

U3A Hobsons Bay/Williamstown President's Report

Welcome to all our members for the 2022 Annual General Meeting. This, as you may not realise, is the end of a 16 month reporting period as we transitioned to a school year of reporting in line with most U3A's. This made sense as we effectively operate on a school term basis and members sign up for courses in a calendar year.

So a lot has happened which I will touch on. Membership has grown despite COVID. Our Secretary will detail this in her report. This growth is something to applaud as we have bucked the trend in other U3A's who have lost members in this period.

This, of course, puts pressure on the numbers in each group and the challenge ahead of us is to create sustainable offerings that meet new and existing member interests. As a consequence, we now have waiting lists for 22 of our activities. We will need more new activities and new Convenors and this will be the challenge the new Committee will face. Our Course Coordinator, Ruth Patching, will talk about this in her report.

New activities require available new venues and we are working closely with Hobsons Bay Council to find venues to relocate to when the Senior Citizens building is demolished to make way for a brand new Community Hub.

This is part of the redevelopment of Dennis Reserve and the new courts are now well established and most of the landscaping is complete. The old building was not really built for purpose for today's community needs and you may be surprised to know that it currently has 5 tenants, ourselves included, that will be given priority access to the new facility.

This will be a big help as it will have 4 meeting rooms all with current IT technology. In the meantime we are close to agreeing to use the Sports Club next to the Cottage and the new clubrooms at Digman Reserve in Hobsons Street Newport while the building works take place. If these venues prove successful they might be available to us on a long term basis particularly as we recognise the aging issues of the Cottage and that the school may well require the Cottage land at some time in the future.

All this is very exciting but will come at a cost so we will need to plan for the hire of new venues even if it is a small amount to cover the cost of cleaning and utilities. We will begin discussions with Council when we have a clearer picture of the potential future costs.

However we will have to consider raising our membership fee for the following year (2023). We have kept our fees at the same rate for this year in recognition that for the past 2 years many of our activities could not go ahead or were severely hampered and we absorbed the costs of COVID requirements for additional cleaning, antiseptic wipes etc from reserves.

We thank our members for their understanding in the changes that seem to be constantly happening but it is also to be celebrated because we have a wonderfully loyal and supportive membership, many more activities, new vibrant members and all have shown resilience as well as patience.

I would like to thank and congratulate the existing Committee who have worked tirelessly to ensure we can offer our members the best of things in what has been a difficult environment. A special mention to other members who have stepped up to take on additional tasks. Having willing and good volunteers has contributed to the success of our club so a big thank you to you all for your support.

Joan Thompson
President