

NATURALISTE UNIVERSITY of the THIRD AGE Inc (Naturaliste U3A)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT OCTOBER 9th, 2020

In my introduction to last year's President's Report, I had included the following first and last sentences - 'Another interesting year has gone by filled with opportunities for learning and participating in our activities, meeting new people and making new friends.' and - 'So, plenty of learning and socialising has been done!' Little did any of us know that 2020 would be the year of COVID 19 and that the learning, and its accompanying valuable socialising we were familiar with, was to be severely disrupted.

Protocols and safety plans that the Committee put in place, as part of our duty of care to members, were made according to Government guidelines, as well as specific needs of the venues we were using and also equipment being used. My thanks to the Committee, Course Leaders and members for efforts taken to follow these to the best of your ability, ensuring that we have stayed COVID free.

I also announced last year that Naturaliste U3A would be hosting the WA Network U3A biennial Conference here in October 2020. We had made considerable progress with planning for this event but unfortunately it had to be cancelled.

Disruptive, inconvenient, frustrating - yes! But hopefully we will move into 2021 on a positive note ready to be back in full swing and grateful that, in spite of the COVID challenges, we all survived.

COMMITTEE

The Committee continues to meet monthly (following protocols!) and in between times considerable contact is made between members regarding issues related to their specific responsibilities.

As happens from time to time, some changes have taken place in the Committee. Towards the end of last year Brenda Pirrit was co-opted to the Committee, taking responsibility for Hospitality. In June Chris Masterman (Treasurer) had to step down from the Committee due to ill health. His position was filled by Janet Mannolini. Recently Gwyn Cracknell (Vice President, Course Co-ordinator) resigned after being on the Committee for a number of years. Thanks to Gwyn and Chris for their contribution over the years and to Brenda and Janet for bringing their expertise to our Committee.

Recently, after discussion, it was unanimously decided by the Committee that we needed to have a fourth person on the general part of the Committee so we can continue to ensure that the range of responsibilities can be covered, or 'shadowed', when absences occur. A motion to accept this will be moved at the AGM.

COURSES

Changes that were addressed during this year include moving the 'official' start time back from the first week of February (same as school start) as per requests from some Leaders for an earlier start. This seems to have worked well. Arrangements

through Don Wright, Systems Administrator, for Leaders of some yearly, historically on-going courses, have been put in place to accommodate requests.

A **Leaders' Workshop** was held in November to encourage those interested in running a course but without previous experience, to give them information and encouragement. Current Leaders were also invited to attend to share ideas about what works well, what further support they might need from the Committee, advice to new Leaders, etc. It also gave an opportunity for all Leaders and potential Leaders to get to know each other. Feedback indicated that it was a helpful session. We are repeating the workshop and further information will be sent out soon.

It is essential that each year we have new courses to offer, especially as our U3A group is so course oriented. It is an ethos of U3A's that peer tuition is encouraged and Leaders do not have to have teaching backgrounds so the call is out for new potential Leaders to get in touch!

COVID 19 certainly impacted on our U3A group this year in that some new courses scheduled did not get off the ground, some long-standing ones have not been able to resume mainly because of social distancing protocols. On a more positive note, the majority have now been able to meet providing current guidelines can be observed. It is a credit to Leaders that they have worked to adjust their presentations and that participants have complied with these. On-line presentations have not been a strong feature for us but it may be something to be more prepared for in the future if we are faced with a similar situation.

NEWSLETTERS

Our seasonal newsletter, 'The Crier', continues to be a valuable form of communication that keeps all members aware of what is happening throughout the group. With a membership of some 250+ it is important that information about what is going on is regularly communicated. This year we have added a new item of 'Meet a Member' and this will help members to see the wide range of backgrounds and skills we have in our group.

TOPICAL TALKS

Last year we finished with a Talk by Judy Waterman from the Busselton Hospice. It was most interesting to hear about the services provided and planned and our gold coin donations were donated to the Hospice. COVID will have been very disrupted to the services provided by the Hospice so hopefully they can soon be resumed.

Our first Talk for this year was to be presented by Max Collins on the topic of 'How an Aircraft Flies'. As it happened it was our first COVID rescheduling because Max had just returned from a cruise and hotspot for the Corona virus overseas, so this talk was postponed. When it was able to be held it was a terrific talk and quite fascinating to hear of all the things it takes to be safely airborne! Our donation from that Talk went to The Royal Flying Doctor Service.

In August we had a change of venue and went to the Geographe Landcare Nursery where Rod Cary gave a very informative presentation and tour of the Nursery which

focuses on plants native to this very biodiverse region. Our donation went to the Nursery.

Our final Topical Talk for this year will be held in early December, presented by Charles Broadbent and Barbara Jennings from the Busselton Woodturner's group. Their presentation and display on the History of Woodturning will illustrate the fact that woodturning is not just a practical skill but is an art form.

Thanks to the regular supporters of the Topical Talks. Unlike many U3A's we don't have these talks as, for example, a regular fortnightly feature but certainly they are an interesting offering to members.

TECHNOLOGY

Many aspects of UMAS work well for us but Don Wright, our Systems Administrator, has worked to get some things adjusted for our needs. At the Leaders' Workshop coming up, Don will go over some points pertinent to Course Leaders.

Cathy Oldman continues to keep our website updated and Lorraine Watts is able to back up both Don and Cathy.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT and NETWORKING

This is an area that, like our courses, has been negatively impacted this year. The State Conference would have included a great deal of networking both with other U3A representatives as well as people in the Busselton community. My 'public relations' role of speaking to various groups about Naturaliste U3A has not happened this year.

However, we are in the process of planning one of our 'Talkfests' for later in November where representatives from the South-West U3A groups meet with us and talk about the things going on in their groups, what works well, what are the challenges. No doubt that the latter will be the main flavour of the day, but optimism will shine through I am sure!

IN CONCLUSION, I am optimistic that next year we will be able to look back and make a determined effort to take stock, look at how we have managed to get through this year and move on. Sometimes it is a good thing to do things differently from how we have usually done them! We are resilient in our 'Third Age'!

Nothing is different about my sincere thanks to all of you – Committee, Leaders, volunteers and members for your support and contribution to Naturaliste U3A.

Joan Parke, President