



BANYULE
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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*U3A Banyule acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to their Elders.
The U3A movement is a welcoming place for all.*

Quarterly Newsletter

March 2026

In this edition

The year began with our U3A membership topping 1000!!! How wonderful that so many seniors are broadening their knowledge, skills and friendships by being part of this great organisation.

News team member Glenda Williamson recently moved to the country and we'll miss her engaging articles.

Marie-Rose Auguste has since joined our team. Check out her first articles in this issue.

Our team is excited to get among the members and report on the wide range of classes and activities U3A Banyule offers.

Hope to see you out there! ☺

*Sue Gunningham
Editor.*

President's report

A warm welcome to all our U3A Banyule members for 2026, both returning members and newcomers. Banyule U3A is about people and our program provides many opportunities to meet and connect with others of a similar age, from our own geographical community.

When we finish our paid working lives, or our children are less reliant on us on a day-to-day basis, we often lose the chance for easy connection with others which were provided by the workplace, local committees and sporting teams.

Many studies have demonstrated the value of social connectedness for our mental health. Our U3A program enables us to meet and connect with others, to test our ideas in a safe environment, and learn new skills or develop knowledge in areas we may not have had a chance to tackle in earlier times.

Of course, U3A Banyule also provides many programs which address other aspects of our health. These range from walking groups to yoga and Tai Chi which support our physical health. These are often amongst our most popular courses. If you have not gained a place in one of your preferred areas, please remain patient and on the Waiting List, as this is continually updated by our Courses Coordinator and our tutors. In all, U3A Banyule enables members to build and maintain our social, physical and mental health.

To begin our year, we ran start-up training sessions for Tutors, Office Volunteers and at our New Members' Welcome. All these events were well attended and purposeful. Our aim is to provide timely information to assist members in navigating U3A Banyule. We hope to have members for a very long time, not just a dip in, then out.

We've had such a great response to the program on offer; a program that seems to be ever-expanding, thanks to some unexpected offerings from members who volunteer their time.

We have two important dates for your diary. Currently we are finalising all the materials and organizing for the AGM. It will be held on March 30 at ILCH from 2-4pm. Our other big event is the celebration luncheon to be held on July 24th at the Montmorency RSL Club. This will be an opportunity to celebrate forty years of Banyule U3A. We would love to see you at either or both of these events.



Janet Ringrose
U3A Banyule President

New Member's Welcome afternoon tea – Feb 2026

The first Monday of February was also a first for some eager people of a certain age. The room at Ivanhoe Library was a-buzz with a meeting for the new members of U3A Banyule.

I entered gingerly, but after being greeted by a very friendly Milena, I immediately felt welcome. I sat in the back row ready to slip away unnoticed, if uncomfortable at any time. How wrong was my presumption!

At the start the President welcomed all present, including about 60 newcomers. She then explained U3A's 'Purpose and Values', the roles and commitments of its committees, and the intricate workings of the Wizard computer system.

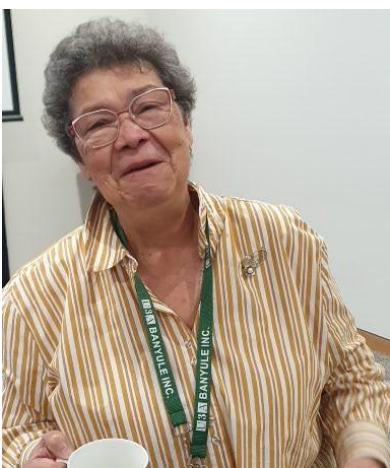
After the formalities, the ice was quickly broken when Milena asked everyone to do a mock 'speed-dating' exercise. Having recently celebrated my wedding anniversary, I was a bit wary of participating. But what an excellent idea it was! We were given five minutes to choose another newcomer, introduce ourselves and share our reasons for joining U3A. Soon the room was full of excited conversations and laughter.

I always wanted to find a pleasant and interesting way of keeping my mind and body active and I think I may have found the niche I needed. The meeting concluded with a delicious afternoon tea; another opportunity to engage with our newly found acquaintances.

I am looking forward to attending my classes. Will keep you posted.

By Guest Writer and new U3A member Marie-Rose Auguste

EDITOR'S NOTE: U3A is entirely run by volunteers and we are grateful to Marie-Rose for volunteering to write this article on her very first day with U3A. The photos below are some of our 'newbies'. Be sure to say hello if you see them.



Marie-Rose (News team - new member)



U3A Volunteer Thank You & Member Awards - November 2025

A large group of members filled the E. Ivanhoe Bowling Club for the *Volunteer Thank You* and to celebrate recipients of the annual *U3A Banyule Awards*. We were treated to a magnificent afternoon tea while we heard of the outstanding contribution each award winner has made to U3A Banyule during their membership.

TUTORS - 'A DECADE OF SERVICE' AWARDS were given to:
(Photo L-R) Brian James, June Sharp, Catherine Prowse, Janice Kelly, Diana McCormack, Len Kelly, Janet Creed, and Jane Davies.



Significant Service Awards were given to:

TUTORS/session organisers

- Richard Cartwright (French – 2 sessions pw -4 years)
- Brian James (Lawn Bowls for 10 years)
- Kay Forde (Social Bridge for 8 years)
- Aruna Morris (Scrabble & 2 sessions pw of Tai Chi)
- Gabby Zito (Italian for 4 years)
- Margaret Jack (Wednesday talks, Governance & CoM secretary)
- Sue and Andrew Lees (Wednesday talks for 4 years)



Suzanne & Andrew Lees

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

- Frances Fernandez (since 2015)
- Mary Hooper (since 2014)

ADMINISTRATION

- Heather Stephens (Member Wizard implementation & MYU3A admin for 4 years)
- Sheila Colls (Lectures and our member of Banyule Age Friendly Committee)
- Dianne Williamson (Strategic Planning, Governance for 10 yrs & delegate to U3A Network Vic).

A 'U3A Victoria - Tutor Recognition Award' was given to Diana McCormack who has taught/organised numerous courses and events during her 13 year membership.



Joan Learmont & Sue Beshara

Our 2025 '**Life Membership**' recipient was Jan Ramp for her many services to U3A Banyule including coordinating Public Lectures, Office Volunteer trainer, Volunteer Coordinator, Tai Chi tutor, News team membership, and support for members without U3A on-line access.

Our 2025 '**Edna Bird Award**' recipient was Joan Learmont who for over 11 years has contributed tirelessly to the well-being of members across many diverse roles.

These include, but are not limited to:

Course Coordinator, U3A President, CoM, news team, supporting members without U3A on-line access, organising lingering lunches, fundraisers, guest speakers and functions to celebrate the different cultural make up of our members. Joan is most a worthy recipient of the award!

By Sue Gunningham (News team)



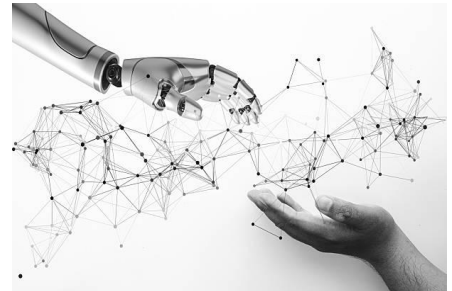
Jan Ramp & Judith Craze

Annual Forum - Artificial Intelligence lecture

'I don't allow my children (aged 8 and 5) access to social media and we limit their TV time; children need to be children.' Does this sound like an AI guru to you?

This interesting comment was made by Tal Nathan at the Annual Forum in November. As we enjoyed nibbles in the Heidelberg Golf Club we listened to Tal and Bruno Zielke present two different views on the future of AI and the influence it is, and will have, on our lives in the future. The presentation was marred by a very fluky PR system, the crackles and silences making it difficult to hear and keep track of the discussion.

Bruno presented an uncertain future for mankind, explaining the many ways AI is taking over and influencing our lives and thoughts! He acknowledged the advancements that AI had facilitated but is concerned that many of us are unaware of its full influence. He posits that AI could become a law unto itself and will make independent decisions. A very scary thought!



On the other hand Tal was very positive. He maintained that we need to learn how to work with and use AI. Job applicants will need a firm knowledge of AI for all forms of employment. My understanding of his argument was 'Like it or not, AI is the way of the future.'

If we need any further evidence of AI and its power, check the article in the Age newspaper on 5th February 2026. A brave new world indeed!

By Elizabeth Ainsworth (News team)

SNAPS & SONGS 25th November 2025 U3A Banyule Choir Christmas performance

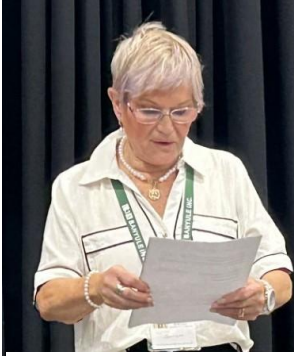
As a chorister (Marian) and audience member (Elizabeth) we both very much enjoyed the occasion. Joan and her skilled team worked miracles providing afternoon tea for the (happily) large audience. Thank you to all involved. We look forward to the next one!

By Marian Power & Elizabeth Ainsworth (News team)



End of year drama performance – December 2025

Class - 'Drama for confidence, creativity and fun'



Tutor Lynne Bartlett

It was a delightful evening of entertainment. A larger audience of members than expected flowed through the doors; requiring more chairs to be unstacked. There was a palpable buzz of anticipation and no doubt some performer nerves!

With everyone settled, tutor Lynne Bartlett introduced the evening's program, expressing her delight in the skill, creativity and confidence her students had developed during the year to culminate in this event. She noted that most students had not performed in public before.



The hour-long program was a treat, with an eclectic mix of dramatic performances from well-known works such as Clancy of the Overflow and Shakespeare's MacBeth, alongside individual performances of dramatic and personal monologues that were a mix of heartfelt and personal, creative and sad, whimsical and retrospective, and laugh-out-loud funny. Hilarious props and costumes aided the acts and a delightful singing performance.



The evening ended with heartfelt thanks to Lynne, for sharing her experience of drama and theatre, for fostering a sense of joy and creativity and for gently encouraging all students to move beyond their comfort zones.

A delicious supper of homemade treats allowed audience and performers to mingle and celebrate a joyful and memorable evening.

By Glenda Williamson (News team)

Creative Knitting Group - November craft stall

Thanks to all who purchased from our stall. We raised \$1298, which was donated to the Banyule Community Fund. The Creative Knitting group would also like to thank U3A Treasurer, Steve Dennis for handling the sales. It was the first time people could buy using a credit card and this proved very successful.

The group also knitted 200 small Christmas items which were donated to the library, for children to find in the lead up to Christmas. Feedback from the Library staff was most positive with patrons asking if the items were free to take home. Some of the leftover toys were parcelled with books and handed out at storytelling sessions.



By Diana McCormack (Guest writer)

Lecture - The A-Z of Ageing Disgracefully November 2025

Christine Lister has lived and worked in the Banyule area for decades. A generous soul, she has offered U3A talks for 15 years, often welcoming Banyule members to her home for presentations. Late last year she presented two sessions - Ageing Disgracefully and Ageing Gracefully.

Participants were encouraged to consider how to manage our transition from work to retirement and ageing with grace, disgrace, humour and meaningful reflection. Christine encouraged us to use our freedom, flexibility, resilience and personal resources to not only survive, but to thrive; to throw caution to the wind, to choose what *WE* want to do with our lives and enjoy the process.



She feels '*shoulds*' are society's strait jackets, as are the stereotypes often assigned to ageing. Christine tells us to '**REJECT THEM!**'

While passionate about her poodle, orchids, garden, books and life in general, these U3A talks allow Christine to further harness her creativity and wisdom and give insights into a variety of topics designed to entertain, enlighten and inspire.

This year, look out for *Dangerous Women, Artists and their Gardens* and *The Garden of My Delights*. *By Linda Duncan (News team)*

Lunch with CoM & Support-role teams – December 2025



Late December some members of CoM and some of the support team members met for an end of year lunch. For two hours, Heidelberg's Dama Rose restaurant rang with loud, cheerful laughter and conversation.

The delicious banquet feast was enormous, thereby ensuring the little bag of chocolates given to each of us by the Vice President at the end of the meal, would make it home uneaten.

We had a wonderful time and it was great to meet other members and put faces to names of people who work behind the scenes, to make U3A Banyule so successful.

U3A is run entirely by volunteers. As a member, perhaps you might consider offering your services in some way? There is a role for everyone, and much to be gained by helping out where you can.

By Sue Gunningham (News team)

In Memory of Noel Griffith 7th Nov 1929 – 3rd Dec 2025

(Editor's note: Noel was interviewed by us in 2025 when he was filmed for ABC's 'The Piano' series. The article was held over pending the program airing. Unfortunately Noel passed away before that happened. Given his long association with U3A Banyule, we decided, with his wife's permission, to publish this article posthumously.)

It is with great sadness we noted the passing of Noel last December and send our sincere condolences to Pat, his wife and their family. Noel's association with U3A was long and diverse. He held the positions of both president and secretary and also ran two very popular music appreciation groups in his home from 1995 until 2025.

While helping a friend buy a piano last year, Noel's piano playing skills were noticed and he was asked to be a contestant on the popular ABC show, *The Piano*. This will be aired in 2026 with him playing his own arrangement of Mendelssohn's, 'On Wings of Song'.

Noel began playing the piano at 12 years of age. He worked as an engineer at APM in the day, but found time to complete both a Diploma of Music Performance and Diploma of Piano Teaching. Upon his retirement he became a piano tutor, his true passion. At 96 he was still teaching piano to a close friend.

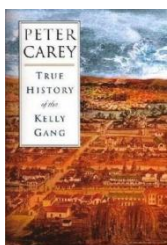
Noel and Pat were also involved with numerous charitable activities, raising money for local and international communities in association with their church and also privately, through a range of activities. For many years they ran concerts in their home with up to 50 attendees, all money going to charity. Noel received a Medal of the Order of Australia, as well as 2017 Banyule Volunteer of the year for his services to the community.

I was very privileged to be invited to Noel and Pat's home last November to discuss Noel's long life and his love of music. The meeting concluded with Noel exquisitely playing a beautiful love song on his 100 year old piano.

By Dianne Dell'Oro-Morgan (News team)



Reading (the Classics) Aloud sessions



I wasn't sure what to expect when I attended the 'Reading (the Classics) Aloud' class, however I was in for a very pleasant surprise.

Under the lively and scholarly approach of Ann Ritchie, a group of about 15 members each took turns reading aloud from a book by Australia's great novelist, Peter Carey about the outlaw, Ned Kelly. Within Carey's masterful writing, Ned Kelly comes alive.

Everyone obviously delighted in the experience and shared observations as they arose. Some members were especially knowledgeable and familiar with the Australia of yesteryear.

It was like participating in 'live theatre' to hear the written word read aloud with so much feeling, with the added bonus of attending a special history class. I could well imagine listening to Ned Kelly himself. What a treat!

By Marie-Rose Auguste (News team)

This lecture by Dr Michael Adcock provided a fascinating insight into the techniques for preparation, purposes and use of beautiful illuminated manuscripts.

We were shown a variety of styles of these manuscripts and how they had varied in content, purpose and design through periods including Gothic, Middle Ages, Romanesque, Renaissance and Medieval. The early works were produced by monks working in scriptoriums to make copies of religious texts, such as the Bible and prayer books.



Later examples were non-religious works written on a variety of topics. Most of the manuscripts were produced on commission for wealthy and royal patrons and because of the time and materials in their construction, were very expensive.

We learned of the preparation of vellum, quills, and the inks, paints and gold leaf used for the texts and illustrations. Often several people were involved with the writing and illustrations of a manuscript. The illustrations in these documents range from decorated capitals to borders and part or full-page painted images enhanced by gold leaf. Inks were made from expensive materials like lapis lazuli, copper, insects and arsenic mixed with egg yolk.



The lecture was supplemented by images of pages from many famous manuscripts including the *Book of Kells* (containing four gospels of the New Testament), the *Book of Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (containing prayers and psalms), and the *Wharncliffe Hours* (a prayer book owned by the NGV).



Dr Adcock created a display of many of his personal collection of facsimiles of manuscripts which we were encouraged to touch, adding an extra dimension to his enjoyable and informative presentation.

By Dianne Williamson (News team)

Do you have an article idea for the quarterly Newsletter?

If you have an idea for an article, or a photo you would like to submit to the Quarterly Newsletter, please contact Sue Gunningham (Newsletter editor) via U3A office. You are invited to submit an article or if you prefer, a team member can interview you about your idea and write the article for you. We welcome your assistance.

2026 IMPORTANT DATES	
Monday 30 th March	Annual General Meeting
Thursday 2 nd April	Semester 1, Term 1 classes end
Fri 3 rd & Mon 6 th April	Easter public holidays – Office closed, no classes
Mon 20 th April	Semester 1, Term 2 classes commence
Monday 8 th June tbc	King's birthday public holiday – Office closed, no classes
Friday 26 th June	Semester 1, Term 2 classes end