

Tuggerah Lakes U3A Inc
Presidents Report – 9 December 2009

I believe there are some 50 odd U3A chapters belonging to U3A Network NSW which is divided up into eight regions for administrative purposes. We, together with six other chapters, are grouped into the Central Region. Membership of these seven chapters varies from a high of about 700 (Central Coast and Eastlakes) to 53 (Cessnock).

On 24 October last, three of our members (Pam McGlenn, Tony Thomson and myself) attended a half-day meeting of representatives from all seven U3A's in the Central Region organised by our Regional Advisor, Rhonda Byrne. It was the first such meeting ever held in NSW. Its purpose was to provide an interchange of ideas and experiences. Subjects included Course Leaders, Insurance, meetings in private homes, Privacy Policies, changes to the Incorporations Act, low-cost software, and possible interchange of courses and Course Leaders between adjacent chapters. It is probable and certainly desirable that, in the future, we will see more interaction with adjacent U3A chapters. Publicity and finding new members was another common concern.

Our Membership Officer, Betty Siegman, says we are near the low end of the range with 141 members as of last month. This is 13 up on our membership of 128 at the end of last year. Modest as this increase appears, it does not tell the whole story because 23 members did not renew in 2009 so this modest increase only came about by gaining 36 new members (28%).

We continue to place emphasise on publicity in order to gain new members for a number of reason:

1. To at least make up for natural attrition;
2. An increased membership holds the promise of being able to mount more and, hence, more varied courses over the year;
3. To bring in new talent and ideas;
4. To bring in younger and more energetic members to replace older members, particularly those on the Management Committee.

Our energetic Publicity Officer, Tony Thomson, with some assistance from other members has probably mounted more publicity this year than achieved previously. This despite the difficulties with accessing and getting free timely mentions in local media that seem to have frequent changes in staff and policy. During the year:

1. 750 pamphlets have been distributed;
2. Tony and Rita Richards spoke to Toukley Probus, The Entrance Rotary and twice at Toukley Library;
3. Some 28 separate events were publicised in the *Agenda* Section of the local paper;
4. The outing to Norah Head Lighthouse and Rescue Station gained a separate mention in the local paper;
5. Three mentions were made on the website *Where I Live*;
6. Each term calendar and other information was made available on our own website;
7. We received some 40 enquiries to each of which we responded appropriately.

8. We manned an information desk at the Bateau Bay Sports Club on 16 November.

A few months ago, some of us attended the funeral of Elaine Callan. Elaine was an energetic and charismatic lady, a wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, gardener, follower of motorcar racing and ardent promoter of education both of children and adults. She was involved during her life in many organisations. One was Central Coast U3A and, in the late 1990's, she became one of the Foundation Members of our own Tuggerah Lakes U3A. She was our Member No 1, our first Secretary and took a prominent part in getting our chapter established. She touched, nurtured and enriched many lives.

During the year, a number of our members had significant health issues, often involving hospital stays and surgery. These included Henriette Vanechop, Ted McGlinn, Valda Lambert, Ann Davis, Judy Writer, Liisa Schneider, Aileen Moss, Marie Murray and Joyce Cinch. When our Welfare Officer, Joyce Clinch (and later, Kath Sewell) was aware of this, cards or, where appropriate, flowers were sent to each.

During the year, our Course Co-ordinator, Tommy Thomas, with assistance from his small sub-committee (comprising Margaret Goode, Pam McGlinn and Jayne Davis), succeeded in mounting an interesting mix of talks and our usual perennial courses. Margaret deputised for Tommy while he was overseas for three months.

There were 38 talks given through the year – 19 by guest speakers and 19 by our members with Rita Richards giving a marathon series of nine talks on *The Celts* attracting near record attendances. We had a mix of one-off talks on a variety of subjects as well as some on such themes as *Psychology, Neurology and Waterways*. Although attendances at such perennials as *French Conversation* and *Mah-jong* seem to be falling, this has been balanced somewhat by increases in the *Discussion Group* and *Creative Writing*.

Each Term saw a Social Day with the last one being used as a Book Launch for Pam McGlinn's third novel, *The Dream is Shattered*.

Rambles around "The Tumbi Wetlands" and the "Red Gum forest", arranged by Barbara Skurr, were popular. The latter, held in September, attracted a large attendance including a number of prospective members with a request for more rambles or walks to be featured in our calendar. As a result, we hope to run fortnightly walks next year; some will be gentle and local while others will be for the more energetic and not so local. The self drive trip to Norah Head Lighthouse and the Ocean Rescue Station was well attended but the 3-day trip to Canberra, arranged by Jocelyn Webster in October, although enjoyable, was only attended by six members.

Next year, and in subsequent years, it is probable that we will start to share a few selected courses and similar initiatives with other U3A chapters in our Region.

Although the present Management Committee ceases to exist at this AGM, the Course sub-committee has been busy setting up a Calendar of programs for the first two Terms of 2010.

For those who like singing, we also plan next year to run a series to be called, tentatively, *Singing for Fun*, probably at a location in Toukley.

Our Editor, Jayne Davis, has done an excellent job in producing four, well laid out, professional looking Newsletters using a piece of rather cantankerous, time consuming, desktop publishing software. A love-hate relationship according to Jayne. On top of this, she has folded and mailed out some 140 five-page Newsletters each term and produced the yearly schedule used for booking meeting rooms as well as the Term schedules used by the Course sub-committee. All this despite the distractions and worry of caring for her ailing sister. Thanks are also due to Joyce Clinch for her eagle-eyed proof-reading.

We continue to be most grateful to 'diggers@theentrance' for giving us a meeting room and facilities to run most of our meetings as well as somewhere to permanently store our equipment. Because this accommodation is free of charge and we can provide morning tea for a modest charge, we have been able over the last year or so to reduce the annual member subscription as well as the attendance fee at each meeting. Even so, we have managed to balance the books, as it were, with income this year exceeding expenditure by some \$200 compared to the surplus of about \$1800 last year. *Exceeded by other U3As.*

Whilst on the subject of "diggers", can I suggest that those Members who have not already done so, consider supporting the club by becoming members – the annual fee is a modest \$2.20.

This year, we have had more than the usual difficulty in finding members to nominate for the Management Committee. This has been:

- Partly because the inevitable ageing of our members together with the difficulty of finding new and, hopefully, younger and more energetic members has had the predicted result.
- Partly because several Committee Members have served their maximum three years in their respective positions and/or are not nominating again.

Partly, but not completely, for these reasons, we want to revisit Rule 9.3 of our Constitution and ask you to approve another change by excluding the application of "The Three Year" Rule to Committee Members so that it only applies to the four Executive Members. *- P, VP, S, T*

We have initiated another change by only specifically nominating members for each of the four Executive positions and then nominating other members as Committee Members of whom there must be as least two (per the Constitution). It will be then up to the Committee to appoint members (who may or may not be Committee Members) to carry out various tasks. This will bring us more in line with the spirit of the Constitution, more in line with similar organisations and, hopefully, make it easier to fill specific roles.

When we started operation eleven years ago, very few Members of the Management Committee owned or were conversant with computers. All U3A business, therefore, had to be conducted either face-to-face or by phone. Today, the position has reversed. Nearly all Committee Members own and use their computers and associated software to produce Minutes, reports, the Newsletter, website, etc as well as communicate often by email instead of by phone. While we are grateful to such members that they use their not inexpensive computer equipment for U3A business, it sometimes causes problems because of the different ages or versions of software. We are investigating the purchase of very low cost software that we can give to those members involved with U3A business in order to minimise such problems.

Speakers, both guests and members, who have given talks were sent letters of appreciation throughout the year.

We also would like to thank:

- Members, who have been Course Leaders, helped create PowerPoint presentations, operated audio-visual equipment, arranged the morning teas or otherwise helped during the year;
- Henriette Vanechop and Rita and John Richards for allowing us to use their homes for French Discussion and Movie Appreciation respectively;
- Charles Proctor for acting as our Public Officer;
- Jenny McLean for ensuring that we had an operator where required for the AV equipment and for maintaining our website; and finally
- "diggers@theentrance" for allowing us the free use of rooms at the club throughout the year and the storing of equipment etc.

When Barbara Skurr asked me ~~to me~~ to accept nomination for President three years ago, she tried to make it more attractive by saying the President has nothing much to do because the Management Committee do all the work anyway. While this was a slight exaggeration, it was nevertheless near the mark. I want to personally thank each of the Committee Members – Margaret Goode, Rita Richards, Cam Rhodes, Tommy Thomas, Pam McGlinn, Betty Seigman, Jayne Davis, Tony Thomson, Joyce Clinch and Kath Sewell – for making my task so easy. They have all spent an unbelievable amount of time looking after their various portfolios with such competence and enthusiasm and despite their family commitments and, in some instances, serious personal health problems. They all did what had to be done, did so in a timely fashion and, while not being reluctant to express a differing opinion at times, did so in a friendly, constructive and cooperative manner. They were just a great team.

I hope you will agree with me that this has been another reasonably successful year for us members of the Third Age and, in ending this report for 2009, and I come to the end of my three year term, I thank you again for the honour of having been your reluctant President.

Tom Marish

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