



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

FRIENDS OF GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS' 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Friday 4 April 2025

Acknowledgments

Councillor Srechko Kontelj OAM, Mayor, and **Councillors**, City of Greater Geelong
Jayne Salmon, Founder and past President, **Jan Cheyne**, Vice President, Committee and
Members, Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Distinguished Guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we stand – the Wadawurrung People – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

The towering Chilean wine palm growing in these gardens is an impressive sight.

One of the largest of its family, this species can live for several hundred years and is endemic to a tiny area in central Chile.

It makes you wonder what Charles Darwin was thinking when he called it an 'ugly tree'.

Sadly, over the last few hundred years, the population of Chilean wine palms in the wild has fallen by 98%.

Chosen as your logo, this tree's history – planted here by Daniel Bunce over 170 years ago – goes to the heart of your organisation's mission.

Conserving these brilliant and curious instances of flora is not only a service to the local community, but also adds to our broader understanding of the natural world.

There are many other examples found within this Botanic Garden, such as the Dragon Blood Tree and the Canary Island Laurel, which also face endangerment in their natural habitats.

Beyond the preservation of individual plant species, providing accessibility and public understanding through The Geelong Botanic Gardens is fundamental for its continued success.

The distinct evolution of these gardens over the centuries highlights the delicate and changing nature of our environment.

There's no better example of this than the 21st century garden with its drought resistant plants – a solemn yet striking reflection of modern environmental demands.

Just like the Chilean wine palm, each part of the garden has its own unique story – both as a specimen and as a piece of history.

Without these insights, we would fail to fully appreciate the profound beauty of this place.

Throughout your forty years, this community action group has made The Geelong Botanic Gardens and its charm more welcoming than ever.

Through your newsletter *Jubaea*, the School of Botanical Art, the Plant Nursery and the Library, visitors are leaving with a wealth of insights they can take into their own backyards.

You are not only increasing admiration of these gardens, but also allowing for their continued contemporary use – just as we are doing today.

As you care for this place, you preserve the meanings embedded within these gardens and allow them to live on and be enjoyed by future generations.

I am certain your commitment to preserving Victoria's rich cultural and environmental history will continue in the decades to come.

I look forward to shortly making a small contribution to this ever-growing history with the planting of the Glastonbury Thorn.

Thank you.