



BANYULE
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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U3A BANYULE ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 2018

On behalf of the Committee of Management, it gives me great pleasure to present this Annual Report of another very busy and successful year for U3A Banyule, which has now been operating for 32 years.

Membership

As at the beginning of August, our total membership stood at 684, being 600 full members, 48 Associate members, 31 honorary members, and 5 life members. It has been a period of unparalleled growth; from 2016 to 2017, there was a 2.7% increase in membership, compared with an increase of 16.4% from 2017 to 2018. There are 154 new members to date this year (ie 24% of our members are new this year.). The increase in the number of Associate members (ie people who also belong to another U3A), from 32 to 46 is in part due to the fact that U3A Manningham no longer offers Associate membership.

The age range of our membership is from 50 to 90 plus. Almost half of the membership is in the age range 66 – 75, and we are pleased and proud to say that we have 18 members who are nonagenarians. Looking at the ratio of male and female members, 25% are males. This is a slight increase over last year's figure. Looking at our Tutors, last year 23% were male, compared to 27% in 2018. The Committee of Management has been concerned to increase male participation and engagement, and has taken steps towards this end, with some success.

The annual membership fee has stood at \$40 for a full member for several years, and the Committee is recommending that this be increased by a small amount to \$45 for the coming year. Our annual fee is still one of the lowest charged by the 109 U3As in Victoria, and represents extremely good value for money.

Course Program

We are very proud of the broad, diverse program we offer our members. In Semester 1, we ran a total of 78 classes, being 20 single sessions, 12 excursions and 46 courses of two or more sessions, including 17 courses meeting every week. These classes were presented by a total of 67 Tutors/Facilitators.

The areas covered were languages (French, Italian and German), mathematics, philosophy, history, archaeology, science, geology, literature, writing, music appreciation, current affairs, book groups, art (including visits to Art Galleries), Tai Chi, Yoga, leisure pursuits (walking, Mahjong, Scrabble, Cryptic Crosswords, Bridge, Lawn Bowls, croquet, photography, creative knitting, dining out), health related issues, travel, film appreciation, theatre, U3A choir, play reading, and a range of excursions to many places of interest. Our popular monthly Public Lectures cover a diverse range of topics, and are an effective drawcard to encourage the wider community to become aware of what is on offer by U3A.

Semester 2 is now underway, and the number of classes has increased even more. Following up on suggestions, among classes that have been added to the timetable are line dancing, recorder,

and red wine discovery. As mentioned earlier, there has been consultation with some of the males who are members, and courses and activities have been added that might be of particular interest to men. It is particularly pleasing that some of our members are offering sessions based on their experiences in their working lives (“Matron’s Militia”, and “What Did You Do Before You Retired?”). The total number of classes on offer in Semester 2 is 94, presented by a total of 62 Tutors/Facilitators.

Members old and newer have enrolled enthusiastically in all classes in the program, and it is exciting to see the U3A Hall filled almost to capacity for some of the most popular classes that are offered. The average number of enrolments per member this year is 7.5, compared with 6.6 in 2017.

We all owe a huge debt of thanks to our outstanding **Course Coordinator, Joan Learmont** and her team, who have put so much work into arranging the program. Thank you Joan, **Judy Vaughan** (Assistant Course Coordinator), **Margaret Fievez** (venues coordinator), **Helen Walker**

(Tutor coordinator), **Jan and Adrian Ramp** (Public Lectures Coordinators), **Rosemary Tait** (data input), **June Molnar and Diana McCormack** (excursions organisers), for your dedication, creativity, and generous sharing of your time and energy. And deepest thanks to all our **Tutors**, both those who are members and those who contribute their knowledge and skills as Honorary members.

Accommodation

The U3A Hall is used for classes every Monday and Friday afternoon, and all day every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, for which we pay Banyule City Council \$3.50 per hour. We also lease the U3A Office space from Banyule City Council at a subsidized rate and we are deeply appreciative of this support.

To accommodate all our classes, in Semester 2 we are using a total of 15 other venues, plus the homes of some members. These include “Our Hub”, Shop 48 in the Harmony Centre and the Old Shire Hall; bowling and croquet clubs; the Ivanhoe Uniting Church Hall; La Trobe University; Watsonia and Rosanna Libraries; and facilities at three Retirement Villages. For some of these, we pay rent, and for some there is no charge. The considerable task of co-ordinating our use of all these venues is done extremely competently by **Margaret Fievez**, and we thank her very sincerely.

We are eagerly awaiting the building of the Ivanhoe Library and Community Hub, expected to be completed by mid 2020, as it will include a dedicated office space for U3A and two large meeting rooms which will be available to be used for classes every day of the week. This state of the art facility will be an enormous boon to us, and we are most grateful to **Banyule City Council**. There has been much detailed consultation with Council about our needs as the project has been developed, and we appreciate the work of Council officers **Allison Beckwith** and **Roberta Colosimo**, and the significant contribution of **Janice Kelly**, as our liaison person with them.

Further to the topic of support from Banyule City Council, we greatly appreciated the chance early in 2018 to be involved in community consultations about the draft **Ivanhoe Parking Plan**. A special information session was held at the U3A Hall for the benefit of members, and our concerns about the deleterious effects of possible reduced parking times were heard, and later addressed.

Grants and Support

We have been the recipient of two grants in the past year. From the State Government’s **Program Growth Support Fund (PGSF)**, we received a total of \$1,850, to be used for a Governance project (finance for a Strategic Planning Day), equipment for two new programs (an addition to the website, and sound equipment for the Line Dancing class); expansion of an intergenerational program (purchase of wool for the Creative Knitting Group); and a membership growth project (a survey of male members).

In addition, we received a grant of \$561 from the **Banyule City Council Equipment Grants Fund**, for the purchase of an amplifier to be used by the U3A choir, Audacity.

Valued support is also received from the office of **Jenny Macklin MP**, with the printing of our June and December newsletters.

Survey of members, and follow up action

A membership survey conducted in March 2017 had a very high response rate, providing much positive feedback, and many excellent suggestions and ideas from members. In the ensuing months, many of these were followed up and addressed by the Committee – for example, orientation and Welcome Packs for new members, tutor training and refresher sessions, improved course enrolment procedures, measures to reduce waiting lists for popular classes, and problems with procedures for payments for excursions. There is always room for improvement, and suggestions and assistance are always welcomed.

Innovations

I want to mention three important new initiatives in the past year.

First, the production of an excellent **promotional colour brochure**, ‘Learning Opportunities for Enquiring Minds’, mainly the work of Mary Wilson, our Communications Coordinator. Funded by a

grant from the Program Growth Support Fund for 2017, the brochure gives a comprehensive overview of what U3A offers. It has been widely distributed through appropriate outlets in the community. Members are encouraged to use it to promote U3A to their friends – it is available from the Office. Word of mouth is what attracts most people to join; the brochure provides the practical information that they need to do so. “Bring a Friend” is a great strategy to grow our membership.

Secondly, members can now access **PowerPoint presentations** from some courses on the website. A link to the presentation is placed on a “hidden” page on the website, and information is emailed to class members who attended the course. Access is available for a limited time. To date, online access has been offered to class members for Dr David Dorward’s “The Rise and Decline of America” series, and also Professor Nahum Mushin’s Public Lecture on “Law, Justice and Society”.

Thirdly, U3A Banyule now has an **Awards Working Party**, with the aim of formalizing the informal recognition of members’ achievements that has been in place in the past. Members of this Working Party are Dr Bryce Phillips, Jack Ings, Mary Wilson, and the President, ex officio. They consider relevant external awards, and identify possible worthy recipients for them. From this Working Party has come the Special Resolution that we are voting on today, regarding Life Membership.

To date this year, there has been a successful application for a **Jaga Jaga Community Australia Day Award**, which was received for “ongoing dedication to inspiring and engaging local seniors through lifelong learning”. In May, our Course Coordinator, **Joan Learmont**, was chosen from a field of 24 nominees to receive the Banyule City Council’s **Individual Volunteer Award**. It is very gratifying that Joan’s outstanding work has been so appropriately recognized.

Longstanding Tai Chi Tutor, **Carolyn Wood**, has been nominated for a Healthy and Active Living Award as part of the Victorian Senior of the Year Awards. The Working Party will also consider possible nominations for Australian Honours Awards; we are fortunate that both Bryce and Jack have extensive experience with writing nominations for these Awards.

Community Involvement

Over the past year, we have linked with the wider community in a variety of ways, including the following:

The Creative Knitting Group has continued to produce a diverse range of items, through which they have supported Aboriginal Housing Victoria, the Seaman’s Mission, Wodonga Maternity Hospital, **RSPCA** Animal Shelter, St Mary’s House of Welcome, and the Cancer Council of Australia. They have also participated in Watsonia Library’s School Holiday Program. Congratulations to **Diana McCormack** and her team for the amazing amount they accomplish. There is an opportunity to purchase some of their beautiful handiwork today.

Our very special link with **La Trobe University** continues, whereby members have the opportunity to sit in as audit (listening) students at some lectures. In semester 1, 13 members participated, and there are 10 enrolments for Semester 2. There is a wide range of courses attended, including several languages, Human Nutrition, Botany, English Literature, Business Economics, Archaeology, Anthropology, History and Network and Digital Engineering. Seven applicants for the program have joined U3A as full members in order to participate. We are grateful to **Sue Beshara** for her contribution as the very efficient Coordinator of this program.

As in previous years, we strongly supported the **Seniors' Festival** in October. In the CBD, the Audacity Choir performed at Deakin Edge, and some classes demonstrated their activities. In the Banyule area, the wider public was invited to participate in some sessions.

We are fortunate to be situated in **Banyule**, which is a leading Age Friendly City, committed to creating age-friendly communities where older people have the opportunities they need to stay healthy, live where their needs are met, move easily around the community and stay connected. We are the largest organization for seniors in Banyule, and appreciate the recognition and strong support we receive from Banyule City Council. **Judy Elsworth** is our representative on the Banyule Age Friendly Advisory Committee, and **Maxine Marks** represents us on the Banyule Seniors Network.

Special Events

The **Annual Forum** in November saw a full house of over 100 members and people from the wider community in attendance. Four prominent members of the Indigenous community, Gary Murray, Lidia Thorpe, Glenn Loughrey and Terry Mason, addressed the topic "Why Australia Needs a Treaty With Aboriginal People".

This year's **International Women's Day Fundraising Luncheon** in March was another popular and successful event. The speaker, Stephanie Woollard, who founded Seven Women, was inspirational, and the craft stall held by Seven Women raised the magnificent sum of \$1500. Thanks go to **Diana McCormack**, who once again organized this Luncheon in her usual efficient way.

An innovation in May was the "**Biggest Morning Tea in the Afternoon**", a very pleasant social occasion which raised over \$800 to support the Cancer Council. Thanks go to **Val Wake** for making this happen.

The **Annual Lunch** in June, held at St George's Restaurant at Melbourne Polytechnic in Northcote, was attended by 78 members, who enjoyed a delicious meal and an entertaining speaker, Bev Moss.

Morning and afternoon teas to welcome new members and Tutors were held at the beginning of each Semester, as well as a thank you event for Office Volunteers and Tutors at the end of the year.

Thank you to all our volunteers

I have already made mention of our **Tutors**, and obviously, without them, there would be no U3A. Tutors and facilitators contribute countless hours of time to share their skills and knowledge. Some come from within our membership, some from the wider community, some offer one off sessions, some short courses, some longer series, some run year-round classes. They make a significant difference to the lives of our members, and I hope they know how greatly they are appreciated.

Secondly, I want to thank our **office volunteers**, a group numbering 25 members, plus a further 22 who are rostered as emergencies. These dedicated people keep the office staffed for two hours every weekday, cheerfully handling all manner of queries, as the public face of our organization. Thank you to **Pat Gropel** for her efficient work as Office Volunteers Coordinator. **Valerie MacPhee**, our Office Manager, can usually be found in the office almost every day of the week, handling a myriad of tasks to ensure that it functions efficiently, and helping to create a warm and welcoming environment. She is also a crucial member of the MyU3A team.

Thirdly, thanks are due to the many people who help out in various ways to keep our classes running smoothly, whether it is shifting furniture, helping with technology, looking after refreshments, or assisting Tutors in different ways. Special mention must be made of **Gilda May**, whose commitment to these tasks is astonishing. To all who make a contribution in this way – thank you very much! You are truly appreciated.

Lastly, I wish to thank the **Committee of Management**, for their dedication and hard work over the past year. In addition to all the ongoing administrative tasks, some highlights have been:

- Production of a **Handbook for Office Volunteers**, designed to provide information about all facets of their important role in an accessible manner. Our thanks go to **MaryAnne Bennie**, an organizational expert in her professional life, for her work on this project.
- Training sessions for Tutors and Office Volunteers.
- A second Strategic Planning Day, building on the success of the one held in 2017, and again capably led by MaryAnne and **Milena Maranville**.
- Changes and improvements to our usage of the MyU3A database, under the guidance of our MyU3A Administrator, **Dianne Williamson**.

A power of work is done by our Secretary and Public Officer, **Milena Maranville**, and by our Communications Coordinator, **Mary Wilson**, whose role encompasses many things; they are both invaluable. **Tom Porter** has been Interim Treasurer for some months, and we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for stepping back into the role when Megan McQueenie was unable to continue. His contribution of time and expertise, coupled with his grace and patience, have been exceptional. **Valerie MacPhee** as Vice President has also been a valued member of the Executive.

In addition to her contributions already mentioned, **MaryAnne Bennie** edits our June and December Newsletters, and looks after technical equipment. **Pat Amor** has capably edited the bimonthly Newsletters for the past two years, but is now standing down from that role; thanks to her for keeping us well-informed. **Val Wake** has been our Social Organiser for the last year, and has carried out this role with calm efficiency. We have been pleased to have three wise men sitting on the Committee as General Members – **Jack Ings**, **Bryce Phillips**, and **Russell Scoular**. Warm thanks to them for their various contributions.

Off Committee members have contributed to U3A in various ways. In addition to those already mentioned, we acknowledge the following:

Alan Marks, our vigilant Health and Safety Officer; **Keith Wise**, our diligent Membership Manager, who is stepping down from the role of looking after the data base after a number of years – thank you very much, Keith; **Lois Maguire**, who has been a very valuable Assistant Treasurer, working alongside Tom Porter; **Toni Tyers**, our energetic Publicity Officer; and **Penny Braybrook**, the very efficient Manager of our wonderful website.

Finally, I congratulate all our members on their enthusiasm for lifelong learning, their commitment to sharing their knowledge and life skills, and their contribution to making U3A Banyule a place of respect, friendship and goodwill.

Helen McKinnon, President
16 August 2018