

MANAGEMENT PLANNING NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE ANBG'S DIRECTOR

Welcome to the fifth edition of our 'E' Management Planning Newsletter.

Our flurry of consultative activity on the future directions of the ANBG has slowed down. We are now analysing the findings from our extensive community consultation.

This newsletter gives you an update on our discussions with community members here in Canberra and across Australia. Our discussions revealed strong feelings for the Australian National Botanic Gardens and a range of opinions as to what was expected of a national botanical institution.

In this issue we focus on the discussions with the Canberra community about the ANBG's living collection that will help inform our review of the ANBG's living collection policy.

We are currently analysing the results of our in-depth consultation with botanic garden colleagues across Australia. We look forward to reporting some of these findings in the June newsletter.

We greatly appreciate the support our colleagues and community members throughout the country have given us. Thank you all for your strong commitment to helping us to plan the future of the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Anne Duncan
Director

IN BRIEF

Important dates / reminders

- National 'E' consultation with Australia's regional botanic gardens in June 2009

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

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NATIONAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS REVEAL STRONG OPINIONS

A diverse range of people participated in discussion groups we coordinated across the country as part of our national consultation. Overall, they gave strong support to the need for a national botanic garden in Australia. People valued a national botanic garden as a repository and important reference collection for Australia's biodiversity, an attraction to showcase Australia's rich plant heritage to visiting dignitaries and tourists, and as an inspirational place for science and education.

Community members said that they expect a national botanic garden in Australia to have several key traits, including:

- international standing in science
- leadership and a model for other botanic gardens in horticulture, science and education
- maintaining a representative collection of Australia's plants
- a living collection with a clear focus
- national collections including a seed bank and herbarium, and
- an institution that tells the Australian Story.

They also expressed an expectation that a national botanical institution will undertake a range of activities including:

- engaging in intense academic research
- increasing awareness of politicians of the important work of botanic gardens
- promoting Australia's flora and campaigning for state education departments to incorporate biodiversity into the curricula
- promoting and profiling other Australian botanic gardens
- balancing the needs of the local community with a national role, and
- maintaining a high public and media profile.



The Australian community thought the ANBG should consider balancing the needs of the local community with fulfilling its national role

While people held strong expectations of the traits and the activities that a national botanical institution should undertake, many perceived that the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) did not currently meet all of these. For example, there was strong opinion that the ANBG had a poor profile in Canberra and throughout Australia in comparison to other national institutions.

The ANBG staff will consider carefully the many important points raised in these Australia-wide discussions in developing the management plan.

CANBERRA COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE THEIR SAY

A broad spectrum of Canberrans participated in topic-specific discussion groups in April.

Last month we reported on attracting 18-30 year olds to the ANBG. We led another discussion to gain insight into what people want and expect from the ANBG's Living Collection, which we report on in this issue.

Many of the opinions on the value of the living collection reflect the ANBG's current main roles, i.e. conservation, research, horticulture and education, awareness raising and increasing appreciation of Australia's rich flora. One participant stated:

"I see the educational role not only in a fairly formal sense, but also encouraging a general interest and appreciation by the casual visitor to the gardens, who by her experience here will gain an appreciation of Australian flora in the broad sense."

Participants had a strong view that the national collection should be "representative" of Australia's biodiversity. People had conflicting opinions between ideological expectations of a representative collection of Australia's biodiversity versus expectations that consider the current resource allocation and Canberra's challenging climate conditions.

"Do we want to have a broad representation of all the Myrtaceae [family] and all the Proteaceae [family]? And, at the same time, do we want to have a broad representation of the major environmental groupings in Australia? I think it's a fundamental question and it has to be addressed in the management plan"

"Given the extent of the area of Australia and the difficulties of trying to grow a lot of plants from different climates, different soil types and so on, that would probably be quite a good model in Australia; were we super-affluent."

"A national collection needs to be as wide as it can be, under the climatic constraints that we have here in Canberra."

Those with a special interest in particular plants emphasised the value of presenting the living collection in family and genera groupings.

From the perspective of education and the visitor experience, discussion group members felt that there was value in presenting some of the collection in ecological groupings. They also recognised the challenges in creating these environments:

"I really think we need an annexe of a flat site, the topography feels wrong. You can't have woodlands on a slope, as easily – or grasslands. They feel like they should be in a valley somewhere. So you really need to acquire some flat grounds somewhere."

Worldwide, living collections displayed as ecological groupings are increasingly common in botanic gardens.



The Rainforest Gully is an extremely successful presentation of a rainforest environment