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Learn Laugh Live

Harbourside North

September 2023

Welcome to the U3A Harbourside North Bulletin and the fourth for 2023.

We look forward to your suggestions for topics and contributions for inclusion in this year's editions. paulacastileu3a@gmail.com

The Editors

Ursula Schappi and Paula Castile

What to do with all that 'stuff'?

The recently released Inter-Generation (IG) Report acknowledges that Australia has benefited from the large Baby Boomer generation. *'It provided lots of workers, who didn't make a huge call on the public purse and paid lots of tax...'* This is how Shane Wright summarised it in the SMH and thereby gave our generation a tick for our contribution.

Little is said in the IG Report about home ownership other than: *'Similarly, since the IG Report is future focused, there is little attention given to the cumulative effect of the ongoing "wealth transfer" to the next generation'* (Ref 1). From a government perspective education and employment opportunities are more important to wealth generation for young people than inheritance that we most likely receive later in life.



Rather than projecting too far into the future and worrying about 'inheritance', we should probably think about what we want to do with all the 'stuff' that we have accumulated around in our homes. Let us avoid the word 'downsizing' and instead look at how we can generate more space for those items we treasure and use. It means that we are likely to find items that we could ease out of our cupboards, wardrobes, garages, attics, boxrooms, or bookshelves. From dust collectors to something that has not even left its original box, to sentimental items we hang onto, we all have things that are taking up space around the home (Ref 2).



Making the decision to 'declutter' can be daunting. Where do you start? I was encouraged recently to 'look into it' when I was asked if I had an old cowbell that a restaurant owner would like to use in his new premises. I immediately said 'yes' because the bell had been in my cupboard for a long time. I did not dare to throw it out because it was a gift from my aunt. However, now I was given the opportunity to re-purpose the bell and so I could part with it in good conscience. Luckily giving away my beautiful cowbell has become the first step in my decluttering process. I promised myself that I would go through one drawer, or one shelf at a time - and in this way, hopefully, I'll generate some extra space in my home.





For all of us, troubled with giving away good clothes, hand-me-downs and op-shop bargains have become socially acceptable. We have all seen on TV the mountains of clothes being transported somewhere. They made us aware of how environmentally damaging our throw away habits have become. Quite apart from Vinnies and other charity organisations, 'pre-loved' stores with brand-named clothes and fashion jewellery are widespread. We may hear young people tell us proudly where they have picked up that second-hand handbag and how much they paid for it, things we simply may not have done in our youth.



At which stage should we tell our children/friends that we are creating space/getting rid of things such as the old pressure-cooker, the toolbox, art-books, LPs we can no longer play? Should we tell them about the bigger items that take up a lot of room such as the old pair of skis, or the piano that nobody plays?

Should we offer them to pick whatever they want? Should we set timelines to do so? It may be relevant to us because our family and friends may like some bulky item and never come and pick it up. They may not appreciate the urgency we feel, now that we have decided to declutter, to get rid of certain items that we have struggled with for so long.

More importantly, when do we tell family that we are thinking of moving, and wanting to

sell the family home? This has emotional implications because homes hold many precious memories for adult children and grandchildren. *'Navigating this conversation can be a difficult one, but the first step in any successful communication is to approach this topic honestly, with empathy and understanding'* (Ref 3).

'Care-to-move', a Brisbane outfit that offers support in transitioning to a new home, suggests that the Christmas gift-giving season is a prime opportunity to start thinking, talking and starting this downsizing journey (Ref 3). Telling our friends and family members that we would like gifts that you can either eat or drink and that in return you may gift them pre-loved books, photos and/or other memorabilia. This can generate a friendly discussion and alert our loved ones that we may like to off-load certain obligations and create more space around our life.

Are we ready to have that conversation? We cannot avoid it because the family home may be important to many. Our adult children may want to preserve it 'as is' because it stores their childhood memories. The family home may also have morphed into an important storage area for the bulky items they want to store but don't have space in their own homes.

What do we do with the heirlooms and keepsake such as jewellery, war or sporting medals that were passed on to us through family? Such items take up little space but may be enormously important to keep until sorted out with family members. It may not be easy but as family lawyers advise their clients, heirlooms and keepsakes may be small in size but big in value. They are prized for their sentimental and monetary value and are passed down among family members for generations. Some heirlooms may also involve tradition. For example, the first daughter to marry inherits her grandmother's wedding ring.



'Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?' is the title of Minnesota University's research project with informed practical strategies to protect family relationships when passing on personal possessions (Ref 4).

We all sit in the same boat - sooner or later we'll have to make difficult decisions over 'stuff' we have accumulated over time. Good luck and wishing you lots of energy!

References

- Ref 1: <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/p2023-435150.pdf>
- Ref 2: <https://www.lifestylecommunities.com.au/blog/guide-telling-kids-youre-downsizing>
- Ref 3: <https://caretomove.com.au/make-gift-giving-part-downsizing-journey-christmas/>
- Ref 4: <https://extension.umn.edu/late-life-decision-making/who-gets-grandmas-yellow-pie-plate>

Ursula and Paula



President's Message

September 2023

Dear members

On behalf of all our members who enjoy this Bulletin every two months, many thanks to Ursula Schappi and Paula Castile for their hard work in preparing such interesting articles for us to read. If you would like to contribute an article, please contact Ursula at ursulasch@bigpond.com

Speakers Thank You Lunch

Each year, as a small token of our appreciation for their hard work in preparing and presenting talks to us, we invite our speakers to an annual lunch. This year it was held at the Northbridge Golf Club in March. The event was thoroughly enjoyed. One of our newer speakers said to me afterwards, "I have been wondering where all the

interesting people might be found – now I know, they're in u3a!"



Second Semester 2023

The second semester is well under way. As soon as we begin one semester, we have to plan for the next one! Many of the venue coordinators have finished planning an interesting first semester for 2024 and details are with our Course Coordinator for consolidation in the Course Book. This is onerous and time-consuming. Thank you to Rosemarie Einstein who does such an outstanding job to meet the tight deadlines every semester.



SUCCESS

Annika Tufts, who successfully organises and runs our Thursday afternoon session in the Melody Room at the Mosman Art Gallery for the past twenty years, has agreed to step up and take over the Monday Sessions in the large hall at the Art Gallery. She is busy obtaining speakers for the first session of 2024.

Naturally, Annika does not wish to continue for the next 20 years! It would be marvellous if some of you could volunteer to assist her. This is a simple and great way to start contributing to our wonderful organisation, make new friends and ensure our continuing existence. It is fun and not challenging. Perhaps you would like to host the occasional session, help to welcome members and sign them in, or in serving morning tea.



But we need More.....

We still need additional volunteers at the Mosman Seniors Centre on a Wednesday morning. Meeting members at the door is an excellent way to meet new people – and I'm always there to help.

CALL OR EMAIL ME NOW:

Michael Suckling:

mwsing@tpg.com.au or 0423 835 134

Thanks to John Walsh, who provided the photographs of the Speakers' lunch.

