



# AUSTRALIA

## U3AAA BULLETIN No. 28

APRIL 2020



*Peter Alcock (Network WA), Laurene Mulcahy (Network NSW), Francois Vellas (President UITA), Susan Webster (Network Victoria), Gail Bonser (Network Queensland)*

### This issue:

#### ■ Member reports:

- 👤 *U3A Online offers helping hand*
- 👤 *Queensland has high profile guests*
- 👤 *SA says 2020 “started well”*
- 👤 *WA looks to happier times*
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- 👤 *NSW emerge from the smoke haze to . . .*

## From the Editor

This issue I have abandoned my drive for better photos and given U3A Online premier position. They usually have a modest half page towards the back despite being equal members in the U3A Alliance Australia and operating internationally. Now our members need U3A Online's services like never before so not only are they up front but I have devoted three pages to their full course list. Many U3As will be converting to online delivery but if you find a hole in your calendar, do take advantage of U3A Online's comprehensive offering.

For those who have serious time on their hands and the appropriate talent, check out the Bridport prize for creative writers on Page 14.

This issue is Peter Alcock's last as national president. Peter has travelled extensively meeting with U3A members around Australia during his term. Thanks Peter for meeting up whenever you and Barbara have been travelling through the Clare Valley and for your sensible handling of many issues.

While we concentrate on the 'first world problem' of being socially isolated in the comfort of our own homes or luxury hotels, it is easy to forget the hell many endured over summer. Our sympathy to them all: from those whose lives were on hold while they relentlessly checked CFS alerts, to those who lost homes and loved ones in the bushfires. Between drought, fire and flood, many thought they had endured it all, never expecting a final fluey flourish. It is difficult to keep things in perspective and remember that COVID-19 will pass and then we will be back to dealing with climate change issues compounded by hard economic times.

Let's use our time wisely over the coming months: master new skills, look after our personal well-being, find new ways of keeping in touch with our U3A mates, embrace change and stay strong and positive to deal with whatever the future brings.

Deadline for next issue of Bulletin is Wednesday 15 July. Yes, I will try to get out another issue in July and I want it full of advice about how your U3As are managing to deliver services despite social isolation. Start collecting photos now. Lots of selfies, I think. 😊

Stay safe and don't be like my naïve friend who logged on to her first State bowls online meeting unaware the cameras would be going both ways. She was wearing her nightie.



*Claire Eglinton  
U3A Lower North  
South Australia*

## From the Chairman

It is certain that we live in most uncertain times. Our way of life as well as our U3A activities and events have been turned inside out and upside down. As I write, I am contemplating how we keep connected and perhaps the technologies that we love to hate can become our best tool. Webinars and virtual meetings could allow us to continue to run courses and presentations to keep members engaged until things get back to the new normal. Whatever that looks like. It is also a time to support our local communities and young people as they need to build strength and resilience for a better future.

Some of us were fortunate to meet up in Toowoomba in February where the local U3A group hosted international U3A president Professor François Vellas and ran a seminar entitled U3A globally. François takes a global perspective of seniors learning and is keen to bring together the three main strands: the European, UK and Chinese models. He advocates more intergenerational learning and the opening up of universities to U3A members, making the point that universities need seniors and seniors need access to university programmes. They are already involved in research activities, particularly with health and medical research.

The Toowoomba meeting focussed quite a lot on international travel for U3A members but that is likely to be postponed for a while. However it did give several of the State representatives an opportunity for face to face discussions.



*Peter with some of the Toowoomba team*

The NSW State conference has been cancelled and our Alliance meeting which was planned to coincide with it will now be an online meeting and the chair will then rotate from WA to U3A Online.

Finally my thanks to all the wonderful people around Australia for their support and for continuing to make U3A such a great organization for living and learning and laughing.

*Peter Alcock*

*Chair, U3A Alliance Australia*

# U3A ONLINE

## CAN WE HELP?

The next few months are going to present a challenge for everyone. Many people will have to self-isolate and stay away from group activities. Most local U3As have already closed.

U3A Online members know that studying at home is the best alternative if you can't get to a local U3A. Find us at: <https://www.u3aonline.org.au/>.

There are two main ways to use our service:

- Anyone can join up as an **Individual Member** for **\$30 a year** and study as many courses as they like during the following 12 months; **or**
- A **U3A** can join as an **Organisational Member** for **\$15**, then pay **\$20 per course** to use with their own members who do **not** have to become Individual Members.

U3As who become Organisational Members can then arrange for groups to study in their own homes and use our online discussion forum to 'talk' to each other. All members using this method can be given the log in and password given to their U3A. It could be arranged for the group to do the course at the same time so they will see each other's comments as they are posted. A U3A can buy as many courses as they require.

As the internet is going to be heavily in use, we do recommend that you download the course you are studying and file it on your computer to save being online or if you can't get online. Each unit has a pdf link for this purpose.

This is something U3A Online has never done on such a scale and, like all U3As, we are staffed by a small band of committed volunteers so please be patient if there are occasional glitches on the website. Be assured we will do our best to keep it up and running to its usual high standard. One thing to note is that some browsers (Chrome, Safari, Firefox, etc.) support our website better than others and if you have problems try changing to a different browser.

*In February, six of the Committee of Management met in Melbourne for our annual face to face meeting. Of our nine members, one is from WA, one is from Tasmania, four from NSW, two from Queensland and one from New Zealand.*



I'm sure we all hope that we will be back with our local U3As eventually but in the meantime happy online learning. All our courses are listed on following pages.

*Jean Walker  
President  
U3A Online*



## Lifestyle Courses

**Ageing & Retirement:** strategies to best manage live as you approach retirement

**Design in Your Life:** Use your life experience to comment on and improve design and function of everyday objects

**Food for Thought:** The history of food, the evolution of food cultures and their impact on the world through the ages

**Introduction to Western Philosophy:** philosophy, philosophers, perplexing problems and answers which have been put forward throughout the ages

**Maintaining Independence:** tools and information to maximize your physical and mental health and wellness

**Myths and Legends:** To stimulate interest in the stories which formed the myths and legends passed down through the ages

**Practical Psychology for Relationships:** An understanding of relationship psychology. Ethical foundations, personal characteristics and methods for managing difficulties

**Train Your Brain:** recent developments, de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats*, Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*, critical thinking, and the art of mnemonics

**The Shaping of the Modern Mind:** through the ages up to the present stage of global interaction

**Play Ukulele by Ear:** 'instant play' system to take total beginners in minutes playing by ear at the campfire, sing along, or BBQ

**Photography: getting the most out of your digital camera:** how to go off automatic settings; importance of ISO, aperture, shutter speed; focussing; download, edit and store images

**Thoreau, Emerson and the Conduct of Life:** encourages forming own ideas on how best to live, express ideas in own words and develop a personal philosophy

## Nature Courses

**Australian Flora:** Australian plant diversity and knowledge of basic techniques of plant identification

**Botany: Study of Plants for Enjoyment:** Plant structures, function and adaptation to their environment; plant classification; how people and plants interact

**Continents on the Move:** patterns, processes and changing shapes of planet Earth and the relationships between the physical and social environments

**Saving the Soil:** soil resource assessment and monitoring, and soil management; problem of feeding the world's billions

**Antarctica – the Frozen Continent:** An introduction to Antarctica and the relationships between the physical and social environments of that region

## Science Courses

**Astronomy:** The study of our Universe and, viewed very broadly, includes all aspects of the solar system and beyond

**Human Biology:** introduction to biological aspects of human body and mind function

**Maths – Number Theory:** The simplicity of the stated theorems and conjectures and challenge of proving them has excited mathematicians since Ancient Greece

**Geometry – Different Worlds, Different Geometries (in development) :** Euclidean geometry provided the mathematics for architecture and agricultural boundaries and transactions.

**Resources for the Future – Renewable and Non-Polluting:** A study of basic renewable resources, especially in the electrical and transportation industries

**The Evolution of Life on Planet Earth:** Trace what science has discovered about the history of Planet Earth from its origin to the present formation

**The Night Sky:** Offers a structured program of observation which will introduce you to most of the major features of the southern sky

**The Northern Sky:** A good starting point for those in the Northern Hemisphere who know a little and want to know more about the mysterious northern sky

**The Story of Science 1 – the Emergence of Natural Philosophy:** Covers the period from the appearance of man's ancestors through to about 1650CE including the evolution of *Homo sapiens* and the earliest science ideas

**The Story of Science 2 – the Science Disciplines:** The emergence of disciplines dealing with biology and chemistry, developments in natural philosophy and background to the social sciences

**The Story of Science 3 –the Physical Sciences since 1800:** development chemistry and physics 1800 to 21<sup>st</sup> century

**The Story of Science 4 – Astronomy and the Behavioural Sciences since 1800:** The developments of astronomy, the solar system, stars, galaxies and the modern theories of the origin of the universe

**Climate Change:** introduction to historic, scientific, social and political dimensions of climate change. For anyone interested in learning about and discussing climate change issues

**The Dinosaurs:** This course aims to inform and share current knowledge on fossils that have been found to date.

*At Southlakes U3A we have purchased 5 Online courses for \$100 plus a site fee. This works out to 30 cents a member! What amazing value you offer in these times of staying at home.*

**Southlakes President**

## **World Affairs and History Courses**

**Australian History 1- Prior to Federation:** Focuses on Australian history up to 1900

**Australian History 2 – Post Federation:** 2 world wars and changing governments

**China in Transition: from Mao to Now:** from sleep into one of the most powerful economic and military players in the world

**Kings & Queens of England:** An idiosyncratic review of the lives and reigns of those who have worn the English crown from the Romans to the 21st century

**Left, Right or Centre: A very brief Introduction to Political Ideologies:** comparative politics and development of political thought of the world's mainstream political ideologies

**Property to Partner:** theories of why women have not been treated as equals and the development of the movement towards equality in the Western world from ancient times to modern day

**Religions of the World:** widening knowledge of major religions and the cultural and geographical factors that influenced their development

**Renaissance Italy:** A fascinating period of cultural history revealing an interesting complex society

**The Romans:** A review of the history of Rome and its empire starting in prehistoric times and its contributions to our physical environment and way of life

**The Great Transformation:** The transformation of Britain from a pre-industrial to an industrial society

**British Society in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century:** From the very early stages of its transformation from a rural, mainly agricultural society into the world's first industrialised one

**The Battle for Australia 1942-43:** The defence of Australia in Papua New Guinea and the Kokoda Track

**Top Secret Umbra – the History of Espionage –in four parts:** Explains the use of Ciphers and Codes in times of war, and commerce in peace time

### **Writing and Creativity Courses**

**Autobiography & Journaling:** For anyone wanting to write their life story and to learn to use a journal as a tool for healing or self-discovery

**Basic English Grammar:** A review of the fundamentals of English grammar for both those who have learnt English as a second language and also as a refresher for those who studied the subject at school

**Genealogy Online:** Introduction to the techniques of researching the main facts of your family history using mainly material published on the Internet

**My Life Story:** Provides the basic tools and knowledge to write and evaluate a long promised Life Story

**The Art of Editing:** Techniques for checking your writing and make changes to improving the content and style

**Shakespeare: Rediscovering the Bard:** An enjoyable and sometimes humorous journey through Shakespeare's life and times and his contribution to the English language

**Shakespeare's Canon:** Explores the perennial claims that others had written the works of Shakespeare

**Storytelling with Pictures:** For those who would like to combine photos with their story for interest and fun

**Henry Lawson – His Life, Work and Times:** The work, life and times of Henry Lawson

**AB (Banjo) Patterson:** life, work and times

**The History and Spread of the English Language:** from Roman times through to the present day, including contemporary developments such as texting and graffiti

**Skills for Using the Media:** introduction to the skills required to write public relations scripts for all media

**Unleashing your Creative Spirit:** Aims to encourage and equip anyone with a creative passion to explore their goals and be inspired to try new ideas and techniques

**Writing Family History:** An introduction to beginners to the fun of writing a family history and to help those who have started to take further steps

**Writing for Pleasure:** Identifies the basic tools needed to write, increases the knowledge to improve writing and evaluation techniques

**The History of Poetry from Chaucer to Ted Hughes:** Introduction to British Poetry from Chaucer to Ted Hughes

### **SHORT COURSES**

**Mostly One Unit courses for a 'Taster' or introduction to our longer courses**

**The History of Education:** The development of systematic methods of teaching and learning

**Picnic at Hanging Rock:** A short study of the novel, the 1975 film with some commentary on the 2017 TV adaptation

**The Short Story in Literature:** "brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters."

**Short History of Marriage:** From the ancient civilisations, up to 1800's wedding and engagement rings, some current Laws and where do we go in the future

# QUEENSLAND

## INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT VISITS TOOWOOMBA

Professor François Vellas, president of the Association of International Universities of the Third Age (AIUTA), attended Toowoomba's three-day event in February. Peter Alcock, U3AAA chairman, and U3A network presidents Susan Webster (Victoria), Laurene Mulcahy (NSW) and Gail Bonser (Queensland) also attended.



The event included a mayoral reception, a dinner for invited guests, a day-long seminar at which Professor Vellas was keynote speaker, a reception at the University of Southern Queensland Toowoomba campus and a lunch at U3A Toowoomba.

The seminar proved to be a very stimulating way to spend a day and was an opportunity for members of the U3A groups present to develop an understanding of U3A in the global sense.

Professor François Vellas spoke of the origins of U3A in Toulouse and outlined the different ways U3A operates in each continent. The model developed in Toulouse allowed older members of the community to attend university to study academic and non-academic subjects. The emphasis was on learning for pleasure without the pressure of exams.

Professor Vellas spoke about U3A as an international movement which currently has 10 million members including some African nations, the Middle Eastern nations, China and of course, Europe and America. He explained the Chinese strategy where the government builds amazing buildings but allows only former public officials to attend classes.

He emphasised that the aims of all U3As worldwide are the same: It is never too late to learn or to take up physical activity. U3A groups throughout the world cooperate with universities and research institutes into the effects of ageing, he said.

One of the goals of AIUTA is to develop U3As where there are none, similar to the Network Queensland objective which actively seeks to establish U3As in locations where none exist.

Professor Vellas outlined research that shows membership of U3As divides into: 50% 60-70 age group, 34% 71-80 years and 16% over 80. He said that one of the challenges for U3A globally and locally is to think about what activities can be provided for those members over 80 plus finding topics and activities that might attract more men. Currently 74% of U3A members are women and only 26% men.

Professor Vellas is involved in senior tourism because he says, it is a great opportunity for cultural exchange as well as being one of the most important tourism markets globally. There is an annual World Senior Tourism Congress which brings together all public and private sector stakeholders, associations, tourism firms and U3As.

Toowoomba U3A organised a study group to China last year. During the tour, personal contact was made with U3A groups in China and members participated in music, dancing and TaiChi.



Tourism was the focus of the morning sessions. One presenter spoke of the need to have passion when selling an idea or a region to another person or group of people. He used the example of a small group tour with a focus on bird watching being led by a fellow twitcher.

The learning was obvious: when we are ‘selling’ U3A and encouraging new members we also need to be passionate about the benefits of U3A.

### **Volunteer of the Year Award**

Iris Murray, U3A Redlands member, was a worthy recipient of the 2020 Redlands District Volunteer of the Year. U3A Redlands were proud to nominate Iris not only for the outstanding work she has done for them but also for several other community organisations. A list of her good works is too lengthy for these pages, but Iris works tirelessly to encourage membership of U3A, has a strong sense of social justice and an awareness of the isolation suffered by many members of the senior community. Iris is clearly a person who acts on her principles.



*Iris Murray receiving her award as Redlands District Volunteer of the Year.*

### **The Passing of an Icon**

U3A Twin Towns has sadly announced the passing of Beryl Ferrier who was a tutor of French there for many years. Beryl was one day short of 95 when she was killed while crossing the road on her way to tutor a class.

An interesting character, Beryl devoted much of her time to her students and drove the administration at U3A Twin Towns mad because she insisted on booking students in at times that best suited them – to hell with the timetable!

Beryl (*right*) was one of the ‘local heroes’ featured at the 2017 U3A State Conference.



*Gail Bonser  
President  
U3A Network Qld Inc.*

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australian groups gave a speedy and unified response to the COVID-19 crisis. On the Monday most of us were thinking we would make it to the end of term but by that Friday, 20 March, it was complete closure. Well done everyone for realizing that here we had a very real exercise in risk management which is an essential part of good governance.

Like a squirrel gathering nuts, I had hoarded my chocolate and wine and was quite looking forward to a long, long hibernation but now I see there is more work than ever. When I called for good news stories for this issue, I was inundated with evidence that 2020 had been off to a mighty start. Far too good to be put on ice, we now need to find ways to keep as many programs going as possible. Between that and how this shutdown will damage our already delicate State finances, it rather blows my plans for a long rest.

U3A Murraylands was full of good news stories, particularly their ukulele players. Already having 30 plus members, they held a come 'n' try day which drew another nine plus excellent publicity in the local press. Jenny Taylor (left), a foundation member of the U3A Strummers, was drawn to the ukulele after finding classical guitar too hard. Not only has she found it a fun instrument but has gained great satisfaction from their public performances. Donning colourful shirts, they have brightened up the day for residents in local nursing homes. Until recently Pauline Hunter (right) was a pianist but has also discovered the joy of being a Strummer. "I love it. It has made me sing again, which I enjoy, though I don't do either terribly well," said Pauline. Every Monday the Strummers were holding a beginners class at 1 pm (ukulele supplied) followed by group practice at 2 pm.



While International President Prof. Francois Vellas was challenging us to find topics and activities that might attract more men, U3A Prospect was already hot on the job. Their new initiative is the 'Great Mates Program'. They are conducting three men only activities: craft beer enthusiasts group, model making and non-fiction book club.

The craft beer group enjoy a quiet drink (two stubbies of an Australian or international craft beer) whilst analysing the quality of the beer against set criteria. Each session a member will choose the beer, research the history of the of the brewery, how the beer was made and the ingredients used.



The model making group are building kit WW2 aeroplanes which will be displayed in the heritage Prospect air raid shelter. The non-fiction book group meets once per month and members read and discuss a variety of books, e.g. biographies, military history.

It is an opportunity for men to get together, engage in banter, support each other and make new friends: all the U3A benefits women have been enjoying for years. Social, physical or academic outcomes, they are all equally valued and covered by South Australia's motto of 'Staying active: mentally, physically and socially'. Gentlemen, tell your wives that it's official, U3A approves of you having a beer.



*Aldinga cycling group members, pictured here above the river mouth at Port Noarlunga, must really be missing the camaraderie and encouragement to take physical exercise which this group offers.*

Inspired by our discussions at State meetings on how to reward group leaders, U3A Aldinga has taken some rather good photos of each group in action and put them onto gift mugs. They have been so appreciated and admired that some groups have ordered more. Aldinga president Brian Arthurs tells me photo mugs ordered through Kmart are really good at \$6 each and Officeworks offer a similar service.



*Claire Eglinton  
Secretary  
U3A South Australia*



## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Like the whole of Australia, in fact most of the world, U3A groups in this State have gone into recess for an indefinite period. Online meetings and courses seem to be the only possibility. A trial Zoom meeting was held recently and this shows some promise as a way forward at this extraordinary time. Unfortunately the **State Network Conference** planned for **Busselton in October** will be unable to go ahead.

Joan Malcolm, president of U3A Margaret River, wants to warn all U3As to be wary of financial scams. She said they have had two attempted scams where an email alleged to be from the president to the treasurer asking him to transfer money to a bank account.

Meanwhile a couple of events from happier times early this year. Thank you to Pauline Yarwood for these contributions.

### HO! ABOARD THE DUYFKEN



*Nigel Ridgeway and Pauline Yarwood out on the Swan River*

Members of North Coast (Hamersley) U3A discovered that you're never too old to learn to sail --- on a replica of a 400-year-old Dutch sailing ship built for war, exploration and treasure hunting for spices.

While twilight sailing in well-catered comfort on the Swan River, North Coasters learned about the harsh realities of life at sea on the original Dutch East India Company Duyfken, which usually left with a crew of 30, returning with around 15/20 men. Many were lost at sea, died from disease or were killed by hostile tribes.

Nigel Ridgway, who is a veteran ocean-going yachtsman, states: “At U3A we have several sailing enthusiasts who were keen to ‘help’ the crew to set the sails, pull on the sheets (ropes) and halyards and even steer the ship using the ancient, traditional Dutch whipstaff, which was in use 50 years before ship’s steering wheels were invented.

Built in 1595, the original Duyfken (meaning little dove) belonged to the Dutch East India Company and is credited with the being the first European ship to land on the Australian mainland (Cape York Peninsula) in 1606 -- ten years before Dirk Hartog’s encounter with the WA coast.

After loading spices (the treasure of the age) from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and surviving confrontations with heavily-armed Portuguese ships, the Duyfken was damaged beyond repair in 1608 – to be resurrected in spirit by a group of West Australian enthusiasts who built the replica 20 years ago.

Since then she has become a popular learning resource, for students and would-be sailors of all ages, dividing her time between South of Perth Yacht Club, Applecross, and Hillarys Boat Harbour.

For those lucky members who took this opportunity it was a great experience,



## U3A PICNIC WASHED OUT BY THUNDERSTORM

King’s Park may look great in this photo but on this occasion there was just time for a quick game of Finska before the deluge began.

President Denise Beer (foreground) said: “It was very disappointing that our favourite annual event coincided with one of the heaviest storms of the summer, but we enjoyed sheltering in the pavilion – up close and very friendly.” [This was several weeks ago! – Ed]

What is Finska? – a new skittles game from Finland, currently taking the world by storm. But thankfully not usually played in a real storm.

*Submitted by Peter Flanigan  
WA Network*

## VICTORIA

As many of you know, parts of Victoria were hard hit by the bushfire crisis over summer, with seven of our Member U3As directly impacted. U3A Mallacoota in the far east of the State was particularly affected by the fires and many of its committee and members are still yet to return to home, or to go back to their normal lives.

Our Network's committee travelled to East Gippsland for our March monthly meeting. We welcomed committee members from U3As Mallacoota, Bairnsdale, Sale and Mirboo North as observers. After lunch, a regional meeting was held. Both meetings were attended remotely via videoconference by members unable to attend in person.



*Network team conducting our March Committee meeting in Bairnsdale, East Gippsland*

U3A Network Victoria responded to the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic by contacting each of our 107 Member U3As to determine what assistance or advice they needed in this unique situation. We have issued four COVID-19 bulletins for our U3As to date.: <https://mailchi.mp/725745eca0fa/networks-covid-19-bulletin-edition-4-23032020> is the link to access the latest edition, published on 23 March.

As of 24 March, 80 U3As are closed and will be assessing their options with regards to re-opening after the school holiday break at Easter. The remainder are considering their options. Everyone is closely following the government's guidance on social distancing and hygiene.

Our Network has been trialling distance and online learning options as well as offering video-conferencing for the past three years. Our U3As are implementing remote interaction

strategies to keep in touch with their members. These include teleconferencing and videoconferencing for lectures and discussion groups; telephone trees to make voice contact with those not connected to the internet as well as conversation groups and language classes happening by telephone.

Our Network team has been speaking with our U3As about the creative ways older adults can use to stay healthy, active and connected with each other during these challenging times. Social interaction is such an important part of our movement. As a result, we have compiled a number of resources which may be of interest to our interstate colleagues:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/dpo6mz7hdytkxjy/U3A%20Network%20Victoria%20Sharing%20Ideas%20and%20Keeping%20connected%20.pdf?dl=0>

We are also developing several tools to support implementing our preferred videoconferencing tool, Zoom. Contact Tracey Swadling at Network Office if you are interested in gaining access to these tools: (03) 9670 3659 or [adminmanager@u3avictoria.com.au](mailto:adminmanager@u3avictoria.com.au)

*Tracey Swadling*  
*U3A Network Victoria*



## Calling All Creative Writers



If you have some extra time on your hands while social isolating, why not enter the Bridport Prize. This international creative writing competition has been going since 1973 and launched the careers of several best-selling writers. It attracts entries from 85 separate countries and there is \$40,000 prize money on offer.

The Bridport has sections for poetry, short story, flash fiction (maximum of 250 words). There is also a section for novels but that is for UK writers only.

Everyone is advised to carefully read the rules, entry requirements and eligibility before submission. Entries close by 31 May.

Find more information on their website: [www.bridportprize.org.uk](http://www.bridportprize.org.uk). As well as competition guidelines it has plenty of writing tips amongst its resources section.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

Between the celebrations for the successful end to the 2019 U3A year and the planning for the opening of the 2020 U3A year, we have had the worst recorded bushfire season in Australia. Particularly affected have been towns along the eastern seaboard where many of our U3As are located. Those not directly affected by the fires have been affected by smoke pollution. Some U3As have recorded the tragedy as it affected their members: 11 members of Bateman's Bay U3A lost their houses. Because of the closure of main highways, many towns were stranded for up to two months, often without access to power and communication: an isolation traumatic for many. One Bateman's Bay member, a retired psychologist, offered group sessions for members and the community including for residents in aged care facilities, about the psychological and emotional effects traumatic experiences like bushfires can cause.

Just as things were getting back to normal (apart from some severe flooding in northern coastal areas), the COVID-19 pandemic struck. As a result the 2020 Network Conference and AGM, which were to be held at Shellharbour 29 April / 1 May, have been cancelled. Fresh arrangements for the AGM have yet to be announced. Most U3As have cancelled their programs for the remainder of Term 1, and are waiting to see how the situation evolves before deciding on Term 2. In the interim, they are devising ways to maintain social cohesion between their members in a situation of social distancing.

However, there has been at least one cause for celebration – former Network president Allan Haggarty was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day honours awards, for significant community service. Since arriving in Griffith NSW many decades ago as a young solicitor, he has been actively involved in several local community organisations, as well as the Riverina Law Society (of which he is an Honorary Life Member) and other State-wide organisations. Allan joined Griffith U3A in 2006, where he has served as secretary and president. He also served on the U3A Network NSW committee from 2010-2019, including as president 2012-2015, and has served as secretary to the U3AAA.



Many U3As were also able to promote their U3A during the NSW Seniors Festival in February. Among them, Lake Macquarie U3A staged a Variety Concert and Port Macquarie also provided dance performances at the local Seniors Expo, illustrating the talents and creativity that abound in U3A. Northern Illawarra U3A challenged students of Bulli High School to debate the topic *It's a Great Thing to Live in the Digital Age*. Taking the affirmative argument, the U3A team won the debate, turning the tables on the students who had won last year's debate. The debate was adjudicated by the Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Cr. Gordon Bradbery.

Nature has taken a beating in NSW which only encourages members to embrace what remains. Ken Fraser of U3A Hawkesbury has been happily promoting the area's birdlife in his course *Birds of the Hawkesbury*. The Hawkesbury area around Richmond and Windsor is renowned for the wide range of birds that live in different local habitats, and students have become increasingly engaged with identifying and noticing the behaviours of birds in the area.



Classroom sessions incorporated pictures and videos comprising ID tips and interesting stories about local birds, alternating with field trips to nearby parks, gardens and reserves. During the field trips the group members have spotted about 50 different species. The field trips have included local lagoons, nature reserves beside the Hawkesbury River, bushland reserves and the tutor's bush property.

Students with photography skills are discovering a whole new obsession as can be seen in the accompanying photos.

*Right:*

*New Holland Honeyeater in a banksia at  
Agnes Banks Reserve  
(Photo by Valerie Tabet)*



*Left:*

*Spotted Pardalote at Grose Vale*

Susan Coggan, president of Southlakes U3A invites you to check out an interesting story, Times of Adversity, on their website: <https://southlakes.u3anet.org.au/>. Members Steve & Eileen Morton share their experience of living through the Ebola epidemic in Lagos, Nigeria, 2014-16 and give some advice for weathering the current pandemic.

*Ainslie Lamb  
Newsletter Editor  
U3A Network NSW Inc.*

