

NATURALISTE UNIVERSITY of the THIRD AGE Inc (Naturaliste U3A)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT October 26th 2018

A little bit of history: In 1973, the first University of the Third Age (U3A), was founded in Toulouse, France. In time it spread across the Channel and in 1982, in Cambridge, the first British U3A formed and evolved in a different way from the French model. This 'Cambridge Model' would become one in which members would decide what to study and teach, no qualifications would be required or rewarded. The objective was the enrichment of later life, most studying would take the form of interactive seminars and members would be encouraged to participate in social and sporting activities as well as academic ones. In Australia, all U3A's across the country have adopted this model and it is readily identified in Naturaliste U3A.

This historic timeline formed the basis of a talk given by the NSW U3A Network President at the recent WA U3A Network Conference and AGM. It puts U3A 'up front' in Busselton where the first U3A group was formed here some 31 years ago. After a number of years it went into recession, being revived by an enthusiastic group in 2009 as Naturaliste U3A, going into full swing in 2010. One of those early founders was Patti McSwain who recently passed away. She was delighted last year, when we celebrated the 30th 'Birthday' of the first group, to see how we had grown.

So, how have we grown and thrived over the past 8-9 years? Our membership, as at the end of June, reached 282. If we look at the total courses over two semesters we have offered over 50 in each of the last two years. Looking back at the early Cambridge guidelines we can see that we epitomise them in a range of activities that provide elements for lifelong learning, as well as healthy ageing.

We have thrived because of the contribution of our volunteer leaders who share their interests and skills. Participants have contributed by joining in discussions and various interactive activities that address academic, social and physical aspects of life. The Committee continues to hear positive feedback about the range of courses we have on offer and I have lost count of how many times members use the words 'laughter' and 'fun' when describing courses, as well as the comment 'I don't know what I would do without U3A'!

COMMITTEE:

At our 2017 AGM we had a considerable change in our Committee with four new members coming on board. During the year Rose Vella stepped down and her role as Secretary was picked up by Margaret Maloney and Dawn Atherton was co-opted into the vacancy.

Margaret Maloney is not standing for re-election and we thank her for her work, in particular her contribution towards the updating of our Handbook. Deirdre Chell has given her resignation due to ill-health but is hoping to become involved again when she is well. She gave valuable support to Lorraine with the database changeover.

The Committee has worked hard this year, with one of our tasks being the updating of our Handbook to ensure that we incorporate the New Model Rules that were accepted last year. In spite of the challenges related to change, we have developed a committed and adaptable team, working well together.

COURSES:

This year we have offered some 53 courses throughout the year. These were made up of ***Year-long courses** that run from March through to December (effectively 2 semesters). Some actually keep going during the Christmas break!

***Short courses** that run approximately six weeks per course, sometimes being repeated during the year.

***Workshops** have been a new offering this year, ranging from three, to four and a half hours in duration. Five were offered and participated in. These provide a great opportunity either for a taster that could evolve into a course, or an option for that time of the year when it is hard for the Grey Nomads among us to commit to longer courses.

Course Co-ordinator, Gwyn Cracknell and Systems Administrator Lorraine Watts have been able to effectively use our new UMAS database to more efficiently sort out groups and notify Leaders. A programme called Doc-o-Matic has been used to produce course booklets.

Course Leaders have been able to get class lists sooner so are able to confirm places with participants. Leaders have been provided with pertinent documents and will again have a mentoring session before the end of the year.

It is not too late to offer to do a course next year so don't hesitate to get more information from Gwyn on 9754 1703

TOPICAL TALKS

We have had three very interesting Topical Talks so far this year: 'Early Detection of Cancer', 'Are You Good to Go', 'Sail into Life', a Rotary initiative for sailing for those with a disability. In November, our last Topical Talk for the year will be 'Stripes in the Forest,' to be presented by Ian Gibb, about a tourist initiative in Nannup focusing of the famous Nannup Tiger!

Last year we initiated an invitation to make a gold coin donation at these Talks to give to a local charity, appropriate to the Talk when possible. Last year with our first such donation, we were to collect at both a Talk by the Busselton Citizen of the Year, Kerry Bayley, and our AGM, a 'healthy' donation to give to Cliff's Kitchen/St Mary's Christmas lunch. Donations so far this year have been to the Cancer Council WA, Busselton Palliative Care, the local Autism Support group and the last Topical Talk donation will be to the local Royal Flying Doctor Service. These donations, easy for us to give, have been much appreciated.

NEWSLETTERS

'The Crier', our newsletter, has been delivered to you close to the first week of each season, four per year. It is interesting to see photos of group participants and to read about the happenings of the previous three months. The goal of sending out newsletters is to keep all members up to date with such things as events, course content and enrolment information, and Committee news. We hope you find this information helpful and interesting. Feedback and contributions are welcome.

TECHNOLOGY

The move to using the UMAS database system has been implemented with relatively few glitches and by the end of this year each new process will have been encountered. It has been a big task and Lorraine Watts must be thanked for her commitment and work doing this. Also, an update to our website has been done.

Thanks must go to Deidre Chell and Don Wright for their assistance to Lorraine and also to members who have gone online to do their membership and enrolment. Extra time prior to Enrolment day to assist members who are postals, or new to computers, has been very beneficial.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT and NETWORKING

During the past year, opportunities for networking and sharing of information about our U3A group and the benefits of being involved with such an organisation, have been numerous.

*Apart from speaking to the Probus Club at the Busselton Senior Citizens Centre, attending two meetings in Dunsborough regarding the new Aged Care Facility, giving a talk to a group of people in Donnybrook about forming a U3A group, Lorraine Watts and I have had meetings with some Committee members from Margaret River, one of which, with Lorraine, was to discuss their interest in our UMAS Data base system. We also had an information stall at an Open Day at Nova Care Retirement Village.

* In June the Committee hosted a networking 'Talk Fest' (and talk we all did) at The People Place with representatives from nearby U3A groups. Participants came from Margaret River, Bunbury, Manjimup and Mandurah as well as a rep from the WA Network. At this gathering we discussed the ways each group operated differently but within the guidelines of the U3A ethos of lifelong learning. Like us, Margaret River runs a number of courses, other groups tend to focus more on regular meetings with guest speakers. Challenges that arise in the various locations were discussed, an example being the perseverance of the Manjimup group, who have such a small population to attract members from, compared with the bigger groups. I must say they were very positive in their feedback and enjoyment in meeting up with the other participants. It was the third time in the past 4 years that we have hosted a 'Talk Fest' gathering here.

* In October I attended a two-day U3A Network WA Conference and AGM. I am our group's delegate on the Network (no, not on that Committee). Member, Barbara Taylor, was also able to attend. Members of U3A's across the state attended, as did some from the Eastern states, eg NSW and Victoria. It was a very interesting Conference with superb speakers. It also meant that we were able to catch up with different U3A group members.

* I am our representative on the Board of The People Place and am pleased that we can continue to have a great relationship with the Centre, where we make good use of their facilities and benefit from the Staff's assistance. In November we will promote our group at a new initiative between The City of Busselton and The People Place to greet newcomers to our city.

However, I must thank members for being perhaps our greatest community networkers in that word of mouth is one of the best ways to get our U3A group known about and benefited from; you are doing a great job!

In conclusion, I trust that the coming year will be a stimulating one for all members and that we continue to take advantage of the opportunity that we have to be involved in a wealth of experiences to make this 'third age' of our lives more enriched than we had imagined it would be!

Joan Parke, President, Naturaliste U3A