

# MANAGEMENT PLANNING NEWSLETTER

## MESSAGE FROM THE ANBG'S DIRECTOR

Welcome to the sixth edition of our 'E' Management Planning Newsletter. Thank you to our newsletter readers who have written to us recently and provided feedback. Some of their comments were about our findings from the national consultation presented in previous newsletters, while others were about the rigour of the planning process:

*I was really interested to see what people had to say about the role of their national botanic gardens.*

*Congratulations on your progress with the ANBG Management Planning Review...I participated in two of the community forums and appreciate reading the Newsletters, my impression is that this review is truly delving with an open mind and promises to deliver something comprehensive and worthwhile.*

This month we report on some of our findings from in-depth consultations with botanic garden colleagues across Australia. We also update you on the review of the ANBG's Living Collection and explore the ideas that emerged in the national and local consultation about telling 'The Australian Story' at the ANBG.

**Anne Duncan**  
Director

## IN BRIEF

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

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## THE AUSTRALIAN STORY

During the local and national consultation, community members said that the ANBG should feature 'The Australian Story' within its Communication and Visitor Services programs. 'The Australian Story' is a complex concept and there were many ideas presented by community members about the 'chapters' of this story. It was seen as the cultural link between Australia's natural heritage and cultural heritage - a story that connects Australia's rich plant biodiversity and its landscape with its national identity. The story would also draw together the nation's development and economy, as well as Australian traditional and contemporary society.

*...provide an overall view that isn't available generally in the states, an environmental history, all those things which are national, rather than located in Darwin or [elsewhere].*

*...plants, particularly the ones for the early colonisers, were important in the settlement and were important for the national identity.*

*Collections of native plants within the Australian culture that have been important economically and [provided] food fibre and support for the early colonies and recent commercialisation of some species.*

*...an exhibition on the history of climate change - the past climate, what there is now, and what we foresee in the future.*

*Aboriginal medicinal plants... Because that's part of history and that's, to me, what the Australia's main garden, Commonwealth garden would be about...*

The ANBG staff are developing an interpretation and education strategy, and 'The Australian Story' is a concept that will assist us to fulfil our role as both a scientific and cultural institution.

## THE ANBG LIVING COLLECTION REVIEW

Previous reviews of the ANBG's living collection have primarily focussed on the success of section plantings or themes. However, the current review is broader, examining the value of the collection, its role within the national and international botanic gardens community and opportunities and strategies for future management. We have appointed an external advisory panel of experts in ecology, horticulture, plant conservation and botanic gardens management to oversee the review process.

We have recently completed a census of the living collection, an important resource for informing the living collection review. We are now examining information on our current number of taxa, specimens, families, threatened plants, cultivars and nursery and seed collections.

The ANBG has engaged Mark Richardson as a consultant on the living collection review. Mark is a former ANBG Curator and more recently worked for London-based Botanic Gardens Conservation International. Mark is advising on the development of evaluative criteria for assessing the values of the living collection in terms of conservation, science, horticulture, education, research and landscape. In addition, we have engaged Sue Mathams to review Australia's biodiversity priorities, so that we can align the ANBG strategies for biodiversity conservation with Government and scientific priorities.

We are reviewing the existing themes of the gardens and developing some suggestions for new and amended themes, definitions of terms and descriptions. Within the next month, we will continue working towards finalising the evaluative criteria, as well as undertaking stakeholder consultation with internal gardens staff and the external advisory panel.

## BOTANIC GARDENS COLLEAGUES DISCUSS A NATIONAL ROLE FOR THE ANBG

As part of our national consultation process in April and May this year we held conversations with more than 30 senior staff in botanic gardens throughout Australia. Many of our botanic gardens colleagues thought that there was a national role for the ANBG.

This role was to encourage national collaboration and response to issues relating to the protection and sustainable use of Australia's rich biodiversity. The recently released *National Strategy and Action Plan for the Role of Australia's Botanic Gardens in Adapting to Climate Change* was considered to be an important example where the ANBG provided leadership to facilitate this collaboration.

Botanic gardens staff told us that the ANBG, as an Australian Government institution, is well placed to access information on national initiatives and priorities and facilitate further collaboration with botanic gardens around the country.

Our colleagues also pointed to a poor public awareness of the importance of botanic gardens as unique multidisciplinary institutions, with their role in ex situ conservation often not recognised or valued. They saw a potential role for the ANBG to raise the national profile of botanic gardens and showcase their conservation work.



Continuing to develop collaborative strategies is important to Australia's botanic gardens community



Sarah Fethers is the ANBG's Seed Bank Manager. Across Australia, botanic gardens staff are discussing an Australian seedbank partnership so as to take a collaborative approach to integrated conservation

# EXPECTATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Science is one of the defining characteristics of botanic gardens and our national consultation emphasised this. As Australia's first botanic gardens to specialise in native plants, there is an expectation that the ANBG will show leadership in research:

*I think that the National Botanic Garden should be the leading research institution in terms of the conservation, the horticulture, the understanding of that flora.*

However, the national consultation revealed that many staff from Australia's capital city botanic gardens are confused about the relationship between the ANBG and the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research, a collaborative research institute with CSIRO. As a result there is a perception that the ANBG is not actively involved in research. This has emphasised the need to improve our scientific profile. We will use these important findings from the national consultation to inform our strategies for improving how we promote and publish our significant scientific work.



Scientific research is a defining characteristic of botanic gardens