



AUSTRALIA

U3AAA BULLETIN No. 34

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High above the Clare Valley: U3A Lower North drummers with attitude and altitude

This issue:

■ Member reports:

- 🧠 WA has ideas worth emulating
- 🧠 SA enjoys the great outdoors
- 🧠 Queensland copes with wet or dry
- 🧠 NSW writers in black and white
- 🧠 U3A Online knows its numbers

From the Editor

WA leads us off this issue with two ideas which are worth emulating. When it comes to training or marketing, what could be better than having your own film crew? They are also putting in some serious work towards increasing membership. Many of us were happy to see the back of KPIs, SWOT exercises, SMART goals, etc., when we retired, while for others it has never been part of their lexicon. If you want changes and improvements in your networks it might be time to dust off the old jargon.

U3A Online doesn't neglect gathering essential statistics on course attendees. Statistics can be a word which makes people's eyes roll but if you don't keep accurate data on members' age (and I mean exact year of birth, not a 5-year range), and assess it each year, then you may not see the warning signs of an ageing membership with declining energy which doesn't auger well for succession planning and your U3A's future. When checking out new member applications, I do an inward cheer whenever I see a birthdate which will reduce our average.

Things affecting future membership were highlighted in a recent KPMG report. Australians, especially women, are expecting to cut back to part-time work rather than retire. The gender gap in superannuation is a factor. Another is that women who, thanks to childcare, are able to continue working during their child raising years are much more attached to their careers.

We will just have to attract more males because the other interesting prediction is that men will be spending much longer in retirement because of longer life-expectancy. In 1978 men could expect just over 9 years of retirement. That figure has almost doubled due to men embracing healthier lifestyles than their fathers.

Living in parts of Queensland and NSW must feel like being trapped in a resiliency bootcamp. U3A members in Lismore won the Services in Community (Group) award but it was small consolation for their usual meeting rooms being closed due to flood damage. Good to hear that many U3A members reached out to help fellow members hit by the floods.

South Australia's article keeps to its theme from last issue of beating COVID restrictions by Zoom or going outdoors. They will have to come in soon because winter is getting closer. In fact at the rate this edition is progressing, it may be winter before it is finished.

Goods news is that we might have more reports from the ACT as they have just nominated retiring president Bob Nield to be responsible for regular contributions. Sorry there is no input from Victoria this time but even the most elastic deadline has its limits.

Deadline for next issue of this Bulletin is Wednesday 27 July. Start sending newsworthy photos and stories to your state representative while it is fresh in your mind.



Claire Eglinton
U3A Lower North &
U3A South Australia

From the Chairman

In discussions with the chair of the Federal Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness, he commented that our organisation is a leading provider of activities that engage seniors, which is a significant contributor to ending isolation.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of state network committees and U3A group committees, tutors and leaders to ensure the U3A organisation continued to provide classes and activities for members through the pandemic. Because of their efforts the U3A movement in Australia can look forward to a bright future.

In accordance with past practice, this month completes U3A Network Victoria's 2-year term of chairing the U3A Australian Alliance and providing secretariat services. My thanks go to Susan Webster (U3A Victoria president) and Anne Grigg (secretariat support) for their support and assistance and all state representatives for their support and participation in various work groups during the last 2 years.

At the U3A Australian Alliance March meeting the delegates accepted an offer by U3A Network Victoria to chair the Alliance and provide secretariat services for a further 2-year term to continue to build on our progress over the past 2 years. Key achievements include:

- Continued fostering a strong collegiate connection between member networks reflected in an updated U3A Australia Alliance Memorandum of Understanding.
- Agreement of the U3AAA network members to proceed to incorporate the Alliance and apply for DGR taxation status.
- Development of a U3AAA promotion statement.
- Lifted visibility with federal parliamentarians through connection with the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness and membership of 'Ending Loneliness Together Association'.
- Upgraded the U3AAA website and links to member network websites.
- Coordinated the further development of the U3AAA strategic plan.

The U3A movement is making a significant contribution to the post COVID engagement with seniors, rebuilding, and revitalising of our local communities.

In closing, I again acknowledge the good work of our Member U3As in each state and the positive way in which they have responded to the needs of members during the pandemic.

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

*Glen Wall
Chair,
U3A Alliance Australia*



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

U3A FILM CREW BECOMING MORE IN DEMAND

At the beginning of 2021, the Film Crew could never have guessed how many exciting and diverse shoots it would complete over the forthcoming 12 months: 26 separate engagements during 2021 (some multiples on the day).



Formal talks, a choir performance, filming Theatre 180 productions, the latest HAZE concert, strategic planning workshops, the Q-Sign project and lip-reading sessions with Better Hearing Australia (WA), and Have-A-Go-Day, are just examples of the eclectic nature of our work. Each one of these presented the crew with a range of thought-provoking problems related to sound, lighting, camera positioning . . . and people.



U3A Perth Film Crew members: Peter Browne, Graeme Hunt, Janice Bowra, Peter Alcock.

The Film Crew endeavour to present the activities of U3A Perth in a colourful, informative way, using both video and still photography, so that people (especially prospective new members) cruising the website can see the wide range of activities and learning opportunities that make U3A unique in what it offers people who are seeking shared, stimulating mental and social engagement after leaving the permanent workforce.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR U3A PERTH

U3A Perth is the umbrella body for ten U3A regions (branches) spread across the metropolitan area. Each region is semi-autonomous and has its own management committee. U3A Perth is run by a council made up of four officeholders elected by the membership at the annual general meeting and a delegate from each region. Since 1987 the population of Perth has doubled but U3A Perth membership has remained static. Why is that? What can be done?

In 2021 Council decided it would take make a determined effort to address this problem by developing a 3-year strategic plan. A professional consultancy was engaged to guide us through the process.



U3A Perth members at the Strategic Plan Workshop

Development of the plan was a multi-step exercise involving the whole of council and about 10 nominees from the regions. The hard work and commitment from our participants, particularly at two workshops, enabled the facilitator to draft the first version of our strategic plan. From then on, we were on our own.

We have clarified four areas of strategic focus that we will concentrate on in the next three years. These have been expanded on further by the expression of four key objectives under each area of strategic focus, followed by the grass roots actions required to achieve our objectives. Measures of success, dates for completion and who is responsible have all been named. Now it is down to work. *(From a report by Catherine Baxter)*

Peter Flanigan
WA Network

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Not to be outdone by talk of walking the Riesling Trail last issue (and to prove SA is awash with wine and walking trails) U3A Aldinga has provided photos of their members cycling the Coast to Vines Trail south of Adelaide. The trail begins at the Marino Rocks train station and follows an old railway corridor south to McLaren Vale and Willunga. A distance of 38 km. The section from McLaren Vale to Willunga is known as the Shiraz Trail. That trail is flatter and more scenic, taking in wineries and vineyards, than the northern section of the Coast to Vines Trail which goes through suburbs.



This group has been together for at least fifteen years. Officially they meet every Monday, but there are two further sessions during the week classified as friends' rides. The shortest ride is 20km, then up to 35km. For those daunted by so much exercise, Aldinga president and keen cyclist, Brian Arthurs points out that two-thirds of their bikes are now electric.

U3A Lower North's drumming group, Drumbeat, used to meet inside a church hall but now use the wide verandah of a former winery where they can enjoy magnificent views over the Clare Valley. A lack of neighbours is probably also an advantage.

Group leader John Monten has been involved with drumming since 2006 and brought drumming into his job as a health worker by running 10-week programs for school students experiencing difficulties. It was also adapted to help people with mental health issues. John says the focus of the U3A drumming group is largely to do with having fun and socialising while learning what may be new skills.



Using African Djembe drums and utilising various West African and Caribbean rhythms participants gradually learn different techniques and apply them to the various parts of a rhythm. Members gain great satisfaction from combining rhythms to make a harmonising, pulsating, and invigorating piece of music.

John says there are a multitude of side benefits to being in a drumming group:

- Good for coordination and using left and right side of your body and brain.
- Develops new neural pathways in the brain so can help with memory and cognition.
- A mindfulness technique as you must be in the moment.
- Good for mental health and well being.
- Great exercise.
- Relaxing and therapeutic.

One of SA's biggest innovations in the last year is our Statewide sharing online learning program. John Travers, our talented webmaster, has set it all up to run through the State website with online bookings. Any U3A can share a presenter or course of which they feel particularly proud. Small remote U3As benefit by having exciting new additions to their programmes, presenters find a whole new audience eager to hear their words of wisdom. Most importantly members have a choice of courses that might not be possible locally because of lack of presenter or lack of participants. It is a small but worthwhile program including languages, philosophy, computing topics, even play-by-ear ukulele and guitar.

U3A Mount Gambier's geology group facilitator, Bob Dalgarno, is one of the presenters who has embraced the Statewide platform, presenting fortnightly Zoom talks on his specialist subject.

Right: Bob Dalgarno after giving a well-received Science Week speech at Burra a while back.



Statewide was encouragement for retired geologist Bob to take up the challenge to learn new skills and go from being a participant to a Zoom meeting organiser and presenter. Although an experienced speaker, Bob had to overcome technical challenges along the way but has gone on to host one of the best-attended courses offered in the trial.

Bob's *Our Restless Earth* series has so far covered Earth's seven largest plates (African, Antarctic, Australian, Eurasian, North American, Pacific and South American), as well as North American geology. It is supported by some stunning photography.

Claire Eglinton
Secretary
U3A South Australia



QUEENSLAND

U3A NETWORK QUEENSLAND ART COMPETITION 2022

Following on from the successful writing and photography competitions last year, there was recently a launch of the 2022 art competition. This year the focus is on painting and drawing. Most U3As in Queensland have one or more art groups and we're confident that there's a great deal of talent out there just waiting to be discovered.

There are substantial cash prizes on offer. Entries are already rolling in. The winner will be announced at the U3A Network State Conference which will be held on 8 and 9 June.

REGIONAL PRESIDENTS COUNCIL MEETINGS

Regional presidents council meetings are once again on the calendar, having been paused during the worst of the COVID pandemic.

The most recent, held this March, was hosted by U3A Toowoomba. Representatives of U3As Toowoomba, Granite Belt, Dalby, Roma and Warwick and the U3A Network attended. These meetings present a wonderful opportunity for U3As within a region to come together to share information and discuss issues of importance.

On this occasion the attendees discussed issues of common concern including reduced membership due to the impacts of COVID-19, and also the financial fall out and changed program offerings that have resulted.

Many other issues were canvassed including volunteering, newsletters and messaging, loss of tutors and program supplementation. The perennial issue of attracting, retaining, rewarding and training tutors was discussed. It was agreed that without tutors we have no program to offer and that we need to think outside the envelope about ways in which we can attract, reward and retain tutors. The information exchange was rich and useful.

Concurrently, tutor coordinators from the Darling Downs/Southern Downs and Western Queensland region met to get to know each other, exchange information and ideas and work out ways in which they can cooperate across the region. This was the third occasion on which tutor coordinators have held sessions to coincide with presidents council meeting for the region: an idea developed at the 2021 State conference.



RESILIENCE ON SHOW DURING QUEENSLAND WET WEATHER

Everyone in Australia has heard about the recent excessive rainfall across Queensland and northern New South Wales. While many U3A members were affected by flood waters, the associations did a remarkable job to keep functioning and/or keep in touch with members. One class member was heard to casually remark that having two metres of water flowing through her house had got her down a bit, although clearly it didn't keep her from her class.



U3A Warwick members slipped and slid their way to Queen Mary Falls wearing their wet weather gear. Numbers may have been down but their spirits were up, as evidenced in the photo. Reports are that they attempted to visit a local café after their epic scramble only to find the café closed. Undeterred they held a picnic morning tea in the outdoors.

Sunshine and clear skies have been a rare commodity. Taking advantage of a warm, dry evening at the other end of the state, U3A Cairns Douglas branch, held a pizza evening in the park. The tropical palm trees and the setting sun offered a great opportunity for members to socialise in an idyllic setting. They took full advantage.

*Gail Bonser
President
U3A Network Qld Inc*

NEW SOUTH WALES

The new year brought the opportunity for both the Network and most individual U3As to return to 'normal' – that is, a pre-pandemic existence of educational and social activities. Due to the pandemic, memberships had declined, but several U3As are reporting that memberships are growing again, as publicity and being seen in the community has attracted new members.

As a bright note to start the year, Northern Rivers (Lismore) U3A won the Services in Community (Group) award from Lismore City Council among its 2022 Australia Day awards.

Monica Perry of Central Coast U3A was recognised in the Australia Day Honours list and awarded the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for service to youth and to the community, in a wide range of services for over 70 years, including a U3A class for the past 6 years. Monica is an inspiring example of a lifetime of volunteer service.



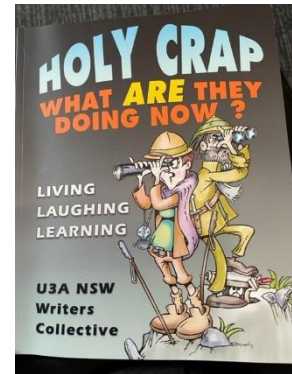
Heather Tredinnick of Southern Highlands U3A, was also awarded the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours list for service to music through choirs over a lifetime, including the U3A Southern Highlands choir since 2012. Under Heather's leadership, the choir has grown to between 70 to 80 members over the years. Heather spends hours in preparation and choosing music, tailoring to the talents of the choir members, and is widely considered a gift to U3A Southern Highlands.

Unfortunately, the floods in the northern coastal areas of New South Wales in March badly affected communities including U3A members in Ballina, Byron Bay, and Lismore, many of whom have lost their homes. U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) reported that the Lismore Workers Club, the home of many of the U3A activities, is closed and may not reopen for some time, due to flood damage, but that fortunately U3A records in an upper floor were not destroyed. Ballina/Byron U3A has reported that "what has been heart warming is the great response from members who want to help others in the U3A family". That the area has been hit a second time by floods is heartbreaking.

Other U3As in more southern areas have been able to participate in the NSW Seniors Festival (25 March – 3 April), an opportunity to showcase U3A to other members of the community. For example, U3A Northern Illawarra held its fourth annual debate against the students of Bulli High School, on the topic *That Zoos Should be Abolished*. (U3A took the affirmative argument but lost on points to the students). The Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Cr Gordon Bradbery, again adjudicated the debate.

The proposed Network conference to be hosted by Orange U3A in April was cancelled. Instead, the Network committee has organised a series of five cross-regional Zoom sessions, to enable representatives of each U3A to attend and hear about latest developments, and to ask questions of Network committee members. The postponed AGM will be held in June, as an online meeting.

The major success story has been the launch of the book *Holy Crap, What are They Up To Now*, edited by Laurene Mulcahy and Beth Elliott of Newcastle U3A, and featuring cartoons by Roy Bisson. The book comprises writings from 69 U3A members from 16 different U3As, writing as the U3A NSW Writers Collective. Dedicated to "all those members of the University of the Third Age (U3A) past and present who, through their passion and dedication, have ignited the flame of life-long learning and kept it burning and growing since its inception in Australia", the book will be supplemented by an on-going blog to keep the stories coming.



The book was launched at the 10th Newcastle Writers Festival on 3 April, by Dr Anne Wakatama, who gave a warm and humorous address touching on the negativity accorded to our older demographic and highlighting some of the stories in the book. The launch was attended by 73 people, including Greg Piper MP for Lake Macquarie, U3A Network president Denis Simond, 6 local U3A presidents, and 14 of the contributors.

Denis commented that the event provided the vibrancy and enthusiastic atmosphere generated by a live U3A gathering, which has been so missed during the lockdowns and small audience numbers due to the pandemic.

Copies of the book are available for sale, at \$20 each plus postage. For further information contact Beth Elliott (elizabeth.elliott8@icloud.com).

As the dark clouds of Covid recede, the NSW Network wishes all U3As, their committees and their members, a safe and happy Easter.



Laurene Mulcahy with Greg Piper MP, Dr Anne Wakamata, Giselle Wakamata, and Denis Simond, at the launch. (Photo by Mansel Williams)



Pt Macquarie Hastings U3A international dance group, at their Christmas concert, performing a traditional Israeli dance.

Ainslie Lamb
U3A Network NSW newsletter editor

U3A ONLINE

You may be interested in some statistics pertaining to U3A Online. Our web administrator, John, does a snapshot of our membership for each of our quarterly online meetings.

In February of this year, 2022, we had 1,027 members, of which 968 were individual memberships and 59 were organisational members, which is when a U3A Group joins and is able to purchase a course for use in their local group.

The majority of our members are from Australia (980) and New Zealand (21), followed by the UK (18). We also have a scattering of members from as far afield as South Africa, Canada, Guernsey, and Switzerland. Some members may not be aware that there is no other U3A Online in the world like ours, where a large number of courses are offered online for a small fee.

We also ask members how they found us and by far the largest response is word of mouth (265), followed by our brochure, the News for Seniors paper, our website, GEMS, and social media.

Our current age profile is:

40 or younger	3
41 - 50	4
51 - 60	88
61 - 70	398
71 - 80	383
80 and Over	85

And our gender proportion is 678 female and 232 male (with a few unspecified).

We have recently launched into Zoom meetings for some courses and plan to do more in the future. You can keep an eye out for these on our notice board page.

Our course co-ordinator, Bev, took a snapshot of the number of people currently visiting the self-paced courses in the past 100 days, and found that there were only three courses with no participants. The most visited recently is Australian History 1 with 23 participants; Religions of the World with 17; Genealogy Online and the Politics course – Left, Right and Centre - both had 15.

And please keep in mind that we are always keen to increase our membership, so if you know anyone who cannot access a local U3A and may be interested, please encourage them to join.

Jean Walker
President
U3A Online

