

Newsletter

AUTUMN 2024



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Community Festival 2024

The 7th McKay Gardens Community Festival was organized by the President of the Friends of the HV McKay Memorial Gardens, local resident, Speroulla Christodoulou, who was supported by the Friends Group Media Officer, Melanie Abdeen and other members, Rainer Linz and Neil Head. Two of the founders of the Group, Helen Reid and Ros Savio, also attended and provided advice on the State-listed Heritage Gardens and showed some of the extensive collection of historical photos of the Gardens that the Friends have collected.



The Festival was held at the Gardens in Anderson Road, Sunshine on Sunday 17 March 2024. Around one hundred people participated including many families with young children from Sunshine and beyond who once again were entertained by the Festival Wizard, *Simsalabim*.



A musical treat!



We were entertained this year by the fast-paced and rhythmical beats of the amazing Urumuri Burundian Drumming Club (above) who showed us how drums are played in Africa to communicate in war, peace, birth, death, planting and harvesting, and the quirky, fun and whimsical children's performance artists, the Sunshine Street Band, who recruited children onto the stage to join their musical ensemble (below).



This year's food and beverage vendors were Gigi's Homemade, Ice Cream Delights and Specialty Coffee Anywhere. Stalls included Jake's handmade jewelry, and the Friends Group information booth and historical photo display. The Friends signed up new members and sold raffle tickets to support the work we do for the Gardens, and gave away free raffle tickets.



A vibrant display of dancing!

As in previous Festivals, the stage came alive with dancing from around the world. Community groups performing traditional dances were Au Co - Vietnamese dance, Bonapasogit / Widya Luvtaris - Indonesian dance, Women of Brimbank - Bollywood Indian dance, and Dantilla Bellydance Troup- exotic middle eastern dance.



In addition to the community dancers, the main stage was an open mic for aspiring young singers keen to jump up on stage and perform karaoke to their hearts content. They were given the stage and many children jumped at the chance. Every child who attended Singalong for the Kids by Neil Ta's Music school received a free gift, making sure no-one went home empty handed.



KID's corner

Everyone loved the KID's Corner where the fairies from Enchanted Words flitted in and painted all the children's faces and wizard Simsalabim greeted the children taking them on an all-day adventure of stories and magic from one end of the Gardens to the other. Every year many children ask us if the wizard is coming. Other activities for the kids included an Arts and Craft Prize, and competition to count the number of lollies in the Jars with prizes donated by Bunnings, Sunshine! There were also hoola hoops, skipping ropes and inflatable swimming rings tossed into the Gardens to play with and take home if you wanted.



FITNESS corner!

In the FITNESS Corner, the Sunshine North Football Club promoted their Auskick Roadrunners program, football kick-to-kick and handball games were played, and the Brimbank District Girl Guides set up their fun obstacle course where children had books stamped at each stage to receive a treat at the end for their efforts.



We were joined for the second year by the very important St Johns Ambulance Service CPR Lab/Lab Lite who gave CPR demonstrations and life-saving CPR training to many festival goers.



Strategic Management Group

In 2017, Brimbank City Council established a Strategic Management Plan for the HV McKay Memorial Gardens to provide direction for the future management and development of the Gardens and to protect its State-registered Heritage status. The Plan states that ‘the Gardens should be maintained to the highest possible standards to increase visitation to the Gardens and become a feature garden in the western suburbs of Melbourne.’

The Strategic Management Group includes representatives from: Brimbank Council Parks and Gardens Management; the Friends of H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens; the Sunshine and District Historical Society; the Sunshine Business District; the Sunshine Presbyterian Church; and the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society.

The Strategic Management Group’s most recent meeting was held on the 22nd April and attended by two members of the Friends, Helen Reid (representing the Church) and Rainer Linz (on behalf of the Friends).



A number of issues of importance to the Gardens were discussed, including an update on the Airport Link works, the adjacent housing development, additional lighting for the Gardens and a discussion of the upcoming arts project.

The Airport Link works came to a dramatic halt last year due to the condition of the State’s finances. To date, the land north of the straight six path has been reappropriated, with a number of trees marked for removal to the grave concern of the Friends.



We now understand that the State Government has engaged new contractors who will operate under a revised program of work. What this means for the Gardens is still unclear. In the meantime the Friends are continuing to keep an eye out for any applications that may be made to Heritage Victoria impacting the Gardens.

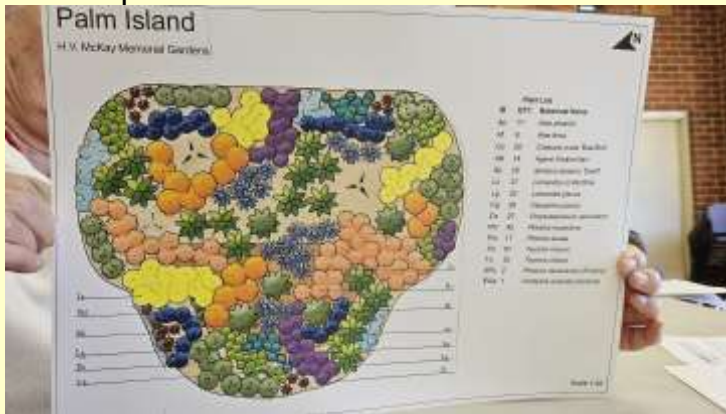
Works on the housing development adjacent to the Gardens have commenced. While the plans have been developed, the timelines and details remain unclear. There are plans to construct a playground near to the pedestrian bridge in stage one of the development, and we have been able to confirm that public toilets, accessible to visitors to the Gardens, are a required part of stage 2. This is great news as the Friends have raised the idea on many occasions previously. However, the Friends remain concerned about the type of fencing that will separate the development from the Gardens, and of course, who will pay for it.



Plans to install additional lighting in the Gardens as a safety measure have been under discussion for a number of years already. So we were most disappointed to learn that this has been deferred in the council budget until the 2028-29 financial year. In other words it won't be the next council, but the one after that which will be responsible for any decision. We are calling for public submissions to the council budget process to have the lighting plans reprioritised.

Council provided some good news to the Group about the proposed Arts project to install a public sculpture in the Gardens. This has also been under discussion for a number of years. The budget and selection process are currently being finalised, and we are pleased to report that a member of the Friends will sit on the selection panel. This is an exciting project that will add value to the Gardens.

We invite our members and the public to come and see the new Quince Walk planting at the northern edge of the bowls lawn. This is a significant new planting, and there are further plans to develop the palm tree island bed in the Garden's centre. As the plans entail a modification of the bed this will be subject to a heritage permit. We would like to congratulate the Gardens staff for their important work.



Supporting the Festival

The Friends Group organises the annual McKay Gardens Community Festival with financial support through Brimbank City Council's competitive festival grants program, and in-kind support from members of the Friends, Bunnings Sunshine, Officeworks Maribyrnong and Douglas Kay Real Estate Sunshine. The Festival provides a reminder of the original aims of the industrialist, HV McKay, in donating the land for the creation of the Gardens in 1909 for the benefit of the workers at the Sunshine Harvester Works and their families. 115 years later, the Gardens continue to provide a place for the community to enjoy themselves in a beautiful, serene, garden environment.



Preserving our Heritage



In addition to making sure that everyone enjoyed themselves, the purpose of the Festival was to let everyone see how wonderful the Gardens are and to raise awareness of the need to protect our heritage.

If you like what we do, Please join us!

The annual subscription is just \$10.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary by email at: contact@mckaygardens.com.au

and send an electronic funds transfer for \$10 to:
Name: Friends of the McKay Memorial Gardens
Bank: Westpac; **BSB** 033-085; **Account** 385640

If you REALLY like us - become a member of the Committee of Management to help keep the Friends Group alive and well and to ensure the protection of the Gardens into the future!



More information is available from our Website
<https://www.mckaygardens.com.au>
or on our Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofMcKayGardens>