



AUSTRALIA

U3AAA BULLETIN No. 31

APRIL 2021



*Eagle's Nest, a site of significance to the Bunerong people. Photo by Dave Arnold 2015.
U3A Mornington, developers of a new First Nations course, meet on Bunerong land.*

This issue:

■ Member reports:

- 🧠 Queensland competes internationally
 - 🧠 SA women talent spotted
 - 🧠 NSW remembers Black Summer
 - 🧠 WA network welcome new member U3A
 - 🧠 Victoria develops a course to share
 - 🧠 U3A Online has Gems for everyone
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From the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn edition where I hope you will find inspiring stories and ideas worth adopting. It was a pleasure to compile though sometimes locating stories and photos turned into a treasure hunt. SA's lead story was discovered by accident while listening to ABC Radio and a fire brigade's Facebook page provided better photos of a U3A project than we had.

All members are asked to keep their eyes and ears open for suitable material and pass them on to their State delegates or send them direct to me at u3asouthaustralia@gmail.com. When submitting photos do remember to get them straight from the source with no minimising to send by email. Photos which have less than a 100 kb are just not suitable.

On Page 11 Victoria's Nellie Collier, Education Program Manager, outlines an innovative First Nations course and the cooperative approach they have taken to support a wide range of groups to take advantage of it. I am sure many U3As will want to become involved as WA's story shows that right across the country members have an interest in Indigenous Studies.

SA's contribution should provide encouragement for members of any creative writing group while a couple of Queenslanders have been tiling and singing their way to international fame in the International Association of Universities of the Third Age inaugural online arts competition. Sounds like a productive use of time in our COVID year and I can't understand why it wasn't publicised wider. In NSW one U3A produced a booklet helping people process their experiences of Black Summer. Natural disasters are coming so thick and fast these days, that it is easy to forget some people are still suffering trauma and trying to recover from previous disasters.

Our many examples of senior high achievers, whether they are receiving academic awards, getting published, or winning international competitions, are not only waving the U3A flag, but showing the rest of society that retirement can just be the start of a second life full of new challenges, highlights and adventures. A World Health Organization (WHO) survey of more than 83,000 people from 57 countries covering all six WHO regions of the world, showed at least one in every two people held moderately or highly ageist attitudes. U3A and its achievers can work to dispel those negative perceptions.

As we get back to normal, don't forget U3A Online which helped us through difficult times. Theirs is a familiar tale of withdrawal of federal government funding despite having complex technology requiring expensive maintenance. Not something to be tackled with falling membership.

Deadline for next issue of Bulletin is Wednesday 28 July. Start collecting photos now.



*Claire Eglinton
U3A Lower North
South Australia*

From the Chairman

All indicators are showing Australia has entered the Post COVID era: Most of the country has had no or very small incidences of new COVID cases, a vaccination program has commenced, restrictions on meeting face-to-face are being relaxed and state borders are open.

Post COVID has arrived, and the world has changed which gives the U3A movement a great opportunity to support the health and wellbeing of more seniors by providing positive engagement in lifelong learning and connection to share interests.

What does this mean for the U3A movement in Australia?

As I reflect on discussions, I have had with members of U3As across the country a common theme is mentioned: it is good that we can meet face-to-face again but is it safe. Our use of technology has increased particularly the use of Zoom. Online classes using Zoom will have a place into the future. Some members have not renewed for 2021 due to limited capacity in venues.

We have increased numbers of first-time U3A members joining U3As. These first-time members tend to participate in more classes and activities than in the past. Increased participation in classes such as family history, photography, gardening, cooking and use of technology to enable participation in tele health, online banking and purchases as well as safely sharing interests online with family and friends.

With all natural calamities, communities demonstrate their resilience by supporting each other to come together which provides organisations like U3A with opportunities to strengthen their positive position in contributing to the recovery of local communities. The transition to post COVID is no exception.

On Saturday 6 March 2021 the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness was launched in Canberra, calling for greater awareness and understanding of loneliness in society.

In a statement by Andrew Giles MP (Member for Scullin) and Dr Fiona Martin MP (Member for Reid) co-chairs of Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness referred to Loneliness 'as a feeling of social isolation – it means not having the social connections we need.'

'In 2019, one in four Australians experienced damaging levels of loneliness some or all of the time. Last year, the experience of COVID-19 doubled that rate to one in two. Half the Australian population.'

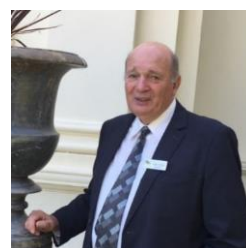
The statement issued by the co-chairs goes on to comment 'Australians need to talk about loneliness' and 'It's time to break down the social stigma that is preventing people from getting help and from developing strong social networks that can act as a buffer against poor mental health and wellbeing.'

The co-chair has contacted me to invite the U3A movement in Australia to share its experiences and approach to engaging with seniors with the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness.

I would like to acknowledge the good work of our member U3As in each state for the positive way in which they have responded to the needs of members during the pandemic restrictions, and I have been inspired by the stories of the role U3As played in engaging with members in this period.

Let us all look forward to the future with optimism and enthusiasm.

*Glen Wall
Chair,
U3A Alliance Australia*



QUEENSLAND

Australian Winners in the 2020 International U3A Arts Competition

The Association Internationale des Universités du Troisième Âge (AIUTA) inaugural online arts competition in 2020 yielded two winners from Queensland: Noel Bird and John Crittenden. AIUTA governing board member Rhonda Weston was present at the virtual presentation ceremony.

Noel Bird from U3A Noosa won an AIUTA Golden Arts Award for his wonderful mosaic. His entry was the overall winning entry in the category Creativity. Noel was in very distinguished international company and it was a real coup for him to have won this award as one of only five category winners from across the world. As it happened, the awards were announced on Noel's birthday. What a wonderful birthday gift it must have been.



Sections of the mosaic on Noel's water tank, part of which constituted his winning entry.

John Crittenden from U3A Broadbeach was also a winner. John won his award in the Singing category. The award winners in this category also came from a wide range of countries.

John is a tutor at U3A Broadbeach. His anthem to U3A summed up beautifully the value of lifelong learning available at U3A and the range of activities that



support it. John said that U3A has given him and his wife Linda a sense of belonging after relocation from the UK. There is so much in John's song and his story that says what we all know to be true about U3A.

We in U3A in Queensland are very proud of the two winners in the AIUTA Arts competition. The competition is running again this year. Who knows, it may turn up some more very talented U3A members in Queensland. There is news of and a link to the entry form for the 2021 AIUTA Arts Competition on the U3A Network Queensland website www.u3aqld.org.au

U3A Network Queensland and COTAQ Sign their MOU

Vice-president Wendy Sanders and president Gail Bonser recently met with Mark Tucker Evans CEO of COTAQ, to discuss the next steps in collaboration between the two organisations. Since 2016, the two organisations have had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). At the recent meeting with Mark, Gail and Mark signed the latest iteration of the MOU.



Mark Tucker Evans, Wendy Sanders and Gail Bonser

Underpinning the MOU is an action plan which provides for regular catch up between the parties. Activities aimed at achieving the joint aims of the two organisations, are developed in these meetings. U3A Network Queensland has a long association with COTAQ. In fact, COTAQ auspiced the first U3A in Queensland.

Gail Bonser
President
U3A Network Qld Inc.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

One of the lovely things about U3A is hearing of members who discover unknown talents and achieve things previously unimaginable. It is often in art classes but a recent stunning example comes from the U3A Adelaide Hills creative writing group.

For homework one week the leader provided an opening sentence which hinted at nefarious deeds and asked the students to complete the story. Judith Lees did and received praise and encouragement to pursue the project further.

Originally only aiming for self-publication, Judith took her manuscript to professional editor Dr Tanya Lyons who was so impressed that she created Moonglow Publishing now specialising in books from and about the Adelaide Hills. And that is how Judith Lees became a published author. Her novel, *The Silent Syringe* is a murder mystery set in the Adelaide Hills and follows the lives of people connected with the towns' bakeries. Hearts are broken and lives destroyed in this intriguing mystery of lies, love and revenge. Moonglow is now looking at a third print run.



*Top: Judith Lees and *The Silent Syringe*
(described as Midsomer meets Meadows)*

Below: Lees' book had a fun launch with pies from a local bakery with rather scary sauce dispensers.

*Left: Lyn Dickason with a copy of *The Estate*.*



The next talent discovery within the creative writing group was the group leader herself, Lyn Dickason. Moonglow published Lyn's debut crime novel *The Estate*. Set during the apartheid

era in South Africa, a series of murders unite a divided community. The oppressiveness of the time is contrasted with the warmth of new friendships and opportunities. The Estate tells of characters who went against a system designed to divide them, and in doing so united the community towards a common goal.

There is no doubt an autobiographical element to this as Lyn spent much of her life in South Africa. She had a strawberry farm and her passion was running the farm school which she and her husband established. She managed the school for 30 years before following their three children to Australia, settling in the Adelaide Hills.

Another U3A member due congratulations is State network president Kerrie Smith. Campbelltown Council celebrated International Women's Day with an event honouring 10 special women. Among these was Kerrie, acknowledged in particular for leadership in education including to U3A. Two generations of former students were present in the audience and she was strongly supported by her U3A friends.

Following a teaching career, in retirement Kerrie has remained committed to providing learning opportunities for all ages, particularly through the State network U3ASA and U3A Campbelltown.

Kerrie was at Adelaide University and Adelaide Teachers College concurrently from 1963-1967, graduating with Education and Arts degrees, supporting herself by being a house mistress at Woodlands CEGS.

Later developing a love and expertise for new technologies, Kerrie was named Computer Educator of the Year in 2000. Kerrie taught adult re-entry courses in word processing and other computer programs during this period to women who were looking to increase their work-readiness skills. It was here that she saw the value of lifelong learning.

Kerrie retired in 2010 and became involved in U3A: president of U3A Campbelltown from 2014-2018, current curriculum manager, and president of U3A South Australia since 2017. Both groups are very active and ensure that Kerrie follows her mandate to 'keep her mind active and be involved'.

So many people think they are on a downhill slide once they retire. Not if they join U3A.



Claire Eglinton
Secretary
U3A South Australia

NEW SOUTH WALES

As we reported in the last issue of the U3AAA Bulletin, our U3As began to restore some normality to their programs in the final term of the year. The Christmas-New Year break allowed time for reflection and renewal, and they have entered 2021 with confidence. Many have gained new perceptions through the use of technologies such as Zoom and access to YouTube which they are continuing to use in 2021, to value-add to their programs.

2020 was not only memorable for the impact of the Covid pandemic. The Black Summer fires of 2019-2020 affected much of New South Wales especially in the Alpine and coastal areas.

Northern Illawarra U3A has produced a book of stories from several South Coast people, including U3A members, affected by the fires. The suggestion for collecting the bushfire stories came from the U3A South Coast regional representative Margaret Stratton, prompted by reading a letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which stressed the importance of allowing and encouraging those affected by disasters to express their thoughts and feelings about fear and loss experienced during the event. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the volunteer service and courage of civilian firefighters and on community response to help people who were under threat of the fires.

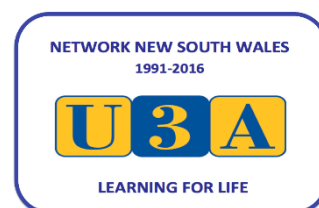
Most of the stories in this book were recorded close to the events they describe, others are more reflective written in the aftermath of the fires and in the rebuilding stage of recovery. They express the range of emotions and responses that a devastating event can engender – courage, resilience, fear, the generosity and kindness of strangers, the slow-motion effect when in danger, the numbness that sets in with the dawning realisation of loss not just of buildings or property but of irreplaceable items that record memories of the past, even the uglier side of human nature, then recovery and adjustment to return to normality.

Two paintings inspired by the bushfires by U3A members appear in the book. *Firefighters* by Jeanette Southam from the Northern Illawarra U3A appears on the cover of the book. The painting by Dinny de Celis (Batemans Bay U3A) depicts the evacuation of people and animals at Malua Bay on New Year's Day onto the beach for safety.



Having missed out on a conference in 2020, cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, we are looking forward to the 2021 Conference *Rekindle The Spirit*, to be hosted by Wagga Wagga U3A 12-13 April. U3A is back on track .

Ainslie Lamb
Newsletter Editor
U3A Network NSW Inc



A GOOD FINAL RESTING PLACE

The painting used on the cover of *Bushfire Stories: Black Summer 2019-20*, published by Northern Illawarra U3A, has gone on to grace a wall in the Bulli Rural Fire Brigade station: a gift from the artist, Jeanette Southam. The fireies say it will be a reminder of the 2019/20 fire season but I doubt they need a reminder.

Those bushfires in New South Wales exceeded living memory in their extent and intensity, fuelled by a decade of drought and dry conditions, lightning strikes, high winds and high temperatures. The fires which began in September 2019 were not finally extinguished until March 2020. The event is now colloquially known as Black Summer.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On Tuesday 16 March Mr Gary Smith, the Chancellor of Murdoch University, travelled to the Shoalwater home of U3A Rockingham member, Jennie Cox, to personally confer her latest achievement – another degree, this time a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies. Her previous degrees are a Bachelor of Nursing and post graduate studies in Clinical Nursing.



Jenny Cox with Murdoch Chancellor, Gary Smith

Jennie was unable to attend the regular graduation ceremonies at the RAC Arena. Due to her outstanding achievement at the incredible age of 81 years, the university thought it would be a wonderful moment if the Chancellor could travel to her home and give her the graduation she would otherwise have missed.

Jennie is a fervent supporter of lifelong learning. She surprised everyone when she hinted there might yet be a Masters degree somewhere in the future.

ALBANY U3A JOINS THE NETWORK

Albany U3A, one of the older groups in the State, has now joined the WA Network. This brings our total membership to 19 groups if the individual members of the Perth U3A are counted separately. It also spreads our geographic range from Geraldton to Albany. We are working on the Pilbara and Kimberly regions, but no luck as yet.

Sheila Shenton, president of Armadale U3A and vice-president of the Network, travelled to Albany with her partner Roy and met with Greg Woodward, president of Albany U3A and some of their other members during a meeting at Willows Country Cattery in Albany during March.



Sheila Shenton and Greg Woodward

Greg advised that they have a membership of forty, with an average twenty members per meeting. They meet weekly during term time on a Friday afternoon at the old museum by the Brig *Amity* in Albany. Greg said that members from other U3A groups would always be welcome. Albany has a lot of attractions so how about a visit?

Right: Amity, looking safely moored from this angle, is actually a landlubber.



Peter Flanigan
WA Network

VICTORIA

Innovative Course Design Funding

Results in More Tutors and More Courses in Victoria

Di Bell from U3A Mornington received an Innovative Course Design grant from U3A Network Victoria in 2020 for her First Nations course. The grant was for Di, in conjunction with Network, to run and then write up a First Nations course which could then be replicated by course leaders in other U3As.

The course was offered, at no charge, to members of several smaller U3As. Participants who were keen to replicate the course in their area, formed the start of a community of practice.

First Nations Community of Practice (FNCOP)

Calls went out for any U3A tutor who leads a class on First Nations topics such as Indigenous art classes, First Nations discussion groups, book clubs that include Indigenous authors, gardening groups that look at indigenous plants, reconciliation groups, riding and walking groups that visit Indigenous places of significance and so on to form a Community of Practice (COP). The COP is for those people who lead the classes. It is a place for them to talk with other tutors, to share Ideas about facilitating discussions on the topic, and to find class resources.

So far, COP members have had the opportunity to:

- Participate in the First Nations course
- Receive the First Nations Course Guide
- Participate in the mentoring workshop run by Di Bell
- Participate in the cultural awareness training workshop run by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation VACCHO)
- Join Network's closed, private COP Facebook page to find resources and discuss the topic
- Participate in an Introduction to Facebook workshop
- Receive support for joining the Facebook group

First Nations Advisory Group (FNAG)

An advisory group was also formed and has since met twice to look at how Network can support tutors and leaders in First Nations course. The FNAG met to determine further assistance for the COP. They elected to offer presentations by Indigenous experts to combined First Nation classes on topics such as rock art and Indigenous kinship systems. They also elected to run training workshops and discussion groups for the group facilitators on topics such as *How to approach a local Indigenous group to work with your class*, or *How to facilitate a discussion on racism*.

Nellie Collier

Education Program Manager
U3A Network Victoria



Network Victoria
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

U3A ONLINE

Doing things differently has been a strong theme for many organisations during the last twelve months. The U3A Online committee of management would usually have held its yearly face-to-face meeting in Melbourne in February but like most organisations, this year we turned to Zoom. It was good to see all our committee members together, if not in the flesh.

One of the main items for discussion was the imminent upgrading of the Moodle platform which supports our courses. Like many, very complex pieces of software, the owners eventually withdraw support for a current system and an expensive upgrade has to happen. This won't happen till May and we are looking at quotes but whichever one we go with will be expensive and now that we no longer receive federal funding, it means breaking into our reserves and hoping membership keeps growing.

We were sad to note that Dr Les Dale, one of the early supporters and course writers, has passed away at the age of 94. Les's contributions to U3A were immense – as well as developing courses for U3A Online, he was a founding member of Manningham U3A and made a major contribution to that group. He wrote three of our courses, Ageing & Retirement, The Evolution of Life on Planet Earth and Towards Utopia. His many awards and recognition from a variety of sources were truly merited. He contributed to the development of U3A in Australia and to many other community projects.

We have two courses with a leader starting on 4 April – *The Night Sky* and *British Society in the Early 18th Century*. We would like to offer more courses with a leader as it can really enhance the learning experience but we can only offer them if members volunteer to be a leader. We would love to hear from anyone who could offer their services. You don't need to be an expert in the subject, just have an interest and enthusiasm.

And a reminder about our monthly e-newsletter GEMS which offers a checked list of interesting and relevant websites. You don't need to be a member of U3A Online to receive it. Check out previous editions and subscribe by going to our website www.u3aonline.org.au and clicking on GEMS in the top menu.



Jean Walker
President
U3A Online

