



Pearl Beach ARBORETUM

Donated Seat Policy February 2025

1. Introduction

The Arboretum Management Committee is often requested to consider additional seats in the Arboretum in memory of a family member who has a strong connection to the Arboretum. In recent decades the previous Management Committees have declined to consider new donated seats due to valid concerns with clutter and maintenance.

The Arboretum has (or has had) twenty (20) rustic timber benches scattered throughout the Arboretum (Figure 1). Eight (8) of the seats have (or had) metal plaques noting that they have been donated in memory of a family member (or members). There is no consistency with the type, size and wording of the plaques which can result in concerns with equity. Six (6) seats have a plaque acknowledging the 20th anniversary of the Arboretum (1996); and the remainder have no plaque. Most seats have been in the Arboretum at least since the mid-1990s, and many are in poor condition. In fact some have recently collapsed requiring them to be removed from site for safety reasons and one has been removed by vandals.

At least one timber bench seat has recently been repaired – involving replacement of at least 70% of the timber and many hours sanding back the original reused timber sections (Figure 2).

In addition a special sandstone seat has been placed in the Arboretum in 2019, in memory of John Greenway, former Arboretum President and manager for 19 years of the Opera in the Arboretum (a Woy Woy Rotary fund raising event). i

In thinking about seats the Arboretum Management Committee wants to be careful not to create a precedent for future replacement or new seats that are all different. The Committee is also mindful that there will be future maintenance implications, particularly for new, repaired or replacement timber seats.

Therefore the Committee has developed this Policy to set some parameters around new or replacement seats, and to agree on seat designs that are reasonably durable. This Policy explains the Arboretum Management Committee position with regard to existing and new donated seats.



Figure 1: Typical example of the current timber bench seats. They are from 20-40 years old. Some are in very poor condition and need to be completely replaced.

2. Arboretum Seat Parameters

The Arboretum Committee have developed the following parameters for seats:

- recessive in the landscape (of a reasonably minimalist design);
- have a simple design aesthetic complimentary to the Arboretum;
- low maintenance (e.g. sandstone or weathered hardwood) with no areas for water to pond;
- structurally sound, safe (e.g. limited areas for snakes or insects);
- sustainably sourced where possible (e.g. recent reconstruction of benches has used some seasoned Camphorwood which is often felled as a weed in NSW);
- suitable for the design to be repeated in the future at reasonable cost.



Figure 2: Repaired rustic timber bench seat in the Arboretum with over 70% of the material replaced.

This is Type A1 design “with arms and back”.

3. Option A - New timber benches to the existing design

In addition to the existing rustic timber bench design with arms the Arboretum is considering rustic timber benches without arms – and also without arms or backs. The less elements in the bench design – the less chance of maintenance issues at joints etc..

Type A1: With arms and back

The Arboretum Committee has demonstrated that new rustic timber benches can be remade to the existing timber bench design (including arms and back) using timber material sourced from “Go Natural Timber” in Auburn, Sydney. See Figure 2.

Type A2: With back but no arms

At least one of the existing rustic timber bench seats has a back but no arms. See Figure 3. However the example shown is shorter than most benches. If Type 2 benches are made they would be at least 1.8 metres long.

Type A3: With no arms or back

In some areas a group of rustic timber benches with no arms or backs could be used to form a “talking circle” for use by school groups.



Figure 3: An existing example of the rustic timber bench seat with no arms (Type A2). It is considered that these seats would need less future maintenance as there are less areas for water to collect and cause rot.



Figure 4: Example of a rustic timber bench seat with no arms and no back (Type A3). It is considered that these seats would need less future maintenance as there are less areas for water to collect and cause rot.

4. Option B - New simple rustic stone blocks seats-

The Arboretum has decided that simple rustic stone seats are a valid alternative in the Arboretum and have already installed some around the “Open Area” off Crystal Avenue. (Figure 5). The seats are approximately 1000 x 500 x 500 mm for ease of moving them around the Arboretum. Several can be placed together for a longer seat, or they can be grouped in more casual formations.

The names of people can be engraved into the front face, after an area has been given a smooth finish. This requires a front loader to move the stone onto its side for carving on a horizontal surface and then again for the digger to reset the seat vertically. The stone-carver takes up to 5 hours on site and the front loader must be hired for the movement of the stone before and after.



Figure 5: Free standing Grade 1 sandstone block (“log”) 1000 x 500 x 500. the area behind the lettering is to be dressed.



Figure 6: Engraved Grade 1 sandstone block (“logs”) 1000 x 500 x 500. the area behind the lettering is dressed.

5. Names on Seats

The Arboretum Committee does not want the Arboretum to become a memorial garden, therefore all future donated seats will simply have one or two names in honour of the people for whom the donation was made to the Arboretum.

Therefore only first and last names can be used and wording such as “donated in in memory of” will not be allowed. Fonts shall be the same – **COPPERPLATE GOTHIC**.

Timber Seats

In the case of timber bench seats the names will be on brass or bronze plaques at least 2mm thick and fixed with brass screws. The plaques will not be recessed into the timber, as this can trap water and also because they may need to be easily removed to apply maintenance finishes. Lettering shall be maximum 10mm high. The plaque will be positioned justified to the upper left hand side of the timber on which it is mounted. See Figure xx.

Sandstone Seats

In the case of sandstone benches the first and last names/s will be carved into the front face of the stone black with an area around the name/s “dressed” back to smooth sound stone. See Figure xx.

Existing Seats and Plaques

Seats that replace an earlier donated seat may retain the original plaque or repeat the original wording on a new plaque.

6. Repairing and Maintaining Seats

Timber Seats

The existing timber seats are mostly over 30 years old have not lasted well, partly due to lack of maintenance (or poor maintenance practices) by our volunteers in the past. Recent repairs to a few of the existing timber benches have demonstrated that more than 70% of the timber and fittings need to be replaced. Therefore the Arboretum has decided it is better to replace 100% ensuring the benches will last at least 40 years with a good maintenance regime.

The refurbished and new seats will be designed so that the fixings in to the ground deter vandals trying to move them and also prevent ground rot.

All new or refurbished rustic timber benches will be finished in quality outdoor furniture oil and this will be reapplied at least every 3 years. However even with this maintenance the benches are likely to require some repair every 10 years and possibly full replacement every 40 years.

Sandstone Seats

Sandstone seats should last at least 80 years if good quality stone is used and if it is positioned and engraved correct to the bedding of the stone. Removal of organic growth (e.g. lichens) and graffiti removal may become issues in the future. Expert advice will be sought at the time.

7. Terms and conditions for seat donors

1. The applicant must agree to become a long term member of the Pearl Beach Arboretum (at least 10 years)
2. Allow up to four months for installation of a new bench or refurbishment of an existing bench.
3. Applications for memorial bench seats will only be considered from current or former long term residents of Pearl beach who had a special affinity with the Arboretum.
4. Specifications for plaques will be provided on approval of your application including the style and number of words that can be provided.
5. The Arboretum will determine the most appropriate place for the positioning of the seat, although the wishes of the donor will be taken into account.
6. The Arboretum may remove or relocate the seat at its discretion after initial consultation with the applicant (or their descendants). If the applicant or the descendants cannot be located after 6 months trying then the Arboretum can remove or relocate the seat as it sees fit.
7. The Arboretum is not responsible for the replacement of seats or tables removed or damaged by vandals.
8. The scattering of ashes is not permitted on public land.

8. Requested Minimum Donations for Seats

The options for new or replacement memorial benches are subject to a tax deductible donation as follows.

Arboretum Ref.	Type	Requested donation inc. GST
1A	Timber bench design with arms & back 1800 mm long.	\$4,000.00
1B	Timber bench design with back but no arms 1800 mm long..	\$3,500.00
1C	Timber recycled sleepers no arms or back. 1800 mm long.	\$3,000.00
2	Rustic stone bench seats 1000 x 500 x 500 mm. Maintenance issues are less with dressed sandstone.	\$3,000.00

Please note that the Arboretum is a registered not-for-profit charity and all donations are tax deductible.

9. Location of new seats

To be determined on site by committee as per condition 5 above.