



BANYULE
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE Annual General Meeting, 12 AUGUST 2021.

To say this was a difficult year is probably an understatement as Covid lockdowns and restrictions constantly hindered or changed our activities and plans from the last Annual General Meeting to this one.

However, refusing to be negative, I am calling this report:

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF LOCKDOWNS AND RESTRICTIONS FROM OCTOBER 2020 TO AUGUST 2021

MEMBERSHIP

The current membership stands at 737. Our membership has seen an increase of 3.6% this year compared to the same period last year. This was despite all the disruptions with Covid19 and delays in using our new facilities at the Ivanhoe Library and Cultural Hub.

U3A Membership numbers across Victoria decreased by 11% in 2020 so we can feel very pleased with our small increase.

Our membership from 2017 to July 2021 has increased by 29%. This is substantial.

Of our present membership 124 are new members and there are 17 new associate members. The majority of our members are in their 60s and 70s with the largest number aged 71 to 75. There are only 23 members under 60. At the other end of the scale 139 of our members are over 80 with 18 in their 90s.

We currently have 167 male members and 570 female members. This means only 23% of our membership is male and we would like to see this increased.

ZOOM

Throughout this period between October last year and currently, Zoom has continued to play a part in providing our program to members.

At least 15 ongoing classes were held on Zoom during lockdowns and restrictions.

Between July 2020 and currently, we have provided 44 single sessions on Zoom, and the Annual Forum on Webinar. Incidental meetings for our committee and working parties were also conducted on Zoom, which was a far better means of communication than the telephone.

We were also able to put our Zoom classes online for our members who missed out on being present at the actual presentation.

Michael Maguire, our Technology Coordinator needs to be thanked once again for all his work in making Zoom available to both tutors and to individual members. His contribution has been enormous.

We are hoping that Zoom will continue to play a part in the future of U3A. It could enable members who are unable to physically get to a face-to-face class, to join in via Zoom.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Zoom, as mentioned above, played an enormous part in helping to keep us together, as did our Newsletters sent out on a weekly to fortnightly basis when we were in lockdown. Weekly emails (that myu3a call omails) were also a great help. I always felt I was speaking personally to members via these omails.

Thanks also to our tutors who were not able to Zoom but who kept in touch with their students over the lockdown.

Many meals have been shared wherever possible between groups, as well as more formal luncheons. This is always such a wonderful way to keep in touch.

Encouraged by omail, hundreds of hand-made items were made during lockdown for a display for all to see. We are still waiting for this to occur but occur it will.

MOVE TO ILCH

This was most certainly a highlight of the year.

After 4 years of planning we finally moved into our new home in the Ivanhoe Library and Community Hub (ILCH).

This occurred in March amidst great excitement. As with any new building there have been a number of hitches but these are slowly being ironed out. We are very lucky to have a separate office and two excellent classrooms with audio/visual equipment built in. This doesn't always work exactly as we want but time and experience will help!

Our biggest difficulty has been the restricted numbers we are able to have in our classrooms (only 27 people in each one rather than 54) and recently, just 10 per room which has stopped us meeting. This has led to many members being placed on waiting lists for classes, which is very frustrating but something we may need to live with for some time to come.

Janice Kelly has been our liaison officer for ILCH. This has been a very demanding task, trying to have our needs met yet keeping a good working relationship with the Council and with YPRL. We need to thank her very sincerely for her tireless and professional work. Fortunately, she is going to continue in this role for the next few months.

TUTORS

We have 48 tutors currently taking our ongoing classes, many of whom have been long-standing. Without them we would not exist and I would like them to know how much each one is appreciated.

At this point, I would especially like to thank these retiring tutors.

Toni Tyers was the tutor to introduce Mah-jong to our U3A and has been a tutor of this for the past 10 -11 years.

Ruth Cumming has run Book Group 2 also for the last 11 years, often in her own home providing a wonderful social occasion along with the study of books.

John Metcalf introduced us to Croquet and led a group of eager members in the art of croquet for 6 weeks for the last 2 years. Jeff Rowe will take his place.

June Sharp has organised our ever - popular Lingering Lunches for the last 7 or 8 years. We have been to some wonderful restaurants in this time.

Again, we thank these tutors for their contribution to U3A and wish them well in the future.

SEMESTER PROGRAMS

Our semester programs have been of the highest quality. We have had a wide variety of ongoing courses, short courses, single sessions, excursions and events. They have been well attended both in person when it has been possible and via Zoom.

Our Public Lecture Series, on the fourth Monday of the month give us the opportunity to invite members of the public and introduce them to U3A. These lectures have been on most interesting topics and they attract a large audience. Thanks to Maria Axarlis-Coulter for her ability in finding some extraordinary guest speakers.

As our member numbers have grown more courses/sessions have been developed.

This has taken countless hours of work for Janice Kelly and her Course Coordination Team.

They deserve great thanks for not only preparing the program but for providing such a high quality one; as well they need praise for their patience in reorganising the program as restrictions come and go.

Our affiliation with La Trobe University continues and is organised by Sue Beshara. In semester 1 there were 14 participants and 17 placement requests have occurred for semester 2.

The subject range chosen by participants covers a wide range from Anthropology, Archaeology, Art; Women's History; Italian; Australian Sign Language; Philosophy; and Asian environmental histories.

We need to thank La Trobe and Sue for giving our members this wonderful opportunity to enhance their learning in retirement.

SPECIAL EVENTS October 2020 – August 2021

The Annual Forum was held in the form of a Webinar in November last year and was well supported by our members who spoke very highly of it indeed. The topic was “A Matter of Trust” and we had 3 excellent speakers who explored the importance of trust in our everyday lives.

Many thanks to those members of the committee who organised this event.

A Traditional Irish Evening with singing and dancing occurred in March. As usual, we needed to limit our numbers but this was a fun event for the 60 members who attended. We have now had a Scottish and an Irish night – what will be next?

Annual Lunch. This was held in June at St George’s Restaurant in Preston, and as usual was a very popular event.

The venue is special and the meal is quite gourmet. The company of each other was what everyone enjoyed most, however, as it occurred not long after our second-last lockdown.

Our guest speaker, Aris Petratos, spoke on “Bees, the Environment and our Health”.

Lunch at the Watsonia RSL. A group of 32 members enjoyed a lunch at this venue on July 5. This was a wonderful opportunity for our members who do not have access to email to get together to meet each other and to meet the Newsletter team who have delivered Newsletters to them over the past year.

Welcome to New Members. A session for new members was held in April and again in July. These sessions are a great way for us to introduce our new members to each other and the committee and to help them to gain a greater understanding of our organisation.

A trip to Stratford for our students of Shakespeare run by Audrey Davies.

This was an enormously successful trip for our Shakespeare enthusiasts, which was written up in our June newsletter. Many thanks to Audrey for organising this – an illustration of the dedication of our tutors.

I won’t mention all the wonderful events we needed to cancel, including our Meet, Greet and Buy Sale. We have had 3 attempts at this and have been foiled each time.

THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Our committee consists of 15 members who attend monthly meetings and a further 12 members who work for our organisation but are not required to attend the meetings.

Despite so many lockdowns and restrictions the committee has been working very hard this year to ensure we have run efficiently and in the very best interests of our members.

The committee consists of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Course Coordinator. Further to these outstanding people we also have a Venues Coordinator, an Office Manager, the Volunteers Coordinator, the myu3a administrator, the

U3A Network Victoria representative and the Technology Manager plus four general positions.

On our “off committee” is the Ivanhoe Library Hub and Council representative, the Community Wellbeing Officer, our Health and Safety Officer, the La Trobe University Coordinator, the Membership Manager, the Social Organiser, the Office Assistant’s Coordinator, the Website Manager and the Newsletter Coordinator.

Furthermore, we have 9 sub committees/working parties that advise the committee on a range of issues. To run an organisation with a 700 plus membership is quite a complicated process.

I would like to thank each committee member, both on and off the committee and all the members of the working parties for their contribution to the smooth running of our U3A.

VOLUNTEERS

Everyone within our organisation is a volunteer. This includes our tutors, our guest speakers, the committee of management and of course all our office volunteers. The OVs, as we call them, work in the office from 10-12 Monday to Friday. They are the face of U3A and as such they are most valuable. Our sincere thanks are extended to them.

A special thankyou is extended to Pat Gropel who has retired as the Office Volunteers Coordinator after 3 years in this position.

We would also like to open our office from 1-3 in the afternoon and at this point are attempting to do this but of course we need more volunteers.

AWARDS

Earlier in the year three of our tutors received Jaga Jaga Community Awards.

They were Valerie Fletcher, Julie Marshall and Margaret Murphy. These 3 have been outstanding tutors for more than 10 years and have contributed significantly to U3A.

This year the Awards committee introduced a Significant Service Award and I am pleased to inform you that five individual members are receiving one of these awards at the AGM and there is one team award.

Three members are to become Life Members.

On this joyous note I would like to wish the incoming committee a wonderful and less restricted year ahead. I am retiring from my position and would like to thank all members for being so loyal and committed in difficult circumstances and ensuring U3A Banyule continues to be such a vibrant organisation.

Joan Learmont

President U3A Banyule

