

U3AAA Bulletin No.3

Dec. 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, U3A ALLIANCE AUSTRALIA

Since the release of the July Bulletin, I and the Secretary formally presented the U3AAA submission to the Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians. After explaining the on-going work of our Members, we outlined and spoke to key points contained in the submission, namely:

- many senior Australians don't want to or simply can't (sometimes due to the lack of suitable employment) work in the paid work-force;
- however, consistent with the Commonwealth Government's stated policy "of keeping retirees in their own homes as long as possible, while helping them stay active and engaged members of the community" there is a need for such people to be able to access affordable learning and social experiences;
- from an economic point of view, the voluntary contribution made by seniors is significant and should be recognised;
- there should be continuing expansion of opportunities to access and receive training in the use of modern technology, including the internet, for the development and enjoyment of older people;
- there should be more community recognition of the valuable contribution of seniors;
- there needs to be a wider range of services provided – more stress should be placed on Municipal Councils, community organisations, and Governments generally to develop positive ageing policies - and there should be more assistance especially in regard to accommodation costs for groups like U3A's;
- volunteer not-for-profit community groups, including U3A need to be considered in relation to DGR status to enable them to access donations from corporations; and
- proposed model Work Health and Safety legislation is impacting negatively on voluntary incorporated associations, and needs to be amended.

[A copy of the written submission can be accessed in the U3A Alliance Australia page on the NSW Network website at www.nsw.u3anet.org.au]

The panel, which was comprised of Mr Everaldo Compton AM, Professor Gil Lewin and Professor Brian Howe AO listened attentively and seemed most supportive of the valuable work that the U3A Movement has and continues to make for the welfare and personal development of its membership.

The Interim Report of the Panel will be released shortly and any Alliance Member who would like a copy provided direct should apply to Vicki Wilkinson, the Panel Secretary on epsa.secretariat@treasury.gov.au

Ron Browne, Chair

MODEL WORK HEALTH & SAFETY LEGISLATION

Following representations made by various U3AAA members to Safework Australia, a Decision Regulation Impact Statement issued on 10th November 2011, includes a paragraph intended to clarify that not-for-profit volunteer associations, whether incorporated or not, which do not have any paid employees, are excluded from the operation of the legislation.

This information can be found at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au (search for Decision RIS Harmonisation).

NSW U3A NETWORK NEWS

Two very productive “cluster” meetings took place since the last issue of the Bulletin. One involved a number of U3A groups in the Mid-North Coast Region and the other in the South Coast Region. These meetings are proving popular as U3A groups can discuss a wide range of issues, including administrative matters, and co-operative arrangements such the exchange of speakers and tutors. They are in part a response to overcoming isolation with the large distance between groups in many of the Network’s Regions.

On the week-end of 14-15 October, the Network webmaster, Ern Hollebhone, ran a workshop at Taree to train Regional Representatives in the establishment and development of websites, where all groups in each Region can share information and “discuss” matters of mutual interest.

The 2012 NSW Network conference will be hosted by the Port Macquarie Hastings U3A, in the Glasshouse at Port Macquarie, on 29th-30th March 2012. The Conference theme, *The Fountain of Age*, focuses on issues of positive ageing and the role of the creative arts in maintaining a positive and active life in the Third Age.

The Conference will also feature several workshop sessions, some of general interest to U3A learners, others of interest to U3A Committees, where ideas and information are exchanged. There will also be a conference dinner, and some local excursions. Program, registration forms and other information will be available on the NSW Network website shortly.

The Network has obtained approval of its logo as a Trade Mark, subject to any objections being made by 23rd December.

RON BROWNE

U3A NETWORK VICTORIA

Victorian U3As participated in Victoria's Seniors Week both at the official launch held at Federation Square, Melbourne, as well as at various regional levels throughout the state. Taking part in this State Government initiative has generated significant benefit for the movement by raising our general profile, showcasing our many activities and creating the opportunity to communicate the acknowledged advantages of U3A membership. Next year we anticipate a further lift in the level of our participation for what will be the 30th Anniversary of Seniors Week in Victoria.

The funding distribution process covering the initial year of our second four year Growth Funding Agreement with the Department of Senior Victorians is well under way. Applications were received from a majority of our U3As for funding of growth programmes. Individual applications detailing each U3A's initiatives are to be evaluated to ensure compliance with agreed Departmental Growth Support Guidelines. Following completion of this review we anticipate funding distribution to successful applicants to commence early in the New Year.

Our U3As gathered for the final Council Meeting for 2011 on the 16th November in Melbourne. Discussion included the changes to organisational responsibilities resulting from recent amendments to both the Associations and the Equal Opportunity Acts. Specific details were previously circulated in an information package to all Presidents highlighting U3A actions necessary to ensure compliance.

Our Network is anxious to initiate a number of projects over the coming year which includes a review of existing telecommunication systems, consistent brand reinforcement and a Development Programme for U3A tutors. These efforts will supplement the ongoing programme to strengthen and expand our Regional structure and improve access to the collective resources and experience within our organisation. We now have ten Regional groups operating, whilst all have their own structures and methodology, they share common aims to exchange ideas, pooling resources and experience and provide stimulus to participating U3As. Regional grouping is aimed to support U3As through mutual assistance and interaction which may often address some of the distance and local issues confronting our country and regional U3As. The engagement of our Development and Support Officer three years ago to drive our Growth Programme included this Regional Strategy in addition to establishment of new U3As. Progress of these and our other initiatives is regularly reported to Local and State Government Department personnel and fellow senior organisations to ensure that we are able to maintain our leverage within the senior community.

The recent nomination of Hume U3A stalwart Pat Townsend as COTA's Senior Achiever Award Winner for 2011 and short listed contender for The Senior Victorian of the Year 2011 was an honour bestowed for her long and outstanding personal contribution and by association some recognition of U3As work within the Senior Community.

Lindsay Glen
Delegate Victoria

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

At the October AGM of the South Australian Alliance we had to face up to the reality of what losing funding means. What services could be suspended and how would we pay for those we needed to maintain? Until now our membership fee has been purely nominal, just enough to fund a small kitty for discretionary spending unregulated by funding bodies.

Rather than wait and hope government funding would be reinstated and risk our coffers becoming totally depleted, delegates bit the bullet and moved to a per capita membership fee. For our smallest U3A this was actually a fractional decrease in the amount they had to pay but for some of our larger U3As it came as a steep increase. Steep increases are never welcome. While it seems most equitable to spread the load according to the number of members in a U3A, we certainly hope to lower the amount if we manage to find new sources of income.

While we will no longer reimburse our members for their public liability insurance or fund small projects, we will continue to pay the joint copyright fees for all members. As a considerable amount of money went on reimbursing delegates for travel expenses, we have cancelled our next quarterly meeting and may move to just two meetings a year.

To recover from all that belt-tightening, two weeks later State President Vale Pederson and I shouted ourselves a night out at the Positive Ageing Awards Dinner. This glittering event held in the ballroom of the Intercontinental Hotel on North Terrace obviously hadn't lost its funding. We had no entrants but we did want to cast an eye over the competition. It was interesting that the winners of one section, the Holdfast College for Seniors is a church outreach group which is a U3A in everything except name. When I asked them why they weren't a U3A they said "You three what?" Between churches, retirement homes, Neighbourhood Houses, etc., we have a lot of competition for membership and funding. All the more reason to raise our profile and let the general public know we exist and what services we offer. Perhaps we need a few U3A entrants in 2012.

Meanwhile Whyalla U3A has made its mark in academic circles. A paper entitled "A Mutually Beneficial Relationship: University of the Third Age and a regional university campus" by Bronwyn Ellis and Michael Leahy published in Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, Vol 4 (2011), 27 November, 2011. This paper describes the collaborative partnership that has developed over the past 15 years between a regional campus of the University of South Australia and the Whyalla U3A. No earth-shattering conclusions but it is good to know Whyalla U3A enjoys such a warm relationship with its host.

Best wishes to our colleagues in other States for a successful conclusion to the year's activities followed by lots of rest and relaxation . . . and over-indulgence and siestas and all the other decadence the holiday season offers.

Claire Eglinton, Secretary, Alliance of U3As in South Australia Inc.

QUEENSLAND NETWORK

Sea Change, Tree Change – a response to the new demographics

Many U3A on the sea board of Queensland are reporting quite large and consistent enrolment increases in the order of 10% per annum for the past two or three years. No doubt this is due in part to the increasing number of retirees (baby boomers?) moving to the coastal areas. A similar phenomenon is occurring in the larger provincial centres.

Whilst memberships continue to expand in coastal areas, new U3As are also being formed in Roma and Pittsworth on the Darling Downs. Toowoomba's efforts in staging the Seniors Expo in that city has been rewarded by significant increases in membership. As we go to press the Network Committee anxiously await the result of a submission for funding to continue the promotion of new U3A in Queensland.

These good news stories augur well for the local U3A but there are strains placed on coping with growth, notably in finding volunteers to assist with tutoring and with administration. A recent initiative to address this problem has come from the Department of Communities which will host a volunteering expo for public service employees. This may be a significant source of volunteers and potentially volunteering members, particularly from those who are approaching retirement. The initial event will be in Brisbane but if successful may be extended to larger provincial centres.

“Go for Gold-- Ageing with Vitality”

2012 U3A Network Qld State Conference

June 5th & 6th

Congratulations Gold Coast for winning the Commonwealth Games bid.

Congratulations Gold Coast as the chosen venue for the **2012 U3A NETWORK CONFERENCE!**

Delegates from Queensland and beyond will come together on the Gold Coast next June for a 2 day program of stimulating guest speakers, workshops, and entertainment hosted by all the Gold Coast U3As. By sharing our ideas and focusing our common goals we ensure a vibrant future.

Please note the date in your Diary as a must-be- there- appointment.

See you on the Gold Coast, June 5-6 in 2012.

Jim Hales

President

U3A Network – Queensland.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Progress continues on the setting up of a State network. The Steering Committee formed at the September State Conference has produced a draft statement of aims and a provisional time-line. This has been circulated to all groups and, at the time of writing, approximately 50% of groups have indicated support. It is hoped that a provisional Council can be established next year with incorporation being achieved by 2013.

The Perth group, U3A (UWA), has nine regions which meet and run courses as independent groups. There are also centrally run courses in the city as well as a number of other events through the year. All together there are meetings and courses on somewhere in Perth every weekday and often on weekends as well. There was a hiccup when the State Art Gallery informed us that, due to “efficiency cutbacks”, there was no longer anyone at the Gallery to coordinate the long standing U3A Art Appreciation Course. Fortunately Perth Central TAFE came to the rescue and the course will continue with their assistance in 2012.

Two initiatives being planned at the moment are a U3A Choir and a U3A Film making group. The Choir looks particularly promising with assistance coming from University of WA Professor, Jane Davidson.

Peter Flanigan, Alliance Delegate

U3A Online

The major activity within U3A Online over the last three months has been work on the new Web site which is expected to ‘go live’ in early December.

This has been a very big project and many hours of work have gone into it but the result will be a more modern, clean looking user friendly site for the members. The next stage will be the addition of a Members’ Lounge where the members will be able to engage in social type activities, short courses and other member driven initiatives. The Lounge will be driven by the members --- bottom up NOT top down.

Dianne Delchau --- President U3A Online

FROM THE EDITOR

*Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. I appreciate that people who are involved in State Networks are very busy people.
Sorry – no photographs this time.*

The next issue will be in March 2012.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter Flanigan