

## U3A Yarra City President's Report 2020

This last year has been a challenging one, but one that the community of U3A Yarra City has responded to with energy and resilience. The onset of restrictions on face to face activities due to the pandemic, has seen many of our classes and activities transition to online settings such as Zoom.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the tutors who have learnt the new skills needed for the online delivery of classes and activities, at times taking them well out of their comfort zones. The fact that we have maintained a solid program is a testament to the commitment to lifelong learning, relationships and community that is at the heart of the U3A movement.

Thanks are due also to all our members who have adapted to the new environment and maintained their engagement with U3A. And while not everyone has been able to actively attend video conferences, numbers of members have said that they nevertheless have appreciated receiving updates and other contact from their tutors. We appreciate your ongoing support.

Of course, there have been some members who have not been able to maintain their participation online, and some groups which have not been able to continue in any form because of the on-going restrictions. There is no denying that the pandemic has affected our ability to provide the same range of activities as previously. Recognising this, the Committee of Management has decided to recommend to members that the membership fees for 2021 be reduced to \$30 for full members and \$15 for associate members. We think this is an appropriate measure that recognises that opportunities to participate in U3A activities during this year have been significantly impacted.

I want to acknowledge and thank the members of the Committee of Management for their efforts and support this year. I have really appreciated their diligence, eye for detail and their positive, collaboration - even if we could only meet via video conference! I thank: Andy Hansen as Deputy President; Viv Blanksby for her efforts as Secretary; Denyse Strantzen as Treasurer; Frank Moore for managing the date base and tutor liaison; Lyn Watson and Mary Walker for managing the program; and Peter Ronge, who has represented us at various U3A Network meetings. This year in particular the committee has taken on responsibilities in addition to the ongoing administrative responsibilities. Some of these have been:

- Responding to the COVID situation has meant additional meetings and in particular, communications with members about decisions we have had to make, often at quite short notice. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of Viv Blanksby for her work in producing the semi-regular ebulletins to keep members informed of developments.

- As well, committee members have made phone contact with those of our members who do not receive bulletins and newsletters via email. This is a relatively small number of people (approximately 15) but it is important that we reach out to maintain our connection with all members as far as possible.
- Participation in the Data Security and Privacy project, run by U3A Network Victoria. This project is designed to ensure that the U3A movement uses best practice in handling personal data for all members. This is associated with the strengthening of State Government legislation and guidelines for data privacy and security. I want to thank Andy Hansen for his participation in the regular Network workshops on these matters and his carriage of the project for U3A Yarra City.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of members who have made additional contributions to our community. They include but are in no way limited to the following:

- The efforts of the Ageing Well group and their convenor, Helen Nankervis who have built on our ongoing partnership with Yarra City Council and, in particular, its Aged and Disability Team. Our U3A relies fundamentally on the support of Council for our office in Stanton Street, and free or cheap access to rooms in libraries for the delivery of our classes. Our relationship this year has developed to become one of consultation and dialogue on matters to do with active and healthy ageing across Yarra City, thanks largely to the efforts of the Ageing Well group. This group has also continued its partnership with Dr Alison Herron from Melbourne University, who has produced an excellent report, based on interviews with U3A members, on the impact of online classes.
- The members of the Newsletter group (Tina Hocking, Susannah Dax and Lyn Morgan), who have continued to produce wonderfully lively and well-presented newsletters as well as the special newsletter in August about volunteering.
- The team of administrators for the Connecting U3A Yarra City Facebook group (Viv Blanksby, Robert Hocking, Sue Kurt, Teresa Pitt, Barbara Selvay, and myself). The Facebook group has at last count approximately 80 members, and its establishment took, particularly in the early stages, considerable time and effort.

Finally, there are a number of people who are retiring from the Committee of Management. I wish to thank them for their significant contributions and, speaking personally, their support. I know I speak for everyone on the Committee when I say that it has been a delight to work with them all:

- Viv Blanksby, who has been Secretary since December 2014 and Minute Secretary since December 2015. Viv has filled these roles with extraordinary efficiency and diligence, attention to detail, and cheerful, positive energy. Her contribution, especially for such an extended period, has been enormous, not just as secretary, but also for her generous contribution to a range of other initiatives.
- Mary Walker, who has been a member of the Committee since December 2016 and has shared responsibility for Program Coordination, along with managing the course information on the web site and this last year, office management. She has always

been generous in her support of our program and responded enthusiastically to opportunities to expand it. Mary will continue to manage the office and volunteers who staff it.

- Peter Ronge joined the Committee in December 2017 and since then has played a valuable role supporting the work of the committee. He has been the representative of U3A Yarra City at U3A Network's northern metropolitan meetings and filled the treasurer's role for several months last year, when Denyse Strantzen was away.

In addition, Bob Morrow has stepped back from his role as Membership Secretary during the course of this year. For many members it was an email or phone call from Bob, confirming their enrolment or sorting out any problems they may have experienced, that was their introduction to U3A Yarra City. Bob's positive, welcoming manner and conscientious attention to members has been a significant and valued contribution to our community.

Finally, I am pleased to be able to tell you that all five of the remaining Committee of Management have nominated for re-election. Our constitution allows for nine members so if anyone wishes to nominate prior to our elections, I encourage you to do so. It is a marvellous way to contribute to our lively, flourishing organisation and community.

As 2020 draws to a close we can be proud of the resilience and energy of our organisation and look forward to a wonderful 2021.

David Lee  
October, 2020