**The U3A -Okeover Annual Report for 2024**

I believe we have had a successful year with many interesting talks and activities. There have been new initiatives and reviews as I outline below. However we are also in a period of transition especially in relation to technology as this report shows.

**Talks**

As in previous years we were able to draw upon the knowledge and experiences from experts in our community and from our own membership to provide us with a huge range of learning subjects.

This year for our Thursday talks we had more focus on a miscellany of subjects rather than the framework of a 5 week series. That said,

* In Term1 Frieda Looser returned to give a presentation on Human migration and Global connections.
* In Term 2 Dr Marianne Hanson (from the University of Queensland) gave a stimulating series on International Conflicts and Pat Braithwaite organised a series on Matters Medical.
* Then in Term 3 Hilary Talbot arranged the Visual Arts series.

Some of the highlights from the Miscellany programmes included:

* a talk by Judith Coullie on the Ethics of Memory (when is remembering or forgetting right or wrong)
* Ross Gumley on The Court Theatre developments (We are looking forward to enjoying the new facility later this year)
* Frank Tay on the Colonial Administration in Singapore
* and Joanne Farmer A seafaring Life.

The environment was not forgotten when Colin Meurk spoke about the place of wetlands in our ecosystems. He was able to reinforce his talk by leading a group to Travis Swamp to learn about its history and to see its flora and fauna.

Technological issues were also presented. We were informed of technological developments in education when Dr Brad Hurren shared about the challenges and changes in learning processes and assessments in a Digital Age. Mike Yardley gave us an update on the state of the news media and the battle over changes in our viewing habits.

The year rounded off by topical talks by Peter Field on the background to the Electoral System in USA and the implications from the results of the presidential elections.

The committee gives many thanks to the organisers as we were truly spoilt with the variety. Again presenters were impressed by our penetrating questions and comments at the conclusion of their lecture which I consider is one of the hallmarks of our U3A.

**Reviewing our structure of talks.**

Offering 36 slots on a Thursday is challenging for our planners but the committee is of the opinion this is our core business and should continue.

**Interest Groups**

Several U3A’s in Christchurch also have formalised interest groups. This is a way to gather socially, provide an opportunity to share knowledge and skills.

Paul Harding was keen to see if there was a demand for this activity by our members so a questionnaire was circulated. At the time of writing there are four functioning groups: Current Affairs, Epicureans, Film/Theatre and Walking. These groups have their own convenor and gather at a time suitable for that group. To date they appear to be working well and fill a gap in our activities.

**Social**

*Morning teas*

For many a highlight of a Thursday morning is the opportunity to mingle for refreshments before the lectures. Thanks to Gendy Dray and her team who arrive early to boil the billy and set out the goodies. At the end of Term 2 we also gathered at the end of a lecture for soup and rolls.

*End of year luncheon*

The end of year luncheon was again held at the Hornby Club. A special moment was the piping in by Claire Ross of a cake to recognise the 94th birthday of Brian Norton.

*Bus trip*

We appreciated Barrie Greenwood in organising an enjoyable bus trip to Kate Valley. On arrival we were given a detailed talk how the Landfill operates followed by a tour of the facilities and ready for lunch at Torlesse Wines.

**Committee issues**

Technology is now influencing our committee discussions. What should be the format for our records; paper or digital and what should be the most effective way in informing members of committee decisions .At the end of a meeting we have a consensus as to what should be highlighted and sent to members via email.

**Sub Committees**

*Whether to incorporate*

In April a sub-committeewas establishedto evaluate the pros and cons of Incorporation under the new 2022 Incorporated Societies Act. Members were John Burrows, Paul Harding, Alan Munroe and Derek Taylor. This group also contacted other U3As to gain their opinions and experiences over this matter. After several meetings their recommendation was that we remain unincorporated. This proposal was endorsed at a members meeting in June. Another issue looked by this committee was whether we should have liability insurance. Most U3A groups saw the risk of not having liability protection as extremely low. It was decided at this stage not to progress this matter.

*Website review*

Information and presentation on our website is now a significant way to introduce potential members to our programmes and activities but also a vital tool in communicating to our existing members. We recognise that Chris Botur who has made a tremendous contribution to its development and use is retiring. After unsuccessful efforts to find member(s) with the skills to replace him we have engaged Danish Jahangi to be our webmaster. There is also a need to have a system whereby we can communicate with him what material should be posted and what needs to be withdrawn. A subcommittee:Yvonne Evans, Steve McBride and Paul Harding has been established to look at website issues. They realise there is competition for members among U3As in the city so it is important that our initial representation and access through the Home Page is up to the mark.

**Membership and proposed new Life Members**

Our membership stands at 130 up from 120 in 2023. We enjoy excellent facilities at our Chapel Street Centre and there is still space for newcomers.! An informal poll suggested that the most effective method to gain members was through your contacts.

After looking at their contribution to the club over many years the committee are recommending at the AGM that team Peter and Pat Braithwaite be awarded Life Membership.

**Mapura Bright Start Scholarship**

This year several of the speakers donated their fee to this scholarship and with the addition from our own funds some $4,000 was given to this worthwhile fund.

**Networking with other U3As**

The current networking structure with other U3A groups has recently been disbanded. It is hoped that a less formal network will continue as the sharing of useful information about speakers and topics would be helpful for all groups. We have expressed our interest in such a development.

**New Members for Incoming Committee**

For our well- being there needs to be an energetic committee. The following folk have indicated that they wish not to stand again on the committee: Chris Botur, Janet Jones and Hilary Talbot. Colin Freeman intends to phase out from the treasurer ship. I have decided not to stand as chairman but prepared to be on the committee. Therefore download a Nomination Form and let us be embarrassed by the number willing to join the team.

**Thanks to members**

Finally I would like to thank you our members for your support, friendliness and intellectual interest. I consider that U3A is in good heart and we can only succeed with your vital input.

Howard Harvey (Chairman)

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