

2020 AGM Part 1- Presidential report by Guy Palmer

Given coronavirus, we plan to hold the AGM in two parts: the first part is being held by videoconference on 19th August and the second part will be a physical meeting at a later date still to be determined. I (Guy) will give my full presidential address at the second part. In the meantime, this is a brief note for the first part. It summarises some of the major developments in the year since the last AGM, where we are now, and some of the key challenges facing us.

Major developments in the year since the last AGM

2019/20 was a period of growth for the U3A. Our final 2019 membership was around 640, which is 100 more than the previous year. In Term 1, 2020 we had around 75 classes, which is 15 more than a year previously. Before coronavirus, our 2020 membership was buoyant and currently stands at around 630.

Diamond Creek Senior Citizens is now a major venue for us and was also the location of our first 'mini expo'. In Term 1 2020, our courses ranged across 17 venues (plus private residences).

We started organising once-off talks.

We participated in the annual Seniors Festival.

We had a marketing presence at a number of the annual festivals.

We did some fundraising (defibrillators, diamond valley railway, sausage sizzle, lamb tasting, petrol).

The website has been substantially re-vamped and extended. It now comprises around 330 pages compared to only 10 a year ago.

We continued discussions with the Council re Eltham Central Pavilion and our other venues (see later section on challenges facing us).

Where we are now

Because of coronavirus, our face-to-face classes were all brought to a sudden halt near the end of Term 1. They were never going to re-start in Term 2. We were planning to re-start many of them in Term 3, but then the virus hit again. It looks unlikely that they will re-start in Term 4. Let's hope we can re-start in Term 1, 2021.

Not only have our classes stopped, but people have stopped joining the U3A (4 people in the last 5 months compared to 40 in the corresponding period in 2019).

But that certainly doesn't mean that nothing is happening.

More than 30 of our classes are continuing electronically, mostly via Zoom videoconferencing. This is a major achievement and one which compares favourably with other U3As.

We have also started organising once-off Zoom classes (4 in the current term).

The office is functioning via email, phone and snail mail.

Since mid-March, we have produced 22 weekly newsletters ('Gibber Gabbers') and will continue to do so. 110 of our members have contributed thus far to at least one Gibber Gabber.

We continued discussions with the Council via videoconferencing and email re Eltham Central Pavilion and our other venues (see later section on challenges facing us).

We are financially stable. The cancellation of physical classes has also reduced our expenditure considerably during 2020.

Some of the key challenges facing us

Getting back to any sort of normalcy will be a major challenge. Different tutors will have different views about when (or even if) they want to re-start. Different venues will re-open at different times. Continuing social distancing rules will make class sizes smaller and some venues problematic. Some (many?) of our membership may not want to return. It may be more difficult to attract new members. Everything is uncertain.

Our potential re-location to the newly renovated Eltham Central Pavilion is still up in the air. It is now almost 3 years since the Council and ourselves first discussed the possibility of us moving our headquarters to the pavilion but we still haven't received a proper offer from the Council for us using it. We have had lots of discussions, we have told them what would be acceptable to us and they have verbally said that their offer will fit with this, but we still await the written offer itself. Also, although the renovations were apparently recently completed, coronavirus has meant that none of us have been able to visit the renovated building. Looking further ahead, if and when we ever move into the pavilion, that will generate a whole series of challenges (and opportunities).

It is not viable to re-open the Office at the courthouse in the current climate. We hope to open our new office in the Eltham Central Pavilion at some stage.

Finally, some of the challenges that I discussed in my 2019 presidential address still remain relevant, including: developing our Diamond Creek membership; re-energising our Northern Nillumbik activities; and formalising some of our tenant/landlord relationships with Council.

And finally, some thanks

I would like to end by thanking some people.

Without people volunteering, the U3A would not exist and I would like to thank all 130(!) of our members who volunteered in some capacity during 2019/20.

I would like to thank all of our tutors (without whom we would obviously have no classes) and all of our Office volunteers (the Office being the backbone of our organisation).

I would specifically like to thank all those who served on the 2019/20 Committee but are now standing down (Debra Forbes, Gail Clayton, Gillian Essex, Lesley Wing Jan, Rosemary Aitken), those who served on the 2019/20 Committee and are re-nominating for 2020/21 (Cath Baumann, Dianne Parslow, Ken Wing Jan, Pam Griffith), and the 6 people who are newly nominating for 2020/21 (names to be revealed!).

And I would particularly like to thank four individuals whose contributions have been, and continue to be, over and above: Dianne Parslow (course coordination and much more), Judy Vizzari (all sorts of articles), Maree Papworth (management of the Office) and Tony Lee (our internal IT systems).

Finally, thanks to those of you who are participating in this unusual AGM.

Any questions?