

7 September 2022

Response from Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust to feedback received via email from Michael Parsons, Organiser, Public Service Association dated Wednesday 31 August 2022.

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your feedback on the proposed RBGDT Organisational Change Management Plan which was referred to me by Ian Faulks, Principal Industrial Relations Advisor, Department of Planning and Environment, on Wednesday 31 August 2022.

Please see our responses below.

Office of the Chief Executive

PSA: The PSA does not oppose the consolidation of the Director level roles to Chief Scientist and Director Science & Education but seeks clarification about the PhD requirement of the role. Was this a requirement of either of the current roles being consolidated? The PSA also notes the potential for the loss of yet another woman in a leadership position.

Response: The requirement for a Doctorate or equivalent level tertiary qualification is an essential requirement in the current Chief Scientist and Director Research role which is one of the roles being consolidated into the new Chief Scientist and Director Science & Education position. This has also been benchmarked with other chief scientist positions, all require a PHD, and most do not allow for an equivalent qualification as we have. We value and encourage woman in leadership positions, and should we lose a woman from the leadership team our executive team would still remain 50% women.

Assets Management and Planning Projects

Item 2 - The technology Rangers use has evolved, and they now manage body cameras, GPS tracking, Licence Plate Recognition, remote access control and CCTV operations, smart nodes, and remote management of over 100 CCTV cameras across all sites. Matching principles will be used to match staff into the new award where possible.

PSA: The PSA seeks a strong affirmation that existing staff responsible for the rollout of these new technologies are appropriately considered based on their experience

Response: We greatly value the experience of our existing staff, and it will be considered when making decisions for filling roles, whether matched or recruited.

Experiences, Partnerships and Engagement

Item 1 - In the Marketing and Engagement team the Corporate Affairs Manager role has been upgraded from a Clerk 7/8 to a Clerk 9/10. This upgrade better reflects the capabilities and responsibility for the role as well as bringing it in line with market standards.

PSA: The PSA seeks clarity about how the responsibilities of the proposed Clerk 9/10 role will change and/or increase from the existing 7/8 role.

Response: The Corporate Affairs Manager role is currently vacant and has been covered by contingent workers due to previous permanent recruitment advertising not finding a suitable candidate. The role has been reviewed and evaluated as a Clerk 9-10 to reflect changes that have happened in reporting lines following the earlier Phase 3a restructure in 2021. Changes include:

- Old Clerk 7/8 role had no requirements under the competency “Manage and Develop People”. However, following an org structure change in 2021, a direct report was added to this role. The competency “Manage & Develop People” has now been included, with a requirement to be at intermediate level.
- The role has been refocused to be less about back-office administration and briefing notes, and more frontline media liaison in order to give more public focus to the work of the Gardens scientists, horticulturists and educators. These key corporate and science stories in the media is something that is not currently resourced in the News & Content team, which focuses more on visitation media and owned channels (science and horticulture content via podcasts, videos etc, rather than traditional media).
- The role has also been refocused to take on management and coordination of all liaisons with the Minister’s Office and Department regarding proactive communications and media. This role used to be resourced through the Head of Communications & Public Affairs position, however that role no longer has capacity to do so due to it previously being merged with the Head of Marketing position (the single Head of Marketing & Engagement Clerk 11/12 role was created in 2021 as a merger of two former Clerk 11/12 functions, and now is responsible for three teams: Marketing, Communications (News & Content) and Corporate Affairs.
- Filling this role is critically important to the health and wellbeing of the wider Marketing & Engagement team, who have been stretched over the past 3 years with prolonged and delayed restructures, and more recently with a competitive labour market resulting in less applicants for vacant positions.



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Finance, Property and Corporate Services

Item - To better support our proprietary base systems and future growth of the Australian Institute of Botanical Science a new role, IT and Digital Assets Program Officer (AIBS) Clerk 9/10, has been created.

PSA: The PSA supports this role creation conditional on the Department identifying where the officer will be located in NSW

Response: This role has been designed to predominantly support our Science teams and as such would split their time between our science facilities and teams in Sydney and Mt Annan.

Horticulture - Royal Botanic Garden and the Domain

Item 7 - Apprentices remain a key focus for the Trust however there are currently insufficient funds to support the reactivation of the program. Efforts are ongoing to secure funding at the first opportunity.

PSA: The PSA seeks an explanation for why the apprentice program remains unfunded. What actions are being undertaken to secure funding and recruit apprentices to the program?

Response: Like the PSA, our staff and Executive remain concerned at the lack of funding available to support our long-standing apprentice program. Our Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Horticulture have already had several meetings with Senior NSW Government representatives from DPE, Transport and Education and the Nursery, Garden and Greenlife industries to try and secure additional funding to reactivate the program. In addition, our Development and Philanthropy team are seeking opportunities to secure external donations, sponsorship or philanthropic support.

As part of the structural review the Horticulture Branch has identified savings through targeted redundancies that will enable one apprentice to be reactivated at each of the Trust's three botanic gardens. This will include one identified apprentice position to be based at the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan.

Science and Education

The RBGDT has invested \$40 million in a new world class herbarium facility and is leading in the Southern Hemisphere in digitising the Herbarium collection and as a result, workflows have changed. These changes position RBGDT as global leaders and staff working at the National Herbarium of NSW as leaders. We are strengthening this team, embracing digitisation into business as usual, and adopting new workflows as a result, existing and previous ways of working need to change.



The PSA has previously raised concerns of unfilled Curator roles. As discussed previously two roles were kept vacant so that we could respond to the PSAs recommendation to employ dedicated staff to see the digitization project through to completion. This arrangement was continued through the successful transition of the herbarium to Mount Annan and we are now looking to fill ongoing roles and resume business as usual. The proposed structure has 13 ongoing roles in Collections where previously there were 11. Nine of the 13 roles are curator roles (5 collections, 2 digitization and 2 leaders) with the expectation that all have responsibility for curation of the collections to varying degrees.

Item 2 - The Collections Team has historically had a flat structure with all positions reporting to the Manager Collections. To reduce this reporting load two new positions are proposed: Leader Collections Curation Clerk 9/10 and Leader Digital Curation Clerk 9/10. These will report to the Manager Collections along with the existing Librarian role.

PSA: The PSA is yet to be convinced of the justification for the duplication of the 9/10 roles and division of the Collection team. As explored below, the PSA believes the function of the team would be better served if existing roles were maintained and filled.

Response: The proposed 9/10 roles are intended to provide opportunities for progression within the team and allow the Collections team to move into a new way of working given technological changes that have meant a greater focus on delivery of digital images and data. The Collections Manager has previously had 10 direct reports (11 given there is a job-share position). In the initial stages of the digitisation project the Collections Manager also had responsibility for managing the digitisation project and staff. This exceeds best practice in terms of span of control. The 9/10 roles spread the reporting load and introduce flexibility and expertise for conducting large curation and digitisation projects within the Collections team.

Item 4 - The Leader Digital Curation role will oversee volunteer programs within Collections, including the current volunteer mounting program and future volunteer programs around digitisation and data capture.

PSA: Leader Digital Curation (Clerk 9/10) is not needed to oversee volunteer programs. A data and mounting volunteer program is already being managed by the Volunteer Coordinator Clerk Grade 3/4 role and this can continue without creating extra roles of the Leader Digital Curation and 2 Digital Curators (Clerk Grade 5/6). These 3 positions are not required, especially if the 6 current Science roles are retained. This would be more cost effective and create a better product.

Response: Imaging and volunteer programs are only parts of the Digital stream. There is also a need for resourcing to support other digital assets and their delivery. For example, the Digital Curators would also run the Exchange program which would include backing up the Plant



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Information Network Officer with data-loading and data quality control. The Plant Information Network Officer role has expanded with technology changes and a bigger focus on data and digital image delivery, rendering the workload too great for a single role. The Digital curators would be responsible for providing training and database expertise across the Science and Education Branch. This has previously been the responsibility of the Plant Network Information Officer and the Curators, so would provide support all these roles.

The expectation in the new herbarium is that volunteer programs will expand to include a larger team of mounting volunteers, and future digitisation and DigiVol programs. The Digital curators would supervise the new programs and take on more of the data checking component to allow the existing volunteer coordinator role to focus on expanding and delivering the mounting program.

The predicted volume of imaging over the next 5 years is estimated at 215,000 specimens (including backlog, new collections and reshoots) amounting to 43,000 images per year. This excludes orphan collection donations which we can expect to receive more of in future – we have already been approached by multiple institutions. With a focus on data and digital delivery there will also be demands for digitizing and making available our library collections. This is beyond the scope of present Curator roles to develop new workflows to accommodate such a program.

The highest volume of specimens digitised by Picturae per day was 3800 images using their conveyor belt system, and three operators, which has now left the Herbarium. In the new herbarium the process is manual using copy stands. Benchmarking against other organisations using this system, including CSIRO, 40 images per hour can be processed with this system. In order to process the predicted 43,000 image per year it will require five productive hours per day over 220 working days per year. This workload requires dedicated positions, new digital infrastructure, projects and workstreams, along with establishing a dedicated volunteer program, and using a two-stand system that is productive every day. These skills can be shared across all Curator roles, but dedicated roles are needed to meet this ongoing business need. Having a digital stream would allow the team of dedicated, highly experienced Collections Curators roles to focus on large physical and taxonomic curation projects and potential reordering of the collections in collaboration with Plant Discovery and Evolution.

Item 5 - The loans and exchange processes will be split between the Collection Curation stream and the Digital Curation stream under supervision of the respective leaders, thus rendering the current Loans and Exchange Officer Technical Officer 1/2 position redundant. Much of this work is currently undertaken by these teams and will be enhanced by a new Collection Curator Clerk 5/6 role and a new Collection Curation Officer Clerk 3/4 role. Loan applications and agreements will continue to be the responsibility of the Manager Collections.



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PSA: The PSA is yet to be convinced that this EOTO 1/2 role should be made redundant. None of this workload is redundant. Further to this an expert liaison person is needed due to the delicate nature of international diplomacy and handling rare, critical to science specimens.

Response: With technology changes the loans program is changing. There are increasing numbers of requests for access and use of specimen images. Many of these requests are replacing loan requests. The digital team would take on these requests as well as building new tools for accessing our collections digitally. There are also increased requests for destructive sampling of the collections. This requires the expertise of collections curators working collaboratively with the botanists.

The expectation is that the new leader positions would be the expert liaison people for the exchange (Leader Digital Curation) and loans (Leader Collections Curation). The benefit would be that there will be two roles (rather than a single one) that are experts in this area and work intimately with the loans/exchange management system. At present these processes rely on a single role which is problematic for business continuity during periods of leave for example. Having two roles would mean the programs can continue without disruption when staff change or take leave.

PSA: An expert in NSW Govt and Australian Govt rules for importation of specimens is also needed to ensure specimens have the right paperwork and do not get destroyed at Quarantine.

Response: The expectation is that the new leader positions would be experts in this area for the exchange (Leader Digital Curation) and loans (Leader Collections Curation). Again, having two roles holding this knowledge lowers the risk to the business that comes with relying on a single role.

Splitting the role of loans and exchange processes spreads the workload and ensures business continuity and knowledge sharing and ensures services run continuously. Responsibility for applications and agreements continues to be the responsibility of the Manager Collections.

PSA: The Collection Curation Officer 3/4 should be required to do the basic support role for the entire Collections section and the entire Herbarium. This needs to be acknowledged as an entry level position and to keep it that fundamental tasks required to preserve specimens are done.

Response: The change is very deliberately moving away from having the Herbarium Support Officer role. This Collection Curation Officer is still expected to perform some support roles for the herbarium however, the nature of the new building has changed the needs of this role somewhat. Shared workspaces mean that there can be shared responsibility for stocktaking and stocking of equipment and materials across all curatorial staff for example.



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The former Herbarium Support Officer role has grown from its original form to take on more and more duties and responsibilities. There has also been a reliance on this individual role for ordering and financial administration which in the new structure would be supported by the Leader roles spreading the responsibility and ensuring continuity.

Replacing the Herbarium Support Officer role with a Collection Curation Officer acknowledges this higher level of responsibility and brings a junior curation role into the team so that there is opportunity for curatorial training and career progression through the Collections streams.

Item 7 - The proposed changes to the Collections Team reduces dependence on single roles for functions, which is necessary for more flexible working and future priorities. The changes include varied gradings to provide a range of progression opportunities within both the digital and collections streams. It moves away from the division between Curators and the previous Herbarium Support Officers to a unifying view of curators.

PSA: The PSA is yet to be convinced of the justification for the division of the Curation team being split into two streams. The digitisation project saw 10-15,000 specimens being digitised each day. That project is near completion and ongoing digitisation workload is expected to be less than 10,000 specimens per year.

PSA: Current Herbarium staff have been trained in the digitisation technology; have worked on other digitisation projects and have the skills to perform the work.

PSA: Our members believe the collections team runs effectively, and division will be disruptive and create inefficiencies. Maintaining current permanent science roles would better support for the function of the team than the creation of two streams for digital and collections

PSA: Some Herbarium roles have been vacant for several years. These roles should be filled, not deleted.

Response: Please refer to the advice provided in relation to expected per day and per year specimen imaging under business as usual for the Herbarium. The herbarium imaging task requires dedicated staff along with strengthening the curation of digital infrastructure and assets including the EMu and imaged holdings.

Similarly with large, complex curatorial projects and the expectation of many more orphan collection donations there are benefits in having a dedicated and highly experienced collections curation team to focus on the physical and taxonomic curation rather than one generalist team of curators that has to be expert in a wide range of functions. The expectation is that the Digital Curators would do some physical curation and that the Collections Curators



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would do some digitisation but that each team has their focus of expertise to ensure we deliver all our programs to the highest standard.

Please refer to comments and justification of new roles above regarding the roles that have been vacant.

Michael, thank you again for providing the feedback on behalf of the PSA members. I hope this has clarified the issues raised, and I am more than happy to meet with you to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



Denise Ora

Chief Executive

Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust



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