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The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for the permanent installation of the sculpture “Regret” by Sam Mahon, on the Archery Lawn at the Botanic Gardens.

During the 1997-1998 season of sculpture in the gardens, a piece of sculpture entitled “Regret” was created by the sculptor Sam Mahon and installed within the pond of the Archery Lawn at the Botanic Gardens.

It was one of five pieces of sculpture located at various sites within the gardens and at the conclusion of the season, when all other works had been removed, Mr Mahon suggested that he would like the sculpture to remain, if and when a sponsor could be found.

The following is commentary on the sculpture by Felicity Milburn, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery:

“Regret”, an interactive work of spidery elegance by local sculptor Sam Mahon, is intended to reflect the 'messy reality' of human life. Over six metres high and made from steel rod of various thicknesses, the sculpture's graceful, insubstantial form is a rueful reference to the ephemeral nature of memory and loss. Depressing the metal handle by the side of the small pool in the Botanic Gardens sends a burst of water up through the entire structure, spinning the tilted waterwheel and gently flapping the wings of the enigmatic bird at the top of the sculpture. Lower down, the revolving procession of enigmatic masts, the water-shrouded face on a supporting column and the partially submerged figures of a man piggybacking a smiling young boy combine to produce a bittersweet evocation of times and people past.

“Regret” was created specifically for the 1997 Sculpture in the Gardens project and was designed by Mahon to enhance the quietly reflective quality of the pond area it now graces. Since it was first installed, this extremely accessible and evocative work has received unanimous acclaim and has delighted visitors of all ages and nationalities.

To gauge public opinion on whether the sculpture “Regret” should become a permanent feature in the Archery lawn pond, Botanic Gardens staff and the membership of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens were asked for any objections.

An overwhelming support has been given for “Regret” to become a permanent installation.

The Art in Public Places Sub-Committee is currently being circulated for opinion and I can advise that the three curatorial staff at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery are in support of the proposal.

Mr Sam Mahon has recently advised that a sponsor has been located for the work.

This is a most generous offer to the city and with such a wide range of support for the sculpture, it is clear that it would be a popular permanent feature.

The above proposal has the full support of the Art in Public Places Working Party.

Recommendation: That approval be given for the acceptance of the sculpture “Regret” by Sam Mahon and that it be placed permanently in the pond of the Archery Lawn at the Botanic Gardens, with an appropriate plaque.