

Beliefs, values and satisfaction with botanic gardens in Australia

D. Kendal^{1,2,*}, H. Kaplan³, and S. Willoughby⁴

¹The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

²Future in Nature, Ararat, Australia

³University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia

⁴Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, London, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author email: dave@futurenature.au

Keywords: beliefs, satisfaction, science, values, visitors, wellbeing

Botanic gardens often have a good understanding of their visitors through satisfaction surveys. However, there are many people in society who do not visit botanic gardens. Understanding broader society's views on botanic gardens will be helpful for planning and management within gardens, and interactions with society outside gardens such as funders, policymakers, and potential visitors. In this study, we surveyed 1000 Australians that were broadly representative of the national population. We asked about their environmental values, whether they visited a range of natural places, their satisfaction with those places, and their beliefs about the role of botanic gardens. We found that the majority of respondents had either not visited a botanic garden, or had visited very infrequently (less than yearly). Most visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with their visit and satisfaction was very high compared with most other kinds of natural areas.

People's beliefs about the role of botanic gardens could be grouped into four dimensions, in order of how strongly the beliefs are held – a place for personal wellbeing, a place to conduct plant science, a place to buy plants, and a place for recreation. Environmental values were an important driver of these beliefs, with biospheric values driving wellbeing and plant science beliefs, and egoistic values driving recreation and commercial beliefs. Both biospheric and egoistic values had a weakly positive influence on visitor satisfaction. Interestingly, altruistic values were mostly not related to people's opinions about botanic gardens, being weakly related to wellbeing beliefs only, and not related to satisfaction. These results highlight that many people in Australia believe botanic gardens are important for a range of reasons that could be included in planning and management, and in conversations with broader society. There may be opportunities for botanic gardens to better connect with people's altruism.