



SYDNEY u3a

learn laugh live

thePulse

NOVEMBER 2024 | ISSUE 7

e-Zine of Sydney u3a Greater West Region

Sydney u3a Greater West Committee

thanks our Leaders and Course Coordinators for their dedication in keeping our courses, events, and activities alive, and filled with laughter and learning.



IN THIS ISSUE

News

A Word from our President

R. Amos

ZOOM Sessions

Contributions from Our Members

Volunteering - It's Healthy

Monday Discussion

J. DeCoursey

Tuesday at Phive

And forward to DNA and Epigenetics

Let's Read

4th Monday Book Club

J. Buhagiar

That Creative Moment

Oxford Street near Victoria Street C. Weber

AS WE HEAD TOWARD OUR KRIS KRINGLE SEASON

What a year. Our Sydney u3a regions have been going through changes. Greater West region has been sourcing new courses and presenters for 2025, finalising the Semester 1 Greater West Coursebook and preparing for our February AGM.

This is our last newsletter for 2024. We thank our course leaders and Greater West members for continuing to contribute to our region. The lively presentations on many topics, energetic discussions, brain games, exercise activities and the shared moments over a glass of wine and luncheons have made our days and weeks fulfilling.

Go well into the New Year.

Linda
~ Editor thePulse

A Word from Robin

Sydney u3a GW President

As 2024 draws to a close, it's time to look back and thank all those people who work so hard for Sydney u3a Greater West, from course leaders, booking coordinators, speakers, and those who work so hard behind the scenes keeping it all together - our wonderful committee. It is a remarkable achievement that this organisation is successfully run entirely by **volunteers** so, ladies and gentlemen, **take a bow** and know you are **truly appreciated**.

Our AGM will be at 2.00 pm on Friday 28 February 2025 at The Phive. It will be a lively social occasion, with a special speaker and a lovely afternoon tea. Are you interested in volunteering for the committee? Let our Secretary know (see page 3)

We also have two new courses next year. In Semester 1, PERMACULTURE: SUSTAINING NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS will be held over 6 fortnights after the *Tuesdays at Phive* sessions. It's a great way to enjoy two classes on the same day. Grab some lunch with new friends after the first session and then enjoy the Permaculture course.

In Semester 2, a popular course, UNDERSTANDING AUSTRALIAN LAW, will be held at The Phive over 6 weeks.

I am also delighted that our first Wendy Wu holiday is being organised for next June. A new adventure for Sydney u3a members, our first trip will be travelling to Kuala Lumpur and Borneo. Another trip, in November 2025, is planned for Singapore to coincide with their annual Affordable Art Fair.

As this is our final *thePulse* for the year, I would like to thank all of you for supporting our region and I extend seasons greetings to each of you. ~ Robin

Tuesday at Phive 10-12noon. November Presenter Punci Dassanyake

November 12 **DNA** – How did it build you and me?

November 26 **Epigenetics** Describing mechanisms by which lifestyles of our parents and grandparents could influence our health and well-being.

ZOOM GW November

Our last Zoom sessions for 2024. **Enormous thanks** to the Course Leaders for the creative vibe they give to these online courses. Note that Mandarin Classes are on Zoom as well. Interested for 2025? Contact Course Leader Stan on stanyan100@hotmail.com

Our Words 9:30-11:30am Contact Leader Ann annorel@hotmail.com

November 4, 18

Music We Grew Up With 10-12noon Contact Leader Howard howferr@gmail.com

November 14 Leonard Cohen

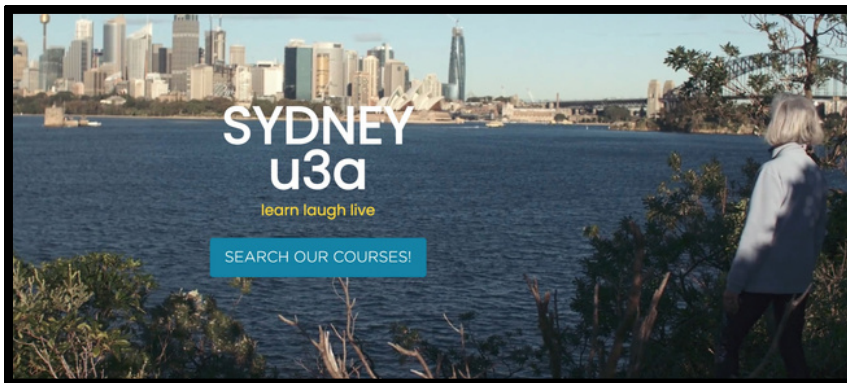
November 28 Classical

December 12 Christmas Delights

History and Travel 2-4pm Contact Leader Karen karenpaterson@optusnet.com.au

November 26 New Zealand

Good News



The Sydney u3a website team met recently. This meeting was all about our upcoming new website. It continues to be a work in progress, as we look, discuss and trial new things.

Pam Furney, Sydney u3a Website Manager, demonstrated to the regional

website coordinators the nuances of the new website. The team was very excited about the new look and feel of the site and were content with the ease of navigation and booking courses. Soon our new website will be launched. We are convinced you, our members, will be very happy.



VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a powerful expression of community spirit and generosity, providing immense benefits to both the volunteers and those we help. By donating your time and skills, you not only **enrich the lives of others** but also experience **personal growth**, and **develop new skills**. Not bad for retirees.

Sydney u3a's network offers you a chance to **engage in purposeful activities**, whether it's **sharing your knowledge**, **assisting in events**, or **supporting administrative tasks**.

Being a volunteer can lead to **reduced stress levels**, a **deeper connection with others** and a **heightened sense of purpose**.

The **AGM for Sydney u3a Greater West** is on **February 28 2025**. Important positions are vacant such as Secretary, Membership Secretary, Vice-President, and Public Relations however, **all** committee roles are considered vacant. We are also open to non-committee people volunteering to assist various committee members (a non-committee role).

Contact our current Secretary ANN on annorel@hotmail.com for more information and a nomination form.

Volunteering improves self-esteem and self-confidence thus leads to graceful aging.

Cecille Padlan
Ballroom Dancing

I find that in preparing my history presentations, I am also educating myself.

Colin Smith
Friday History at The Phive

It's an opportunity to meet people and work in a supportive team environment. I have learned new skills, increasing my confidence in continuing to learn.

Ann Orel
Our Words and GW Secretary

Sharing the role - someone did it before me and someone will do it after me! It provides fulfilment, company, new friends, new ideas, places to go and routine for the week.

Judy McShane
Monthly Monday Book Club

Retirement released me from the tyranny of achieving performance targets - it gave me a chance to "stop and smell the roses".

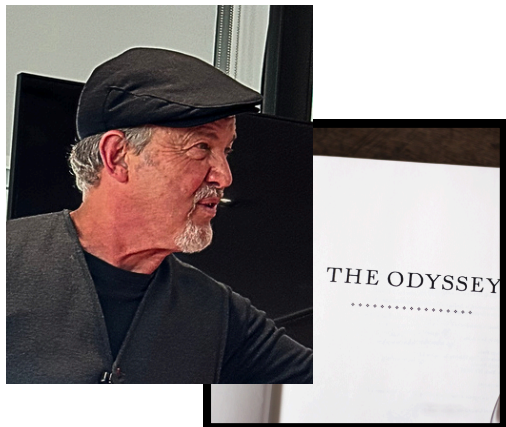
I am loving my u3aGW volunteering role.

Peter Anderson
Magic Moments In Classical Music

It's great to be doing something I enjoy while meeting up with a range of different people, enjoying conversations whilst walking in the fresh air, through different scenery/locations and at the almost obligatory coffee stops. It's like your inner goddess jumping up and down with excitement.

Liz Ryan
We Walk

Tuesday at Phive



We are so fortunate to have listened to so many wonderful presenters over this year. We shared so many fabulous moments learning (and on many occasions finding ourselves laughing away). Topics included India's amazing background thanks to Himanshu Jhala, Trevor McAlister's, at times, very amusing stories on *Exploring Hidden Sydney*, Jonathan Drew's presentation on *History and Mythology with Storytelling* and his energetic story on Odysseus.

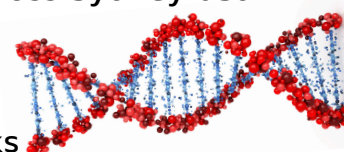


One session that had people laughing then gasping was the presentation by Graham Spindler **Secrets behind the Songs in SHOW BIZ** - what was revealed towards the end had many of us gobsmacked.



And in November, our last two **Tuesday at Phive** sessions for 2024 will focus on US - you and me: well our genes. Sessions on **DNA** and **Epigenetics** with .Punchi (Das) Dassanyake will be eye-openers. He has spoken on this topic across Sydney u3a regions and the response has been fantastic. So we are NEXT!

What will be interesting is the last session on Epigenetics - the recently established discipline - an emerging science - that looks deeply at how environmental influences - children's experiences - affect the expression of their genes. We grew up thinking our genes were set in stone - uh uh! Epigenetics has disproved this.



Remember the saying 'nature vs nurture'. This emerging science demonstrates that nature and nurture work together.



November 12

DNA How did it build you and me?

November 26

Epigenetics Describing mechanisms by which lifestyles of our parents and grandparents could influence our health and well-being.



Don't forget to book into Tuesday at Phive with Course Coordinator Ann on anntoddu3a@gmail.com

Monday Discussion Group at Northmead Bowling Club (NBC)

Our fortnightly Monday afternoon Discussion Group continues to be engrossing. One of the topics in our October session involved social media and children: how often, how long, and the important issue - what! As grandparents, do we have any 'control'? John DeCourcy suggests we read Peter Etchell's *Unlocked: The Real Science of Screen Time*, "It is good science and really good stories".



During our discussion, John brought up the following dot points:

Screen Time

1. Digital Screens (DS) are addictive, particularly for very young children (<4)
2. DS promote brain passivity crowding out the normal/proper development of children's brains.
3. Even in adolescents and adults, addictive behaviours are apparent – Anyone doom-scrolling?

Social Media

1. Social media curates a person's feed to provide more of what engages them.
2. Engagement is measured by dwell-time and user selection/taps
3. Humans are more sensitive to negative news than positive (this is evolutionary – negative represents potential threat).
4. Adolescents are navigating their 'identity crisis' (Erikson) sorting out how they relate to others.
5. The biases of social media distort this development.

What can we do?

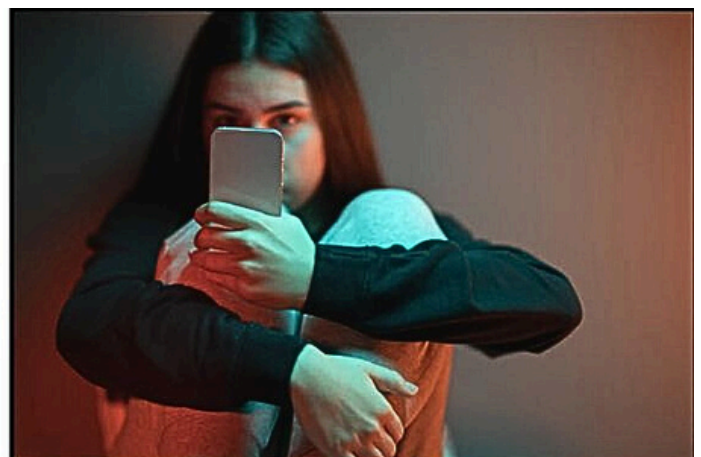
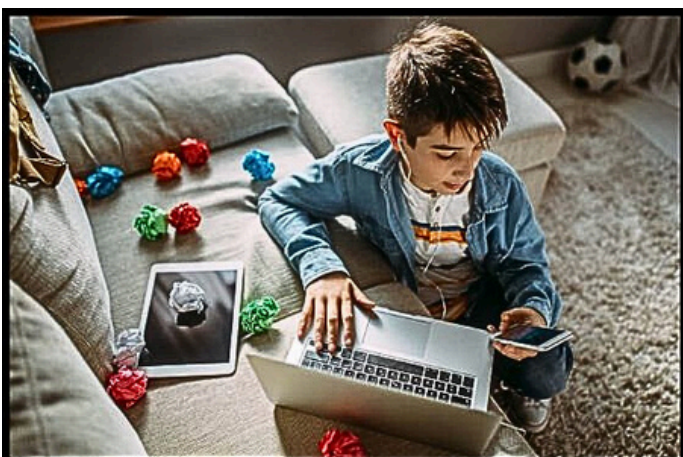
Firstly, many of us are grandparents. We know that the amount of digital time per day is a top priority - less is more.

Conversations with our children about our grandchildren's use of digital media may be difficult. Understandable - we are not the parents. However, sharing 'news' and research on the prolonged use of being on social media and its effects on the growth of a child's brain (and more) might be worthwhile. Currently, it is suggested that the maximum time recommended for kids is between 30 minutes and 2 hours per day. MAX!

During the discussion, we agreed most of our children were raised in a '*nature is nurture*' mentality. Do we see our grandchildren spending most of their time in nature playing with friends? Are our grandchildren having a fun, adventurous and healthy, both socially and mentally, childhood? Things to think about as social media becomes more commonplace.



or this...



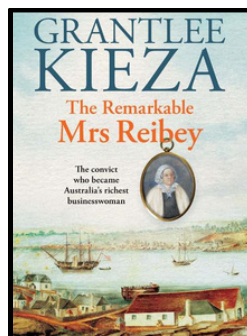
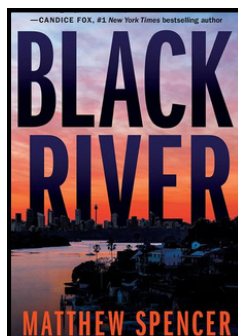
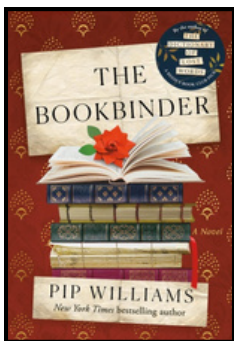
Let's Read

Sydney u3a Greater West Book of the Month Club

~ Judy Buhagiar

An enthusiastic group of Sydney u3a Greater West book lovers relax in a sunny room at The Hive enjoying Morning Tea. It's the fourth Monday of the month. Led by our leader, Judy McShane, the group of keen readers (about 12-15) discuss their impressions of that month's book - sometimes fiction, sometimes non-fiction.

And what a diversity of genres we have enjoyed this year! The discussion - lively! Here are a few of the books we have read and discussed this year. Interested in joining this lively book club? Contact leader Judy on judymcs@hotmail.com



The Bookbinder of Jericho by Pip Williams. An historical fiction based in Jericho, England, during and after WW1. A story of two sisters and temporary job opportunities for women while men were away fighting.

Black River by Matthew Spencer.

A crime fiction based in a fictional boys' school in the Parramatta area, Matthew's first book of his series Rose Riley won him the Danger Award in 2023. His second book will be launched in July 2025.

The Remarkable Mrs Reiby by Grantlee Kieza.

A biography of Mary Reiby who arrived in colonial Australia as a prisoner, but became a wealthy, successful business woman. She is commemorated on our \$20 note.

Under Her Skin by Sue Williams.

The amazing life and work of Fiona Wood, the Perth-based doctor who is known for her work with burns victims (especially the Bali bombing victims) and the use of spray-on skin derived from the patient's skin cells. And all while raising 6 children!

Peach Blossom Spring by Melissa Fu.

A terrific historical fiction involves a mother and child escaping the Japanese invasion in China in the 1930s but... civil war looms and they prepare themselves to flee to Taiwan.

That Creative Moment

OurWords continues to challenge its members. A recent challenge was **NOT EASY**. It involved creating a piece about one character at a bus stop who was described initially in one way and then later in another way. It is what we do when we consider first impressions and then discover the person's story. Enjoy **Carola Weber's** response to this challenge, plus her response to impromptu writing.

Oxford Street near Victoria Street.

He approached with an unsteady gait and leaned, shivering and hollow-eyed, against a pole. The buzz of conversation amongst the shoppers and 'beachgoers' waiting at the stop skipped a beat and positions shifted subtly to widen the circle of suspicion around the interloper. Bags were clutched tighter and children brought a little closer, gazes averted. With St Vincent's just around the corner, you were bound to come across the odd addict returning from the outpatient clinics.

The young man gave little sign that he had noticed and stood slightly hunched, pulling his overly large hoodie further over his forehead: his arms clasped protectively across his chest, periodically shifting his weight from side to side as if he couldn't get comfortable.

Startled by a booming voice, he looked up, "Hiya Johnno!"

The newcomer waved vigorously as he approached; his broad smile fading to reveal a look of deep concern, "Johnno – maaate! You have looked better; jeez – you've lost a lot of weight. You've just come from chemo I'm guessing? Aww, it sucks, doesn't it, the big C? But hey, you *are* getting through it – aren't you? The guys can't wait to have you back at training. Your mum says you've kept up with all your uni work – that's pretty awesome. Just keep it up – OK?"

The two men fell into an embrace, the hoodie falling back to reveal the younger man's smooth scalp, while his

his face brightened, transformed by a moment of recognition and ordinary kindness.

It was as well the bus came by just then because everyone had something in their eye.

Impromptu Writing: Each session we choose random words and when we reach ten, we write a paragraph or two ensuring each of the words are part of our story.

Holiday Surprise

"Well, this should teach me to **valorise** the images in the travel **blurbs**. What a load of claptrap - excuse the **slang**," Luisa muttered as she set out from the hotel.

Rather than basking in the tranquil scene she had been led to expect, her knees were **locked** against the force of the **Vesuvian** gusts of a raging **Sirocco** blasting its way from the deserts of Africa.

Well, no point in having a **conniption** about it now. Time to focus on the positives!

Firstly, the chaos caused by the wind was a perfect demonstration of the principle of **entropy** in physics and, not only were her arms gorgeously **braceleted** by swirling leaves but her own tendency toward **pareidolia** was right now transforming the mess of debris on the lawn into a montage of magical scenes just for her.