

U3A Dunedin Charitable Trust

Chair's Annual Report

It gives me great pleasure to present this Annual Report for U3A Dunedin for the period 2017/2018.

The years from 2015 to 2017 were ones of great change for U3A Dunedin. Our administration moved from paper-based to web-based, and with the removal of the waiting list, our membership increased over this period from 700 to 850.

It might be reasonable to look on this past 2017-18 year as one of consolidation, where we have been dealing with matters resulting from these changes, and I suggest this will go on for some time. We've worked hard to retain the friendly feel that is special to U3A Dunedin, and our web-based communications and information have become central to our ability to remain in touch with members.

Our membership still stands at about 850, but I suggest this will continue to increase slowly. 90% of our members have indicated that they wish to communicate via the web; we also put special effort into maintaining our service to the remaining 10%. However, with eight mailings per year, our paper and postage costs for this activity are significant. We will be working with these members to see how we might retain our service while minimising costs.

We are almost entirely a volunteer-based organization, which is unusual for a membership and activity of the size and scope of U3A Dunedin. Many people (including myself) find active involvement in U3A to be a rewarding stepping stone following retirement, to make new friends and learn about new activities and interests. So please consider this as a call for new volunteers to contribute to U3A's interesting and worthwhile organization.

Financially, U3A is in a very good position. I thank our Treasurer, Evan Taylor, for his stewardship, and will leave him to talk to his report.

As with many similar organisations, we were required to report to the Charities Commission for the 2016 year, using their new reporting requirements. This was not an easy or quick task, but we understand the system we are in good shape to make future returns to this statutory body.

Our three **Series** of courses that we offer every year are a core part of our activities. These courses are largely organised by a Board subcommittee, the Programme Committee, and your Board puts considerable effort into ensuring it is supported. Barrie Peake took over as Chair last September, and it is pleasing to report that three new members have recently joined this subcommittee. Noelene Evans retired after three years as Programme Secretary, and Phyll Esplin has taken over that role. Our organization owes a lot to members of this committee.

Recent course-related changes include

- Ensuring that a member, having missed out on a ballot, does not miss out on any course that they enrol for in the next series
- The course brochures have a new look, which we trust you appreciate
- We continue to support the Ride Share scheme, a form of carpooling of most use to members who, for one reason or another, could not otherwise attend a course

This past year's courses have been varied and successful, though we are frequently surprised by the level of support - both greater than, and less than, expected. There was an issue with the Spring 2017 Series when it became clear that the two most popular courses had been scheduled for what we thought was the smaller venue. The rapid decision to change from Leith Bowling Club to the Otago Golf Club for all courses for that Series resulted in a number of concerns from members, so much that I wrote to all members explaining the action. We have done quite a lot of work since on the issue of venues. One outcome was to discover that with some rearrangement of seating, the Leith Bowling Club could achieve a capacity of 140 close to that of the Golf Club (160).

Both these large rooms are less successful for our smaller courses, and this remains a concern.

I am particularly pleased to note a course being organized for the Spring Series later this year by Te Tumu, the School of Māori, Pacific & Indigenous Studies at the University of Otago. This is something new for us, and very welcome.

The Board gave consideration to use a **paid contract administrator** to assist with some of our work but concluded that, given our continuing volunteer contribution, there is not a clear need at this time.

There are currently eight **Discussion Groups** of 6 – 12 people, meeting in a member's home or at a local gallery or other place of exploration. The number is growing, but slowly. There is huge potential for like-minded people to get together to explore mutual interests: some New Zealand U3As have over 40 such groups.

Our **University of Otago representative**, who sits *ex officio* on the Board, is Dr Elaine Webster, Director of the university's Summer School and Continuing Education programme. This places her in an ideal position to assist with contacting departments and speakers, and she gave crucial help with the course under development by Te Tumu.

The breadth and usefulness of the U3A Dunedin **web site** has significantly increased over the past year. It is worthy of a 30 minute exploration if you haven't looked into its nooks and crannies. One of our aims has been to make it of increasing use to members. Copies of previous lecture presentations (when suitable and available) are now accessible on the Web site. Our home page was recently enhanced by a series of changing images relating to upcoming courses.

The Board is now supported by a Board-only section of the Web site that includes all details and documents we might need, and a diary which automatically emails members two days before their action is due! Our thanks to Alan Jackson, and to John Shanks who does this work under contract, for their extremely fine work.

New members of the **Board** include Stuart Strachan and Ngaire Bates (Discussion Group convenor).

One of our jobs is to ensure the vitality and continuity of U3A Dunedin, for our current members and indeed if we continue to grow to 900 or even 1000 members. To that end we have begun to document job descriptions for position-holders, and to ensure there is an understudy/alternative. If someone has to step into a complex role at short notice, some pre-planning can help 'keep the show on the road'.

We get information from members constantly and in a number of ways – via our website, course feedback forms, via individual members of the Board, and we also welcome comments via email, letter, in person at courses, and at the AGM. If you think we are still not meeting the needs of the membership, do let us know. Constructive critique is always welcome.

Until recently the U3A Dunedin AGM has been held in July. Since a change in our Trust Deed we held an AGM in late June last year, and this one is in late May. I understand our Treasurer would prefer the AGM to be held even closer to the end of our financial year, 31 December.

Our thanks to the Otago Golf Club and the Leith Bowling Club for their helpfulness and hospitality, and to IAV for their excellent audio-visual work.

I acknowledge our three Life Members Alan Horseman, Brian O'Rourke, and also Lin Phelan, who is still an active member of U3A.

I have already mentioned the work of our Programme Secretary, Phyll Esplin. I would like to note the work of our Membership Secretary Lynda Jackson, whose excellent work holds us all together, and of our Board Secretary, Marion Potter, whose excellent work and organizational memory is so important to the work of your Board.

I am delighted Marion Potter is this year standing to be a member of the Board. I should like to introduce two new members standing for the Board. Jude Hathaway, originally from Southland, was a journalist with the Otago Daily Times for 29 years. Jill Geary was originally from Auckland where she worked for 25 years in TV news; she has worked in Real Estate in Dunedin for 18 years.

I particularly thank Stephen Baird, who steps down after three years on the Board. Stephen has made significant contributions, particularly during some difficult moments for the Board when his legal knowledge was of great help.

I thank all members of the current Board for their hard work, commitment, good humour and sense of purpose. Everyone has worked hard to serve U3A Dunedin well over this past year

I will be stepping down as Chair of the Board at its next meeting, when the positions of Chair, (and if possible) Deputy Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are all elected or reappointed.

I suggest your U3A will be in good hands for the coming year. I thank all of our members for their ongoing encouragement and support.

Gretchen Kivell
Chair, Board of U3A Dunedin
31 May 2018