

U3A Wellington City President's Report Year Ending 30 June 2024

It is with pleasure that I report on the activities of U3A Wellington City for the year ending 30 June 2024. A pleasure because the association is in good heart and providing a full schedule of activities to a growing sector of our community which stands to benefit from regular intellectual stimulation, interest groups and social interaction. Membership has risen steadily to a current total of 1,313.

Philip Harrison assumed office as President in September 2023. He brought great energy, enthusiasm and innovative ideas to the challenging assignment. He had already made his mark as a member of the Programme Committee and his photographic skills made an indelible impression. He initiated the process to update the constitution and had useful digital skills. Unfortunately, he felt it necessary to resign after about six months because of health issues and family commitments. Barbara Crump, his predecessor who had already served five years as president and five years before that as secretary, took up the reins again till a replacement could be found. Once again, her boundless energy, institutional knowledge and superb people skills enabled the club to continue its activities with minimal disruption. After a couple of months, I was appointed. Thanks to the good offices of Barbara, the transition could not have been smoother.

What were my first impressions on taking over? Support came from every side. The machine was so well oiled that all activities continued with no interruption. Committee meetings have been business-like with each member reporting comprehensively on their portfolios, but also feeding off one another for the common good of our organisation. We are fortunate to have the services of this dedicated team of people who devote many hours to enrich our leisure time. Their portfolio reports for each Committee meeting always make interesting reading.

Faith Atkins has done a sterling job registering new members and renewing subscriptions. She managed to stay abreast of this even while overseas for a protracted time. Gill Sutherland dealt with the posting out of new cards while Faith was out of the country. The new Stripe payment platform has been installed for all membership payments and the Paypal account is no longer being used. Each Stripe transaction costs \$1.30 and the cards cost about \$6.00 depending on the size of the batch ordered. Lost cards during 2024 have cost us about \$90 so we may have to start charging for them.

Newsletters are a vital channel of communication to all U3A members and to the wider public. Janet Tyson is the editor who assembles the information and edits all submissions. In a very friendly and professional way she edits the articles and produces a very readable document. Saskia van Stockum then works on the layout and adds the photographs. We are fortunate to have two such competent people doing this work. Positive feedback indicates that the publication is greatly valued.

Our programme committee consisting of Gill Sutherland, Libby Clark, Simon Louisson and Brian Pauling is probably the most visible of the Committee. Arranging two lectures per week is no mean assignment. One cannot but be impressed by the calibre of the presenters that they have found. The variety of topics is amazing and one seldom leaves lectures without feeling stimulated, enthusiastic, worried or entertained. The various work histories of the programme committee members open many doors for our benefit. Over 200 members, and often over 300 members, regularly attend lectures. Programme planning for 2025 is well advanced. In future, if a speaker is unable to attend at short notice, an email will be sent to all members notifying them of the change of presenter. We have a few lecturers on standby who have indicated that they would be prepared to step in at the last minute.

All members know about the sign-in process. The warm welcome received sets the tone of the meetings. Jeannie Buxton is the mastermind behind this. Teams of two now control the signing in for a few weeks at a time. The computer has been upgraded and the system seems to be working well. Jeannie, who spends many hours organising this, also regularly reports on the numbers attending each meeting.

Sue Dale has continued to offer an eclectic mix of events in her programme. Many of these take place during U3A recesses, but they are also popular during term time. Sunday roasts serve two purposes – enjoyable fellowship and no need to cook. Circa Theatre, art exhibitions and concerts have entertained those with a cultural bent. For those who enjoy the outdoors, there have been garden tours and a visit to the Feilding sales yards.

For most of the year in question Linda Beckett was in charge of the Special Interest Groups (SIG). She was very efficient and the activities ran smoothly. When she resigned, Demetra Kennedy took over this portfolio. She is proving to be an individual with great energy and enthusiasm. Meetings have been held with group coordinators and, in no time, she had an in-depth understanding of the workings and needs of the SIGs. After a stock-take it was found that much of the equipment was obsolete. A major upgrade is underway at present. Demetra has brought a useful corporate perspective to our Committee meetings.

Malcolm Wheeler has proved a faithful and competent Website administrator. No task seems to be too much trouble for him and it is reassuring to know that the website is always up to date. He has also been our go-to person for all matters computing. Initial planning has taken place to establish a new website/database interface for U3A Wellington City. This will be progressed in the second half of this year. Malcolm has compiled an asset register and current equipment list of our assets.

Tricia Walbridge has over five years, as secretary, served three different presidents and five committees. The presidents have appreciated her attention to detail, reliability, meticulous filing, institutional knowledge and timely reminders. I greatly appreciate the support that she has given me during the short time that I have been president.

In similar vein, our treasurer, John Rutherford, has carefully managed our finances. He has always been approachable and ready to discuss finances. This portfolio has not been easy, with residual Covid issues and Paypal problems complicating financial management.

Finally, many thanks to the unsung volunteers, led by Ian Goodwin, who set up the projection equipment and carry the microphones. Presenters often mention how impressed they are by the warm reception they receive and the user-friendliness of the technology.

The feedback that I receive is that you are enjoying what the Committee is providing. They are a great team who are putting in many hours to enrich your lives. May we go from strength to strength during the next year.

Bruce Levick

President