

## From the President: 2025 - A vintage year!

U3A Wellington City Incorporated 2025 – What a vintage year! We started with a membership of 1,348 and ended with 1,514 members, an over 11% increase. How has this been achieved?

One factor has been **the calibre of the lectures**. Attendance has hovered around 300 per lecture in all four terms. Two presentations stand out this term – Michael Baker on *Lessons learned from Covid-19* and Suzanne Snively on *Defusing what the Treasury describes as the Timebomb of an Aging Population*. Both drew audiences of well over 400 and on both occasions the queue stretched from the sign-in desk on the first floor out the front door of the Embassy Theatre along Kent Terrace to Majoribanks Street. Well done Lecture Programme Team!

The second contributor to this increase in numbers has been the blossoming of our **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)**. Facilitator Demetra Kennedy has set up five new SIGs, with more planned.. The inventory of all the equipment is up to date and a check has been made to ensure that all participants are paid-up members of U3A Wellington City. Well done Demetra and all SIG coordinators!

The third factor in the success of U3A Wellington City is the contribution made by **you, the membership**. Both Michael and Suzanne mentioned the amazing calibre of your questions in the Q & A sessions. Also, the way in which you have embraced the spirit of U3A that the Committee has tried to create – learning, having fun and sharing time with like-minded people.

Now it is time for you and especially your Committee to relax and enjoy time with family and friends. Have a great holiday!

**Bruce Levick**

[president@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:president@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)



*Season's Greetings*



## Term dates for 2026

### Term 1

Friday 13 February -  
Tuesday 31 March

### Term 2

Tuesday 21 April - Friday 3 July

### Term 3

Tuesday 21 July -  
Friday 25 September  
(No lectures during Film Festival,  
dates to be confirmed)

### Term 4

Tuesday 13 October –  
Friday 13 November

## Thanks for those who make it happen



*President Bruce Levick thanks the volunteers who make U3A Wellington City work so effectively, some 50 of whom came to the lunch. Photos: Janet Tyson*

More than 70 people were invited to what has become an annual event – the lunch to thank those volunteers who underpin the ongoing success of U3A Wellington City activities. As President **Bruce Levick** said, the event held after the last lecture of the year, is a chance to acknowledge and thank volunteers for their essential contributions.

It is also a chance to put a face to a name you've seen somewhere or find a connection with someone you've seen briefly when they scan your membership card. And as longtime volunteer **Doug Helps** said, it is also a chance to thank Bruce for his leadership and excellent lecture summaries.



The 12-person elected Committee members have portfolios including the lecture programme, events, SIGs, the website and the newsletter. They are at the hub of a much larger wheel that keeps activities running smoothly.

Thirty-one different people coordinate one or more Special Interest Groups. The two Email Co-ordinators send the weekly lecture updates and other essential information; on lecture days, the Front of House team welcomes and checks in members and guests, the Lecture Set-up team ensures you can see and hear the presentation, and the (very fit) Microphone Runners coordinate questions.



## Our ingenious event organiser – Sue Dale

If you've joined fellow U3A members on a bus odyssey around scenic Wellington or ventured to Foxton to greet the godwits arriving from Alaska, you know to thank **Sue Dale** for setting it all up. If you're amongst the groups that gather for monthly Sunday roasts, the same person organised them. (Such was the merriment amongst the 25 happy diners at the pre-Christmas event at The Grand that no-one remembered to take photos.)

Since she joined the Committee in 2021, Sue, [events@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:events@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz), has set up interesting experiences for some 2000 U3A members. They have gone to art and museum exhibitions, getting a close-up curator view of special displays. Eighty people visited the World Press photography show with U3A, while over 100 went to Mana Island – and some are still waiting to go next year.

Every time there's a gap in the lectures, or a noteworthy show or display during term time, Sue sets up an opportunity for members to mingle sociably. She honed her skills while working as promotions and publicity librarian at Wellington Central Library.

Sue inherited the role of event coordinator from Aidan Kay but has put her own spin on it, for instance, the idea of bus odysseys. Her networks and contacts are the source of many events such as behind the scenes visits to noteworthy houses and art collections. She is also open to suggestions from the membership, like last year's standout day trip to Feilding Sale Yards.

Sue, who was also the organiser for the recent volunteer luncheon, will take a break over Christmas. However, she will take enquiries for a trip on **Thursday 26 February** to *King Lear* by the Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe in Eastbourne.



*Sue Dale at the TeePee cidery with Peter Hatfield, Jeannie Buxton and Suzanne Blumhardt, is instantly recognisable by her cloche hat, usually black but also in red. It's her version of the tour guide's flag, making it easy for participants to find the person who can answer all the questions and has thought through all potential problems to make sure things run as smoothly as possible. Photo Janet Tyson.*



### Events to look forward to in early 2026

Details of new year events will be online at [www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz/special-activities/](http://www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz/special-activities/) and advised by email from **Friday 16 January**.

Included are:

- A return visit to Mana Island
- A visit to the Bond Store gin distillery in Paraparaumu
- A curator tour of the Frances Hodgkins and British modernism 1920-1935 at Toi Mahara Gallery
- A tour of Michaelangelo exhibit at Tākina.

*32 members enjoyed a curator talk and tour of "Ungeographic", the major exhibition by Australian South Sea artist Jasmine Togo-Brisby during the spring holiday break. Photo: Pātaka*

## SIGs winding down



*This cheerful Shakespeare Group must be discussing a comedy. However, the actor who will portray the tragic King Lear is amongst them.*

SIG activities are winding down after an enjoyable year, as shown by the selection of active members shown in the photos on this page. However, some SIGs will continue into December, and others will resume late January 2026. Check with your SIG coordinator for further details.

“We were pleased to watch Singing 4 Fun gain momentum and oversee the launch of Pickle Ball this quarter,” SIG Facilitator **Demetra Kennedy** says. Both will continue in the new year based on members’ feedback and enthusiasm for these activities. The Board Games group has a new co-ordinator, Isobel Reid.

“We will also continue to explore interest in the creation of an Environmental Issues SIG,” Demetra says.



*Pickleball is one of the SIGs launched in 2025. Photos: Demetra Kennedy.*

---

## New walking group steps out

Walking Group 2-3 [walking2-3@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:walking2-3@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz) is the newest Monday group to get going. As its name suggests, this group is designed for those whose fitness levels come between that for existing Groups 2 and 3 and meet some of the high demand for walking group places.

Demetra says she is still trying to find the fairest way to manage the huge popularity of walking groups, and the resultant wait lists. She asks people not to chop and change the group they are walking with. “We realise that, for many reasons, people may wish to move to a different group, and you can do if there is space for you,” she says. “However, we ask that you stay as a member of only ONE group at a time and give a month’s notice to the leader of that group if you want to move to another group.”



## 2026 Lecture Programme

The coordinators have an exciting list of speakers lined up for next year's programme. We are extremely fortunate to be able to choose from a long list of potential speakers, some of whom we come up with ourselves, and some being suggested by members, says **Libby Clark** ([programme.leader@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:programme.leader@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)).

The first lecture will be on **Friday 13 February** with the very topical speaker being **Robert Sarkies**, producer of the film *Pike River*. Madagascar-born singer "**Lala**" **Simpson** and award-winning architect **Hugh Tennent** follow in a Term 1 list that includes **Rhonda Pritchard**, **Phil Bagshaw**, and **Brooke Roberts**. Details are now being added to [u3awellingtoncity.org.nz/programme/](http://u3awellingtoncity.org.nz/programme/). Members will continue to be informed of upcoming speakers and events through weekly emails.

We look forward to another year of enthusiastic audiences! – **Libby, Simon, Anna and Ewen**



*Lala Simpson, singer, songwriter, and song leader.  
Photo supplied*

---

## A very popular lecture



*Above left: Well before the start of Suzanne Snively's lecture, the audience was queueing to get in. You will be pleased to know we are looking into acquiring an Eftpos machine to speed up the process when payments are needed at Front of House. Photo: Janet Tyson*



*Above right: Inside, it was a record full house with 458 members and guests. Photo: Simon Louisson*

---

## Wanted: marketing help

The Committee at its last meeting decided it would like to create a new position of Marketing Officer. A small budget has been allocated. U3A Wellington started doing some marketing this year, such as our *Bring a Friend for Free* days and posters. This has helped boost our membership numbers to the record of over 1500.

One of our Programme Coordinators, **Simon Louisson**, has been leading the marketing work, but he's quite involved with the speaker programme and would like someone else to concentrate on marketing, which is likely in future to include some social media. Simon says a basic marketing campaign is in place and the job is not onerous. Please contact our President, **Bruce Levick**, [president@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:president@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz) if you think you could help.

## Cutting membership card costs

Recently membership passed the 1500 milestone and today we have 1514 current members.

We are encouraging the use of digital membership cards, which can be printed out or uploaded to a smart phone to use for scanning at lectures. New members are also offered a physical card at no cost, but existing members who want to replace a lost card will first be sent a digital card, and then asked if they want to pay \$10 for a new physical card, to cover production and postage costs.

If you need assistance with a digital card, please ask **John Marwick**, the Membership Secretary [membership@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:membership@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz).

---

## Welcome to new members\* since our last newsletter

- |                   |                     |                    |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| ● Anne Ashby      | ● Christopher Hare  | ● Suzanne Miller   | ● Paul Selwyn-Smith |
| ● Sue Brown       | ● Elizabeth Henry   | ● Alexis Mundy     | ● Karen Thomas      |
| ● Maureen Cahill  | ● Lizzie Hockly     | ● Michael Osmond   | ● Ross Warring      |
| ● Debbie Collings | ● Caroline Jack     | ● David Parks      | ● Bev White         |
| ● Sarah Crawford  | ● Veronica Jacobsen | ● Barry Prior      | ● Marion Wood       |
| ● Marion Crawshaw | ● Dennis Marment    | ● Louise Rider     | ● Gretchen Woudt    |
| ● Marilyn Domney  | ● Jennifer McDonald | ● Barbara Roberts  | ● Jeff Zais         |
| ● Alex Gray       | ● Diana McRae       | ● Cathryn Robinson |                     |

\*This list includes only those members who at the time of joining have said they are happy to have their names included in our newsletter.

---

## Zealandia discoveries in the rain



The unscheduled early arrival of drizzle was not enough to put off the 17 U3A members and one guest who gathered to walk some lesser-known tracks of Zealandia. These included half of the Valley View Track, via the Tieke Track, the Fantail and Pylon Tracks and the Round the Lake Track.

Some members reported they were travelling on tracks they had never tried before, and others saw birds they hadn't seen before, **Liz Martin** said. A highlight was a sighting of the rare Kohurangi or Kirk's daisy in flower in the Heritage Discovery Area.

"Spring is a great time to visit Zealandia. The birds are actively nesting with lots of movement and singing – regardless of the weather," Liz said. After the walk, most of the group enjoyed lunch in the Zealandia Rata Cafe. Photo: Anita Williams.

U3A Wellington City – [www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](http://www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)

"Providing opportunities for continuing education that promotes the ongoing development and wellbeing of our members".

Lectures on Tuesday and Friday at the Embassy Theatre from 10.30-11.45.

Enquiries and feedback: [info@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](mailto:info@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)