

President's Report tabled at U3A Myrtleford and District Inc Annual General meeting at Club Savoy, Myrtleford on 13 August 2021

Since our last AGM despite the many challenges in maintaining continuity of course offerings, there have been many achievements and several highlights throughout the year. To everyone's credit, and with the continued understanding and support across the membership, we managed very well, pulling back – even closing down when the Chief Health Officer told us to and resuming courses and making activities available as soon as it was safe to do so.

This tested and re-tested our patience and our natural urges to get on with things.

Amidst it all and although this year is not over and we are now conditioned to expect further disruptions, our U3A has had a good year and, in many respects, an outstanding year.

I'd like to share with you some of those highlights commencing with our book team being awarded the winner of the "Community Innovation" Award at the 2020 Victorian Multicultural Awards. This was via an online presentation, on 16 December. It was a very good Christmas present and a fitting recognition of the super efforts undertaken by this team, led by Jan Mock. Jan Mock (Secretary) wasted no time in ordering the award sticker to be placed on all books on hand at the time.

This year, we resumed activities in Term 1 cautiously, as restrictions progressively eased. This gave us time to upgrade and tailor the Tutor Handbook and concurrently develop a COVIDSafe plan in preparation for resumption of activities.

We also commenced work on an "Own Rules" constitution to replace the current "Model Rules" version so that the evolving operation of our U3A aligns with our rules. This is still work in progress.

You may remember that we commenced with outdoor activities such as Tai Chi and walking before resuming indoor courses under our COVIDSafe Plan which involved limited student numbers on courses, pre-cleaning, post-cleaning, etc.

By mid Feb 21, it was all go again as **you** embarked of the Seniors' Led Recovery of Myrtleford. Membership numbers rose, we introduced 11 new courses most of which were fully or over-subscribed and ideas from members, flowed.

In this period, we secured an Alpine Shire Community Grant for the installation of an Automated Electronic Defibrillator (AED). With the help of Alpine Health and Bendigo Bank, the unit is now installed and training by Alpine Health is planned in coming weeks.

By the end of Term 1, we had run 23 courses across 14 different venues. One of those courses was Knife Sharpening. When I presented this information at the annual U3A presidents' forum, they said: Knife Sharpening? What do you do up there in the hills?

As the year progressed into **Term 2** we had a couple of safety incidents. Those in attendance did marvellous work to make the patients comfortable and to get medical attention. These incidents were investigated and improvements to our procedures were quickly communicated and implemented, and I thank all those involved for their understanding and their leadership; for we now operate with a greater awareness of the risks that we can sometimes be exposed to and we are more prepared to deal with them.

In that term we saw high levels of participation and the bus trips to the silos and other outdoor activities certainly helped people break out of the COVID shackles, albeit temporarily.

By the middle of Term 2, there were many new faces in the groups. 44 new members had joined our U3A by then, and more have since. In fact, it's now a staggering total of 65 new members. Put into context, in 2018, we had 110 Ordinary Members, in 2019 there was 105, Last year, it was 114 and for 2021 so far, we have 178 Ordinary Members.

On top of that we have 10 Associate members and seven Honorary members. This means a growth of more than 60% in 2021 - year to date.

And, for the new members, it's been a challenge to arrange a get-together to give them a warm welcome. The Christmas in July lunch has passed. Perhaps at the 'Christmas in September' or perhaps the 'Christmas at Christmas' Function? – we can do them (you) justice.

On a more serious note, we are very pleased to welcome new members as we know they further enrich and strengthen our U3A in every sense.

In May 2021, we participated in the La Fiera Italian Festival. We held the official launch of **the Book** at club Savoy on the first day of the festival. A most successful event with 120 people attending which received good pre and post publicity for our U3A and for the very good work that it does.

We sold books at the launch, they were signed by the authors; and our stands at the La Fiera events were also successful mainly because of the people who staffed them were passionate about the book and getting this wonderful story out there.

The book *For a Better Life* keeps on giving. Jan Mock (Secretary) tells me that we have sold more than 1000 copies. She's probably selling some today.

In Term 3, the course coordination team prepared another exciting and varied program, with new courses like 'line dancing' and 'welding for beginners' on offer. I estimate that we are now up to **18 new courses for this year alone**. Another pleasing thing is that the variety and programming of courses available allows many members to enrol in a few courses at a time. **Some people just won't stay at home!**

Early in the year we sought ideas for projects that would benefit Members and the Community. We received several ideas and have established a selection panel to preside over submissions, seek further information on and to select one or more worthwhile projects. Proceeds from book sales has created a nest egg for this project and this panel met last month to advance the process. An update on progress will appear in the newsletter.

I referred to publicity earlier. Since last December, we have averaged more than one article per month in the local newspaper and at least once every three months on radio.

We have been very successful in that every article we prepare has been published.

The book award, its launch and publicity on announcing a community-based project has raised our U3A's profile immeasurably. We thank the media outlets/partners for this. They include:

- North East Media
- Ace Radio Network
- Alpine Community Radio
- ABC Goulburn Murray
- Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre – Myrtleford Matters

Of course, our Members' word-of-mouth has gone a long way.

We have purchased new equipment - commencing with a digital projector and a screen for use by Tutors, First Aid Kits to take to any activity and U3A banners for events.

We were shortlisted for the National Volunteer Grants Scheme and have submitted a proposal to purchase other equipment to the value of up to \$5000. We will know of that outcome in November this year.

Facilities-wise and venues - The Myrtleford Senior Citizens Centre, has received an audio-visual upgrade recently which will enhance the ability to conduct activities. There are some maintenance items that our landlord the Shire is attending to - as recently as this week. That venue is a valuable community asset, and we are grateful to call it our home base. New courses have seen us utilise a wide variety of other venues as well. This is testament to the work that the courses coordination team do, the excellent relationships that they have with our many partner organisations and how our members have either run or supported the courses offered in workshops and outdoor venues.

For Seniors week, the committee has commenced planning having already secured the key speaker and we have encouraged nominations for awards such as Senior of the Year Award.

Our finances are in a healthy state, and you'll hear the details from Judy Pitts (Treasurer) in a moment.

Thanks go to many people and organisations

Firstly, the **Tutors and activity leaders** – they are backbone of our core activities. You are members who have not only volunteered to impart knowledge and experience, but to plan and prepare well, so that everyone has an enjoyable experience. We thank you one and all.

Coffee Speakers. The range of subject matter expert speakers that we have had this year has been excellent. Our thanks go to them for their inciteful and interesting presentations.

To our **partner organisations** including Alpine Shire, Club Savoy, Myrtleford Times and several others -we thank you for your continued support.

The **Committee and the Committee's families** for allowing them to do what they do. If its not obvious to you at this point, your Committee has done another sterling job. Your Committee places the interests of you, the members first by:

- promoting age-friendly attitudes
- constantly seeking your ideas for courses and activities
- maintaining regular contact with the whole membership, keeping it informed about news, developments and new initiatives
- sensible and flexible course and speaker programming
- maintaining the membership data base and website
- diligently managing finances

So, if I may on your behalf, give a hearty thanks and appreciation to all committee members for their commitment and achievements in this past term and may those who form the new committee continue to do good things for our U3A.

I wish them well.

That ends my President's report which I move that it be accepted by this meeting.

Thank you.

John Twyford

President

U3A Myrtleford and District Inc.