



OPERATIONAL PLAN

Overview.

This document has two purposes:

- (i) To provide Committee members with an abbreviated review of the operations of the GCA with particular emphasis on the last three financial years ending 30th June 2017, 2018 and 2019, and
- (ii) As an introduction to the formal Operational Plan for calendar year 2020.

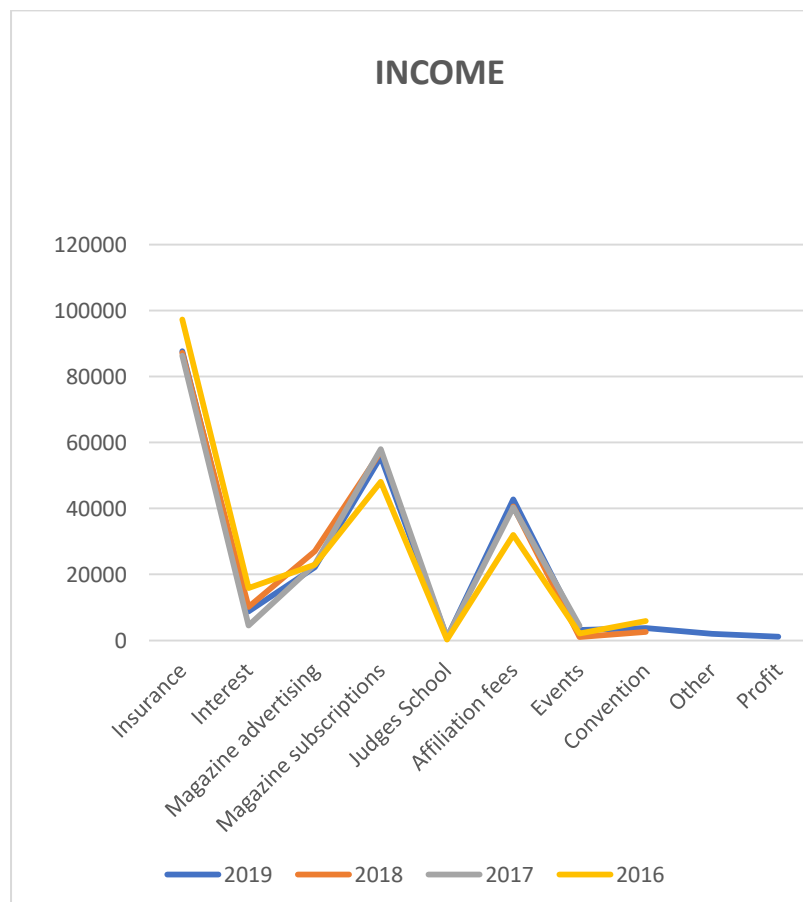
Sources of information used in this document are the Annual Reports for the Garden Clubs of Australia for these three years and the minutes and reports of the Committee in the period October 2017 to August 2019.

Where assumptions have been made in preparing this plan, appropriate attention is drawn to those assumptions.

The document should also set the agenda for activity by the GCA in 2020.

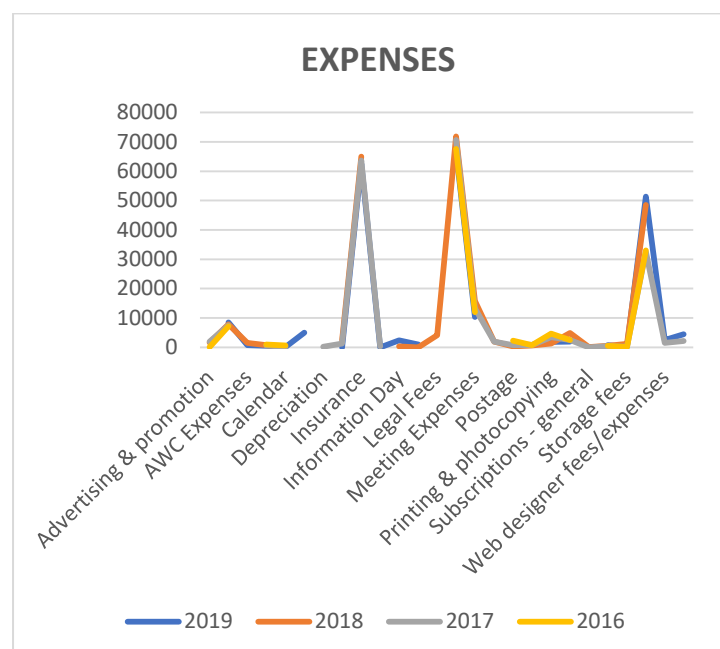
GCA Finances

The GCA has four main sources of income, insurance cover for affiliates, magazine subscriptions, affiliation fees and magazine advertising; all other sources are minor in comparison.



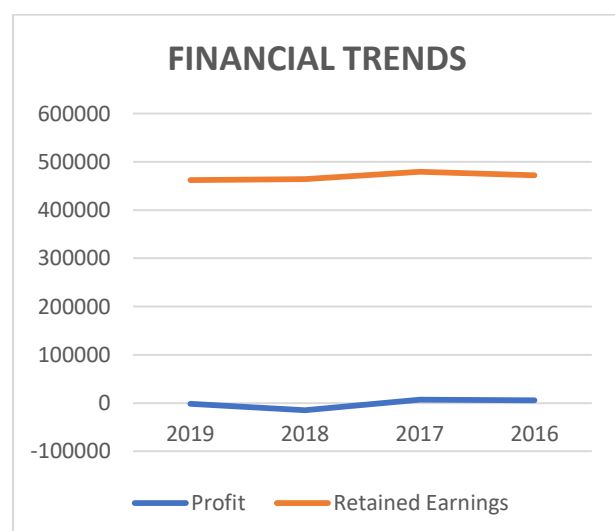
In the period for which data is available to prepare this document, there has been no significant change in income.

Similarly, there are no significant changes in the major areas of expenditure- Insurance, magazine, printing & postage, and travelling expenses. There are additional categories of expenditure appearing in different years but they represent insignificant amounts in relation to the overall pattern of expenditure.



It would seem that the GCA financial position is unlikely to change significantly unless radical change is introduced to increase new income streams, reduce existing expenditure in selected areas, or achieve a significant increase in the number of associations affiliated with the GCA.

It can be stated with some confidence that under existing modes of operation, the GCA is probably achieved an equilibrium between membership and income.



Insurance

Our insurance arrangement on behalf of affiliates is said to be the most competitively priced system available.

Revenue from insurance, while not the highest of our income streams, provides the highest return to the GCA.

We have very little capacity to affect financial outcomes of the insurance scheme other than ensuring a high proportion of affiliates participate in our scheme. Participation in the scheme is not a condition of affiliation with the GCA.

In the last three years the Committee has not been advised of the gross numbers or percentage of affiliates participating in the GCA insurance scheme. It should be noted that a significant percentage of GCA affiliates in the relevant states are also members of either the Western Australian Horticultural Council or the Queensland Council of Garden Clubs. While it is unclear as to whether the Western Australian Horticultural Council offers insurance to members (it is a member of the GCA) the Queensland Council of Garden Clubs certainly does.

Recently we have begun to receive returns on event insurance which will bring some increase in revenue from insurance.

“Our Gardens” Magazine

This is the ‘flagship’ publication of the Garden Clubs of Australia. It is published four times per year (Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring) and, in addition to reporting on club activities, publicising club events, it covers horticultural advice and a range of articles on gardens and garden experiences across Australia and internationally.

A complimentary copy is sent to all affiliates. Clubs may also purchase additional copies and arrange for individual members to subscribe. Personal and gift subscriptions are available for purchase.

Members of affiliates subscription is \$15.00 per annum

Additional affiliate subscriptions are \$15.00 per annum each

Personal/Gift subscriptions are \$20.00 per annum or \$50.00 for 3 years.

In May 2019 the Committee was advised that current subscriptions were as follows-

667 individual \$15.00 subscribers	\$10,005
508 one year or 3-year subscribers ¹	\$ 7,620
2207 club subscriptions (2929 – 718 clubs)	\$33,105
TOTAL	\$50,730²

The Financial Report of the 2018 – 2019 Financial year reports that total revenue from the Magazine is \$77,854 (which includes advertising revenue) while expenses totalled \$66,804 returning a profit of \$11,050 for the financial year.

This represents a profit in the order of \$1.50 per magazine dispatched.

Other GCA Activities

Non-financial activities of the GCA also need to be reviewed as part of this operational plan to allow the Committee the opportunity to review operations and make judgments as to whether any particular action should be considered or additional support be provided to improve the efficiency of the GCA operation.

Two areas in particular will be covered.

- Membership
- Zones

Membership

In the 2018 Annual Report of the Garden Clubs of Australia it was reported that membership as at 30th June 2018 was 713 affiliates representing 54,430 members. In the Annual Report of 30th June

¹ For the purposes of this calculation it is assumed all subscribers are \$15 subscribers

² This figure is not at a significant variance from that reported in the 2018 – 2019 Annual Report

2019 membership was reported at 718 with a significant reduction in the number of resignations during the financial year.

The membership secretary reported in the 2018 Annual Report that 32 membership packs had been provided to interested parties and in 2019 Annual Report 41 membership packs had been distributed.

While it is understood that gardening organisations across Australia who may be interested in joining the GCA may take some time to decide to take that action, the return on the investment of time and effort by the membership secretary in this endeavour can only be described as very poor. This suggests that the GCA Committee needs to review process and practices in support of the membership secretary's efforts.

Zones

The Garden Clubs of Australia divides its affiliates into 52 Zones (including a postal zone) largely on geographic lines; each zone is to have a zone coordinator to assist affiliates with in the Zone (Constitution Cl. 15.10).

The Committee has received advice since November 2017 that 43 zone coordinators serve affiliates with 9 vacancies; 5 zone coordinators serve two zones each. Effectively this means 19 zones or almost 37% without a zone coordinator focussing on their specific needs.

From time to time since November 2017, zones have had zone coordinators appointed by the Committee and some have had their zone coordinator resign.

The following zones have not had the service of a zone coordinator since at least November 2017.

Country Western Districts (Vic)
Geelong – Bellarine Peninsular (Vic)
Central West (NSW)
Hume Border (Vic) &(NSW)
Hume Ovens (Vic)
Snowy Mountains (NSW)
South West (NSW)

Analysis of Membership and Zones

In the period covered by this analysis, the following clubs have resigned from the GCA

<u>Club</u>	<u>Zone</u>
Nundle	North West NSW
Wyoming	Central Coast South NSW
Wollongong (West?)	Illawarra North
Coonamble	Central West NSW
Floral Art Society (Vic)	Melbourne East
Henty	Riverina
Boorowa	South West NSW
Graduates Mark II	No record on database
St George & Sutherland Camellia Soc.	Sydney Sutherland
Shoalhaven Orchid Soc	South Coast NSW
Ballarat Community Garden	Ballarat Bendigo
Upper Landsdowne Garden Club	No record on database
Geelong Pelargonium Club	Geelong Bellarine Peninsular
Hainsworth Edible Garden	Perth North
Australian Daylily Society	Brisbane South
Blackbutt Benarkin	Central & Central South Qld
Coledale Communal garden Group	North West NSW
Growing Lots	Melbourne East/Mornington
Permaculture Exchange	ACT
Yarrawonga	Hume/Ovens
Wangaratta	Hume/Ovens
Combined Garden Clubs	Sunshine Coast
Stroud	Hunter North

Kingsgrove
Goulburn Evening
Rockdale
Transition Parramatta
Parkes Floral Art
Camperdown Botanic Gardens

Sydney South West
Southern Highlands
Sydney South West
Cumberland
Central West NSW
Country Western Vic

(Clubs in Zones with extended absence of Zone Coordinator are shown in **bold**)

Clearly there appears to be no relationship between resignations and the absence of the services of a zone coordinator.

Changes in affiliates in the last three financial years is as follows-

	Affiliations	Resignations
2017	+20	-14
2018	increase of 7 over-all	
2019	+13	-5

PROPOSED PLAN FOR 2020

At the August 2019 Committee meeting the Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 was adopted without modification. Thus, the emphasis of this Operational Plan for 2020 must be on the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan.

The five (5) strategic imperatives outlined in that document are

- Engaging and connecting with all affiliates
- Engaging and connecting with significant gardening and horticultural groups at a national level
- Developing relationships with Local, State and Federal Governments to benefit the gardening community
- Delivering greater member benefits
- Reviewing the structure of the GCA to facilitate the overall objective of delivering services, benefits and add value to all affiliates.

1) Electronic service provisions to meet the current and future needs of the GCA and the those of all affiliates

The provision of a useful, operational website for the GCA and its affiliates is the highest priority of objectives for 2020. Action has already been initiated by the Committee to design an integrated service which will meet all possible informational and communications needs of the GCA and its affiliates. **This must be operational by early in 2020. A review of the effectiveness of the system must be undertaken by May 2020 to ensure any difficulties are corrected and the service is robust.**

Facebook and Twitter services need to be expanded to allow affiliates to communicate with the gardening community and the general public as a mechanism for generating interest in gardening and increasing affiliate membership. A number of specific projects will be trialled in 2020 to achieve this objective.

A gardening reading service and a regular newsletter will be developed to enhance engagement with affiliates.

2) Relationships with Industry.

As mentioned in the Strategic plan, the GCA has no formal relationships with agencies in Australia involved with gardening. This must change and this organisation seen as an active member of the Australian gardening community.

Industry, in particular needs to see a purpose in being associated with the GCA and therefore we need to develop genuine activities which will facilitate relationships.

It is proposed that the GCA develop an on-going relationship with the Nursery and Garden Industry (now called Greenlife Industry Australia) at a national level and at state level during 2020. A project proposal is included as Appendix 1 which would facilitate this relationship.

3) Relationships with Government

When the Australian Garden Council was launched in 2015, Ms Louise Markus MP speaking of the launch in parliament indicated that “the words **‘garden’** and **‘gardening’** were recorded in Hansard that day for the first time in over a quarter of a century. **This is a severe indictment on the GCA’s representation to government on anything related to Australia’s most popular recreational activity.**

Redressing this situation will not be achieved quickly nor easily. In 2020 the GCA must establish a mechanism to develop an advocacy strategy with government at local, state and national levels.

4) Structure and Operation of the Garden Clubs of Australia Committee.

It is absolutely clear that significant change is necessary to ensure the efficiency of operation on the GCA Committee and the effectiveness of its work.

- Size of the committee, while within the parameters set by the current Constitution, is overblown; only a small number of committee members are engaged in serious, continuous endeavours for the GCA, while too many are engaged in peripheral and very short-term contributions. This situation appears to have arisen over some years through a practice of electing committee members through those member’s desire to serve on the committee rather than electing members for their skills and abilities to contribute to the necessary work of the committee.³
- The costs of holding committee meetings has grown in the last few years and the affiliates have every reason to question whether expenditure at this level is a sound investment of the Association’s funds.
- The basic organisation of the GCA affiliates appears not to be effective. While Zone Coordinators are appointed for three years to assist and support affiliates, anecdotal information suggests that there is a high proportion of Zone Coordinators who are either not carrying out the duties expected of them or are ineffective in the role. Reference was made earlier in this document regarding insurance coverage offered by other competitive gardening groups. The GCA should understand very clearly that the current organisational arrangement of the GCA to divide our affiliates into Zones represents the most significant competitive advantage the GCA has over other gardening groups in Australia. If our Zone system operated efficiently in support of our affiliates, their desires and expectations, we could justifiably claim the premier position as the leading gardening group in the nation.
- **The Committee has received no significant report from Zone Coordinators in the past two years, on the needs of their Zones or on potential resignations which might be avoided through timely intervention.**
- **There appears to be no formal reporting mechanism required of Zone Coordinators.**

³ This analysis is in no way critical of the contributions of individual committee members or the leadership of the GCA. The simple fact is that there is much for the GCA to do and the mechanism for recruiting committee members is not conducive to matching roles with skills.

“To lack another set of skills is not a criticism. What is important is to recognise the value and validity of other skills in other people and to combine the people with the necessary skills to attain the collective objective.”

- **No training programs for Zone Coordinators on their operation has been held by the GCA in recent years.**
- Perhaps it is, in part, a result of the general ineffectiveness of the Zone system that the President of the Association undertakes significant travel around Australia visiting affiliates. In the last two financial years, the President has visited at least 100 affiliates, with very few duplicate visits. This is done as an enormous personal contribution. **This activity appears to be highly valued by affiliates but comes at a significant cost approaching \$20,000 per annum.** Once again the GCA is exposed to criticism over such expenditure when agents of the GCA (Zone Coordinators and Committee members) are not used in specific instances eg to celebrate anniversaries.

Work is being undertaken to address the issue of the size of the GCA Committee through alterations to the Constitution; this has the potential to reduce costs of meetings and introduce targeted appointments to serve the GCA needs. It will be the responsibility of the existing committee to support these proposals. Failure to do so will be an indictment on individual members. This change must be endorsed by February 2020 with effect at the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

Competitions

The GCA has operated two photographic competitions for a number of years; our annual competition and the competition for the Beautiful Gardens of Australia Calendar. The photographic competition is the largest non-profit organised competition in Australia. Many of the submitted photographs appear in Our Gardens magazine and contribute significantly to that publication.

These competitions are a resource which should be more widely utilised by the GCA

Organisational Health

Sound management of the Garden Clubs of Australia entails running the organisation with probity and in the interests of members

It encompasses the systems governance, financial control and risk management plus the business processes and people that combine to enable the GCA to fulfil its commitment to members.

Transparent operating procedures, efficient business systems and maintaining an informed, committed and contributing committee membership are components in successful management of the Association. These must be the objectives of the GCA Committee.

IN SUMMARY

In calendar year 2020 the GCA committee must focus its attention on

- Developing and implementing an effective and efficient electronic communications service that meets the needs of all GCA activities and personnel – affiliates, Zones and Committee.**
- Relationships with one element of the gardening industry – the Nursery and Gardening Industry of Australia.**
- Developing a plan for engaging with Government at all levels and advocating on behalf of the Australian gardening community.**
- Restructure the organisation and operation of the Garden Clubs of Australia Committee to introduce cost savings and management efficiency.**

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL GARDENING WEEK- 2020

This is a proposal for a national initiative for National Gardening Week 2020 in which we would invite all affiliates to participate in a single effort.

PLANT 1000 TREES AND SHRUBS ACROSS AUSTRALIA DURING NATIONAL GARDENING WEEK

This is a very modest target given that the Garden Clubs of Australia has over 700 affiliates.

However, it also provides the GCA with the opportunity to engage with the Nursery and Garden Industry of Australia and its State Branches.

We should approach NGIA on the basis that we would promote this effort nationally and recommend to our affiliates that they purchase a tree or shrub from a member nursery of NGIA.

NGIA could be requested that their members provide a locally suitable offering of trees and shrubs priced in the order of \$50 and \$30 respectively to be purchased by GCA affiliates.

GCA would publish to our affiliates a list of NGIA member nurseries.

We would also suggest to affiliates that they plant the tree or shrub in a suitable location in their community, such as in/near one of the following-

- Public garden
- Round about
- Street
- School grounds
- Aged-persons home
- Child-care centre
- Public play ground
- Grounds of a historic home
- Swimming pool area
- Affordable housing site
- Community library
- Community halls
- Green spaces
- Community garden / fruit trees
- Public toilets and Guest rooms
- Community garden
- Men's Shed
- Pot, in a shopping centre

GCA should arrange an Illustrated Certificate of Appreciation to be prepared and sent to each affiliate that participates in the project and posts a photo on our Facebook Page.

The President of the GCA Committee will accept the responsibility for negotiating a formal arrangement with the National Garden Industries Association to facilitate this project.

MOTION: That this committee approve and endorse the details included in this OPERATIONAL PLAN and the project outlined in Appendix 1.