

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT: MAY 2020**

After seven fascinating lectures our lives, and lectures, were brought to a shocking halt with the Covid-19 virus. With the closure of the Embassy we postponed the scheduled lectures.

The committee meantime explored the possibility of an alternative to the Embassy lectures and thus began administration of the short survey to elicit members' opinions, provision of personal help to some 60 members and the two-week trial of delivering lectures via the software application Zoom. All this involved another great effort from our programme coordinators in reorganising the lecture timetable and securing presenters willing to talk to us via Zoom. Alan Wright led the learning of the application with several of us following suit. A review of the two-week trial convinced the committee we should commit to twice-weekly Zoom lectures from 12 May and these have attracted large attendances. We are pleased that many members who may not have been interested or able to attend the Embassy can remain at home and from their living rooms participate in U3A lectures.

From the very black Covid-19 cloud there is a silver lining. This is in the form of our annual subscription, with the renewal period due very soon. You may recall that at the last Annual General Meeting we reported a persistent deficit in our financial position and advised that for the 2020-21 financial year subscriptions would rise to \$40 per year. Due to much lower operating expenses with no Embassy rental our Treasurer is pleased to recommend that the \$35 annual subscription remain unchanged which the committee unanimously endorsed.

We have committed to Zoom lectures at least until 3 July (the end of Term 2) which gives certainty for our programme coordinators. Our updated calendar schedule is on the website. Assessment of whether we continue with Zoom following our Term 2 break will be made once the Embassy reopens and subject to Government advice on large gatherings.

Before each lecture we ask for the presenter's permission to upload their slides (where used) to the website. With Zoom we are able to record, with presenters' permission, and the recordings are kept for a short period. If a member wishes to have a copy of a recording contact me or a member of the committee for the link.

Our new modernised website is now operational providing a much cleaner and attractive look. Gwen Levick led the project and together with Aidan Kay worked intensively with Sam Devoy of IT Spinach over many months. Careful attention was paid to user requirements.

New features include the Calendar that lists lectures by the month and the FAQ section. We are very grateful for Ian Goodwin granting permission for the use of his beautiful Wellington photo and very much appreciate the efficiency and care Gwen and Aidan have taken with this project.

Interest groups have coped with the virus situation in different ways. Alan Wright has helped those who wish to use Zoom to deliver their programmes. He provides further detail in this newsletter.

We wish you well in these still uncertain times,

Barbara Crump