

Newsletter

November 2017

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YARRA CITY
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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Andy Hansen

President's report

This is the final newsletter of 2017 following another successful year for U3A Yarra City.

I would like to acknowledge the support by Yarra City Council who provide us with an office in Abbotsford which is used for office administration and small classes. The lease has been extended for another five years from August 2018. In addition, we have enjoyed use of their library facilities and community bus either free of charge or for a low cost. This substantially contributes to our ability to provide activities to support the active ageing of our community.

Our umbrella organisation, U3A Network Victoria, provides continued support and we have recently been informed of access to two government grants for expansion of our activities. Thanks also to the support of Adam Bandt's office for print facilities.

At the group's AGM on 31st October, existing committee members were returned, and two new members elected. Most previous committee members have agreed to continue in their positions listed on page [12](#).

On a personal note, I gratefully acknowledge the support and guidance of the U3A Yarra City committee and especially Past President, Lyn Watson, who has been very generous with her time and experience.

Our Committee of Management has worked diligently throughout the year compiling and facilitating a wide range of activities for members. We have worked well together fulfilling our assigned roles and covering for each other when needed, an aspect for which I am particularly grateful due to travel commitments. I thank: Vivienne Blanksby as Secretary, Denyse Strantzen (with support from Patsy Brown) as Treasurer, Mary Walker and Lyn Watson for their time and effort developing and facilitating our program of courses and activities, Frank Moore for his computer and organisation support including Tutor Liaison, Jenny Martin as Publicity Officer during semester 1, and again Lyn Watson as Vice President. **Cont.**

*President's
report cont.*

I also thank our auxiliary management team for their support, specifically Susan Brewer as Office Manager and Bob Morrow as Membership Officer. Finally, Tina Hocking as Newsletter Coordinator and Robert Hocking as database/website support. They have given support for many years and are handing over their responsibilities to others; thank you Tina and Robert, we greatly appreciate your efforts.

We all owe gratitude to our Tutors and volunteers who help facilitate our courses and activities. Without these special people, we would not have an organisation at all. An overview of our 2017 courses is in the Program report on page [3](#). I'm very pleased to note that fifty-seven volunteers have given their time and services, which emphasises willingness to not only participate in our activities, but also to actively assist. Our membership at the end of 2017 stands at 269 and includes a combination of full and associate members, plus four honorary and life members.

May I remind our members that the U3A Yarra City is an independent incorporated association with an annual subscription. These fees allow members to take part in any class or activity without additional charge, except for entry fees for some external visits and tours. Our current range of activities fall within the funds collected and we have no plans to change our subscription fees. All the 'work' of our organisation is undertaken by volunteers, thus enabling its success.

On the administrative side, our online database, MyU3A, with the PayPal payment arm has worked well. We regularly review our Privacy, Conflict of Interest, Health and Safety policy documents which are available on our website. We also aim to maintain equipment used for our courses and activities from within our subscription funds.

Thank you, everyone, for helping to make U3A Yarra City such a friendly group.

Andy Hansen President

**Christmas message**

The Newsletter group would like to thank members for their submissions and assistance with activities such as proof reading, copying and distribution of the newsletter during 2017.

We wish all members a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year and we look forward to your continuing contributions in 2018.

Program report

Courses and talks are the key business of U3As. We are pleased that during 2017, our membership has increased and the courses were well-attended. A core of 27 courses ran throughout the year, as well as 10 short courses of less than 8 weeks. Our 29 Tuesday Forums have remained particularly successful, plus our popular Xmas Quiz.

In addition, we have organised activities such as the Seniors Disco Wisco in conjunction with the Yarra City Council and a Table Tennis tournament. Our day trip in the Community Bus to the Western Water Treatment Plant at Werribee was very successful.

The Ethnic Museums visits with an accompanying ethnic meal have been fascinating and fun! Yarra Libraries computer courses are also advertised in our course program.

The Program Committee sincerely thank all who ran courses and talks and particularly those who ran year-long courses. Again, we have had much input from class members who supported these by providing access to and setting up of rooms, collecting money if required and cleaning up afterwards.

Once again, we were able to utilise a wide variety of venues in the City of Yarra. Consistent regular bookings throughout the year and from year to year simplify our planning work. We are currently negotiating with Yarra Council Venues to use the new Bargoona Nganjin Library in North Fitzroy for groups in 2018. We would like to express gratitude for the ongoing support of the Council, Yarra Libraries and Neighbourhood Houses for providing venues.

View our [2018 Program](#) online.

Enrol in Semester 1, 2018, from December 1st.

Mary Walker and Lyn Watson



Islamic museum tour



Disco Wisco

Our classes

Racontez-nous une histoire

French Conversation has long been on the list of courses requested by our members. This year after a little gentle arm twisting from our course coordinator, I agreed to convene a group. (I'm deliberately calling myself convenor rather than the tutor – to avoid unrealistic expectations about my expertise). It's very much a collaborative effort among the 6 or 7 members who regularly turn up to the U3A office on a Wednesday afternoon to exercise their French prowess.

We are mainly people who have studied French to a reasonable level in the distant past but want to maintain and develop spoken French. There is normally a weekly topic for which we each prepare 'une petite histoire' – an incident, a description, an opinion - to present to the class and to stimulate questions and comments. We use conversational texts to access current dialogue, useful phrases, vocabulary and practice exercises, linking in with the topic of the moment.

It's been both stimulating and a lot of fun. Each time we find out something new about our fellow classmates as they draw on their life experiences to offer a vignette on the relevant subject. We've heard about each other's travel adventures, choice of houses, comfort with technology and views on current events. Following each 'discours' the rest of us pose questions and draw out the subject matter, responding with our own opinions or accounts of similar incidents. It's all welcomed in the name of language practice.

Maintaining French proficiency is a great exercise for the brain and there's more than one way to do it. At least three of our number have freshened up their language directly by taking off to French speaking countries during the year. I'm thinking of indulging in that form of education myself sometime soon! Meanwhile French Conversation – Intermediate, will be continuing in 2018. Perhaps you'll join us.

Viv Blanksby



*Maintaining
French
proficiency is a
great exercise
for the brain...*

Table tennis

*...ready to
polish Ping
Pong skills...*

The Table Tennis group meets in the Gymnasium at the Stanton Street U3A office on the first and third Wednesdays. Special thanks to Wendy Hall who coordinated the group until recently and who has now handed over to Susannah Dax and Cecelia Winkelman.

Eight to ten members regularly arrive primed for each occasion, ready to polish Ping Pong skills established during teenage years. It's great for hand-eye coordination, fitness and fun.

The highlight of the year was the inaugural 'Round Robin' tournament held to celebrate Seniors' Week. It was certainly fast and furious and a little crazy too. Eight of us competed for a rather brassy and ribboned gold cup and place-getters medals. Celia thought hers was a crown! Anne diligently researched how to run a tournament and produced the required paperwork and Susannah presented the prizes. First Prize was won by our trusty U3A President Andy Hansen. This was well deserved as no one could tackle his undercut spinners! But wait a minute - we are on to it! Next year Table Tennis will be held *every* Wednesday and we have identified a local coach who delivers an online program so that we can have five minute tutorials at the start of each session. We encourage you to join us for fun and games at Table Tennis in 2018 or just come along and try it out.

Susannah Dax



Winners: Andy, Peter, Anne
and Princess Cecelia



Susannah presenting the
cup to Andy



Liz, Peter, Lyn, Andy, Susannah
and Cecelia

The paradox of ageing

Every man desires to live long but no one would be old. (Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels.)

The good news is that the majority of older people are happier and have a more positive outlook than other age groups.

In recent research people in the 65-75 year old age group reported a higher level of satisfaction with life compared to younger age groups. Health improvements mean the years of life spent with a disability are decreasing. Older people are working longer and are actively engaged in the community. Thirty five per cent of Australians aged 65-74 are volunteers. Many also care for family members including grand-children. Interestingly, most people report feeling 10 years younger than their biological age.



Our community is living longer. That is more positive than 'getting older'. In Victoria 20% of people are aged 60 years and over. By 2031 we can expect 22.2% in Greater Melbourne and 30.5% in regional and rural Victoria. The upper limits of survival are increasing. Australia has 25 super- centenarians (over 110 years of age.) Our older groups are also more diverse; 41% of Victorians aged 65 and over and 45.6% of Victorians aged 85 and over were born overseas.

If longevity is to be recognised as a benefit not a problem, governments must plan ahead. We need a state-wide and national strategy to address the many challenges for a diverse and ageing population, particularly that sector who suffer illness, disability or economic difficulties. Housing, aged care, improved in-home care, transport, health and age discrimination are all key issues.

As individuals we know physical activity, cognitive stimulation and social engagement contribute to healthy ageing. A Scandinavian study showed reading and membership of a book club lowered the risk for dementia. We could expect U3A to have a similar effect since its programs cover all three of the key factors for healthy ageing.

In *The Republic*, Plato, Greek philosopher, asks an old man, Cephalus, whether he fears old age. He answers no.

For if men are sensible and good tempered, old age is easy enough to bear; if not, youth as well as age is a burden.

A final thought; ageing beats the alternative.

Rhonda Day

Member of French Conversation class, volunteer at the Victorian Council on the Ageing, (COTA). Rhonda recommends *Ageing: A Very Short Introduction*, Nancy Pachana, Oxford University Press)

Western Treatment Plant

The Western Treatment Plant at Werribee hosts several open days a year, as well as conducting guided tours for school and community groups. When this was brought to our attention, program coordinator, Mary, was quick to organise a U3A visit. With Chris as our driver, we boarded the bus at Richmond early one September morning and headed west.

A welcome morning tea was served on arrival before exploring the Discovery Centre. Here scale models demonstrate the water cycle from the catchment areas through to the various stages of treatment and discharge. Boarding the bus again, the tour took us past the series of lagoons (or ponds) that the waste liquid passes through. Stage 1 lagoons are covered so that the biogas released from bacterial breakdown of organic matter is captured and used to generate over 90% of the Plant's energy requirements. This also helps minimise the odours that many would recall from days gone by. By the time the effluent has passed through its final stage of treatment, it is suitable for irrigating market gardens, sports grounds and parklands. Any excess is safely discharged into the bay under licence.

A major attraction for both local and overseas visitors is the wetlands and its amazing bird life. Over 280 species have been recorded at varying times of the year. Numbers were considerably less during our visit, but still enough variety for some impressive photographs.

Following a stop for lunch at the cafe at Werribee Park we returned to Melbourne after a most memorable outing. Our thanks to Mary for organising the tour and to Chris for driving the bus.

Tina Hocking



Giant agitators



Burning excess methane



Bird life along seashore

The language of Fencing

Rhonda Day interviewed Jane Allardice a member of the French Conversation class.

Google Jane and you will find a formidable list of her international and national achievements on the Australian Fencing Federation website. In 2017 she was ranked in the top 32 in the World Veteran Fencing Championships and she won bronze in the Women's Foil in the Australian Veteran Fencing Championships.

When did you first start fencing and how did you choose that sport?

I joined the RMIT fencing club when I was studying there and found I had an aptitude for it, winning the intervarsity women's foil in my second year.

What skills do you need?

Fencers need to be aerobically fit with developed core strength and strong quadriceps, a sense of timing and distance and fast response times. They should have determination to practice and a strong competitive spirit.

What has kept you interested in fencing?

I like the fact that both mind and body are engaged. It's a very tactical sport and one never stops learning. Also, the fencing world is very sociable.

How do you keep up your fitness to compete at such a senior level?

The fencing calendar in Australia is from mid-January to mid-December. Prior to competitions I have one to two 30 minute, rigorous lessons from my coach per week and bout with opponents three times a week. In non-competitive periods I take one lesson per week and train two nights per week. I also walk and ride my bike and occasionally swim and go to the gym.

How did fencing fit into your working life?

I have been a Medical Laboratory Scientist, a Project Manager in the Health sector, Supervisor of a Pathology IT Department and most recently a Pathology teacher in the VET sector. After 20 years of competitive fencing, I stopped to concentrate on my career and studies. In my fifties, I picked it up again. I now have the time to train and to travel interstate and overseas to competitions.

What have you gained from the French Conversation class?

The language of Fencing is French. I love the French language and culture and have travelled to France many times. French classes in the 1960s did not emphasise conversation so it has been good to practise conversational French with a great group of people, ably led by Vivienne Blanksby. U3A Yarra has given me an opportunity to get to know more people in the area and to meet for a common goal.

Jane (centre) and the Australian Women's Foil team at Maribor Slovenia



On yer bike – Mansfield to Tallarook



Ready to go



Cheviot tunnel - the longest Vic. rail tunnel



The start of a long climb



Lush fields and many onlookers



Waiting, waiting...



Painting time - Lyn Morgan

Mansfield to Tallarook

November saw the third 'On Yer Bike' (OYB) personal challenge. This ride involves cyclists overcoming a range of obstacles such as hills, hot weather, punctures, echidnas, rain, mud and fellow riders.

Riders pit themselves against their own inadequacies such as lack of fitness, ageing bodies, fatigue, overindulgence and excessive alcohol ingestion.

This year we attempted the Great Victorian Rail Trail from Mansfield to Tallarook, a distance of 121 km. Some made it, most didn't!

We all met at Tallarook, however the Mansfield commercial bus and trailer arrived two hours late and with less seating than requested. Fortunately we all managed to squeeze in, using the Yarra bus as overflow. In Mansfield, Jonno and Bob negotiated a 50% off the bus fee.

The late arrival at Mansfield meant starting off in the heat of the day. While the path to Bonnie Doon was relatively benign, the heat took its toll and most riders were glad to arrive at the Motel in time for Steak Monday, a 550 gram steak for a steal. The serenity and the power lines quickly revived our flagging spirits.

Next morning we started early to miss the heat. The path was easy, but there was one long grinding hill that kept on going and going. Day 2 was also the beginning of Jonno's three punctures.

The Giddy Goat café provided a lunchtime gourmet food drop on the trail and in the evening delivered a mountain of food to our luxurious accommodation just out of Yarck. Here everyone pitched in to either cook or clean up.

Day 3 we were on the road at 9am. The weather was warm but not unbearable. There was one long steep climb up to the Cheviot Tunnel; the longest rail trail tunnel in the State. From there our descent into Yea was only interrupted by another of Jonno's punctures.

Accommodation in Yea was very comfortable and we dined at the Peppercorn Hotel. The fare was delicious and the senior members of the group set an example to the younger ones, with commendable temperance and restraint.

On leaving the hotel there was an ominous sign of what tomorrow would bring. It was raining.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) predictions and maps were not looking good, but as eternal optimists, we ignored them. In future we will take the advice of the BOM.

Four riders started off early in order to catch a train from Tallarook. The remaining 15 riders set off under grey skies. It didn't take long for the rain to start and for the path to change its character. The path had been a coarse but rideable gravel, however it changed to sand and clay and became slippery and slow. Like true OYB stalwarts we pushed on. We stopped for a short break under a shelter and not long after we had resumed, Bob got his first puncture. His trusty steed proved difficult to work on and after taking considerable time to change the tube, the puncture persisted. We gave up and called for the bus. Meanwhile, the lead riders of the group, totally drenched, disheveled and despairing, arrived at the Trawool pub. The pub was closed but the owner opened up and welcomed this shivering, bedraggled group of insane seniors. Somewhere else there is another story of the innkeeper welcoming strangers. Maybe there's a lesson there for our government.

After thawing out, Ross decided it was too dangerous to continue, so the ride was stopped 10km short of the finish.

Once dry and warm, people started to see things in a new light. One or two even said they'd do it again. All praised the effort put in by the organisers and thanks to Ruth who volunteered to drive the 'sag wagon' (Yarra bus) throughout the trip.

Who knows, we may even have another one next year.

Peter Rankin

Photo Gallery



Historic walks - Middle Park



Coburg Historical Society's cottage



Fitzroy gardens



Fitzroy gardens



Bruce and Jenny planning a mosaic



'Art for All' class inspired by Paul Klee

Diary dates

2017

- 1 Nov Membership renewal
 1 Dec Course enrolment open
 5 Dec: Xmas Quiz@10.30 and lunch@12.00
 Collingwood Library. Bring food to share
 15 Dec: U3A office closes. Semester ends



2018

- 22 Jan U3A office reopens
 24 Jan Tutor lists finalised
 16 Mar Newsletter submissions due

Semester dates

- 30 Jan: Semester 1 starts
 30 Mar-15 Apr: School holidays
 29 Jun: Semester 1 ends
 30 Jun-15 July: School holidays
 16 Jul: Semester 2 starts
 22 Sept-7 Oct: School holidays
 14 Dec: Semester 2 ends

Committee 2018

- President:* Andy Hansen
Deputy President: Lyn Watson
Secretary: Vivienne Blanksby
Treasurer: Denyse Strantzen
Program Coordinators: Mary Walker, Lyn Watson
Database: Andy Hansen
Tutor Liaison: Frank Moore
Publicity: Vacant
Health and Safety: Frank Moore
Committee: Peter Ronge, Helena Rosman

Other

- Membership:* Bob Morrow
Newsletter: Tina Hocking, Rhonda Day, Lyn Morgan
Office Admin: Susan Brewer

Connect with U3A Yarra

FaceBook: Send photos and articles to our email address u3ayarracity@gmail.com with *FaceBook* in the Subject line or go directly via FaceBook.



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