

2020 - 2021 Web Hosting Service Upgrade

Attention: All U3A Associations currently using the u3anet.org.au Server.

18 August 2020

REVAMPING OUR WEBSITE HOSTING ARRANGEMENT

Recent communications have addressed some of the technical aspects of the changes planned while this document addresses the ongoing 'business' arrangements of the Network providing website hosting to you the U3A Associations.

We now seek your U3As commitment to the project.

To assist U3A Committees in making an assessment of the project we have divided this commentary into: -

Section A: Overview and Commentary, and

Section B: The Technical (perhaps for 'tech savvy' for Committee Members with that knowledge and certainly your Web Admin person).

SECTION A - Overview and Commentary

Website Upgrade

Primarily the purpose of the Website upgrade is to: -

- Provide greater security for the Network website and the hosted websites.
- Freshen up all sites and address potential problems that have developed over more than 10 years for the Network and its users.
- Decrease the vulnerability of the entire system to all users that has arisen in the past due to some poor 'housekeeping practices' by individual U3As and Web Admin persons.

The Networks Hosting

Future hosting by the Network will require an undertaking by the individual hosted U3A to actively undertake housekeeping of their hosted site. This is an onerous task requiring skill. That skill base may be a significant barrier in providing succession to a new Web Admin person. Our intention is to make it easier for you and your organisation. The **WordPress Multisite** option will, by default, have greater technical oversight. Note that all existing URLs will be ongoing.

Advantages to be derived by U3A hosted website users by offering a move from the current **WordPress Standard** or simply a **Standard** site to **WordPress Multisite**, both options are explained below in Section B, while WordPress Multisite will allow:

- Reduction in the amount of individual website maintenance
- The skills required by a Web Admin person will be content focused
- Less onerous transition of Web Admin person roles when succession is needed
- Much of the role in maintenance will transfer to the Multisite Supervisor, engaged by Network.

Whereas strong preference is toward the hosting of **WordPress Multisite** the Network will continue to provide **WordPress Standard**. The upgrade from **WordPress Multisite** to **WordPress Standard** when viewed will be seamless.

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Service Cost

The Network has engaged a consultant to bring this project to fruition. The significant cost of the consultancy will be met by Network. The engagement of volunteers to assist with the project has resulted in a reduction of the original cost estimates.

It is not possible to establish a finite costing until we can ascertain what Networks disbursement costs will be. The cost will be greater than currently levied reflecting the direct cost to Network. The future cost will be the same for both **WordPress Multisite** and **WordPress Standard** users. We will advise this cost shortly after we establish from you your preference, i.e. we cannot do it until you answer.

The Network believes that the Multisite option may be attractive to those Associations that are currently not using a web-service or are using other providers.

Though non-monetary, U3As taking up the option of WordPress Multisite will benefit from the reduction in time and expertise required to maintain their Website and benefit from the professional supervision provided by Network.

U3As Election U3a Committees are asked to complete the following election.

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U3A Registered Name:	
Date Prepared:	
Web Hosting Option (select one):	<input type="checkbox"/> WordPress Standard or <input type="checkbox"/> WordPress Multisite
Committee Contact Person:	
Website Contact Person:	
Commitment: <div style="text-align: right;"> Signed: Position: </div>	On behalf of the above U3A Association U3A I submit our chosen option. <div style="text-align: right;"> / / 2020 </div>

N.B. In Section B below reference is made to additional costs that may be levied against a U3A **WordPress Standard** user where Network needs to meet additional Web Admin person cost arising from errors made by a U3A's Web Admin person.

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SECTION B - The Technical

Network Provision of Web Hosting Services

The Network's strategy is based upon the service being inherently stronger with greater certainty of reliability. By stronger, the Network means better ongoing professional supervision and, for most U3As the use of **WordPress Multisite**, a setup where a group of sites can have automated supervisory systems with fairly minimal added overhead costs. The actual site content for both **Multisite** and **Standard** configurations will remain very much the responsibility of the individual U3A Association.

WordPress Multisite or WordPress Standard

Each U3A Association wishing to continue to use the u3anet.org.au Server must select one OR other of the Standard or Multisite configurations. (See the table below)

Issue / Attribute	WordPress Standard	WordPress Multisite	Notes
Maintain Structure and Content	Y	Y	Edit role the same
WordPress Core Address major version updates	Y	# A / S	# All Multisite share the one instance of core code
Themes - update as necessary	Y	A	Occasional
Plugins - update as necessary	Y	A	Regular - weekly
Security Alerts Monitor messaging take action	Y	A	Often based upon threats
Remove content that is no-longer displayed, say older than 2 years	Y	Y	Good housekeeping, manages space

Y - Yes, tasks to be addressed; A - Automated Process; S - Supervised by Multisite - Supervisor

For the member **U3A Associations** that choose to continue using their existing **Standard** configuration the Network will be specifying obligations that will be expected of the U3A Association in ensuring that their site is being maintained in a satisfactory manner.

The obligations will address maintaining the currency of the code that ensures that the integrity of the site is ongoing - this means 'system' messages must be actively managed and updates must be installed in-line with good practice, that is, in a timely manner. The **Standard** configuration has a much greater risk of failure due to an error made by the Web Admin person. The Network in such a situation will incur extra contractor costs and the Network may, in turn, pass those costs onto the Member Association as the source of the failure.

Further, since 2018, the Network has installed an advanced security plugin (Wordfence) on websites, and it is believed that some are ignoring the messaging from that plugin and others have disabled the plugin as 'a nuisance'. All aspects of site maintenance are important as there is risk of mischievous code disabling one site or, more seriously, many or all of our websites.

Multisite will reduce all of the above 'management' obligations for a site Web Admin person to virtually zero as the key site maintenance aspects are addressed automatically or, when necessary, by the Multisite Supervisor.