

President's Report to AGM – 2024

Last year at the AGM I reported that our U3A Yarra City had for the first time reached 400 active members, a sharp increase since the Covid lockdowns. This year I can report that our membership has had another exceptional increase, to just on 500. It's great that our group has been seen by a large number of the seniors community in Yarra to offer the services that they want. A great endorsement!

A small but significant change during this year has been the update of our logo. As at the top of this report the logo shows us as simply "U3A Yarra City". Gone is any reference to "University of the Third Age". The rationale for removing the university reference was simply to avoid any confusion. Our organisation is not a university in the modern context, and any suggestion that we have educational pre-requisites or offer formal courses (or exams!) could be off-putting to some potential members. Hence the change. I hope that our new logo is seen as "lean and clean", and definitely not off-putting.

It is only two years since we made the change to our current U-MAS membership management system. The change has been successful and members are largely happy with this system. Technology however, moves on and U-MAS is now showing signs of age. U3A Network Victoria has been aware of the need to consider the future and have decided on a change to a new system called "Member Wizard", intended to be rolled out to all Victorian and hopefully Australian U3A groups. This is an Australian designed and supported membership management system developed in recent years with Queensland U3A groups as the main clients. Support for U-MAS will cease in 2027, so a move is necessary. Your committee has decided to make the change in early 2025. Our judgement is that the new system will be easier for users and better for administrators. Another change-over of systems isn't welcome, but it's believed that the outcome will make it worthwhile.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of the members of U3A Yarra City Committee of Management. Viv Blanksby (Secretary and Deputy President), Frank Moore (IT, Membership Management System Coordinator), Sue Kurt (Treasurer, web support), Maria Hudson (Program Coordinator), Barry Giddings (Tutor Liaison, Member Liaison, Health, Safety and Privacy Officer), Jan Tinetti (Correspondence). Although each has a designated portfolio each has also been very willing to contribute across all matters of concern to our group. Without the tireless efforts of these volunteers we wouldn't have our vibrant U3A.

Lyn Watson has been coordinator of our Tuesday Forums over several years, and has done a fine job in seeking out speakers on an incredibly wide range of topics. Lyn has decided that it's time to retire from the task and in her place is a Forums Committee. This group of four volunteers headed by Mink Schapper will take over the organisation of Forums from the start of 2025. Already they are getting down to the task. I think of the Forums as the "jewel in the crown" of U3A Yarra City, and you can expect a regular series of Forums, continuing on Lyn's work. I want to pay tribute to Lyn's work not just as Forums Coordinator but in her previous roles of President, Deputy President, Program Coordinator and general committee member since 2013. A truly inspirational contribution.

Two other long-term members of the Committee of Management have also decided that it's time to retire from their roles. Viv Blanksby has for 10 years been Secretary and this year stepped in also as Deputy President. Most members will have come into contact with Viv because she has produced our informative Bulletins. Sue Kurt has been our Treasurer and also website and IT support. Both Viv

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and Sue have contributed much more than their formal titles suggest; both have been assiduous members of the Committee of Management, contributing across all aspects of the group's activities. They will both be sorely missed.

All of our courses need Tutors, and we have 53 of them; these are the selfless individuals who give their time and their expertise to lead our activities. Some of them contribute expertise gained in their previous employment and for others it's because they have hobbies old or new. When you get a Tutor in conversation it's often clear that they have a passion for their chosen field and I think this is the essence of retirement; the chance to do what you want to do, and for our Tutors it means helping others do the same. My sincere thanks go to all our very fine Tutors.

The Newsletters committee headed by Tina Hocking has produced well-crafted documents three times each year, celebrating achievements and providing information for all members. This work is an important contribution to the "vibe" of our U3A and I commend their work.

Our U3A office continues in support of those members who prefer face-to-face dealings; Mary Walker and her team of volunteers have facilitated this every week.

As always we rely heavily on the support of Yarra City Council and Yarra Libraries. Primarily this is as our suppliers of venues, but we do also work with these organisations when special events come up, such as the recent heritage bike ride – part of Seniors Festival. I thank the council and libraries for their ongoing support.

U3A Network Victoria is the body that coordinates and supports all Victorian U3A groups. Their work is, I'm sure, largely invisible to most members, but they organise meetings where U3A groups from around the state can share information and experiences, they conduct courses, give advice and support and crucially they support us with our membership management system – U-MAS and in future Member Wizard. They organised the annual state conference at the start of October. U3A Yarra City benefits from these contacts.

As we near the end of 2024 we can celebrate another year of members enjoying and benefiting from a huge variety of activities that have kept our minds and bodies healthy, and most importantly have encouraged our community-focused socialising. I thank all members for your continued support of U3A Yarra City. It's your U3A, and as is the way of such groups, you get out of it what you put in.

Peter Moore

President, U3A Yarra City