

Committee of Management

Annual Report 2024

I have had the honour of being President for just under three years and as I step down, I cannot emphasize enough how proud I am of all the people who volunteer, which results in such a dynamic learning and social environment for Older Adult members of our community. Our organization is well known within the greater community for our purpose, our integrity and our capacity to deliver as best we can for our members. As an organisation of volunteers, U3A is a great undertaking, and excitingly, I believe members can be optimistic of our future progress.

The Committee of Management oversees all aspects of this organization and has at the forefront, a focus on continuous improvement. Membership is carefully monitored and currently, while still recruiting, we are tracking similarly but slightly ahead of 2024 when our membership rose to just over 900 members.

Our membership profile at the beginning of March is:

Full	639	187	826
Associate	32	9	41
Life	12	2	14
External Tutors	14	5	19
Total	697	203	900
Grand Total	690	201	891

*9 were members still renewing

Our steady membership reflects the fact that once enrolled, our members are staying on and this correlates with the high

levels of satisfaction in the 2024 Satisfaction Survey. In 2024, as a goal of our Strategic Plan, Kevin Whiting and John Jones-Parry conducted valuable research into varying aspects of male membership to ascertain how we can encourage more male members and facilitate ongoing membership. We will continue this focus going forward. In terms of membership, we have not advertised but our reputation for delivering a broad dynamic program, clearly attracts our new members.

A Gap Analysis of the Strategic Plan 2022-24 was undertaken late in 2024 and it is very gratifying to note that we far exceeded what we set out to do in 2022. Many of the achieved goals are now very much part of our established practice or are our continuing focus for improvement. The one goal that needs future focus is examining how to best create connections with diverse groups in our community. However, after a Planning Day on February 28th to examine available data and garner responses, our imperative is to synthesise the considerable volume of feedback into what will be the Strategic Plan 2025-2028. If we are to remain relevant and responsive to our members then we need a plan that truly reflects our members' needs and expectations. Working with the Strategic Planning Team, comprising of Milena Maranville, Dianne Williamson, John Jones- Parry and Janet Ringrose, I can commend them for the care, thoroughness and integrity they bring to this task. I also wish to thank the Governance Sub Committee which informs the Committee of Management. Led by Milena Maranville and ably supported by Dianne Williamson, this subcommittee undertakes vital work in ensuring all policies and procedures are in place and gives considerable energy to sustainable recruitment of volunteers.

In terms of financial management, our Treasurer Steve Dennis undertakes this role with meticulous care. In late 2023, he organized an independent review of our financial records to be undertaken by Colville Williams & Co. PTY.LTD and in 2024, has continued that practice. Given the expanding program, especially hiring CMR1 & 2, our spaces at ILCH and the other 13 venues used for classes and events, the ongoing challenge is always meeting the increased charges. However, the bequest from the estate of Edna Bird, has meant that the interest gained has enabled CoM to recommend to our members that the Annual Subscription Fees remain at the 2023 rate, during 2024. This year we will again ask members to set the same fees for the year 2025. We are sure our members will endorse this proposal at the 2025 AGM.

Our Course Coordinator Sharon Karasmanis does an amazing job, ably supported by Marg Fievez in her role as Lecture Coordinator and Tania Rostan, our Venue Coordinator. They are a super team managing what seems an ever-expanding program. We have had several members unexpectedly volunteer to take classes and so our program has continued to grow. In 2024 our program grew to over 70 classes, along with extensive public speaking opportunities, excursions, social events and the lecture program. In response to member feedback in the 2024 Satisfaction Survey, a thorough investigation into waitlists resulted in key improvements to the management of waitlists; ensuring that there is immediate backfilling as soon as vacancies arise. We thank our tutors for their responsiveness and vigilance. CoM also created the necessary stipulation in the Banyule Terms and Conditions of Membership, that members can only enrol in a maximum of two exercise classes. This has resulted in greater access for far more people. Our tutors, lecturers, speaker facilitators and presenters are amazing. Please know we greatly value your

knowledge, commitment and energy. Sharon, Marg and Tania we salute your work.

In 2024 active recruitment was undertaken to ensure sustainability in the Office Volunteer roster. As a result, this year we have begun with a full roster of Office Volunteers which is very heartening. Heather Stephens and Milena Maranville along with Office Manager Inge Kearney and new Office Assistant, Kay Mitchell have focussed on continued improvements to all office operations and materials. This work and the focussed training days provide valuable support to our front of house volunteers. A big thank you to the Office Volunteers and to Heather, Milena, Inge and Kaye.

We greatly value the use of CMR1 & CMR2 at ILCH, our central hub. I wish to acknowledge Janice Kelly as a powerful advocate for U3A Banyule. I have worked with Janice to negotiate a longer contract with Yarra Plenty Regional Library and Banyule City Council and to effect safety changes. While I will continue to liaise with these entities, Janice is retiring from her role and U3A Banyule owes her a vote of thanks. Given the increasing demand for spaces within ILCH, we strive to work cooperatively with YPLS, trying to balance our needs but working for mutual benefit. This year we will renegotiate our use of CMI & 2 as central to our purpose, but our program is broad. In 2024, to 'house' our program, we hired 13 venues across Banyule: Bundoora x 1; Greensborough x 2; Heidelberg x 4; Heidelberg West x1; Ivanhoe x1; Ivanhoe East x1; Macleod x2; Watsonia x1. Tania Rostan carefully manages all long and short-term hiring, and she works sensitively to meet the needs of classes.

Our relationship with Banyule City Council (BCC) is of key importance and we have many members participating in consultative meetings to help inform BCC Age Friendly initiatives. In 2024, U3A Banyule provided strong support of Seniors Week in September, by holding three 'come and try' events: Learn to Knit; Watercolour; Singing for Pleasure. Milena Maranville and Maxine Marks successfully applied for a BCC grant to provide materials for the Watercolour class which have continued to benefit our current class. It is greatly valued that our council is keen to support our work where it can. The BBC initiative of the 'Age of Creativity' Art Exhibition was well supported by our members and it was great to see and celebrate their creativity. We also supported the Ageing Well Expo run by the Banyule and Nillumbik Councils by providing a stall. There are many to thank who supported the holding of these events but a special 'thank you' goes to those who led them.

In 2024, we have had some wonderful social opportunities. Joan Learmont the stalwart of Lingering Lunches, mentored a new group of organizers to continue offering interesting dining destinations and so the tradition continues. Paule Cartwright and Pam Macintyre have taken on the task of organising several social events. To Joan thanks, just doesn't seem enough. As Catering Coordinator Fiona Wilson is retiring from her long-held role, Gina Jones-Parry will undertake that role. Thank you, Fiona for your many years of organizing a team of great cooks to cater for so many occasions. Our knitters, led by Diana McCormack, held two craft sales on 22nd and 13th November with money raised being donated to the BBC Community Fund. The Annual Lunch held on June 26th featured the Group Manager for the Biological Sciences Group, of the Victorian Police Forensics Unit at Macleod. This occasion was fully booked. The Annual

Forum held 26th November at the Heidelberg Golf Club, capitalised on 2024 being an Olympic year. This involved a presentation from a female swimmer from the 1968 Mexico Olympics and a male hockey player from Paris 2024. The comparison of their experiences and the insights of ‘behind the scenes’ at Olympic events, made for a very successful event. Vice-President, Janet Ringrose organized these two events which were so enjoyable. To all who organize events or contribute to catering please know our members are so appreciative of your efforts.

An event that is close to my heart, is organizing the special afternoon tea held on 18th September for our Nonagenarians and our Centenarian, to celebrate them all as they are so inspiring. As requested, they came with great stories to share, and the conversations flowed over a sumptuous afternoon tea. Time flies when you are having fun and our special guests had fun. Our Newsletter team, led by Liz Ward, captured the vitality of U3A Banyule. Liz and two of her team, Jan Ramp and Barb Sekuless retired at the end of 2024 and we thank them for their fine work. Sue Gunningham accepted the role of Editor and has recruited a new team to showcase “us” in 2025.

Last year, the Awards Committee under the leadership of Sue Beshara, held a special afternoon tea at the Ivanhoe Bowls Club to thank our tutors and volunteers as well as celebrating those who have made significant contributions. It was wonderful to be able to say ‘Thank You’ to so many who contribute. A special vote of thanks was made to retiring tutor Noel Griffith and his wife Pat, who have hosted Music Appreciation for 28 years at their home. Bravo Noel and Pat! Nancy Cornwallis, leader of ‘Audacity’ since 2011, was presented with a Tutor Excellence Award certificate sent from

U3A Victoria for her outstanding commitment. U3A Banyule Life Membership was awarded to Heather Stephens, a member of CoM, for her immense contribution over many years. Heather has managed and been the trouble shooter for the MyU3A system; has initiated along with Kevin Whiting the Trybooking system to streamline paid events; played a key role in the Website redevelopment and worked tirelessly to improve office manuals, procedures and present training sessions. Heather worked closely with Sharon and the Courses group in 2024, to streamline the end of year enrolment timeline and processes, resulting in a smooth transition into 2025. In 2024, the Committee of Management wanted to recognise Edna Bird's amazing bequest by initiating an exciting new annual award, to recognize a 'special person who has been a strong contributor and has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the values of 'friendship, community and connection'. The Inaugural Edna Bird Award was bestowed on Sharon Karazmanis for her outstanding contribution since she joined in 2019; her exemplary work as Course Coordinator; her technology trouble-shooting; her liaison with YPRL and her collegiality and goodwill. Key to the ethos of U3A Banyule is ensuring we convey gratitude to our volunteers and acknowledge all those who have made significant contributions. I would like to acknowledge Sue Beshara and the Awards Committee who makes such a valuable contribution in this regard.

Throughout this report, I have thanked people and have reiterated the importance of our volunteers. I would like to thank all of you who do give of your time, no matter how great or small your input. A big thank you goes to my immediate colleagues for their support, expertise and commitment Vice President Janet Ringrose, Secretary Margaret Jack, and Treasurer Steve Dennis. Our Committee

of Management comprising of Jan Brown, Steve Dennis, Margaret Jack, Sharon Karasmanis, Inge Kearney, Helen Hodson, Milena Maranville, John Jones- Parry, Janet Ringrose, Tania Rostan, Heather Stephens, Dianne Williamson has worked with such goodwill and expertise to ensure that this organization meets our challenges and responds to the needs of our members. A special thanks goes to Noni Crowther Minutes Secretary who so accurately records the business of COM.

I wish to acknowledge two members who will step down from significant roles, although they will not step down from COM. In her focus in Governance, Dianne Williamson has left an amazing legacy of work in identifying issues, creating clarity and ensuring U3A has clear articulation in all its documentation. She reports for U3A Banyule of initiatives and issues from Network Victoria. Bravo Dianne! Margaret Jack will step down from the executive role of Secretary after five years. Margaret has been such a wonderful support to me and has readily given so much as Secretary. A job well done Margaret! Along with CoM, we have 13 members who act in 'Support Roles', overseeing so many diverse aspects of U3A Banyule. Although often working alone, their contributions are greatly valued. To you all, I would like to express my sincere thanks on behalf of our members.

It has been such a privilege to lead U3A Banyule from August 2022 to March 2025. I have been humbled by the energy, the intelligence and focus of those who work so hard to make U3A as dynamic as it is. I look back over this past year, indeed across the whole period of my presidency, with gratitude for the positivity amongst our members. Always when there has been a call for help; a job to be done or a

position to be filled, we have had people come forward. I thank you for the support you have given me.

Judith Craze

President

U3A Banyule

12th March, 2025

Annual Report from the Committee of Management