

## MUDGEES DISTRICT U3A PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2024 AGM

I'd like to present the President's Report for the 2024 Mudgee District U3A 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting.

Now in our third year at Kildallon we are comfortably settled in and conduct most of our classes and activities here.

Council has continued to make improvements to Kildallon Education Centre. In the last 12 months an oven and an extraction fan have been installed in the kitchen, new blinds were fitted to the eastern rooms, a handrail was added to the front steps and the paved area at the back was given a new roof. Council also undertook a rather expensive exercise in having the exterior of the original building painted and while the scaffolding was in place, some roof repairs took place. This time last year the front of the site looked dreadful as most of the vegetation had been removed and there was construction material and equipment everywhere but after the completion of the CUC building, a whole program of beautification has taken place with a smart white picket fence, new gardens and paths.

It's my understanding that further landscaping is to take place, and that the exterior of the other buildings will also be painted early next year, but as for the requested extension to the car parking area and disabled parking spots, we are still waiting.

Construction of the Country Universities Centre had only just commenced this time last year and there were concerns about how it would impact on some classrooms. Fortunately, the gap between the new and old buildings was widened and the expected problems with airflow and natural light did not eventuate (if anything, the glare from the white roof gives too much light into A4). The CUC has helped bring Kildallon Education Centre to the attention of the community and it serves as a de facto office for U3A as many of our enrolment forms are dropped off there.

### **Course/Activities/ Events**

Speaking of enrolments, while still not at pre-pandemic levels, 2024 has continued to see steady growth in membership. Our current enrolment stands at 219 with more applications trickling in as the year progresses.

This year, U3A offered 32 courses.

<b>COURSE AREA</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE 2022</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE 2023</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE 2024</b>
The Arts	24%	24%	28%
Wellness	14%	21%	19%
Discussion and History	31%	30%	38%
Games	14%	9%	3%
Literature	17%	15%	12%

As well as our regular, well attended classes there have been new ones. We have learned about the significant contribution particular people have made to society in *People who Made a Difference* and *Artists who Changed the World* and this will continue in term 4 with *In Praise of Quiet Courage*. Our understanding of inventiveness has been broadened by *A Short Sprint through Humanity's Long History*. Our mental state has been looked after with *Mindfulness and Meditation* and our creativity has been sparked by *Weaving from Nature*.

There have been 'one off' sessions as well. In March, Marcia McDonald from Service NSW spoke to us about accessing rebates and services to reduce cost of living pressure and at the end of July Valda told us how the Senior Rights Service acts as an advocate for Seniors. Next month Erica will tell her story of coming to live in Australia from Poland.

Of course, there would be no classes at all if we didn't have Presenters and we thank those who volunteer their time to share their knowledge and skills with others.

At the end of last year, Mudgee District U3A celebrated its 25th year with a wonderful gathering at Oak Tree Retirement Village that demonstrated many U3A activities. Judith spoke to us about how U3A came to be started in Mudgee and how it has developed since its inception in 1998 (information that came in very handy later). The Line Dancers had us tapping our toes, while the Tai Chi group mesmerised us. Cantobella entertained with a bracket of Australian carols and during morning tea, there was time to admire the work of the artists, quilters, knitters, paper folders and Christmas decoration makers. The trivia session devised by Marianne and Janet tested our knowledge of Mudgee District U3A and our memory of newsworthy events of 1998. The morning was rounded off with a carol singing session, led by Andrea and, I believe, a good time was had by all.

The following day, Cantobella sang at the Rotary Carols, held at the showground. Their performance must have been more than satisfactory as they have been invited back this year.

Once again U3A has worked collaboratively with the Mudgee Readers' Festival to bring 'Live and Local' (screenings of sessions from the Sydney Writers' Festival) to Kildallon. Over four days in May this year, 172 people attended the 21 sessions on offer. Although this was a pleasing response, it would be good to see our book groups get on board and support this event. To extend our relationship with the Readers' Festival, it is hoped to live stream some sessions from the Sydney Crime Writers' Festival (BAD) mid-September this year (details on our notice board).

Following the success of the Grand Opening of Kildallon in November 2022, Mudgee Arts Council was planning a Spring Fair, however this was put on hold largely due to the construction of the CUC and the fact that the front yard was a total mess. Instead, the event was postponed until Autumn with the intention of pairing with the CUC for its grand opening. Unfortunately, the opening occurred mid-week, which ruled out that idea and the following weekend was Easter, so the event didn't happen until April. Along the way the commercial emphasis implied by being a fair was changed to a showcase of what happens at Kildallon (or the Baptist Church, as the case may be).

Kildallon Expo went ahead despite adverse weather conditions that forced the event to be staged under the covered area (supported by seven gazebos of various sizes) at the back of the main building. U3A contributed to the day by running a very popular cake and drinks stall, displaying arts and craft and with performances by the Line Dancers, the Tai Chi group and Cantobella. Thank you to all who assisted on that day and thank you on behalf of CCC as the money raised went towards the acquisition of display boards that, when they are constructed, will be available for use by all groups at Kildallon. In case you haven't seen it, here is a record of that event. (Video)

On the topic of promoting Kildallon, MAC was asked to participate in a proposed Skills and Training hub at the Small Farm Field Days. Enormous thanks go to Marianne who organised the display that showed what Kildallon is all about, and to Janet and Liz for their assistance in running the stand. The Mudgee District U3A banner was proudly on display, and we had our program booklet and trifold there as well. Marianne reported that these proved very popular with attendees, and although many of people spoken to came

from outside our immediate region, they were interested to see what we offer our members, several of them taking booklets to show to their own regional U3As.

### **Publications**

- the 2024 Program booklet and trifold
- the Presenters' Information Booklet
- Newsletters (mostly) monthly

### **Sub-Committees**

- (i) Risk Assessment –
  - An electrician has been lined up to do the annual tagging and testing.
  - Maintenance issues at Kildallon are reported
- (ii) Website – thanks to David Price our website is kept up to date and professionally presented. While the possibility of including the capacity for making on-line payments has been looked at, it would involve the website moving to a higher level of service, and that, of course, would cost more. For the moment, that idea is on hold.

### **U3A Network**

Things were very quiet on the Network front this year. The annual conference was held at Belmont in April, but no one from our organisation was able to attend. Due to ill health, our Regional Representative, Lindsay Cox, resigned and Jennifer Short from Bathurst (?) was co-opted into the position. Since then, she too has stood down and a replacement has not been found which leaves our district without a representative at Network level. That makes it more difficult to find out about decisions that have been made. The 2025 conference will be held at Orange, and our U3A has been asked to contribute, although what form this will take is yet to be decided.

### **The Committee**

At last year's AGM the following people were returned to the Committee – Stephen Russell (Secretary), Janet Duffy (Treasurer), Cheryl Russell (Program Coordinator and MAC representative), Debrah McGarrigle (Events Coordinator), Marianne Matthews (Minutes Secretary and later, Vice President), Susanne Scholes (Assistant Treasurer), Nancy Chapman (Welfare Officer) Liz McNamara (Publicity Officer) and myself, while David Price remained our Web Master. We also welcomed Erica Wojciechowski who became the Assistant Program Coordinator. In other words a top team.

It hasn't been the easiest of years for the Committee and I thank each member for their commitment to U3A, and for pulling together to make things work.

In November last year, we were devastated by the loss of our long-time member and good friend, Nancy. Nancy held the record for the person attending the most U3A courses in a year, a record that she proudly upheld, year after year. We miss Nancy – her bright personality, her 'can do' attitude, her wisdom born of experience and her concern for others which made her the perfect Welfare Officer. (We also miss seeing her with her blower removing the leaves that gather at the back door). In honour of Nancy, U3A gave a donation to the Garvan Institute specifying that it go towards Shingles research.

With Nancy gone, Liz took on the Welfare Officer role, Deb became the person to keep the fridge supplied with milk, and after an appeal, Margaret Brennan agreed to return to the Committee. Thank you to you Deb, Liz and Margaret for taking on these roles.

Then, in February this year, we lost two more Committee members when Cheryl and Steve Russell went, for family reasons, to New Zealand for an extended stay. At the time, Cheryl was the Program Coordinator and Steve the Secretary, both demanding roles to fill. Erica, who had been paddling in the shallow end of the pool as Assistant Program Coordinator, was suddenly pushed into deep water and had to learn to swim very quickly. She also inherited the role of the U3A representative to MAC, something she did not count on. She will be the first to admit that at times being Program Coordinator has been overwhelming, but she has given it her all and we thank her for it.

We also thank Cheryl and Steve for all the work they did to get the year off to a good start, even while they were packing up their house, ready for the move. Steve, as Secretary was responsible for creating an on-line file for U3A documents and assisted Cheryl with the administration involved with the Program Co-ordinator role. Cheryl, in that role, sought new people for courses and convinced existing presenters to remain. She prepared this year's program and had all the class lists ready before she left. Today Steve leaves the Committee, but we are hoping that Cheryl will rejoin us in the new year and therefore, she is standing for reelection.

With two casual vacancies on Committee, we were very grateful that Pam and Chris Bellhouse offered to step in and fill the gaps. After observing the workings of the Committee, I am pleased to say that they haven't been scared off and are standing for election to the Committee today. Thank you, Pam and Chris.

Sadly today, we are losing two more long-standing Committee members, as Deb and Susanne step down. Debrah has been our Events Coordinator for many years. She has very capably organised venues and catering for U3A events including our end of year function. Susanne, as Assistant Treasurer, is the one who gets to approve the payments set up by Janet. Susanne was going to step down last year, but she stayed on to make sure that there were voices other than those of former teachers on Committee. Both Deb and Susanne are dedicated committee members, who can be relied on to be there when a team effort is required. We are sorry that you are leaving the Committee but know this is not the end of your association with U3A. Thank you both for your contribution to Mudgee District U3A.

As you are aware, there is to be a shake-up of the Committee from today (assuming that we are all elected). This will involve some role swapping. Janet stepped in to take on the role Treasurer after the passing of Ray Parle. Since then, she has overseen the change to a different accounting system and has done an excellent job of managing our finances. She will pass the baton to Erica, who has had previous experience as Treasurer with other organisations. Janet will take on the enormous role of Program Coordinator, a role she has held previously. She will be ably assisted by Margaret who has also previously held that role.

And so, I address you for the last time as President. In the last four years, we have dealt with a pandemic, lost dear friends and key committee members, and we have seen the world change dramatically. Despite these setbacks, U3A is still here, fulfilling the much-needed role in society of keeping seniors active in body and mind. In my opinion, the greatest achievement in those four years is that, after many years of searching and petitioning, we have a permanent home here at Kildallon, and I am proud to have been part of that process. Following on from the excellent leadership of St Judith was never going to be an easy task but I have done my best to live up to the high standard she set. Now it is the turn of someone else, and I am happy to hand over to the more than capable, ever so competent Marianne.

**Heather Rushton**