



Letter from the Chair

U3A Dunedin

4th May 2020

Your Board met for almost two hours this morning but via Zoom. I've put a photograph of the gathering on our **Photo Gallery**.

Zoom, FaceTime, Messenger, Skype etc are all methods being used by our members to keep in touch with each other and their families. Most are free. There is no reason why that technology can't be used by lots of informal U3A groups at the moment to keep in touch – whether about U3A things or not.

I'm 75 now and hope to live until at least 90, so that means I have to keep up with all these new developments for the next 15 years, or risk getting out of touch at a time when I'll probably value contact more than ever. I do encourage everyone to learn the new methods, to ask a friend (as I certainly do) to show you how to set them up and get the best out of them.

The Board ratified my election as Chair until 2021, but has not yet selected a vice-Chair. There are two places available at the Board table (strong hint).

The Board discussed rebates for course fees etc and it is likely that everyone who enrolled for Series 1 will get a \$20 rebate. This will be given as a credit and will be seen when logging into "MyU3A" and looking at "My Account" just as soon as that piece of software is completed. (It is taking a while as University staff – including our Web Master - are still transferring courses to on-line delivery and are now preparing to run the exams on-line).

The issue of a rebate for the annual membership fee was also discussed and it is likely that there will be a significant credit for that also (credited to your U3A account) of around \$20 – so that the membership fee in 2021 will be around \$10 to \$15. We will know better when we get to the end of the year and have paid all the accounts.

Instead of giving a donation to University Departments after the delivery of excellent lectures, the Board would like to make a donation to the Pūtea Tautoko hardship fund for students (also a link on our web site) which has been mentioned in the ODT. If you would prefer your credit for the course fee rebate to go into that fund, please let our Treasurer, Evan Taylor, know by e-mail (evan.taylor@xtra.co.nz).

What next? Well quite a lot... the loss of face-to-face time and the social interaction which we enjoy with our meetings is felt very keenly, especially by those folk who live alone. It is likely that everyone knows some of the members of U3A who live close by and so it is suggested that informal walking groups be set up. Members can arrange times, routes to be followed etc by 'phone and see where the journeys lead. Looking at plants, gardens, buildings, sharing news and encouraging each other to do that 30 minutes exercise each day can all be aims. Groups of three, four or five – at all times obeying the rules of social distancing – will do the trick.

The web site has been extremely busy since lock-down with lots of photos added to the **Photo Gallery** (please take a look and send me some of your own - maybe some you take on your daily walk). The **U3A Links** section has been hugely extended to link to museums and art galleries which have virtual tours, podcasts, papers which will be of interest to some and much more. The **News and Coming Events** section includes items from University (there was a one hour teleconference last Thursday arranged by Communication Science with Siouxsie Wiles (the red-haired scientist who is regularly on TV just now answering questions about the virus) and all that had to be done to join in was click on the link which was on our web site. There was a link to the commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland organised by the Irish Embassy in Wellington – again easy to join in. There are links to the Royal New Zealand Ballet productions which have been screening for the last five weeks (this weekend *White Swan – Black Swan*) and to performances by the English National Theatre as well as NZSO concerts. Finally there is a new **Magazine** section, which requires your member login and there you will find many articles on Science, Literature, Travel etc. The articles on Saudi Arabia by Hilary Hunt are fascinating, and we are more than happy to add more articles of interest.

The Board has asked that I find out if anyone is looking at the site (or whether I'm wasting my time) and so I ask you to send me an appropriate e-mail please.

The Programme Committee is investigating the development and implementation of a single lecture series utilising existing presenters for delivery by Zoom in June/July. This would give us two lectures per week, one hour each, during the winter months. There is a lot of investigation to be done yet but just to say that we don't want winter months to be "empty" so far as U3A is concerned.

In addition that Committee is hoping that if we reach Alert Level 1 in October / November, a further series of shortened courses in normal form, might be arranged – a sort of spring mini-series.

Barrie Peake, immediate past chair of that committee, has undertaken to see what can be done about training sessions for members with the Zoom technology.

Don't forget the **Discussion Groups** – the walkers are fine and current affairs, poetry, book discussions, German conversation etc can all happen via computer. At home we have had many discussions with friends via *Messenger* about cooking and they have helped enliven lock-down menus. Ngaire is doing a sterling job with those groups and in many ways they are potentially the backbone of our delivery for the next few weeks.

If there are any cases of difficulty with which U3A can reasonably be expected to help, please do contact our Secretary Marion Potter 453 4721 (mw.potter42@gmail.com).

We have likely spent the last few weeks coming to terms with the new lifestyle, gardening etc and now maybe we turn our minds to more stimulating pursuits – and U3A can certainly provide plenty of those.

Very best wishes

Alan Jackson
Chair 2018-21