

NATURALISTE UNIVERSITY of the THIRD AGE Inc (Naturaliste U3A)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 20th 2019

Another interesting year has gone by filled with opportunities for learning and participating in our activities, meeting new people, making new friends. With our current membership at 271, we are the largest of the regional U3A's in Western Australia. When broken down into semesters, we have offered some 60 Courses/Workshops this year as well as 4 Topical Talks. So, plenty of learning and socialising has been going on!!

Our big news is that we have been invited by the West Australian University of the Third Age Network to host the State Conference here next year. The Committee has accepted this invitation, and under the umbrella of the U3A Network WA, has already been sourcing such things as a venue (The Esplanade Hotel), speakers, and other activities for the two-day event in October 2020! Funding, such as a Lotterywest grant, will be applied for as will local sponsorship and some small in-house events. This will be an opportunity not only to showcase our Naturaliste U3A group but also to welcome Conference visitors from other U3A's throughout the state to this lovely region.

COMMITTEE

My thanks must go to our hard-working, adaptable Committee. We have had a few changes during the year. Early in the year Elaine Hogan was co-opted to the Committee to provide support while we had Gwyn Cracknell (Vice President) and his wife off an extended trip around Australia, and Dawn Atherton was on sick leave. Elaine was unable to continue but has our thanks for her assistance. We were able to welcome Deirdre Chell back after having previously stepped down for health reasons. Dawn is not re-nominating for the Committee due to health issues, but we hope she will become involved again in the future. Many thanks Dawn for your contribution.

One of the things that we have endeavoured to do is to have Committee members, according to interests and skills, to shadow others with specific roles. This assists us to cover absences and has helped us to become adaptable when members are away.

COURSES

Each year we face changes, whether it is because of outside requirements or as a result of reviewing, as we regularly do, our policies and procedures, needs and interests of our members. Feedback from Course Leaders is valuable in this process.

One of the changes we are currently addressing is the fact that our start date for Courses has gradually, over the past few years, with valid reasoning at the time, moved back from us following the West Australian school academic year starting in February, to starting close to March. A growing number of Leaders have wanted to start or resume their groups earlier in February. Thus, it has been discussed and agreed to by Committee members, for courses to start in 2020 **as from** the first week of February, in line with the start of schools. This will accommodate a number of Courses that meet monthly in the first or second week. Of course, Leaders can start at dates suitable to them after the first week of February and a staggered start is ideal. Other arrangements for those yearly, historically on-going and continuing courses are being made available for those Leaders. Further specific information and details regarding them will be provided soon.

It is important for members to understand that membership fees, and course fees are different. In order for anyone to participate in Courses or Workshops, for insurance purposes they need to have paid their **membership** fees to the Treasurer. Course fees are paid to Course Leaders at the start of the Course and are worked out by them to cover expenses such as room hire, materials, refreshments.

A Workshop is being planned for Leaders and those who may be interested in offering a Course but not sure how to go about it, likely to be early in November. This will give current Leaders a chance to discuss what works well for them and what are challenges. For others interested it will give them strategies to use and steps to take regarding getting a Course running.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR OFFERING A COURSE OR WORKSHOP IN 2020, SEMESTER 1, PLEASE CONTACT GWYN CRACKNELL (COURSE CO- ORDINATOR) 97541703, OR JOAN PARKE 0410 667696 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

TOPICAL TALKS

We finished last year with a very interesting Talk, 'Stripes in the Forest', by Ian Gibb from Nannup, about a tourist initiative there focusing on the famous Nannup Tiger. The Talk was followed by plenty of questions from the audience.

This year our three Talks so far have been very worth-while attending. First one was a presentation from Max Collins on the topic of 'The Weather'. Who would have thought a Talk with such a simple title would be so riveting! Max is keen to offer another Talk next year. This was followed by David Gardner, one of our U3A members, who had a very interesting story to tell about his involvement in the early establishment of the Lake Argyle Diamond mine. Our third speaker was Chris Willmott and her Talk on 'Keeping Girls in School: SIPA Days for Girls' Program' was a real eye opener and was well appreciated by the audience. Chris told us about the project she is manager of in Uganda that provides schoolgirls with menstrual kits and information about reproductive health. This is having a very positive effect on girls' attendance. This was a thought-provoking Talk highlighting issues that we don't often hear about. The final Talk for the year will be in November, presented by Judy Waterman, that will be about the range of support and services offered by the Busselton Hospice.

Topical Talks are a valuable addition to our Courses and Workshops and certainly are stimulating with their range of topics and presenters. The gold coin donations have been presented to the local groups and charities as indicated at the Talks and have been greatly appreciated.

NEWSLETTERS

'The Crier', our newsletter, is an important form of communication, especially in a group the size of ours, that ensures that members get to know about the happenings of Naturaliste U3A, and to help people feel connected by this information. The newsletters are sent out four times a year, in the first week of each season. Feedback and contributions are welcome.

TECHNOLOGY

The use of the UMAS database system is falling into place well and makes the processes around enrolments, Course information and formation of class lists more efficient and quicker. Don Wright is now the Systems Administrator. Cathy Oldman now updates our website and Lorraine Watts is on hand to assist in the technology area.

During the past year Lorraine has mentored the Margaret River Committee through establishing the UMAS system and that has further established our connection with our neighbouring U3A.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT and NETWORKING

After some 6 or 7 years as Naturaliste U3A's representative on The People Place Board, I have now stepped down from the Board. Chris Masterman has taken my place and it is good that we have a voice with this Community Centre that we use so regularly.

Earlier this year a number of us from the Committee met up in Cowaramup with members of the Margaret River U3A Committee to share information about what each group was doing. Like us, Margaret River U3A is quite Course oriented but they tend to have more direct contact in some of their activities with the local community than we do. We also had two of their members, Bill Bunbury and Peter Lane involved in Courses for us.

As a result of a donation to the Hospice of our Topical Talk collection, I was invited to attend a thankyou morning tea during Volunteers Week at the Hospice. It was good to see a number of U3A members who volunteer their services there.

A Conference 2020 Committee has been formed with myself, Lorraine Watts and Chris Masterman, with Peter Alcock who is the WA Network President and Jean Duff WA Network Treasurer, both from Perth. We have had a number of meetings regarding the Conference so far and as time goes on will be making contact with other groups regarding their participation in the event.

In conclusion, not only do I reiterate my appreciation to the Committee for their continuing support and contribution to the running of Naturaliste U3A but also, from all the Committee, thank Course Leaders, without whom we would not be the valuable resource for the Seniors in our community that we are. And to the volunteers who are always ready to lend a hand to set up and clear away at our meetings and events, a big thank you.

I trust that the coming year will be another one in that we share and enjoy being in our 'third age'. **Joan Parke, President**