



U3A Banyule 40th Anniversary July 2026





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.*

A message from our President

In July 1986 a small group of passionate individuals came together with a singular vision - to explore the possibilities of establishing a U3A campus for the North Eastern region of Melbourne. What began as a humble grassroots initiative has blossomed into a strong, vibrant organisation with over 1100 members in 2026. The U3A Banyule is a vital part of our local community, fulfilling its original mission to provide shared learning, social connection and enhancing the wellbeing of its members.

As we look back on 40 years, the true history of our organisation is not found in policy documents or strategic plans. It is written in the countless hours of service, the warm smiles, the resilient spirit, and the tireless commitment and dedication of our members.



Janet Ringrose

Whether you have been with us for many years, or recently joined Banyule U3A, your involvement is the lifeblood of our success. Driven entirely by volunteers, it is the individual contributions of our members through committees, tutoring, undertaking of specific roles, participating in classes and lectures and showing support for one another that is our strength. Together we have shown that even the most ambitious goals can be achieved when a community unites with purpose, compassion, and a willingness to give their time.

This booklet serves as a tribute to four decades of collective impact, a walk down memory lane, and a heartfelt thank you to every volunteer who has shaped what U3A Banyule is today. As we celebrate this remarkable milestone, we do so, not just honouring our past, but stepping into the future with confidence and optimism.

Thank you for forty years of extraordinary service. Here's to the next chapter of making a difference, together.



Editor's Note: (Sketches and 'Thoughts for the day' in this booklet were created by anonymous members and appeared in Yarra Valley U3A Newsletters in the early years)

The Story of U3A Banyule

The University of the Third Age began in France in 1973. The concept was to offer both academic subjects and physical opportunities to older citizens. The model spread through Europe and in 1975, the International Association of U3A was established.

Australia's first U3A was in the City of Melbourne 1984, then Hawthorn, Monash, Ringwood, and in 1986, Yarra Valley U3A (later re-named Banyule U3A).

Two volunteer workers, Hula McGregor and Dawn Roscholler were demonstrating exercises for older people at Plenty Hospital. From their early discussions grew the first steps towards establishing the Yarra Valley U3A. They held a meeting on 7/4/86 at Dawn's house. Present were Dawn and her husband John, Hula, Penny Abrahams, Chris Wroe and Jill Thompson.

The group organised a public meeting in the Condor Room at Heidelberg Town Hall on 24/7/86 to discuss the possibility of establishing a U3A campus in the N.E. Region of Melbourne. The meeting was attended by 900 people! A steering committee was formed and later, 59 people attended the inaugural U3A Yarra Valley meeting which was held at the Roscholler's home.



Condor Room

In the early stage, all classes were held in members' homes. Newsletters were printed with the support of Banyule Councillors and local MPs, then folded and posted by U3A volunteers. Volunteering underpinned the organisation then, as it does now.



Heidelberg Technical School

U3A Banyule fosters partnerships with Yarra Plenty libraries and contributes in many ways to the broader community. Our choir presents at various musical gatherings and invites musicians from local schools to join them. Our Knitting Group has taught people of all ages to knit. They also sell knitted items and donate the money raised to charity.

Accommodation has always been a problem. In 1987 we were allocated a room and office facilities at Heidelberg Technical School.

In 1993 we shared Council offices at 44 Turnbull Avenue with another organisation.



Baby Health Centre

In 1988 we moved to an empty Baby Health Centre at 208 Burgundy Street and also hired rooms from local churches, Rosanna Fire Station, Living and Learning centres, etc., plus we used free spaces offered by Banyule Council, local MPs and in private homes.



44 Turnbull Avenue

In 2009, with Banyule Council support, we moved to 14 Ivanhoe Pde Ivanhoe. Most classes were now held in this larger space which we used five days per week. This, while we awaited the construction of Ivanhoe Learning & Community Hub (ILCH) where U3A was to have a designated space.



14 Ivanhoe Pde

When Banyule Council decided to sell 14 Ivanhoe Pde, before ILCH was completed, we objected, asking the sale be delayed until completion of ILCH. Later, one-on-one discussions with Councillors swayed the Council's decision in our favour. In 2024 we moved into our new office space and meeting rooms at ILCH.

On our 40th Anniversary, with a current membership of over 1,100 members, U3A Banyule remains true to the founding concept, providing both academic and physical opportunities to senior citizens. We are a community of scholars and an army of volunteers.

Snippets from our Past Newsletters

1986 - 1992

1986 Newsletter 1 Our inaugural meeting in July had a membership of 59 people, with 19 of these being on the Steering Committee.

October 1986 Newsletter 2 Yarra Valley U3A Campus Chairman's message (excerpt) ... 'I am convinced the U3A concept will help satisfy felt needs previously shelved or left to wither on the vine. Our forward plans are the acquisition of an office with rostered staff and a phone, so we can operate from one central point... A post office box has been applied for and a special rate of postage struck for sending out the monthly newsletter. At the moment, committee members hand-deliver the newsletter to keep costs low. Our bank balance at the 31st of October 1986: Credit \$818.85.

1990 March: Introduction to Computers course is full but another starting after Easter.

1991 January: 8 day Tasmanian tour \$870pp.

New courses: Armchair travel, Comparative religions, Environmental matters, Philosophical thinking.

March 1991 Vale Notices: Ian Walter, Jay and Elizabeth Spencer, and reports from each of the **seven courses** offered by U3A Plenty Valley.

August: An October conference advertised: '**Lifelong development**' at the YMCA Macleod.

A 'Reef and Rail trip' was being planned with a flight from Melbourne to Brisbane, then train to Cairns for a seven night stay, before return flight to Melbourne.

March 1992 Two new courses: One will discuss the life and thoughts of the eminent Swiss psychiatrist C.J. Jung, while another class is titled 'Maths made easy.'

August: A report from a **U3A Conference held in Melbourne in Senior Citizens Week** where it was discussed whether U3A type programs for 'special groups' in the community (eg. migrants, visually impaired, hostel residents, disabled people, etc) should be designed around specialisation or integration. Experience favours integrationist approach where practicable, partly from a pragmatic point of view (for recruiting tutors, leaders) but also because of the U3A movement's belief in the social value of integrating people from different backgrounds.

U3A Yarra Valley now regularly hosts two local radio programmes each week. Fridays for 30 mins on Community Radio 31NR, there's a mix of travel talk by Jim Welch, an interesting story or found article by Leslie Claydon and a book excerpt by Norma Thomas. On Tuesdays, Jim, Leslie and Norma discuss a particular book and other readings in their talk show 'Random Readings' on PV FM 88.6.

September U3A conference held in Adelaide. Theme: 'Widening your horizons - living for today, sharing for tomorrow'. Some U3A Victoria members attended and the main question discussed was '*Would having some kind of national organisation benefit Australian U3As?*'

New Course: 'Out - Calm Corridors of Learning, In - The Stirrers at Work' *Some short term forums on specific issues, that ensured the presence of well-informed people with opposing viewpoints would be present to stir the conversation up. Some topics included:*

- Confidentiality of medical reports. 'Would you stop attending your doctor if you thought he might reveal all?'
- Does religion have a place for younger people?
- Women issues - what are they, and are men getting a fair deal?



1993 - 1996

1993 'Is it R.I.P. for the U3A radio programme?' The original idea was to enable older people to continue developing through learning. It would be an Australian first. The group of volunteers grew to nine people. Nine into 1 ½ programme hours over two stations. But volunteer numbers have decreased overtime and two programmes at 2 two stations require a minimum of two people.'

New Course: 'Arm chair travel and cultural history' covered Hawaii, PNG, Indonesia and Singapore.

1994 An '**Introduction to computers**' course was added to U3A class list with lessons held at Banyule College. Meanwhile the '**Thinking philosophically**' class read and discussed Peter Springer's book, *How shall we live?* then turned their attention to Oswald Hanfling's book, *The quest for meaning*.

1995 Winter It was suggested **entertaining day trips** might be organised to places of interest. Ideas ranged from Drouin West fruit & berry farm, a Maribyrnong River cruise and the Science Museum

U3A Plenty Valley member Jim Welch wrote: 'The greatest reason for **travel is 'escape'**. Escape from the dull daily routine, from the job, the boss, customers, community, the house, lawn, car, leaky tap. Some seek change actively by exploring new things; others seek it passively by hiding on the beach. *Be an escape artist! Attend U3A classes.*'

U3A Victoria's 10th birthday: 600 guests from across Victoria poured into the Great Hall at Melbourne's Art Centre. Sir Zelman Cowan entertained the group by addressing the subject of 'Achievement.' He spoke of Sir Redmond Barry, Sir Isaac Isaacs and the soldier engineer General Sir John Monash. We came away with a good sense of pride in our nation and in the contribution U3A makes to the ongoing well-being of its elderly citizens.

Decline of the Written Word (an excerpt)... 'These days every school child is exposed to a computer and ... spends almost as many hours looking at TV screens. When calculators replace mental arithmetic and video games project death and destruction, what is the future of the printed word?

Is there a future role for public libraries? Will rows of computers connected to the Internet eventually replace libraries, change schools and the traditional method of teaching? Does society face a decline in our contemporary culture patterns and morality?

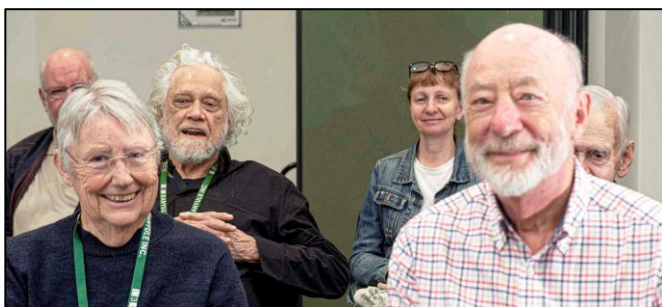
TV is an outstanding method of communication but ... offers less depth and complexity of thought than does the written word...one needs the ability to read and write well... Is the slow eclipse of the written word an indicator of a decline in the intellectual and spiritual sustenance which any of us need?'

U3A Central Coast Region; Aus & NZ Literary Competition \$3 entry, cheques only.
Section 1. Short story 500-2K words Section 2. Article 500 -1500 words

1996 January: 'Study into ageing - the effect of active learning on older people.' People were asked what they'd most like to learn. Five learning areas consumed 60% of all answers: music, computers, languages, history, and philosophy. Some remarks from U3A respondents; 'It's wonderful in U3A to do all the things we've put on hold for years.' 'After 25 years at home with children I was looking to broaden my horizons.' The report found without exception, that undertaking education and recreation activities led to a sense of well being.

1996 April: Open Seminar at Latrobe University 'Australia 2000' plus: What's in store?
Topics covered were: Our country now, how do we see ourselves? What are our strengths and weaknesses? What threats/opportunities does Australia face by 2050? What will Australia be like?

Thought for the day: *Nothing is too small to know, and nothing is too big to attempt.*



1997 - 1998

1997 January U3A Yarra Valley's 10 year anniversary. We have over 200 members and run 24 classes/activities including some science classes, current affairs classes, 3 literature and 3 art classes.

Are any members interested in forming a **Yarra Valley U3A choir**? We have a choirmaster willing to lead the group if enough people are interested.

Three day U3A conference Caloundra QLD. About 150 members from all over Australia, including 20 Victorians (some from U3A Yarra Valley) attended. The theme: 'The joy of living,' had an opening address by Prof. P. Thomas, Vice Chancellor Sunshine Coast University. The local U3A has an office and facilities at the university and members are encouraged to be involved in the university's activities. The Head of Computing gave an 'interesting and intelligible talk, even to the non-initiated, on *Surfing the Internet*'. After a talk by some local Year 7 students a collection was taken and raised \$667 to support the school's efforts around environmental action.

April: Part of a report by Peter Bethell regarding the **Sunshine Coast U3A** which he and his wife joined because they spend months in Queensland every year. 'Sunshine coast U3A began in 1986 with 30 members. Ten years later it boasts a membership of 1750, proving the region's popularity as a retirement area for both Queenslanders and Southerners.'

Plenty Valley Radio 88.6 A report by Leslie Claydon said the radio station is housed in the former Yarrambat Primary school on cnr of Yarrambat and Ironbark Rds. The program has a varied content and has forged links with the School of Media at Latrobe University. This included the creation of a series of professionally produced programs on audio-tape for mature-aged people to be nationally available through Rellyfm. Community Services Victoria financed this initiative.

June: U3A 7-day Darwin N.T. 'Dalliance in the Dry' was not a formal conference but rather, a fun way to have a learning experience. Accommodation was at Kormilda College, 8 km from the town centre.

September: Seniors Abroad introduced to U3A Yarra Valley. This international home-stay programme arranges tours for seniors from one country to another. Seniors live with a host family which offers hospitality voluntarily. Conversely, you can register as a host and entertain guests here.

1998 January: Some of the issues being discussed in **the Current Affairs** class are: The Pauline Hanson phenomenon, How and who to lobby if you feel strongly about an issue, The Bougainville crisis, Work for the dole scheme, Some economic aspects of Australia's immigration program.

The **Thoughts and Ideas around the table** group ('bring a cut lunch and join us') are discussing: What are the most important values in today's world? What are your expectations of life next century?

Latrobe University offer us accommodation for our very large classes, access to their staff for talks, and permission to sit in on lectures (*Audit*) in most faculties. Our computer class will be held in the Language Centre's beautifully equipped IBM classroom at a very small cost. In return, we can help them by providing practising conversation sessions for foreign students learning English. This is a golden opportunity for us all to expand our horizons.

September: 'The Future of Adult Learning' By Jim Welch: 'U3A Yarra Valley needs to be connected to the Internet in the near future. Several years ago members doubted the need for an office and phone. Today these exist, plus a computer, slide projector, copy machine, and volunteers manning the office from 10-noon, five days a week.

1998 Sept cont'd International Year of Older Persons wants to challenge older people's loneliness. A project began in Banyule and Darebin asking older people to volunteer to work with a Project Officer, one day a week for one year. They would visit older, lonely people; listen to their stories, be supportive and encouraging, and contribute to plans for relevant activities for alleviating loneliness in this cohort.



1999 - 2002

1999 *President:* Noel Norman, *Secretary:* Noel Griffith, *Treasurer:* David Bland,
Course Coordinator: Bill Richdale, *Editor:* Don Collins *Note: all males!*

Monday talk examples – ‘Mrs Joan Rutley presented ‘fascinating insights’ on the history of the theatre in her role as ‘Keeper of the Wardrobe at the Performing Arts Museum.’ Dr Patrick Fitzgerald ‘amazed us with his account of the wonders of modern dentistry.’

The German classes are thriving and equipment for watching films is now available, but the class is looking for a CD player to add music and German songs to their repertoire.

Twenty-six different classes were offered in Term 2 at 16 different venues, many in private homes.

2000 January: Our U3A President’s report: ‘We’ve passed a milestone, entered a **new century** and the concern for the **Y2K bug** should be behind us.’

Our 10th anniversary, held at Glenn College, La Trobe University. Theme ‘Australia 2000’. Speakers addressed 3 key messages: the need for more informed estimation of risk, the explosion of opportunity characterising our time, the troubling contradictions of our time such as prosperity existing alongside growing poverty.

April: U3A Yarra Valley’s **11th Annual Seminar title; ‘Living and sharing with 9 billion people’** (the estimated world population by 2050).

Volunteers were sought to compile a **history of Yarra Valley U3A campus.**

U3A Australia trials an Internet programme for those confined to their homes, but seeking mental stimulation. This trial eventually led to funding by the Federal Government for **U3A online.**

An **excursion** to the Victorian Open Range Zoo at Werribee and some **new classes** began in French, German, Indonesian, as well as film group and a class titled ‘History of Railways’, to name just a few.

August: New classes: ‘**The Internet & the web**’ and ‘**Intermediate computers**’

2001 January: New classes: Cryptic crosswords, Medical History (Stone Age to Space Age), Moral Pandemonium, Coffee & Chat for Socialising (Old England Hotel monthly).

April: We now offer 23 classes. The enrolment queue formed outside the office well before opening time.

2002 January: New classes: Appreciation of Jazz, Croquet.

April To Grow Or Wither? ‘Our organisation needs constant nurturing with new ideas, programs and membership. ... Our survey suggests the best source of new members is friends of existing members. So please approach people you know who might like to join.’



Thought for the day: *Don’t follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*



2003 - 2007

2003 January: Keeping in touch - emailing our newsletter We now have an active website: www.yarrawalleyu3a.websyte.com.au Details of courses and Monday Talk topics can be found here. 'Another possibility for a new and faster form of communication with members is by email. We are asked to list our individual email addresses at next enrolment day. Those without home computers could try to learn email and internet and try using them at public libraries or internet cafes.'

August: NEW GROUP: 'Migrant conversation' operates with Olympic Adult Education. Ten volunteers converse once a week with a group of students from many ethnic backgrounds. Conversations cover everyday life and allow students to hear 'Aussie accents'.

2004 August: Book recommendations The Howard Years (Robert Manne), The Good Doctor (Damon Galgut), Seven Types Of Ambiguity (Elliot Perlman), Vernon God Little (D.B.C. Pierre). Five Biggest Lies Bush Told Us About Iraq (C. Sheer, R. Scheer & L. Chaudhry).

2005 January: A Grampians Tour visited Hamilton Art Gallery, gardens, waterfalls, caves, and the Volcanoes Discovery Centre. At Wallaby Rocks 'We clambered over rocks, up tracks, jumped crevices, and generally behaved like mountain goats to be rewarded with a 360-degree panorama.'

April: I learnt recently that-

- If you have food in the fridge and clothes on your back; you are richer than 75% of the world
- If you have money in the bank, your wallet and spare change; you are in the top 8% of the wealthy
- If you are healthy; you are more fortunate than the million who will die this week
- If you are not imprisoned or starving; you are better off than 3 billion others
- If you have talents, remember to be thankful for them; over 2 billion people cannot read or write.

August: The Literature /Poetry class discussed John Donne - *Sonnets and Sermons*. 'Donne wrote some of the most deeply erotic poetry in the English language. But as the Dean of St. Paul's he also wrote and preached deeply felt, and moving church sermons that are still remembered today, including the famous 'No man is an island' sermon.'

Benalla Conference: Key speakers: Prof. T. Seedman (The future of lifelong learning), Prof. R. Williams (The future of technology), Dr. M. Townsend (An argument for NOT segregating people according to their age). The Laughter Workshop was fun and Hume U3A demonstrated 'chair aerobics.' Day one ended with a fashion parade, and day two with a wine and cheese tasting.

2006 June: The Einstein Centenary Year - a short course, (two x three-hour seminars)

Seminar 1: *Special Relativity* – nature of light, is all motion relative, is time a fourth dimension, do moving clocks run slow, are you really thinner and heavier when you run, how do stars shine?

Seminar 2: *General relativity* – Einstein's elevator, is time travel possible, could you live longer on Jupiter, how are time and space related, what is quantum gravity?

2007 January: New course: Social Tennis - everyone welcome for a friendly hit of tennis once a week in Greensborough. Bring own racquet and contribute to the cost of balls and court hire.

June: Yarra Valley U3A turns 21. U3A Victoria now has 77 campuses with 20,000 members. Thank you to the founding members who had the foresight and energy to facilitate older age learning in Banyule and Nillumbik. **Our membership has grown to a little over 300.**

Thought for the day: *There is no neutral Education (Paulo Freire)*



2008 - 2017

2009 June: Four New Courses:

- *Heroes* - Who are they? Why do we see them as heroes?
- *Reading the Gospels* – A slow and deep reading of the ‘Gospel of Mark’. Bring a copy of the Bible
- *The Search for meaning thru Religion, Rite & Ritual* – by a lifelong student of philosophy & religion
- *Basic Introduction to Investing* – Relative risks and rewards.

Sunday Walking Group has no coordinator. Each walk will be organised by a different person. Participants must contact the organiser of ‘that’ walk, so they know how many they will be escorting.

2010-2011 These years featured **eight ‘away’ trips by train, bus and/or train**. Day trips were also offered. The Koori Heritage Museum and Living Legends (at Woodlands) being two.

2012 Art classes with ‘live’ (naked) models. (One of our News team remembers opening the door unthinkingly. She was NOT popular).

2013 The Chinese community offered us classes in language, art and calligraphy, and Helen McKinnon began ‘Writing your life story’ - a class that continues today.

2014 Our name changed to ‘Banyule U3A’ to better identify our area and avoid confusion.

2015 July: Statement to Banyule Council from U3A Banyule opposing the sale of 14 Ivanhoe Parade until the Community Hub is built.

October AGM decided those with email address could renew/pay membership online.

December: The **threatened sale of 14 Ivanhoe Pde** led U3A to play a significant role in BCC’s decision to keep the space until ILCH was built. **Our membership of 550** made an impact, with the expectation ILCH would take about 5 years to build.

Examples of classes/lectures ‘The discovery of Richard III’s skeleton under Leicester carpark’, ‘Mathematical concepts we all should know.’

2016 ILCH progress underway! Now in the design phase.

Banyule Council granted \$2,500 to U3A for the purchase of a 75 inch Smart TV to allow tutors to have Internet access. Another government grant provided money for redesigning our website and for the **Creative Knitting group** to provide ‘knitting packs’ to help them teach children and women from a women’s refuge how to knit.

Examples of our lectures: Colin Hutchinson spoke of his role as VFL/AFL statistician and historian. Jenny Macklin (MP for Jagajaga) talked about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Valerie Fletcher ran a session on 3D printing.

2017 June: New offerings: ‘tantalising and fascinating’ such as Dr Tyrrell’s ‘Apocalypse Now? Or shall we wait until tomorrow?’ and Jane Davies series ‘Black Death, Modern Africa.’

September Latrobe University invitation: ‘Improving your memory-strategies for everyday life’

November Creative Knitting Group raised \$895 to donate to the Olivia Newton John Centre, Cancer Council Australia, Melbourne City Mission, Leukaemia Foundation and a women’s refuge.

Thought for the day: Faith moves mountains but you have to keep pushing while you pray.

2017 - 2024

2018 April U3A Banyule set up a Facebook page. Volunteers needed to help with the development and provision of its content and administration.

June New classes; Red wine discovery, Recorder group, Line dancing, Illustrated Garden talks and talks on topics such as 'A rug fit for a king' and 'Crisis in the Middle East'. Our choir sang at 'The Edge' Federation Square during Seniors Week.

December: U3A Banyule is one of 109 U3A's in Victoria. There are some 300 Australia wide. We have a rep on the U3A Victoria network which co-ordinates activities and is developing a strategic plan to compete more successfully for government funding to better meet U3A members' needs.

2020 January: Inaugural Robbie Burns supper; 70 members and friends celebrated Scotland's National Bard with a Scottish supper including oat cakes, haggis, tatties and a wee dram of whisky. The evening began with a live 'Piping in the Haggis' and included singing, toasts, Scottish poetry and music, topped off with a demonstration of Scottish country dancing.

June: A special 'Isolation over' craft display followed Covid lockdown. Sale items included handmade bags, aprons, cushions, knits, tea cosies and patchwork items.

November: Covid lockdowns meant learning to Zoom. Many U3A classes became online Zoom sessions. The newsletters focussed on members stories, describing what they did and what they learned about themselves and their neighbours during lockdown.

2021 March: Banyule City Council in partnership with Yarra Plenty libraries and U3A Banyule finally opened the door to our **new U3A facility at ILCH**, which secured us community meeting rooms.

December: *Audit* sessions were offered again at Latrobe University

2022 March: U3A Banyule has almost **700 members**, with nearly 100 being newly enrolled members. A 'speed dating' activity at the Welcome Morning Tea was great fun. The President hopes, with Covid behind us, 'Line dancing' and 'Singing for pleasure' will resume very soon.

June: OAM awarded to U3A lifetime member **Janice Kelly**, who was the liaison person with Banyule City Council from the very beginning of the plans for the new community centre at ILCH.

2023 March: Our member **Will Semler** featured in the Newsletter on his impending 100th birthday.

December: Senior's Week the Creative Knitting Group welcomed knitting newcomers into their group and helped people get started with knitting projects. About 55 people attended, from beginners to very experienced knitters. People were given wool and needles to take home.

2024 December: The Annual Forum guest speakers were two Olympic Champions: Tim Cross (Paris Olympics 2024) & Sue Harbottle (Mexico Olympics 1968).

Noel Griffith (aged 95) retired after 28 years as U3A Banyule's Musical Appreciation tutor.

2025 February: U3A Banyule had **38 Office Volunteers** at the start of 2025. Forty-nine new members, including 12 men, were welcomed at a special morning tea.

September: U3A Banyule had a **membership of 973** and '**Member Wizard**' replaced 'myU3A' as the on-line operating system for members.



Thought for the day: A closed mind gathers no thought



