



2023 State Conference Report

The U3A State Conference for 2023 was held in Deniliquin on the 18th and 19th of April. There were 42 attendees from 14 different U3As along with a number of speakers, three of whom were from Victorian U3As.

Proceedings opened with an Acknowledgement of Country by Karen Mobourne and a Welcome to Deniliquin from Mayor Peta Betts.

Denis Simond (President) and Greg Brown (RR U3A Leeton) welcomed visitors and interstate presenters. Denis covered details of all the NSW U3A groups, some of only 35 or so members to the larger groups with over 1000 members. Overall NSW and ACT have nearly 30,000 members. Greg emphasized the importance of using the Network Website as a resource for Member U3As.

The AGM for U3A Network NSW will be a Zoom meeting on 8th June 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Local historian, Lindsay Renwick, gave a very comprehensive and entertaining account of the **History of Deniliquin**, this was accompanied by pictures and many interesting anecdotes.

Later in the afternoon speakers from attending U3As spoke to the topic of **“What has worked for our U3A and what hasn’t!”** The following groups told of their activities:

Northern Rivers – enjoy social groups, walking, food outings etc.

Newcastle – have 120 presenters including 40 courses. They enjoy walking, tai chi, ukelele groups.

Batemans Bay – 500 members and 40 courses with many retirees from Canberra. Despite bushfires they have kept going and supported community in many ways. They need volunteers, they like the website but it does not suit older members.

Canberra – 4000 members and 300 courses with many varied subjects. They have a Tuesday Forum which involves many different topics. Denis commented that Canberra University welcomes U3A students.

Deniliquin – Began in 2011 with 37 members and now have 140. Are running 11 classes including walking, singing, history, canasta, Auslan, writing, discussion group, trips around the district, lunches and coffee mornings. This U3A combines to run Seniors Week activities, Council programs and have successfully gained a number of grants.

Northern Illawarra – have 350 members and run 17 courses as well as a U3A choir. Also have film group, debating group with local high school students and had a successful poetry recital. They take part in National Reconciliation week.

Shoalhaven – 500 members and have the motto 'Learning not Lonely' from UK. During Covid they ran on-line courses, like Music from the 50's and 60s. They run 53 courses including 15 minute walks and garden trips, History, 9 Language courses, Art, a Death Cafe and a Coffee Club.

Griffith – Varied courses with a guest speaker on Mondays, current affairs, Hard Quiz and Poetry. One difficulty is the number of competing interest groups throughout the city.

Wagga Wagga – 500 members and 60 different sessions with groups on Saturday and Sunday. Lots of exercise groups followed by movies and lunch. They have mostly on-line members and now have their own room in a community Centre built by the council but do pay rent.

Leeton – meet once a week for Morning Tea and a Guest Speaker. They do Balance and Bones and had a 6-week course on Ageing. Their venue is the CWA rooms and all funds go back to the community.

Milton/Ulladulla - Laurene Mulcahy spoke about her podcasts, which she is developing for Network Members use. She has done 5 and is keen to promote them for use by Member U3As to attract new members

Conference Dinner. This was beautifully catered for by the RSL with Deniliquin's "Sing Australia" choir providing the after-dinner entertainment.

Wednesday 19th April

Early birds took advantage of a guided walk along the Edward River before the Conference reconvened.

The day started with two workshops. Delegates selected from a choice of two for each workshop. Workshops were as follows:

Scam awareness – presented by S/C Tania Thompson. Statistics relating to scams are quite frightening. Identity crime is a major problem along with a massive rise in cybercrime. U3A member are in the vulnerable age group. Devices we may have should be secure and continually backed up. \$2.1 billion is lost annually due to scams.

Police are available for any situation involving scamming – there is a Police assistance line for reporting. You are given an Event number in the case of losing personal details, cards etc, - to enable you to continue 'living' until these items are replaced. Should scammers come to your home it is wise to ask as many questions as possible, ask for their ID, a phone number for their supervisor. Get as much information as possible! Remember...

BE ALERT – AND – BE AWARE!

Covid related Mental Health – presented by Lourene Liebenberg

During Covid times and still today Lourene and her team work on community health issues and spread information through radio, local paper, social media, Facebook and a 'Let's Keep Deni Safe' page and respond to many questions each day. The aim was to draw and engage the community, make accurate information available and highlight the message 'Be kind, Stay Safe' also 'Focus on what you have control over.' Campaigns were devised to help pull the community together such as having blue ribbons and blue all over town to show our appreciation for Health workers.

Border closures were a big issue here in Deniliquin. Lourene connected with the heads of organisations and attended meetings to monitor and impart accurate information. The first Covid case in Deniliquin was on 30th September, 2021.

Post Covid new mental health initiatives are being run through community activities. 5 main things to focus on: Connect; Be Active; Keep Learning; Be Aware; Help Others. There is an increased focus on self-care and the community being pro-active.

Long Covid – physical things make you exhausted, lethargic, have foggy brain, memory loss and lose the ability to reason. What to do? Get a Mental Health Care Plan through your GP or Counsellor; medication for depression could well help in the short term; Cognitive Behaviour Therapy - remember it is not you - that is useless but that you have Long Covid.

Gentle Exercise (Balance and Bones) – Barb Anderson and Greg Brown.

This session highlighted the need for us to keep our bodies 'moving'. Greg spoke about the Balance and Bones DVD which is available for purchase to use as an aid to run an exercise class. Barb, an accredited Exercise Physiologist, spoke on the ways and reasons for us to continue to remain active and healthy.

Barb demonstrated a brief activity, using a chair as a balance aid she led some very simple and gentle exercise moves. She stressed the importance of these activities and noted that working in a group takes care of the social aspect as well and many groups finish their classes with a 'cuppa'.

Sport for Older Persons - Glen Wall. Chair U3AAA: Overseas Developments and Australian Opportunities.

Glenn told how a number of sports have been modified such as walking football and pickle ball, to suit the needs of older persons and pointed out the advantages of these types of activities to aid well-being for retirees.

How can Technology be used and managed by all U3As in the future? - Technology/Data Management and Course Enrolments – Julian Attwell and Kevin Whelan

Julian and Kevin explained that U3As can benefit from technology by bringing a more standardized approach. Some programs and Apps were highlighted as being easily adaptable to running individual groups and a variety of courses. Examples of systems available are: Cards, Excel, MYOB, FileMaker, Xero, etc. Some of the custom-built systems are Google Docs, Word Press plugins, MYU3A, UMAS, and Smartphones.

Positive Ageing-Lifelong Learning and Brain Maintenance – Ainslie Lamb

The importance of maintaining our brain was emphasised and some fun brain exercises and activities were presented. Ainslie used a power point to share these. She suggested that we could introduce creative activities programs to U3A such as making things from newspaper and cardboard, many other ideas are available online.

U3A is a Good News Story – Denis Simond

Denis presented an overview of how U3A facilitates its lifelong learning programs through connections between communities, seniors and generations. U3A combats loneliness and isolation. It creates health benefits and social benefits through volunteering and increases self-esteem and skills. Some of the current challenges U3As are facing are: Accommodation, Rental costs, Sourcing tutors and volunteers. Volunteers make it happen.

A Look at our Census 2023 Data – Phil Warren

In 2021 there were 81 NSW U3A groups In 2022 there were 78 In 2023 there are 77 – 60 in NSW/ACT and 17 others

There are 250 groups nationally

Alternate Fee Numbers: Phil presented his model for charges from members and overheads involved. A comprehensive presentation of his model of a new Fees Structure is to be presented at AGM later in 2023.

U3A Australia Ltd – Glen Wall Chair of U3AAA (U3A Association Australia)

U3AAA policy is to support all U3As in Australia (250) working towards having U3A groups in every state in Australia and these groups to be run by retired or semi-retired members, with low-cost programs and accessible venues.

Glen introduced Jessica Cotter who is an executive of NBN who are working closely with U3As in assisting with activities in organisations using smart TVs etc They are working with all the credible agencies.

Future of our Network – Ron Browne.

U3A began in NSW in 1987. By 2008 there was an alliance of the states. In 2013 they received a grant of \$130,000 from the Minister for Ageing to support new groups. He shared a website address for more information.

liveaughlearnwithu3answ – all lower case Where to From Here?

Shared technologies have enormous benefits as can minimize costs and share resources and experiences and are a consistent process.

Are We There?

Transition has commenced, websites are responsive, funds needed to facilitate widespread implementation.

What is Holding Us Back?

Desire to be unique. Problem of not wanting to or accepting change in a world of rapid change.

Eastlakes at Belmont, Lake Macquarie Offer to Host the 2024 Conference.

Lorraine McKenzie, President Eastlakes U3A gave a Zoom presentation showing their lovely area and venues for the Conference in 2024. She issued an invitation for U3As to attend.

We are looking forward to meeting up again in early April 2024.

The Conference was closed by the President of U3A Deniliquin, who thanked attendees for their positive participation and contributions. Denis Simond also expressed the Network's gratitude for the excellent hosting of the Conference by the Deniliquin U3A.