

September 2023 Newsletter

www.u3asoutherngoldcoast.org.au

Phone: (07) 5534 7333 in office hours Mon, Wed & Thurs 9:00-12:00

President's Message

In 2006 I retired and moved to the Gold Coast to a house on Tugun Hill that my family built in 1954. I enjoyed a few years overseas visiting my favourite places and then settled into a comfortable and happy new phase in my life.

I have been a member of U3A Southern Gold Coast for three years and have enjoyed my involvement and appreciate the enrichment that it has provided for my day to day life. This year I decided that I should make a contribution to the organisation, not expecting that to be taking on the role of President. But here I am!

Retirement is an interesting concept, the old view mostly referred to working men and there was a perception that it was the beginning of the end. Times have changed, many of us have had more than one profession and retirement now encompasses travel, hobbies, sport and various forms of education and activities to fuel the body and the brain. The possibilities are boundless.

We belong to an organisation that offers learning, friendship and fun, a real enhancement to quality of life. From the 'inside' I see what a tremendous amount of effort goes into keeping U3A afloat. The committee, office bearers, tutors and all the other contributing volunteers give their time, expertise and effort to create and provide a wonderful experience for our members. I know they are all appreciated and I am pleased to thank them each and every one.

Here's to another year and many more to come of the U3A experience.

Vicki Harvie



Upcoming Events

Unique variety Wine Tasting

Friday 15th September,
5:00-7:00pm at Boyd Street
Tickets \$10 per person
(numbers limited)
Book with U3A office by
phone (07) 5534 7333

Information stand at The Pines Shopping Centre

For Seniors' Month from
Wednesday 4th to Friday 6th
October, 9:00am to 12noon

Art & Craft Exhibition

Monday 9th to Friday 20th
October at Kirra Hill
Community Centre
From 10:00am to 2:00pm
weekdays

Christmas lunch

Tuesday 5th December at
Club Tweed (bowls club)
Cost \$40 (numbers limited)
Book with U3A office by
phone (07) 5534 7333

Annual General Meeting outcomes

At the AGM in June a number of members, who are new to the Committee of Management, were 'sworn in' and generously offered to give up their time to volunteer in important positions.

Blair Sheppard acted as our Returning Officer and did a wonderful job in reading through the nominations and calling for additional volunteers.

This year's committee comprise Vicki Harvie (President); Robin Brown (Vice President); Linda Dern (Secretary); Merry Cloutier (Treasurer); Liz Logan (Funding Manager and Acting Newsletter Editor); Meg Johnson (Program Manager) and; John Niven (Digital Technology Manager). News to hand – a new Asset Manager, Brett Dockett, has just been appointed by the Committee of Management.

Later in the newsletter are articles on the backgrounds of both Vicki and Robin and stories about the other committee members on what they get up to in their spare time.



As seen clockwise from left: Vicki, John, Meg, Robin, Merry, Brett, Liz and Linda

Drawing of the raffle at the Annual General Meeting

There was no shortage of people wanting to buy raffle tickets for a much-coveted boxed bottle of Dom Perignon champagne. This generous gift was kindly donated by a member and drawn at the AGM by Cr O'Neill with Cathryn Brooks named as the lucky winner.

In total about \$1,000 was raised from the raffle and attendance at the Biggest Morning Tea which was then donated to the Cancer Council. Many thanks to all who helped with the event as well as to those who donated so freely to this very worthy cause.

Background (Vicki Harvie, President)

I'm a North Queenslander! I graduated, nursing alumna Townsville General Hospital in 1966 and then as many of us did, left for England, not to return until before the 1975 election. In the intervening years I worked in the UK, the USA and Saudi Arabia and visited a few other places. As a beneficiary of Mr Whitlam's policy to make education available to working and middle class students, I enrolled at the ANU and obtained a BA and LLM. I worked as a lawyer until my retirement. After a long stay in Florence learning Italian unsuccessfully but actually having a grand old time, I returned home and attained the English as a Second Language Certification and spent some years teaching. I currently do some work with refugees and with indigenous youth. A comfortable retirement is a privilege and a pleasure and I am enjoying every moment of mine.

Background (Robin Brown, Vice President)

Originally from Kingston Upon Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Even though I left the town over 40 years ago, I have never lost the accent. I'm a Yorkshireman by birth and nature who still thinks Sir Geoffrey Boycott was a great cricket player. I started my working life in the UK and then 18 months in New Jersey, USA. I migrated to Australia 34 years ago, spending most of that time in Sydney, working for Caltex as an I.T. Program Manager. I decided to retire six years ago while consulting at Viva Energy in Melbourne.

Most years, my wife, daughter, and I would have Easter holidays here on the Gold Coast. Two years ago, when my wife was retrenched from Westpac, we decided to make the move north. My interests include travelling (overseas and around Australia), most forms of theatre, history, listening to music and I read all sorts of things.

Outlander Novels Fan (Linda Dern, Secretary)

One thing people probably don't know about me - I am a HUGE "Outlander" book series fan. I first came across the book series in 2016 and since then have enjoyed four re-reads of the entire series. It led me to follow the author Diana Gabaldon and I am currently connected with her on social media. The author has a really interesting personal life story and the most amazing ability to draw you into the story and forget the rest of the world.

I was late to the "Outlander" series of books with the first book being published in 1992 with the then title of Cross Stitch. Since discovering the series, I have also dived into all of the novellas Diana has written featuring some of the minor characters from the main story and weaving their life stories in and around the "Big Book's". Looking forward to Book 10 and two other novella's Diana is currently working on.

In 2019 I was in Scotland and decided to take myself on a self-guided tour of some of the filming sites used in the TV adaptation of the books. Here is one of the photos during that visit.



Some down time - or was it? (Meg Johnson, Program Manager)

July-August is generally a quieter period for the Program Manager's role, so I decided to take some time off and spend a month in France - all with the aim of improving my spoken French.

It was a delightful holiday, and included five days of cycling along the Canal du Midi in Southern France. While my travel buddy wisely chose to use an ebike, I made the error of opting for a manual model. "The terrain is mostly flat," said I, confidently. What I didn't take into account was the heat and extraordinarily strong headwinds. So, on a particular day when our cycling distance was 65 kms, I vowed that my pride would never interfere with common sense again!

Along with the cycling, our days were spent exploring centuries old villages, marvelling at the market produce, and enjoying fabulous food. And, indeed, there were plenty of opportunities to practise my French. The holiday wasn't really "down time", but "happily busy".



Other Volunteering Roles (Merry Cloutier, Treasurer)



Besides being Treasurer for U3A, I'm also Treasurer for Project Didi Australia. We work with a partner in Nepal to provide trauma-based home care to girls who are survivors of trafficking. The long-term objective is to reintegrate them back into their families. We also provide scholarships, with several girls pursuing degrees in computer science, engineering, nursing and even an MBA. Secondary education means a girl can earn twice as much as one with only primary schooling, while tertiary education means three times the earnings. This helps break the cycle of poverty, a major contributor to trafficking.

We also support a group of women in Nepal who have been subject to domestic violence by selling their jewellery to provide income to support themselves. Check the jewellery out at <https://www.projectdidiaustralia.org/shop.html> and watch the video to see how they make the intricate beads. Also now that everyone is travelling again, we have restarted the travel tours to Nepal, with an opportunity to meet our partners.

Some of you may have gone to the Tea & Talk session with Clare from QIMR Berghofer talking about the amazing research they do. I'm on the QIMR's Animal Ethics Committee (AEC), so I get to see all the research projects when they are just starting, as well as the progress they make as time goes by. I've been a member since 2019 and this year, they appointed me as Chair of the committee.

The role of the committee is to make sure animal welfare is considered at all times, with a focus on the 3Rs (Replace animals with alternatives, Reduce the number required, Refine procedures to ensure there is no pain or suffering). So how did I get on the committee? No, I'm not a scientist and have never worked in research. I'm known as a Category D, which means I know nothing! Category A members are vets, Category B are scientists, Category C are animal rights, with community members being Category D. All of this provides a good balance to our discussion when we review and approve the projects. I'm sure some of our members would make good committee members. If anyone is interested let me know, as we are always looking for AEC members.

Wild-erness Adventures (Liz Logan, Funding Manager)

Like many people I love to travel but my preference has been to visit places that are somewhat 'less travelled'. Often this involves an active pursuit of some kind too while seeing the sites.

I've gone snorkelling in Saipan, Micronesia on World War 2 wrecks and felt like I was flying while swimming in the crystal clear waters of Piccaninnie Ponds, South Australia. These ponds have been described by Valerie Taylor as one of the most beautiful sights in Australia.

On a visit to Richmond, New Zealand I went wakeboarding on Waimea Inlet and I've ridden a quadbike through the Tunisian countryside. One spectacular hiking trip was through The Colorado Provencal in Rustrel, Luberon in the south of France. Next year I'm off to Papua New Guinea and who knows what I'll get up to there.



On the High Seas (John Niven, Digital Technology Manager)



Congratulations to John for being a crew member of the winning yacht of the Southport Yacht Club Winter Sailing Season, Inshore Division. The winning yacht, "Argo" (pictured) is a 7.3 metre (24 foot) yacht of the RL24 class. The Winter Sailing Series consisted of nine races over the winter with multiple different classes of boats competing on a handicap basis.

The well-known local boat designer Rob Legg designed and built RL24s (and RL28s and RL34s) right here. Sadly, Rob Legg passed away in 2019. There are hundreds of RL24s in Australia and overseas, and there is a national championships held each year. John competed on Argo during the most recent in January 2023.

An avid sailor, John also sails on a 12 metre yacht moored at the Southport Yacht Club. For the technically minded, John sails as a headsail trimmer or foredeck crew. He is 'out on the water' two, three or four days a week!

Feedback from Tutors about Classes

Meg, our Program Manager, recently sent out an email thanking all of the tutors for the work that they do for our members. As it was the middle of the year she asked for feedback on how classes were going to date and to provide comments on suggestions for next year as well as for photos.

Alison Campbell, Line Dancing tutor, was the first to respond saying: "As for the hall it's great, the class has around 30 to 35 dancers each week. There are a few other line dancing teachers between Tweed and Mudgeeraba and my class is the biggest so I am pretty proud of that. I think everything is working well, the price is great as all the other classes in the area are more expensive. Hope this feedback helps".

The group celebrated Christmas 2022 in colourful style, as seen here.



Reduced Office Hours Trial

Feedback received from the office volunteers recently has been that the foot traffic into, and workload in, the office has decreased significantly.

For this reason, and in conjunction with the difficulty in recruiting volunteers to work in the office, the Committee of Management decided to trial reduced opening hours. The trial started in September with the office only opening on three days during the week. The office is now open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am to midday and closed Tuesdays and Fridays.

The trial will be closely monitored to determine its success and possible continuation. Please note that messages can be left on the answering machine at any time and will be followed up promptly when the office is next open.

Get Well and Condolence Cards

Please contact the office if you know of a member who is suffering from an illness, is in hospital, recovering from an operation or is grieving the loss of a loved one.

They will then contact Margaret Buchanan who continues to do a wonderful job in handcrafting beautiful cards wishing our members well.



Seeking an Administration Coordinator

There are a number of changes happening with our office. A major one is that after working diligently as our Office Manager for three years, Anne Souter, gave notice prior to the AGM of her intention to stand down from her role.

As no one has offered to take over Anne's position, the Committee of Management has rewritten the duties and time required for the role. We're now seeking an Administration Coordinator to focus solely on working with the office volunteers. External advertisements have been placed but we'd much prefer for a member who has the knowledge of, and a commitment to, our U3A to step up.

Apart from the joys of contributing, all volunteers assisting us are entitled to reduced fees and other benefits. The Position Description for this new role has been put up at Boyd Street and on the noticeboard outside the office. Please email om@u3asoutherngoldcoast.org.au if you are interested in finding out more and we'll arrange a meeting.

Trivia Night event

A small group from U3A Southern Gold Coast attended a Bendigo Bank fundraiser in which artworks created by two of our members were kindly donated. These donations provided a good way of raising the profile of our organisation and showing the talents of our members and tutors to more than 150 guests at the event.

Kay West donated a lovely painting called Summer Days on the Goldie (pictured) and Miche'al Cowie donated a pen and ink sketch, both of which were part of a number of raffles on the night.



Our U3A logo was featured in a slideshow, as one of the donor organisations, and we were publicly thanked numerous times to the audience. Kay and Miche'al were also acknowledged as having generously donated the artworks and the winners of both items were thrilled.

Class fee increases for 2024

Having to increase any costs is always a difficult decision particularly in tough economic times. U3A Southern Gold Coast however, continues to provide good value for money and while annual membership fees will remain the same in 2024 the cost of each class will rise.

The increase has been kept as low as possible from \$10 to \$15 per class per year. Visitor passes will remain at \$5 per class and voucher books (for five visitor sessions) will be \$20. The increases are to cover rising costs of hiring venues for classes, paying for increased administrative overheads and the cost of ongoing repairs at Boyd Street. We are in a sound financial position at present and wish to ensure that this continues.

New table tennis tables

In June we received word that a grant application for new table tennis tables and equipment had been successful. Funding of \$2,500 was provided through the Federal Government's Stronger Communities Program and with the assistance of Karen Andrews, MP.

We have now bought three new tables to replace some of the old and broken ones.

If you haven't tried it yet, table tennis is a fun, dynamic (engaging the body and mind), group sport. We run two sessions per week including Monday mornings for the general community and on Thursday afternoons for members and friends. Everyone who plays agrees that it's a lively, friendly sport that caters for all skill levels and you get lots of exercise while having fun.



Lectures at Griffith University return

The popular U3A Griffith University lectures are back and there's one scheduled for Friday 27th October with the topic yet to be finalised. These lectures are only offered to U3A members and focus on topics and areas of interest to seniors.

The speaker at the first event in July was Associate Professor Jennifer Boddy, who is the Co-Chair of the Environmental Sustainability Committee at the University. Jennifer is an internationally recognised researcher with expertise in climate change, disasters and domestic and family violence. Jennifer's research is grounded in a commitment to social and environmental justice, and seeks to create safe and sustainable environments free from violence. Jennifer talked about her aim of embedding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into all elements of Griffith University operations.

A group of U3A Southern Gold Coast members attended this lecture and noted that it was most educational. Thank you to Andrew Bode for his efforts in reintroducing these lectures.

Gold Coast U3As meeting

The motto "there's strength in numbers" has been the motivator to bring together the four U3A associations based on the Gold Coast.

The most recent meeting in early August attracted 18 attendees including two representatives from the Gold Coast Council's Leasing Department. It was agreed that finding suitable space to operate our offices, and reasonably priced venues to hold classes, are common issues to us all.

A recommendation from the council officers was to put together statistics on our membership, class numbers and venues and to pool this information. This data could then be used to demonstrate the benefits of U3A in the local community. In total, we calculated that there are well over 1,000 U3A members across the Gold Coast and we provide much-needed services to seniors. This number is increasing too and we discussed how to start a new U3A branch in expanding suburbs.

Other ideas were shared at the meeting and importantly it was good to know that we're not alone.

Do you Like to Dance?

Our *Dance Like No-one Is Watching* classes are resuming on 26th September at a new time slot of 11:00am to 12noon on Tuesdays at St Monica's Church Hall.



Each week the class has a different music theme and dancers bop along to the hits of the past. Dancing has been proven to be beneficial for us physically and mentally and everyone can move at their own pace.

Come along for some friendship, fun and fitness. New class members and visitors are very welcome. For more details go to <https://www.u3asoutherngoldcoast.org.au/classes.html>

Introducing U3A Australia

With its recent incorporation, U3A Alliance Australia is now known as [U3A Australia](#).

The newly formed U3A Australia aims to be an advocacy group for the U3A movement nationally. Recognising the combined strength of the 250 Australian U3A Associations with almost 100,000 members, U3A aims to establish strong connections with governmental and peak bodies nationally.

The organisation's principal purpose is threefold:

- Advance and support an effective and sustainable U3A movement in Australia;
- Represent U3A state networks in Australia; and
- Support lifelong learning, health and wellbeing interests, and the reduction of social isolation of retired and semi-retired people.

Newsletter Update

Do you like to write articles and stories? Are you good at checking the spelling and grammar of articles? Or do you have an interest in photography?

Perhaps you are skilled in newsletter design (and it doesn't have to be using a software program).

Can you spend a few hours four times a year to help with the newsletter? If so, we would love to hear from you!

Ideally, the newsletter should be produced by a team of people to ensure that it's the best possible publication and is highly informative. At present we have one Editor sourcing and writing all articles and taking photos who is unable to continue to work alone in this role in 2024. If you are keen to keep the newsletter going, please offer to assist.

To talk about the role and/or submit an idea or article please email newsletter@u3asoutherngoldcoast.org.au or phone Liz on 0406 519 369 and leave a message.

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In the spirit of reconciliation U3A Southern Gold Coast acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.