



Ballarat **Botanical** Gardens

BY LAKE WENDOUREE

## The Fernery

The current fernery was constructed in 1955 and extended in 1962. The structure has a steel frame with timber battens and rafters. Prior to this 4 previous timber framed ferneries have existed on the site and have rotted and been removed. The grandeur of the early ferneries is evident in historic photographs.

The Ballarat Botanical Gardens Masterplan and Management Strategy states *"The replacement of the existing fernery structure by a more historically sympathetic structure should be considered basing the form, mass and articulation of the building on historic precedents."*

The purpose the fernery is to provide protection from extremes of sunlight, wind, rainfall, frost by simulating the environment found beneath a cool temperate forest canopy. This allows a suitable environment for ground ferns, ferns attached to trunks of trees, and a whole range of flowering plants that occupy the floor, and mid strata of forests. It provides a complimentary "wild jungle like" experience to the balance of the central Gardens and could accommodate an elevated boardwalk with tree trunks displaying plants and animals that inhabit them.

The existing frame and footings have been found to be sound by a structural engineer. The extension has been suggested as being an adjacent pavilion with a sealed roof that could house the Stoddart Statue Collection, while still displaying plants.

Following the completion of the Australian Ex-prisoner of War Monument in the South Gardens, this will be the next landmark project for the Gardens.

An architectural design competition is proposed to develop the concept and schematic designs required to undertake the necessary planning approvals and fundraising for this exiting project.