and better ways of propagating, reached out, were helpful to customers, were entertaining and informative on social media, dealt with mice and sprinkler failures, were enthusiastic about our mission and full of ideas.

Thanks to members of the Committee of Management for their careful deliberation and guidance on some challenging issues, for putting up with lengthy Zoom meetings and always being prepared to pitch in.

Lyn Allison



Our Committee of Management

- Lyn Allison, President
- Rosey Haas, Treasurer
- Angelo Indovino, Vice President
- Meg Taylor, Secretary
- Janet Bolitho
- Hannah Carle
- Andy Webster

Our Staff

- Nic Brinkley, Manager
- Karen Sher
- Holden Sayer
- Mars Reid
- Ella Ryan