

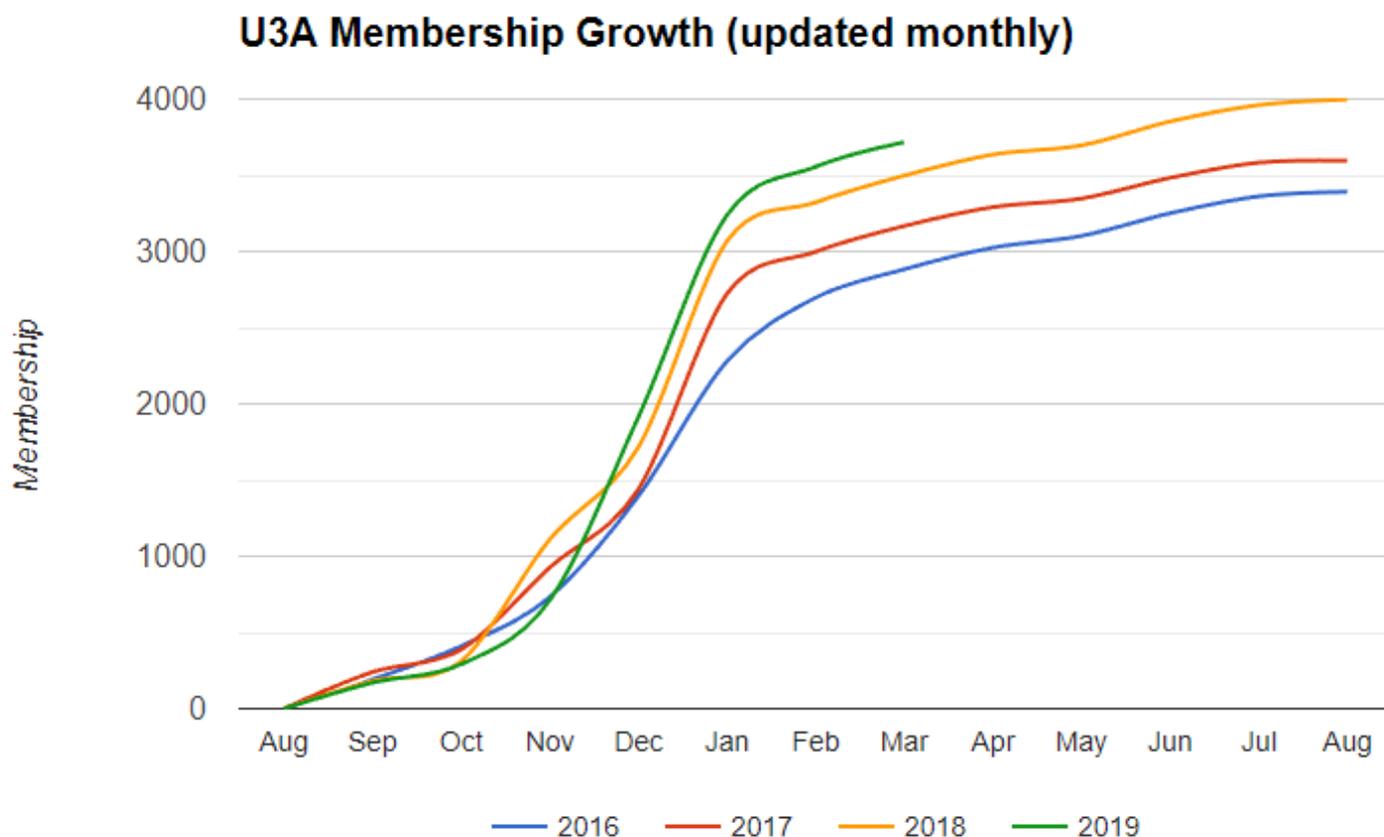
## The Year in Review

It gives me great pleasure to present this report on U3A Brisbane's activities and achievements in the past year.

The year has been one of substantial growth in membership, classes, and attendances, and our finances continue to maintain a healthy state.

### Membership

Our paid membership (excluding honorary tutors) for 2018 was 3997, an increase of 12% over the previous year. This graph illustrates the growth trends that we have experienced in recent years. Note that our membership year commences on 1<sup>st</sup> September.



Although the graph presently suggests further growth this year, our modelling indicates that overall membership growth for 2019 may be flat. Each year we consistently lose about 27% of our members who do not renew, which means we need to gain about 1100 new members in order to maintain the same overall membership level. Fortunately, our reputation in the community is such that we are able to attract new members at this level. This need for continued replenishment is assisted by the fact that our target demographic is increasing each year through retirement of the baby boomer generation. However, there is no room for complacency, and we must remain aware of the possibility that the interests of newly-minted seniors may well diverge from past patterns, as has happened with many bowls and golf clubs in the community. We also face competition from Men's Sheds, Probus Clubs and other seniors' organisations.

## Financial Position

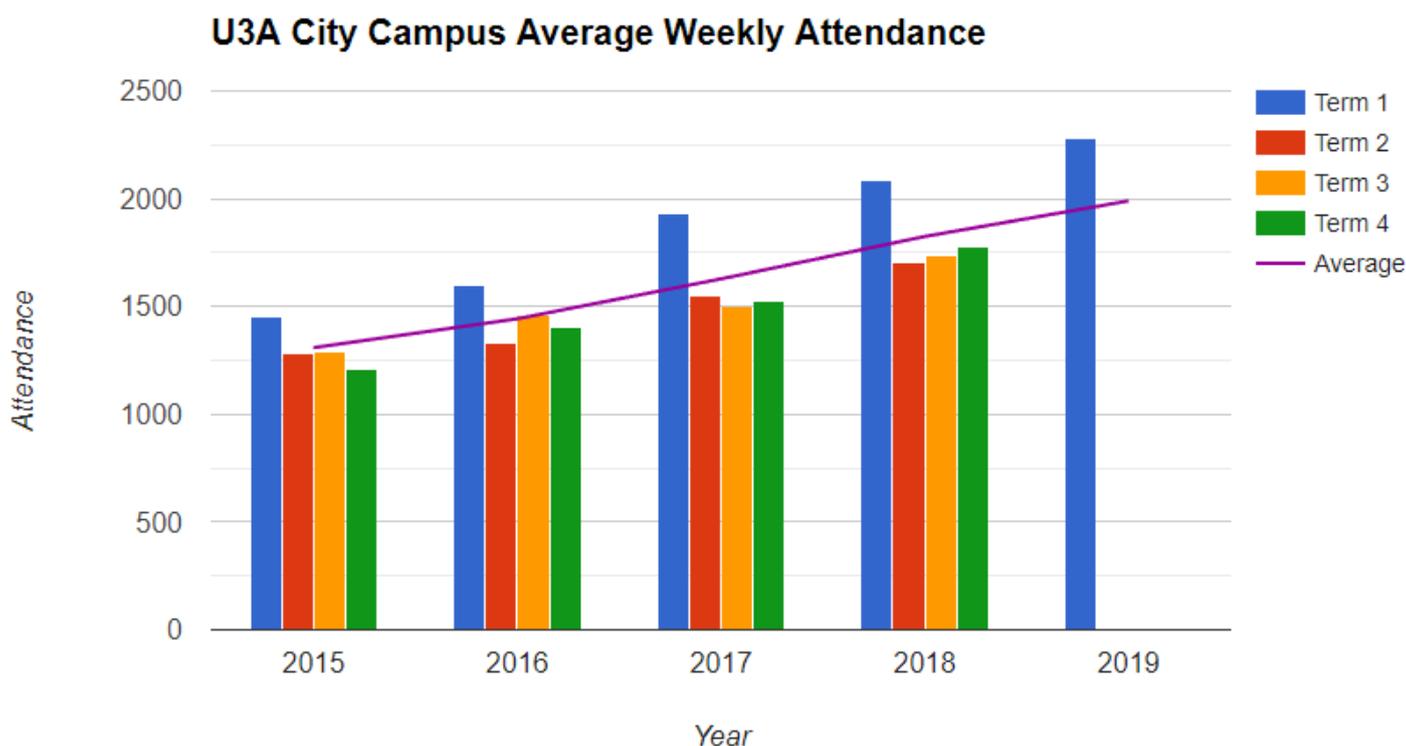
As our Treasurer, Greg Williamson, will shortly explain, we achieved a substantial surplus for the calendar year, largely as a result of increased membership and attendances. As a non-profit organisation, it is not our intention to make large surpluses forever, but we currently plan to have sufficient excess cash to pay out the residual Noteholders' loan of \$419K in full by 2022. Thanks to our strong financial position I am pleased to announce that will be able to hold annual membership fees at \$40 and class fees, where applicable, at \$5 for the coming year.

## Classes and Tutors

The primary objectives of U3A are to provide mental stimulus and learning opportunities for our members, and the successful conduct of our classes is therefore the focus of almost all that we do. A glance through the index of the Class Schedule makes one appreciate the quite astounding range of subjects on offer, from languages, both ancient and modern, to history, literature, philosophy, current affairs, computers, science and recreational games. We are most fortunate to have so many well-qualified tutors who have stepped forward to offer their services and the benefits of their experience and qualifications. We salute you all.

During 2018 we averaged 275 classes each term, compared with 261 the previous year, taught by 200 tutors. For first term in 2019 we had 289 classes and we currently have 213 individual tutors.

Class attendances during 2018 averaged 1825 per week in our City Campus venues, an increase of 15% over the previous year. In addition, we recorded an average of 570 members attending classes each week across our 42 district venues. During Term 1 of 2019 recently finished, we experienced further growth of 9%. This graph illustrates the attendance pattern for City Campus classes over the past few years:



These annual increases are commensurate with increases in membership, and are certainly an indication that members appreciate the courses on offer, but a consequence is that we are seeing increasing pressure on availability of classrooms and timeslots. We also have a concern about the number of classes that are fully booked and therefore inaccessible to further enrolments. In Term 1 this year closed classes reached a high of 46%, and this situation has unfortunately resulted in some complaints from members.

In addition to regular classes, we also run special events which have included *Cancer and the Human Brain* by Dr Guy Barry, a talk on robotic surgery by Prof Ross Crawford, the *SCINEMA* Science films organised by Marty Gellender, and the current series of talks on the NBN prepared by Greg Taylor. Our IT Group coordinated by Diane Arapovic has incorporated many interesting talks on IT topics, including a visit to the facilities at *The Edge* at State Library.

### **Class Scheduling**

The recruitment of new tutors and the allocation of classes to our classrooms and venues is the responsibility of the district coordinators. Gail Hawkins manages these tasks for general classes in the two city campus venues, and does a magnificent job wrangling classes into increasingly scarce timeslots, while Gwenn Ball continues to skillfully manage computer classes in our busy computer lab. We recognise that not all tutors are able to obtain their preferred timeslot or classroom, but unfortunately demand outstrips supply at certain times of the day. In the districts, our appreciation is owed to the district coordinators, capably overseen by Mary Calder, for the great job they do in allocating tutors to the various suburban venues, namely Martin Bridgstock (Logan), Robyn Bunting (City Precinct), Rod McLary (Northside), Allan Wishart (Southside), Anna Blake (Westside) and Chris Hobbs (Wynnum). I would also like to thank Marg & Jim Ancliffe for their tireless support in the very active district of Logan.

### **Accommodation**

As I have already mentioned, we face increasing demand for classroom space in the City Campus classrooms, and capacity has reached over 90% at times. There are very few free time slots before 2pm. Some classes are uncomfortably large and we even have a few classes with 50-60 members attending each week. Your incoming committee is therefore faced with the challenge of ensuring that we have sufficient classroom space for the foreseeable future. There is no easy solution, since the acquisition of additional space is an expensive exercise, both in capital cost of fit-out and ongoing lease, rental or interest payments. Needless to say, this matter will be the main focus of the incoming committee in coming months.

A regular concern has been that our utilisation of the city premises is only 6-7 hours per day. We do not see any immediate prospects of offering classes at earlier or later times, or on weekends, since these times are not popular with members. However, a wonderful opportunity to make better use of our rooms came our way late last year. ILSC, a language and business school located on the lower floors of our Adelaide St premises, was looking for extra space for evening classes. We came to a mutually acceptable agreement and during Term 1 of this year

ILSC has been running about 9 classes a week in U3A rooms from 5.30pm in the evenings. The arrangement has worked very well and brings in good additional income.

We aim to improve our facilities where possible, and during 2018 we invested in new digital screens to replace ageing projectors in the computer lab and room 3, and a soundbar in room 16 to improve sound quality, particularly for movies and music classes. Many thanks to Keith Catts, Greg Taylor and Jim Henry respectively for facilitating these improvements. Thanks also to Anne Hetherington who was instrumental in the sourcing and price negotiation of some big ticket items such as the new tables and chairs for Creek Street.

## **Administration and IT**

In an expanding organisation, more growth means more administrative work, and I must congratulate Yvonne McGann and her office team on coping with another busy year with patience and calmness. Yvonne is well-supported by day leaders Mary Calder, Helen Davis, Lyndall Beattie and Eve McCormack, as well as about 50 other volunteers who ensure that both Creek St and Adelaide St are adequately and competently staffed. The roster takes quite a bit of organisation, yet the whole operation runs like a well-oiled machine. Some of the other U3As in Queensland that are much smaller than U3A Brisbane find it necessary to employ a paid office administrator, so there is a substantial financial benefit for us in managing such a large organisation with no staff costs.

Our efficient IT systems certainly help to keep the administrative work to a manageable level. It is pleasing that 80% of new members and 62% of renewing members now pay their subscriptions online, much reducing the office processing that would otherwise be required. Greg Taylor manages our database systems and website, and continues to improve our systems each year so that we can take best advantage of the efficiencies enabled by the digital revolution.

In the coming months, our administration team will be planning the implementation of tap-and-go terminals for payment of the \$5 class fee. Our member survey indicated that there was strong interest in having this option, and we hope to introduce this feature during Term 2. There will be no additional cost to members, so it will be a simple choice of paying by card or cash. We were fortunate to receive an anonymous donation of \$2200 which will fund the cost of the EFTPOS terminals.

In the coming year, we will have NBN access at both city premises. This will open opportunities for outbound streaming services for selected events, because of the much higher upstream bandwidth that the NBN provides.

## **Communications and Publicity**

The increasing cost of postage means that we rely mainly on electronic methods of communication with members. Our primary communication is the monthly eNews newsletter which reaches the 97% of members who have email. It is pleasing that we have such a high penetration rate, which is well above the figure of 88% Internet access for the Australian

population at large. Members who don't have Internet are welcome to use the public laptops at Creek St or Adelaide St.

eNews is now edited by Jean Smith, who has taken on the role previously handled for many years by Helen Dubois. Our thanks to Jean, Helen and also to David Gemmell and Kay Herington who manage the formatting.

Our other main vehicle is the quarterly Class Schedule. We recognise that many members prefer to have this printed and mailed to them, but it is also available for download from the website or Facebook page. It takes quite a team effort to update our class database each term and we thank Mary Calder, Gail Hawkins, Jean Smith and the district coordinators, as well as the working bee team who apply mailing labels.

Our website and Facebook page are also valuable information sources and members should check these platforms regularly for important announcements.

Another avenue for public relations is the opportunity provided by expos and speaker invitations. I thank Martin Bridgstock, Anne Hetherington, Rod McLary and Chris Hobbs for representing U3A at such events over the past year.

### **Winter School**

The 2018 Winter School was our most successful ever, both in the quality of presentations and attendances. This event is organised by a dedicated committee headed by Marilyn Wagland, Anne Douglass and Kate O'Loughlin and they do a fantastic job recruiting expert speakers from diverse fields. A total of 2280 members attended the week's events, compared with 1950 in 2017.

### **Social Group**

Our longstanding Social Committee Chair, Helen Dubois, has decided to move interstate and we wish her well. She and her fellow committee members Barbara Scott and June Gemmell have handed over the reins to new Chair Marianne Jones with Elizabeth Eichmann, Alannah Gaffney and Angela Butler making up the new committee. Events organised during 2018 included *Aladdin*, Canungra tour, *Beautiful*, Ipswich Heritage Tour, Christmas in July, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and the Aussie Icon Cruise.

### **Risk Management**

During the year, some of our Committee members attended a U3A Network Qld presentation on Anti-Discrimination and Disability law, an important issue that we need to keep abreast of. We have created an Accessibility page on the website to provide information on access for members who have mobility issues or are wheelchair-bound.

Our Secretary Simon Wood keeps the Committee apprised on Constitutional issues that arise from time to time and I thank him for his diligence and advice.

Our Emergency Procedures have been updated and are available on the website. During the year a building-wide fire drill was conducted at Adelaide St, and we were pleased with the

cooperation of members. We were able to exit the building in excellent time, a testament to the leadership provided by our fire wardens.

In February 2018 we installed Heartline Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) at both our city premises, and many of our office volunteers have been trained in their use. We hope they are never needed, but we considered that the investment was a sound one given the age group of our members. Our thanks to Anne Hetherington who researched the various products and arranged purchase and installation.

### **Donation**

The family of the late Dorothy Buch have made a generous donation of \$3000 to U3A Brisbane in appreciation of the enjoyment she derived from being a member and tutor for many years. We thank the family for their kindness.

### **Outgoing Committee**

I wish to acknowledge and thank all the members of the Management Committee, whose energy, enthusiasm, and commitment have so competently anchored the management work of our organisation throughout the year. Yvonne McGann and Rod McLary have decided to retire from the Committee this year. Rod has been of particular assistance in using his social work and counsellor training to help resolve some disputes during the year. Yvonne has been a Committee member for six years and will of course continue in the Office Manager role. We welcome Lyndall Beattie's nomination as Treasurer. Lyndall is an experienced CPA and will no doubt be a competent replacement for our retiring Treasurer Greg Williamson. We sincerely thank Greg for the high standard of his work as Treasurer over the last 5 years. I am very pleased he is remaining on the Committee.

On a personal note, I have derived a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from my role as President over the last 2 years and I'm certainly looking forward to my final upcoming term. This report has gone a long way to describe the success we have enjoyed over recent years but one thing that is very hard to quantify in a report is the spirit of camaraderie that permeates throughout our U3A. I see evidence of this on almost a daily basis and never fail to feel a great sense of satisfaction that we all contribute in some way to the success of this great organisation. Personally, I am grateful for the fantastic people I have met and the great friends I have made during my decade long association with the U3A movement and, in particular, U3A Brisbane.

To all our members, thank you for your support in attending classes during the year. May you continue to realise the benefits of being an active member of U3A Brisbane in its mission of *Connecting Seniors to Lifelong Learning* and finally, thank you again for allowing me the privilege of being your President for another term, I look forward to reporting on an even more successful U3A Brisbane this time next year.

Greg Doolan  
President

17 April 2019