

Fourth Australasian Native Orchid Conference and Show Another Perspective

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"Native Orchids – Our Natural Heritage" was the theme. Brilliantly conceptualised in a display co-joining the show hall. During show set-up, a sliding wall partition hid the theme feature, which was only revealed in its magnificence on Show opening. Then entry was through a bushland track amongst mature native palms, trees, shrubs, native grasses and rock walls.

In each mini-eco area appropriate native terrestrial and epiphytic orchids flowered to perfection. Our walk through this delight was a joy to the eyes and our ears were filled with a continuous symphony of bird and frog calls appropriate to the theme sections. Apparently it took three days to set up!

Having completed our meander through the bushland, we faced the show display. There were thousands of Australasian native orchid species and hybrids on show, flowering to perfection. There were even whole displays comprising *Sarcochilus* only.

Terrestrial orchids, read about but never seen by many, superbly grown – not as single plants, but as pot fulls! Rare species, reputedly difficult to flower were in profusion. Including various *Pterostylis*, *Thelymitra* (with heat lamp, to keep blooms open), *Diuris* and *Caladenia*. Helen Richards and Malcolm Thomas benched most of these plants.

Adjoining the show was the plant and book sale area. Major native species and hybrid growers were represented with many fine plants and flasks on offer.

The speaker programme, organised by Gary Backhouse, covered two full days. The 22 speakers had been carefully chosen to present a wide and stimulating coverage of both technical and horticultural material.

ANOS accredited judges from various parts of Australia and New Zealand undertook the judging, which took just over four hours. It was of great interest to me as one of the founders of ANOS judges and the judging standards, to observe some differences in state standards!

ANOS judges later had a formal meeting, as did delegates from ANOS groups, mainly to discuss the future of *The Orchadian*.

The closing dinner on Saturday night was held in ideal surroundings, with a majority of delegates present. It's a shame that some chose not to attend for their own reasons and held their own function.

The highlight of the evening for me was to present the Ira Butler Trophy Committee's R.D. FitzGerald Trophy for the first time. This award, the idea of I.B.T.C. Committeeman David Banks, is to recognise outstanding service to the advancement, propagation and conservation of Australian native orchid species. Having received an outstanding nomination from ANOS Victorian Group through Helene Wild. The I.B.T.C. unanimously resolved to present the first trophy at this Conference. It was my pleasure as Chairman of the I.B.T.C. (and only surviving founder member of the Committee) to present the inaugural trophy to Helen Richards. Helen's look of total surprise made my evening. Congratulations Helen.

My congratulations go to Tony Slater and his team. My thanks to Helene and Alex Wild for the pleasure of their company, on our many dashes across beautiful Melbourne.

Thank you all for the best conference, of any sort, that I have attended in the last forty years. It makes this old ANOS founder member very happy. We look forward to the next ANOS Conference and Show to be hosted by ANOS Macarthur Group and to be held at Campbelltown, NSW.





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