

New Members welcome 23.03.2018

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for coming, it is great to see so many of you here.

Together with the Committee of Management of our U3A Port Phillip I welcome you to this gathering; an opportunity to meet each other, introduce you to how U3APP works, and to some of the volunteers present.

U3APP respectfully acknowledges the Yalukut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung. We pay our respects to their Elders, both past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

U3As are under the umbrella of the Victorian U3A Network – 109 U3As in Victoria. Each U3A is run independently, and responsible for all its own business. Our membership comes from a broad background, from within the CoPP & other suburbs.

I am going to use this opportunity to give you some information about what happens in the background to make it all happen.

U3A is a not for profit organisation, run entirely by volunteers, we are mainly self-funded from membership fees (with a small level of State Government funding over prior years), and rely enormously on the input of our members (tutors and volunteers - there is not a single paid employee). We receive considerable support from the CoPP, being able to use the Mary Kehoe Centre, plus several other locations, for our courses and activities, and some funding for specific events. This enables us to keep our membership fees low and have a lovely centre which is well maintained.

We currently have 525 full members plus 12 Life members and more than 100 are volunteers, tutors & facilitators. We run over 60 courses, monthly outings, talks on Saturdays and Tuesday afternoons. Several tutors present more than one course / activity. We recorded approximately 2,500 hours freely given by our volunteers.

Committee Of Management

Our COM has 10 members and several ex-officio members for specific responsibilities. Each member has responsibility for portfolios, heading up operational areas and supporting the large number of activities and volunteers.

I would like to introduce the COM and ex-officio members present.

John Craven, Ian Shaw, Mark Denniston, Karen English, Kate Anderson, Geoff Levy, Richard Edwards, Lois Best, Claire Keech, Bev Fryer, Margo Anderson and Meredith Mancini.

We have a range of backgrounds with the only real pre-requisite being a desire to contribute to the community and an interest in ensuring the professionalism of everything we do.

Courses and activities:

Courses, special events, Saturday talks & activities is what U3APP is about. All of this is managed by the Course Coordination Team, consisting of Mark Denniston, Ann Gibson, Sunny Acreman, Geoff

Levy as well as Margaret Byron, our in-house specialist on all creative works of layout, presentation of Course guide and our other publications.

For some in-house events, we provide catering, organised by Di Gameson, who is also a Drawing tutor, together with a small group of helpers for setting and cleaning up.

The CCT finds tutors, manages the relationship with them, helps with the formats of courses they wish to present, plans and creates the timetable and calendar, books rooms with CoPP, assists tutors with all aspects of running their class ensuring the rooms are suitable and that necessary equipment is available. The CCT is proactive in planning for the next term to ensure we can continue to offer programmes and cater for the many different interests.

IT

We are fortunate to have wonderful IT systems, thanks to the superb vision and efforts of the IT volunteers – the main driver being Helen Vorrath.

Our IT system has been developed in-house, starting in 2015, using standard modules and at a minimum cost. It is run by a very small group of dedicated people. The IT team consists of Helen Vorrath, Karen English, Diane Boyle and Kate Richards, who maintain and improve our website.

From the Initial design to capture member contact information and events, it is now highly sophisticated, enabling online joining, payment of memberships, course enrolments, apologies and cancellations. It works well, in 2017 79.5% of members paid their membership on-line, this year it is 86.9%. This year we have for the first time all attendance records on computer tablets, easily managed by tutors and course monitors and making the task of collating information quicker and more accurate.

The e-Bulletin goes out regularly to members and free subscribers with details on courses, events and Links to important and interesting sites.

The Information Technology Enrolment Management (ITEM) team consists of Karen English, Meredith Mancini, Lyn Place, Jan Mulder and Hugh Sarjeant and is responsible for managing all enrolments and the waitlists.

The IT team have worked hard to create and improve the systems, train volunteers, produce detailed manuals of instructions written for day to day tasks and for the continuing management of the system. The system is a critical element of our long-term growth and management; it enables our membership and enrolment processes to cope, be more accurate and have less administrative workload as our numbers increase. It also enables us to increase the number of courses delivered in other locations.

Office:

Managed by Bev Fryer and Margo Anderson. They have been joint office coordinators for last 2 +y. Margo has now retired from this role and her place is taken by Meredith Mancini. We especially thank Margo for her powerful and productive contribution and thank both her and Bev for the wonderful teamwork between them.

We have fewer than 30 office volunteers and it is up to Desleigh Kent to make sure the office is staffed during open hours. Our volunteers have received extensive training and support to help them in using the computers and the other systems to understand how the organisation works. Volunteers are asked many different questions by members, tutors and visitors; about classes, rosters, computer matters, etc. They are mostly the first contact individuals have with U3APP.

Rights and obligations, we ask our members to understand and respect

Class enrolment is a serious matter. Our enrolment policy is outlined in our U3APP.org.au website. The start of the enrolment year is usually the first week in December and dates and times for enrolments are published in the e-Bulletin at that time. Many courses run for the full year and enrolments for these commence in early December for the following year. Enrolments for shorter courses occur as the course is set up. All new courses are advertised in the e-Bulletin and bookings are opened for them. Enrolment is best done online, except for the very small number of people who do not have access to a computer.

Once enrolled in a year-long course, this enrolment is valid for the full year and for shorter courses, the duration of the course. At the end of each year, in early December, all courses for the next year are open for enrolment for all paid up members, irrespective of whether they were in the class the previous year.

Class numbers are determined by tutors. If courses are full you will be asked whether you want to be on the Waitlist. Waitlist management is strictly administered in order of enrolling. There is no preferential treatment for anyone as the system is designed to be totally fair and give everyone a chance. If wanting to enroll in a course and you find it is full, please put your name on the Waitlist – it is the only way we know there is greater demand and that enables us to take action. If no one is putting their name on the Waitlist we do not know that the demand is greater than the offer of places.

To manage Waitlists the IT and CCT team work closely together to try and find solutions and get people into their chosen course. This involves exploring with the tutor whether the course attendance numbers can be increased, whether we can find an additional tutor, as well as immediately acting to put the first person on the waitlist into a course when room is created due to someone dropping out or resigning. Ideally, we would like to enable all members to get into the courses of their choice and we are working hard to achieve this, but also need our members help and understanding.

Members can help by

- Always apologize if you can't make a class (preferably online), 3 non-apologies and you could lose your place in a class
- 5 or more planned apologies (not including illness) in a row and you will be removed from the class and put at the top of the waitlist if the class is full.
- Our current two exercise / two language course restriction relies on people doing the right thing. We check manually after enrolment to identify anyone who hasn't abided by the policy and ask that they withdraw from one/some of their courses if they've enrolled in more than two. This can create disappointment and annoyance and is best avoided.
- One other point I want to make is that all transactions within our system are confirmed by you receiving an email acknowledgement. If you don't get one, firstly check in your Junk or

Spam folder. If not found then please check that you have completed all steps, and / or contact the office.

Name tags

It is a requirement that every member wears their name tag when attending classes. Please ensure that you have completed the details of your Emergency contact on the reverse side.

Parking

COM and our CoPP contacts are well aware that the parking around MKC is inadequate for our needs. We have been active in pursuing a change in the CoPP policies, so far without success. Because we only have a small number of parking permits we ask that those of you who can walk / use public transport do so. There are several streets in the area where parking durations are longer, and / or no restrictions apply. Bev Fryer has kindly put up a map of the area around MKC to help members find those.

We rely on our members to ensure that our frail members have access to the centre and reassure you that we are not giving up our efforts to change the system.

Finally, the future!

Throughout the U3A organisation, there is a motto - that every member is expected to contribute something. Not a lot, not all the time, but what you can, when you can. We understand that even though we're mostly retired there are lots of demands on our time. At the same time, you have heard me talking about a vibrant organisation which provides a considerable amount of physical, mental and social stimulation to members. This does not happen without the considerable input from our volunteers. To continue achieving this we need to continue to have a flow of individuals who volunteer their time and whatever skill they have.

Each of you has taken the first step - joining U3A. Well done. Please take the next step - get involved as a volunteer in some capacity; you can use your knowledge and experience to work with the team of your choice, in some capacity:- put a course together, teach others, facilitate a session in an area of interest, help in any of the many other roles.

Get others involved - tell your family, friends and neighbours about U3A and get them to come along. Tell us (U3APP) what you do and don't like, what can be improved, what ideas you can contribute. I ask you to consider this matter seriously as each of us has a unique skill that can be utilised. Along the way you will make new friends, learn new skills, increase your wellbeing, have some fun and laughter.

Very important - no one has to do anything on their own. There are documented procedures, training manuals, training opportunities, mentors, teams – whatever you volunteer for, there will be others helping and backing you up. It is easy, please tell the office, send us an email, talk to the COM & Office Managers.

We welcome you warmly, please enjoy the conviviality with your fellow members.