

Naturaliste University of the Third Age (Nat U3A)

President's Report October 27th 2017

There is no other way to describe this past year than to use three key words – GROWTH, CHANGE and CHALLENGES. The goal for this coming year will certainly have to be CONSOLIDATION!

On reviewing this last year I would like to start with a quote from the Winter 17 ONECOTA Magazine for older Australians that says, 'There is nothing average about the modern older life'. This holds true for the members of Naturaliste U3A who, ranging in age from the early 50s to our oldest member who is 96, engage in a variety of activities that provide social interaction, mental stimulation and physical good health. These are the cornerstones of positive ageing. The days of looking forward to doing 'nothing' in retirement are moving aside to make room for looking forward to those of becoming involved in life-long learning in one form or another.

MEMBERSHIP: As of 2 days ago, we reached 268 financial members – 51 more than this time last year. We maintained, then increased last year's growth. This can be attributed, in good part, to a very effective 'grapevine' where members are passing on information about their positive experiences to others – thanks very much.

COMMITTEE: of course, this progress isn't just in membership growth alone. I must thank on my behalf and yours, a very determined and hard-working Committee, without which no organisation can flourish. Members have put in extra hours of research and work to bring to fruition two major changes in particular.

*The first is being able to bring forward a motion for the membership to vote on that we 'accept the New Model Rules for Incorporated bodies, in full'. It is a Government requirement that all Incorporated bodies must address this and either submit changes to be ratified or accept in full, also to be submitted for ratification.

*The second is the implementation of the U-MAS Database system. This has been thoroughly researched, purchased and Committee members have had training sessions with a trainer from Victoria where some 20 U3A groups now use the system. Committee member, Lorraine Watts will take on the role of System Administrator, bringing her expertise in Information Technology to that task. The use of U-MAS will greatly assist in the running of an organisation the size of ours.

* The Committee unanimously agreed that the membership fee of \$25 not be raised for 2018.

*The Committee met last December for a planning session to devise a Strategic Plan for 2017-2020. Considerable inroads have already been made into implementing those plans.

*Meetings are held monthly to ensure that we keep on top of courses, Government requirements, finances and the everyday running, much of it unseen, of Naturaliste U3A.

*In May the Committee held a 30th birthday celebration for the original U3A formed in Busselton. This was a most enjoyable morning tea and was appreciated by some of those very early members and others from the 2009 group who 're-formed' what is now the current Naturaliste U3A.

**** This brings me to **the most important news** about the structure of the Committee, your Committee. Four members of the Committee have stepped down earlier than the AGM so we could co-opt new members to take their places. With an extremely busy few months looming, it meant that retiring members could have more time to pass on essential information needed then, rather than wait until after the AGM. Each of the co-opted members, apart from Malcolm Jennings, have nominated for their positions to be voted on.

Retiring members are Richard Liston who has been Treasurer for eight years and also held roles dealing with membership, enrolments and the website. David McDonald has been Vice President and Course Co-ordinator for some six years, Barbara Taylor has been Secretary for three years and Cathy Oldman for one year. Between them they have a massive amount of experience and knowledge. Barbara and Cathy were instrumental in investigating new technology and working on the new Constitution/Model Rules. The combined drive and service of these members has been greatly appreciated.

Thus the full nominating Committee is: Joan Parke (President), Gwyn Cracknell (Vice President and Course Co-ordinator, replacing David), Chris Masterman (Treasurer, replacing Richard), Rose Vella (Secretary, replacing Barbara), Lorraine Watts, Margaret Maloney and Deirdre Chell for the General Committee, one of these positions replacing Cathy). Various responsibilities of members will be finalised after election.

COURSES

As many of you are aware, our courses, both short and on-going are based on two semesters a year. This year 51 courses have been offered – a great effort as it is essential to increase our courses as our numbers grow.

On Enrolment Day in February we held our annual 'Thank you and Welcome Sundowner' for Course Leaders. As always it was an enjoyable time and gave us an opportunity to show our appreciation for the contribution leaders make. This event will take place again next year. There is no doubt that Course Leaders are the backbone of Naturaliste U3A!

It is not too late to express interest in running a course for next year so if you have an interest or experience in a particular area that you would like to share, please contact Gwyn Cracknell on 9754 1703 for further information.

We are planning to hold a mentoring and information session for new leaders later in November.

TOPICAL TALKS

This year we have presented Topical Talks by Grant Henley- Mayor of Busselton, Matt Norton, from the Margaret River/Busselton Tourist Association, Kerry Bayley- Busselton's 2017 Citizen of the Year, awarded for her volunteer work, and Bernie Masters who spoke about Citizen Science. All were very interesting. On average each was attended by about 35 members.

NEWSLETTERS

Our newsletter, *The Crier*, is sent out in the first week of each season, either by email or post and they are also on our website. They are an important communication tool, vital in a group such as ours with its variety of courses and other activities and ensure that members are kept up to date on what is happening. As from this Spring's edition, Gwyn Cracknell and I have reversed roles and he is Editor and I am Co-editor. Contributions and feedback are very welcome.

TECHNOLOGY

You will be given updates by email, post or via our website on the steps being taken with our move onto the data base system. Members who require help entering their data, enrolling etc for the first time on this system will be given assistance. Those who are postal members will still get communications from us through the post and help will be given to you to ensure you are not disadvantaged by not using computers.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT and NETWORKING

*Early this year I spoke to the Friendship Group at St Mary's and the audience showed interest in hearing about the various things we do. I also met with some Committee members from Margaret River U3A and we shared information about our two groups. A planned lunch with that group, ours and Mandurah U3A 's didn't finish up happening but hopefully will next year. The networking between groups is both interesting and valuable.

*Unfortunately, no-one from our Committee was able to attend the WA U3A Network this year.

*I continue to be your representative on the board of the People Place, Busselton - formerly the Busselton Family Centre. Over the years we have developed a very good relationship there and the welcoming staff give us much support. Like us, the People Place has had to work hard on making necessary changes and we will see some interesting happenings taking place in the coming year.

*Naturaliste U3A is also a member of COTA - the Council on Ageing. Hopefully next year, having heard previous Topical Talks from them, we will be able to tap into their wealth of information and support.

CHANGES and CHALLENGES

Finally, in the next month or so the Committee will be reviewing the ways we can best serve our members as we move into the ninth year of Naturaliste U3A. Are the processes that were determined to suit a small group still appropriate for the large group we are now?

Some of the changes will come about just through our basic technology needs. Others, more importantly, will be to ensure that our ethos of accessing life-long learning can be best applied to our members. Mostly, it is anticipated that the changes will be a series of small steps rather than giant leaps. Many will affect the administration more than the actual membership.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would like to thank all of you for being members of Naturaliste U3A and bringing your own contribution to the Courses you participate in and Talks you attend. This makes us, as a whole, a valuable asset to the community. I often bump into Libby Mettam, our local MLA, and I enjoy reminding her that Naturaliste U3A is doing an invaluable job in helping maintain the well-being of 260+ senior members of the wider community – she totally agrees!

Joan Parke (President)

ADDENDUMS - as a result of the General Extraordinary Meeting and Annual General Meeting:

- 1 *The motion to accept the New Model Rules was accepted by the required number of members at an Extraordinary General meeting prior to the AGM on 27/4/17.*
- 2 *The 7 nominating members were voted on to the Committee into the roles nominated for at the AGM 27/10/17.*