



**BANYULE**  
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

**U3A Banyule Inc A0013622D**

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## AGM Annual Report 2023 - 24

In 2023, our membership rose to just over 900 members and this year, we are currently at 841 (179 males, 662 females) and still recruiting. As we do not advertise the work of U3A Banyule, clearly word of mouth has continued and is a positive affirmation of what we offer. Of course, as an organisation of volunteers, it is a great undertaking and a great responsibility. However, it is a testament to the work we undertake that within our community we are known for our purpose, our integrity and our capacity to deliver as best we can for our members.

The Committee of Management carefully monitors trends in order to meet increased demands and to examine best possible practice. After much consultation with members, the Strategic Plan 2022-24 has charted the directions of our organization over the past three years and so this year, we are coming to the conclusion of this plan. The Governance Sub Committee, led by Milena Maranville and well supported by Dianne Williamson, has been a tour de force in monitoring our achievements against the goals of the Strategic Plan and we have exceeded what we set out to do. Particularly, during this past year there has been a sharp focus on review and renewal. A fuller report will be made at the AGM. Many members have contributed to these achievements that have strengthened U3A Banyule and we are very grateful. The challenge is that later this year will see the development of a new Strategic Plan 2025-27 which will be presented and voted on at the next AGM in 2025.

Towards this, we are already collecting data to inform pathways going forward from 2025. The recent Satisfaction Survey has given a useful snapshot. Of the 268 respondents, 95% were in the Satisfied / Very Satisfied category. While this is very heartening, a dynamic organization is about continual improvement and to this end, the survey asked our members for responses on the

satisfaction level re classes, volunteering and technical needs of our members. We have carefully examined the responses. This is one source of data we will draw on and along with some focus groups of members, we will arrive at a Strategic Plan to steer the directions for the next three years.

For Financial management, we are greatly indebted to the work of our Treasurer Steve Dennis who took over from Kevin Whiting at the beginning of this year. Along with organizing an independent audit, Steve has carefully managed our finances throughout this year. Given the increasing costs of hiring CMR1 & 2 spaces at ILCH and the other 15 venues that we use for classes and events, we expected that it would be necessary to raise membership fees for 2025. However, an unexpected bequest from the estate of Edna Bird, has meant that we are in a position to hold membership fees at status quo for the year. The CoM has voted that fees will remain the same as this year and we are sure our members will endorse this at the AGM.

Over this year, our program has grown from 64 classes in 2023 to 70 in 2024, along with many outings, social events and our extensive lecture program. It is a delight to report that a number of people have unexpectedly offered to take classes and so this has enhanced what we offer and we actually have 15 new courses. How good is that? Our 60 tutors and 8 speaker facilitators are managing waitlists very effectively and backfilling as soon as vacancies arise. To our tutors, lecturers, speaker facilitators and presenters, please know we greatly value your knowledge, commitment and energy. You are our heroes. Our Course Coordinator Sharon Karasmanis does an amazing job, supported by Marg Fievez in her role as Lecture Coordinator and Tania Rostan, our Course Information Manager & Venues Coordinator. What an amazing team!

We greatly value CMR1 & CMR2 at ILCH, our central hub. Without this, we cannot offer our broad program for 55+ adults. Because our program is so broad, we hire 15 other spaces for classes. I wish to thank Tania Rostan for her careful management of hiring all the spaces, long and short-term, to manage the growing needs of our huge program. It was pleasing to work with Janice Kelly over this year to negotiate a longer contract with Yarra Plenty Regional Library and Banyule City Council, ensuring the continuity of ILCH as our central hub. This was ratified by our Committee of Management earlier this year and will need further negotiation in 2025. As partners with YPRL, we take our role seriously, promoting library membership and events and it is important for U3A Banyule and YPRL to work together for mutual benefit.

This past year has been a year of review and renewal. A highlight in 2023 was the review and refurbishment of the website which was undertaken with a grant from BCC. A thorough review and then a complete rewrite and re design has resulted in a fresh and easily accessible resource site

for members and potential members. It was a great team effort from Mary Wilson, Penny Braybrook, Heather Stephens, Barb Sekules and myself.

Dianne Williamson and I reviewed our very aging constitution against the requirements of being an incorporated body and it is pleasing to see that we are compliant. After a review of our online booking and a trial of Trybooking, this far more efficient booking system was introduced at the start of this year. Thanks to Heather Stephens and Kevin Whiting for their work in initiating this implementation. Heather Stephens and Milena Maranville, along with Office Manager Inge Kearney, undertook to review all office operations and office materials with the purpose of creating greater clarity for office volunteers and improving communications. This has been a mountain of work as every form and document has been reviewed. Reference manuals along with training days have been so valuable in giving our OV's (Office Volunteers) much needed support to enhance the work of the office. Margaret Jack arranged for new lanyards and undertook policy review re incident reporting. All this has been such valuable work as our OVs are our front line and need every bit of support we can give. A big thank you to Heather, Milena, Inge and Margaret. Heather has also effectively managed our 'MyU3A system and associated processes.

Our relationship with Banyule City Council (BCC) is of key importance. We have raised our profile with BCC and members have been key participants in informing the BCC Age Friendly community initiatives. I thank those members who attended many consultative meetings and forums or took time to fill in surveys, over this past year. Given that we are the biggest organization servicing older adult learning and social needs, it is important to have a voice. It is about improving the lives of older adults in our community for which BCC and U3A Banyule share a strong commitment. Recently, I spoke at a council meeting to endorse the Ageing Well in Banyule Framework document, particularly focussing on the integrity of the process of consultation towards achieving this valuable planning framework. Many of our members have participated in consultations, surveys and in the continuing meetings to generate this document. I thank Dianne Williamson for her commitment and representation throughout. Over this past year, we have met with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and other councillors to give them a greater understanding of our needs and the demands on our organization. It is greatly valued that our council is keen to support our work where it can. We are grateful for two grants which enabled:- 1. the review and redevelopment of the U3A Banyule website, and 2. the purchase of craft supplies to be used during the successful Seniors Month activity run by our knitting group. Our Creative Knitters have been able to use excess materials for their work in producing items for the Craft Sale this month; the proceeds generated will in turn go to the BCC Community Fund designed to help those in need locally.

While our organization is invested in giving a broad range of learning opportunities for members, social opportunities are integral to what we do. 2024 began with an exciting Spanish Night: an

exotic festival of all things Espanol. Joan Learmont's Lingerin Lunches over this past year have provided delightful dining destinations and a chance to meet other members over a shared lunch. Elaine Rees through her excursions has offered members the chance to see interesting places previously not on their radar. Elaine is retiring from this position and I wish to thank her for her all her wonderful work in finding interesting destinations for our members to explore. A superb job Elaine! The Annual Lunch featuring the Vice President of the Heidelberg Theatre Company, Wendy Drowley, and the Annual Forum in 2023, which focussed on Cyber Security with John Lombard and Dr Geetika Verma from RMIT, were well patronised events. It is always exciting to get the perspectives from those at the forefront of what they do. Over this year, Joan Learmont has orchestrated afternoon teas following Public Lectures and other events to bring people together. There is no doubt they are very much appreciated. Last year the Great Afternoon Tea for Ovarian Cancer Research last year raised \$1507 and the afternoon tea on 6<sup>th</sup> May this year, raised \$1500 for the Banyule Community Fund. Those who came to support these two events, not only enjoyed their afternoons but knew how important it is to support those who are making a difference in our broader community. Bravo Joan and the teams who have worked with you towards making those special occasions so successful. We thank all those unsung heroes who volunteer to bring us these occasions to enjoy each other's company. From me, but also from all of our members, a huge vote of thanks. To Liz Ward and our Newsletter Team, thank you for giving us a term-by-term round up of all the amazing highlights of each term. It is great for all of us to have a chance to sit back and reflect on how U3A Banyule has enriched us.

Last year, the Awards Committee under the leadership of Sue Beshara initiated a special afternoon tea at the Ivanhoe Bowls Club to thank all of our volunteers and also make it a special occasion for our Awards Recipients. It was special to be able to say Thank You to so many who contribute, no matter how big or small. We did not have everyone there but we had close to ninety people. What a fabulous opportunity to say thanks; we appreciate your contribution. We combined this Thank You afternoon with our U3A Banyule Awards for Volunteers. This was a special occasion to recognize those who have made outstanding contributions towards making U3A Banyule such a dynamic place.

Earlier this month, It was a pleasure to attend the Jaga Jaga Awards to see our nominees Joan Learmont, Heather Stephens and Dianne Williamson receive much deserved community recognition for their contributions, not only to U3A Banyule but to the greater community. We were delighted to learn of awards to members Karlene Lang and Peter Gurney for their contributions to community. Dianne, Joan, Heather, Karlene and Peter, we are proud of you and we thank you for your volunteering work. Last year the Awards Committee led by Sue Beshara created a special afternoon to give all volunteers recognition for their assistance over the year as well as awards for

people who had made significant contributions. It was a very uplifting celebration and we are planning another one this year when all significant awards will be announced.

I was first elected as President in August 2022 and it has been such a privilege to lead U3A Banyule. Many others have made me look good. This is an amazing organization as it relies completely on volunteers; people stepping up in terms of time, energy, creativity and active problem-solving. I would like to thank all of you who do so, no matter how great or small your input. A big thank you goes to my immediate colleagues for their support, expertise and commitment- Vice President Janet Ringrose, Secretary Margaret Jack, and Treasurer Steve Dennis. Our Committee of Management -- Jan Brown, Steve Dennis, Margaret Jack, Sharon Karasmanis, Inge Kearney, Milena Maranville, Janet Ringrose, Willem Roodenburg, Tania Rostan, Heather Stephens and Dianne Williamson -- does a wonderful job to steer this organization so thoughtfully and thoroughly in terms of vision, time and energy. Someone who does a mighty job as Committee of Management Minutes Secretary is Noni Crowther! I wish to acknowledge the work of Willem Roodenburg who will step down as Technical Manager shortly - heartfelt thanks, Willem. As well as our CoM, we have 13 members who act in 'Support Roles' overseeing so many diverse aspects of U3A Banyule. They are often our quiet achievers but their contribution is vital and valued. To you all, I would like to express my sincere thanks on behalf of our members and for the support you have given me personally.

U3A Banyule is only as strong as those who volunteer. The efforts of all our volunteers, no matter how big or small (and I keep making that point) make such an amazing difference. I thank all of our volunteers most sincerely. I also wish to thank our members for your goodwill, participation and support.

Judith Craze

President

U3A Banyule

4<sup>th</sup> May 2024