



***STAY CONNECTED***  
**CENTRAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER**



***Volume 16 of Stay Connected***

Hi all

In this volume we've got a couple of topics that are a bit "downish". We are printing them simply because our members have "a need to know". BUT we've also got some inspiring stories to share – the magic couple from Harbourside North, a formal big big "thank you" to our wonderful committees/leaders and speakers who regrouped, reinvented and added a new way for U3A provides continuous learning.

Don't forget your feedback and any snippets. [vppr.sydneyu3@gmail.com](mailto:vppr.sydneyu3@gmail.com) ***Stay Connected*** and enjoy

Dianne Ekert  
VP Public Relations  
Sydney U3A Inc

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**DECLINING MEMBERSHIP**

Regrettably our membership has fallen from 5844 in December 2019 with a retention rate of 81%. For the ten months to end October total membership is at a low of 4974 with a retention rate of only 64%. This is disappointing and is directly correlated to COVID-19.

The monster virus has truly humbled Sydney U3A. Fortunately, and thankfully, many of our members are "hanging in there" with us. Your loyalty is most definitely appreciated. *Stay Connected*

In February, just prior to COVID-19, we worked diligently to develop a marketing plan to improve membership retention and for a new member recruitment drive. Many hours of work and ready to “hit the go button”. **THEN** the lockdown happened scuttling our plans.

At this stage, sadly we are unable to effectively implement the plan. Whilst we do have Zoom - thank goodness - for the most part as we simply do not have enough face-to-face courses, talks and events.

Regularly we receive correspondence/phone calls from frustrated members re their inability to get into a face-to-face for a variety of reasons. Most retirement villages don't yet accept outsiders, other venues are still unopened. All regions are having difficulties, but one region in particular is experiencing extreme difficulties in securing suitable face-to-face venues.

Additionally, NSW Health orders impose the 4-meter rule and social distancing thereby reducing the capacity of attendees many times without a reduction in rental rates. Regions are still enrolling new members, but not many - understandably.

### **To retain existing members and recruit new members we need to be able to offer something more than entering names on a waitlist.**

Be assured we are aware of the need for a membership drive which will, hopefully, happen early in 2021, when things surely will get back to something resembling normal, especially now that some restrictions are being lifted. We do, however, need to take care and do what is right by us.

President, Judy Harris, personally thanked members who generously donated, but it is important to again acknowledge those members who freely gave so that SydneyU3A could continue.

We now ask that members pay their membership fees as they fall due and that regions continue to stay connected with their regional members. We have been operating in Sydney for over 30 years and intend to keep going for many more years.

#### **MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT METHODS**

**On-line** [www.sydneyu3a.org](http://www.sydneyu3a.org) (credit/debit card/PayPal)

**Cheque** payable to Sydney U3A Inc mailed to Suite 10.2, 31 Market St Sydney 2000

**Bank Transfer** Sydney U3A - St George Bank - BSB 112879 Acct No 424522654

**Credit Card** (not AMEX or Diners) - Phone the office 9267 9056

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#### **SYDNEY U3A FAMILY**

Whilst I have always been passionate about education and Sydney U3A, the more connection I have with our loyal members, the stronger my belief in our values become - **Sharing, Growing, Socialising** and **Passion**.

Sydney U3A recognises and celebrates the diversity that exists in people of different backgrounds, educational status and life experiences. The outcome is an organisation that provides low cost continuing education to stimulate mind and body all in a relaxed environment that makes it easy to meet and enjoy like-minded people and to develop new friendships.

We actively promote humanistic values - a rich, cultural diversity of membership. It is one of our greatest strengths and central to the U3A ethos. Our members range in age from the mid-50s through to early 100s from all walks of life. It is one. AND we offer a myriad of courses - something for everybody.

In this edition two special members have contributed - Valda and John Ulm, aged 96 and 99 respectively. Valda and John were both journalists prior to retirement. Their story -

#### **FROM VALDA ULM HARBOURSIDE NORTH REGIONAL MEMBER**

Moving house and home is always traumatic. We did this in 2003, leaving our Clifton Gardens (Mosman) home after 40 years, as it was on a steep hillside site with too many steps for ageing legs. So, we moved to a ground floor apartment in Greenwich and started a new life.

One of the first things we discovered was Sydney U3A and its discussion groups on Monday and Thursday at the Lane Cove Living and Learning Centre. I joined first, going to the Monday group run by Barbara Meth. A short time later John got tired of me coming home with stories about all the topics we had discussed and decided to join himself. For the sake of a calm and happy marriage I insisted he go to the Thursday group. Ever since it has been one of the happiest times of our lives. We have both made new friends. And more importantly, it has kept our brains young and active and sharpened our discussion skills.

One of the things I love about U3A discussion group is that we can debate, argue and discuss just about any topic under the sun - and believe me, we sometimes choose some strange ones! But it is always done in a friendly manner. No one is allowed to talk over or interrupt another speaker, and everyone's view is listened to and respected. We have a break for morning tea, and to get to know our fellow group members. Age is no bar - one of our liveliest members was 100 years old. Sadly, no longer with us, but much missed for his views on just about everything.

Because of the current epidemic we have had to accept it is not feasible right now to carry on. But we are hopeful they will be back in full swing next year. AND we will be first on the doorstep when they do.

Written by Valda Ulm (age 96)



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## FACEBOOK

We are **desperate** to receive graphics for our Facebook page. For this promotional tool to work effectively we must refresh and renew. Please send photos directly to Laurie Wilson

[laurie.wilson@optusnet.com.au](mailto:laurie.wilson@optusnet.com.au) or to me [vppr.sydneyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:vppr.sydneyu3a@gmail.com)

Just ensure that everybody in the photo give permission. Thanks in advance.

**Visit our Facebook Page - like, share and follow**

**<https://www.facebook.com/sydneyu3a>**

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## OFFICE CLOSURE

Central Office will be closed from 21st December to 8th January inclusive.

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## MEMBERSHIP BADGES

It is a requirement that Sydney U3A members must wear membership badges when attending courses, talks and events. This applies even if all members know each other.

It is also a great idea to complete the reverse of the badge with next-of-kin etc so that, if there is an emergency, no time is lost in contacting the right people for you.

Regions/Leaders/Booking Secretaries please continue to assist us in this.

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## A VERY SPECIAL "THANKS"

Again, a very special thank you to region committees, coordinators, leaders and speakers who, when COVID-19 struck causing a lockdown, quickly re-grouped, albeit in a new guise, to ensure that Sydney U3A could continue to deliver. Much work, some angst, but overall boundless energy enthusiasm and dedication to enterprise

Zoom, email, Skype and even old-fashioned post were the new tools. Without these special members, Sydney U3A would have been in a much more precarious position.

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## GRANTS

As we were unable to get anywhere with a direct approach, contact was recently made to the appropriate NSW Government Minister through the City of Sydney's Independent Minister for financial assistance for Sydney USA. Advice received indicated that financial assistance would not be forthcoming, but a list of seven organisations offering grants was provided. When the list was researched, Sydney U3A was ineligible to apply for any! A variety of reasons including incorrect status, wrong area, wrong activities, core activities etc. Again, very disappointing, but, be assured that we will continue to seek and search for assistance.

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**SHARING**

**GROWING**

**SOCIALISING**

**PASSION**

## SYDNEY U3A CREDOS

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Feedback welcome to **vppr.sydneyu3a@gmail.com**