

EUROBODALLA REGIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN (ERBG) CULTURAL & RESPONSIBLE RETAILING POLICY (Adopted August 2019 to be reviewed August 2020)

BACKGROUND: This policy draws on 2 essential elements: The ERBG, and Cultural Retailing.

The ERBG is a well-loved and well-supported community asset.

Our Vision is: To inspire the appreciation and conservation of our region's plants through Conservation, Education, Recreation.

Cultural retailing is a 'noble venture' elevated above the ordinary by its commitment to the organisation's Mission and subsequent inherent responsibilities therein, challenging it to find the balance between culture and commerce. Staff within the space are tasked with being mission delivery agents and brand ambassadors, and may be the only staff that Visitors encounter during their Visit. It is also understood that a shop, along with a café, is a 'must have service' to meet visitor expectation, that it contributes to the Visitor Experience even whilst contributing revenue.

There is a basic human impulse which gives us relationships to objects. They enable us to capture and archive memories, feelings and stories. Objects are receptacles or repositories that connect us to ourselves, to people, to places and to our values.

As Cultural Retailers we curate opportunities for people to continue their connection with ERBG and all that it stands for. It affirms the messaging received throughout the Visit, potentially being an integral part of the Visit, as well as providing a take-home reinforcement. It both supports and expands the on-site education, engagement and experience.

The ERBG Mission:

To value, protect and evolve a much-loved community asset that can connect people with plants in a meaningful and relevant way, for now and well into the future.

To set ourselves the highest possible environmental standards — minimising resource use; incorporating rain water use and practical water conservation methods; reducing our energy use through solar energy and design technology; reducing, reusing and recycling our waste — all to provide active leadership to the Eurobodalla through demonstrating, doing and teaching.

To build community connections by facilitating a diverse range of inclusive activities and events that cater for all sectors of the community.

ERBG Principles:

Conservation: Understanding, protecting and restoring plant biodiversity and habitats.

Education: Promoting the importance of plants in natural and cultural landscapes.

Recreation: Managing our Botanic Garden facilities for all to enjoy.

IN THEORY: The ERBG Vision, Mission and Principles are integral to providing the direction and delivery of cultural retailing at ERBG.

People coming into the retail area broadly fall into 2 groups -
Visitors who become impulse shoppers, whether for souvenirs, gifts, or as supporters of the ERBG mission;
and
Dedicated buyers, who come specifically for the shop, to make a purchase: they are committed to buying.

Both groups derive pleasure from the fact that their purchase supports the work of ERBG. In fact, that may initially be the primary reason for their purchase.

There is potential particularly within the impulse buying Visitor group for this to include children, whether on a school trip or with family, who have money 'burning a hole in their pocket'. We need to be mindful of and considerate of this group both when selecting and displaying merchandise.

Whichever group a shopper falls within, we aim for both the experience and the product to be equal, which is why in this shared space Visitors always come first, and retailing second.

IN PRACTICE:

What items are we going to sell?

Potential merchandise should honour and reflect, or demonstrate:

- the Vision, Mission and Principles of ERBG
- the unique nature and branding of our establishment
- the Visitor's experience

Items will achieve this by:

- being Australian-made wherever possible
- providing conservational, educational and recreational opportunities across age ranges
- showcasing the talents of local artisans and producers, especially where items are produced in a sustainable way.
- ensuring all items are safe
- sourcing items that do the least environmental harm, throughout the supply chain
- acting as an alternative choice to any existing environmentally damaging product

In addition to the previous points, the following list indicates the questions that will properly be asked before an item is stocked:

- Is the packaging natural, recycled, recyclable, biodegradable, non existent (as opposed to over packaged involving single use plastics)?
- Does the product provide an alternative to plastic or to single use material?
- Is it well made and built to last and repairable or is it disposable?
- Made of natural materials?
- Is it produced within Australia or better still locally made?
- Is it displaying regional species? If not... does it have a place here for some other purpose?
- Is it environmentally or scientifically accurate?
- Does it connect people with plants and encourage meaningful interactions?
- Does it encourage greater understanding and respect of the environment?
- Does it encourage creativity and solution finding?
- Does it respect cultural heritage and provenance?
- Is it ethically sourced?
- Does it respect IP and copyright?
- Does it clearly show our commitment to the environment, to flora, to fauna and to people as reflected by our logo?
- Is it commercially viable? If not...is it significant enough for it to be cross-subsidised or sold without profit?
- Does it make sense to have this product available from the ERBG or will it need additional signage to explain why it has a place?

These questions will be used to evaluate the merit of a product before it finds a place on a retail shelf within the Visitor Centre. Clearly it would be difficult to find any product that could satisfy all of these requirements but a commitment must be made to give serious consideration and preference to products that comply with a reasonable amount of them.

IN PRACTICE:

Signage

In establishing the ERBG as a model of cultural and responsible retailing we have the opportunity to develop unique brands and experiences and to facilitate positive changes to consumer behaviour. Therefore it will be necessary to develop interpretation throughout the retailing area that informs of our choices and considers our responsibilities and those of our visitors. Through this we can achieve a hybrid space that is both a museum-style display and a store, in which visitors can continue their experience of our Garden, its Vision, Mission and Principles, and make informed purchasing decisions that reflect their unique/individual Garden experience.

Whilst signage in the retail area will predominantly reflect the products and their environmental credentials the incorporation of personal stories and community partnerships that exhibit support for the environment and the Garden will also be included.

All signage will adhere to current ERBG style guidelines and adopt the ESC Writing Guide 'plain English' approach.

MAKING IT HAPPEN:

Roles:

The ERBG Merchandising Committee is to be made up of members of the Friends Merchandising Sub Committee and ERBG Visitor Services staff. Their role in curating a cohesive merchandise collection will be to assess all products for their appropriateness in consideration of the previous points and to adhere to ERBG Branding and Style Guidelines. They are to have an awareness of current and emerging retail trends and practices.

The role of the ESC appointed Botanic Garden Manager as the person responsible for the ERBG site, staff and volunteers will be to oversee the Visitor Centre operations ensuring that a consistent standard and message is achieved.

In the event that a product selected and stocked does not meet sufficient desirable criteria or may be considered as inappropriate the Botanic Garden Manager will have the authority to maintain the standards. In some instances this may result in the removal of the product from sale.

Meetings

The ERBG Merchandising Committee will meet a minimum of 4 times per year to discuss budgets, products, promotions, sales and any other associated retail issues.

It is not envisaged that the Botanic Garden Manager will be a member of this Committee but may attend from time to time or be invited to provide updates on Visitor Centre matters or to provide guidance on any products or issue considered by the Committee as relevant, potentially contentious or impacting on general operations.

FINAL WORD:

The ERBG Visitor Centre is in a unique and exciting position to become a model of responsible retailing, a premier visitor experience that embodies our commitment to all doing what we can to help our planet. Our shop has the power to influence change and as custodians of our regions flora it is our duty to be good examples in whatever way we can to help nurture and protect it.