

U3A Brisbane Annual report 2021

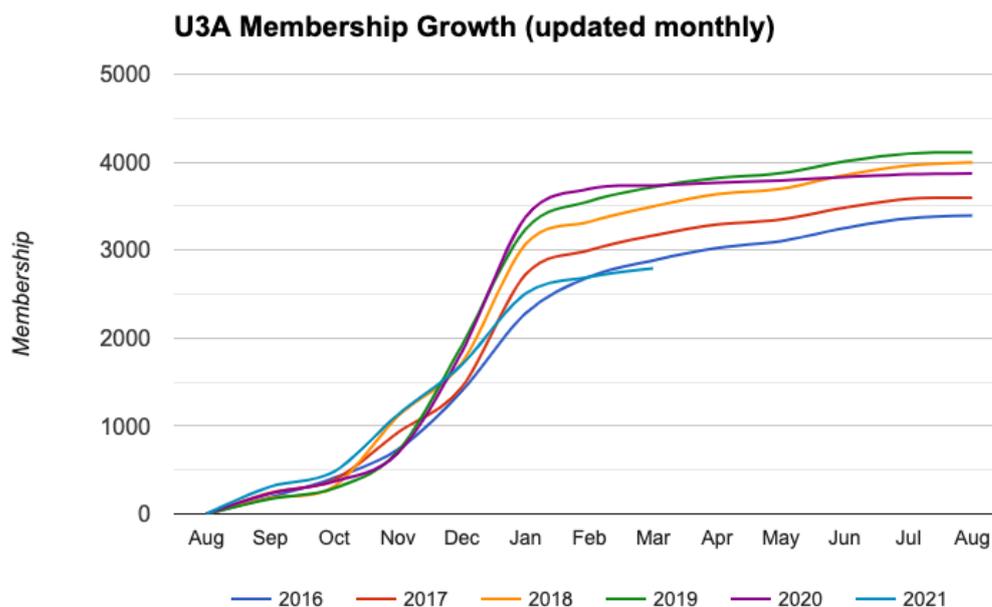
2020 has been a year of great challenge and transformation for U3A Brisbane. In February we became aware of a possible pandemic called COVID19. As a result U3A Brisbane closed its city venues in Creek and Adelaide Streets on Friday 13th March 2020. There would be no more Face-to-Face classes in the city until 2021. However, when these classes resumed they were required to run under COVID Safe rules which meant that many popular classes such as dance, choir, recorder, cards, mahjong etc were not allowed and in addition we were limited to enforcing the 2 square metre rule.

The main outcomes of these decisions were:

- No formal class fee income from March 2020 until January 2021 although members made generous donations and paid voluntary fees for Zoom classes.
- Reduced number of possible Face-to-Face classes because many could not run in a COVID Safe way.
- No. of members able to be accommodated in Face-to-face classes reduced to 50% of previous capacity because of Government regulations.

Membership

Our paid membership for 2020 was 3870, a drop of 6% from the previous year. However, as U3A was closed for most of 2020 the membership for 2021 has sustained a big drop. Given that we could not offer classes, social interaction was limited and the future uncertain this was not unexpected.



We were fortunate to have the technical expertise available to transfer to online learning and provide support and advice as needed. This has allowed many classes to continue despite the shutdown. We appreciate the willingness of our Tutors and Members to 'take a leap into the

unknown' and move to a different mode of teaching and learning. Their support has been so important in keeping U3A Brisbane viable.

Financial position

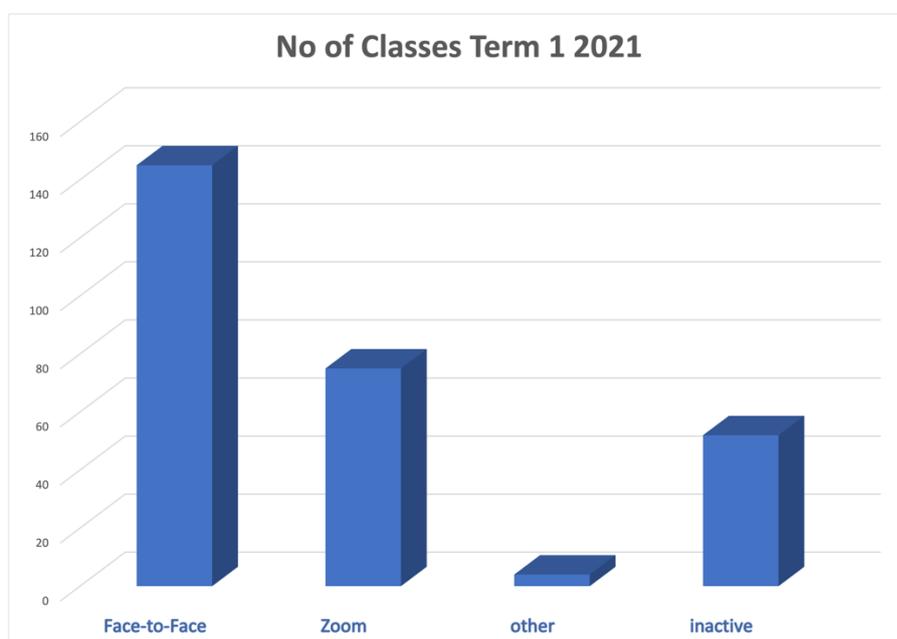
Our Treasurer Lyndall Beattie will shortly be giving an overview of our financial position. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lyndall for all her hard work. She has done a wonderful job which has been complicated by the Lease repayment arrangements introduced because of COVID and other changes which she will explain.

It was noted that in Term 1 this year when we finally reopened Members were asked for the first time to pay their Face-to-Face Class Fees upfront for the Term. We also asked members in online classes to make a voluntary contribution of \$25 and 88% complied. We are very grateful again for the support of our members.

Classes and Tutors

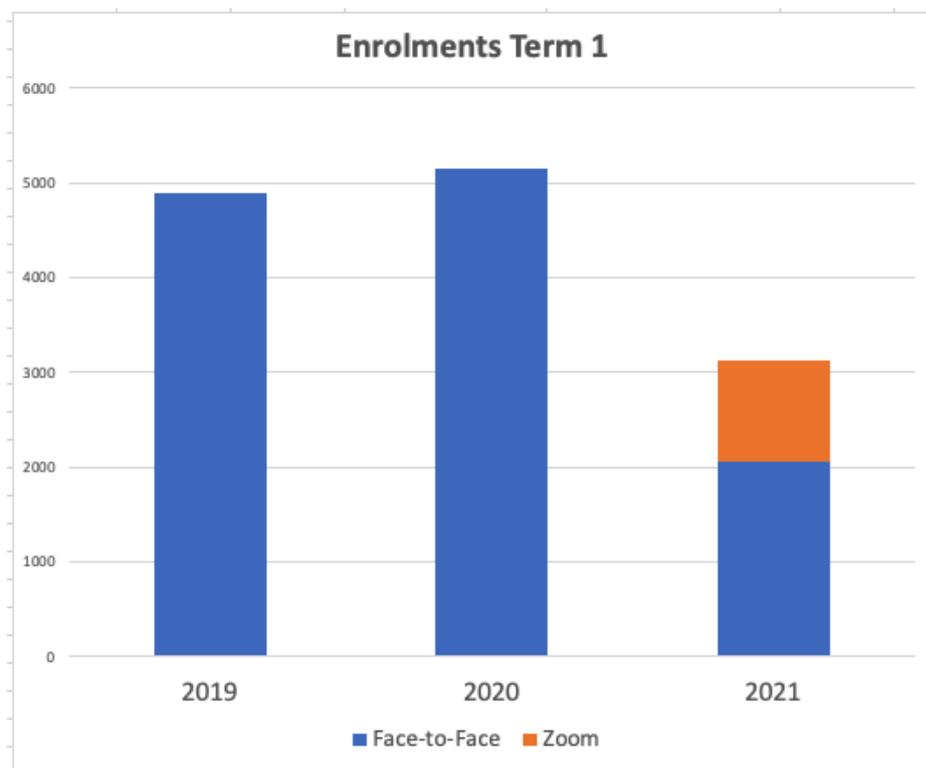
Above all U3A aims to provide mental stimulus and learning opportunities for our members. We have tried to do this through the pandemic and continue to do so despite the necessary rules to keep us safe. Many Tutors moved their classes online by Term 2 2020. These online classes have proven to be very successful and offer opportunities for members who are not able or not prepared to return to Face-to-Face classes. We are grateful to our Tutors who paid for their own Zoom licenses when U3A Brisbane was not in a position to assist.

When we reopened in 2021 there were 145 Face-to-Face classes spread across the City and Districts, 75 Zoom classes and 4 other classes using different and creative approaches. We could only reopen because of our detailed COVID Safe plan for the City venues. This plan was ably implemented by our Coordinators and Office Volunteers and succeeded because of the cooperation of our members.



The Graph showing the number of inactive classes owing to COVID Safety restrictions indicates how much growth we might expect if these restrictions were eased.

All of our COVID Safe plans were organised by our COVID Committee, chaired by Neil Brown and supported by our Medical Advisory group. Our Medical Advisory group were especially important in providing advice based on their knowledge and understanding of the issues being faced.



A comparison of total Term 1 enrolments for 2019, 2020 and now 2021 shows enrolments growing and then the current drop because of COVID. The figures include both Zoom and District classes and again gives some indication of the impact of the government's restrictions.

Other Educational Activities

Because of COVID-19 there have been very few other Educational Activities possible, but we have continued to offer online Presentations to members, and this will continue. However, we have had to cancel our Winter School and all Social Committee events.

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. There were no classes in the City for Terms 2 to 4, 2020 but Gail has done a remarkable job in organising classes in Term 1 2021 to comply with our COVID Safe plan for returning to Face to Face classes. These classes start at staggered times and extra time had to be allocated between classes to allow for movement of students with minimal congestion and extra cleaning. In addition, there were the many online classes to organise. Our Computer classes are similarly affected but Peter Jones has skilfully organised these so that we have a combination of classes in the Lab and online.

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), Gabrielle Power-West (Westside), Rod McLary (Northside and City Precinct), Pat Collins (Southside) and Chris Hobbs (Wynnum). I would also like to thank Marg and Jim Ancliffe for their tireless support in the very active district of Logan.

I would like to especially thank our District Coordinators this year because they have worked so hard to help implement our COVID Safe plans for both Face-to-Face to and Outdoor classes with wonderful results. These began in Term 4 2020 and there were 52 Face-to Face classes running in the Districts in Term 1 2021 each with their own individual COVID Safe Agreement – all organised through our District Coordinators.

Accommodation

Throughout 2020, when we had little income, we were still responsible for Lease repayments on Adelaide St and Loan repayments on Creek St. I would like to thank Neil Brown, one of our Management Committee members, for undertaking lease negotiations with CBRE in an effort to help us retain our Adelaide St premises and to negotiate a more flexible agreement. He has succeeded in this and if enrolments and membership continue to improve in 2021-22 then we will continue to retain our Adelaide St premises. The Bank loan on Creek St will be repaid by June 2021 which will secure Creek St. into the future.

In previous years we have had increasing demands for more classroom space. COVID has changed this. We have even less capacity in our city campus rooms because of the Government's 2 square metre rule but we are fortunate that many classes can run online now. When we returned to Face-to-Face classes in January 2021 one problem for many tutors was how to move from an online teaching mode which can cater for up to 100 students to a classroom with restricted capacity. Some tutors have overcome this obstacle by running Concurrent (Hybrid) Face-to-Face and Zoom classes. These have been successful. The clever use of a combination of Online, Face-to-Face and Hybrid classes into the future may take some of the pressure off our current venues

Administration and IT

Throughout 2020 when we could not open our City venues our wonderful office team led by Yvonne McGann maintained our administration and contact with members working from home with occasional trips to the city when necessary. Yvonne is ably supported by day leaders Mary Calder, Helen Davis, Rod McLary and Eve McCormack as well as many other volunteers.

It is important to note that the ability to work from home and manage the Administration of U3A remotely is only possible because of our online Management System. Greg Taylor wrote and manages our database system. He also manages the website and mailing lists and continues to improve our systems each year so that we can take advantage of the efficiencies enabled by the digital revolution.

This has been so important over the last year. Greg wrote and implemented our own QR System for maintaining contactless attendance records which we need for insurance purposes. It links directly to our database and can be used for contact tracing across our 40

venues in case required by health authorities. He has also written the necessary software to allow us to implement our new Upfront Class Fees system. All fees can be paid and managed online. We are grateful to Greg for the many hours of dedicated effort needed to help us achieve a smoothly running online system in a very short timeframe. His contribution was recognised when he was awarded the “Volunteer of the Year “ Award in the Australian Not-for-Profit Tech Awards which recognise innovators, volunteers and lifetime achievements.

Communications and Publicity

The increasing cost of postage and the restrictions on Face-to-Face communication means that we rely mainly on electronic methods of communication with members. This was especially so in 2020 when the Office was closed for most of the year.

Our popular eNews is edited by Jean Smith. Our thanks to Jean, Kay Herrington and Greg Taylor who manage the formatting and distribution. This has been so important this year. It has allowed us to retain contact with our members and update them on the current situation each month.

Our other main vehicle is the quarterly Class Schedule and our thanks to the tutors and Coordinators who help compile and check the data and to Greg Taylor, who organises the email distribution. The Class Schedule is available for download from the U3A Brisbane website.

The website particularly is a valuable information source and members should check this site regularly for important announcements, especially in the current circumstances. Detailed information and instructions for using the current technology is available here. Members can also check if they have paid class fees and obtain a list of their recent transactions. This is done through the Member Dashboard.

Management Committee

The Management Committee, consisting of Deslyn Taylor, Gabrielle Power-West, Lyndall Beattie, Martin Bridgstock, Neil Brown, Jim Ancliffe, Mary Denver, Peter O’Loughlin and Marilyn Wagland have worked together to steer U3A Brisbane through the biggest crisis in our history. The crisis is far from over, as further lockdowns may occur at any time and we have formalised our Closedown procedures accordingly. The recent closure just before Easter went very smoothly and we have refined our procedures slightly thanks to Yvonne McGann and Mary Calder who were involved at the Operational level and suggested some slight changes. We will continue to do everything possible to make sure that we survive and thrive into the future.

Two of our members, Marilyn Wagland and Jim Ancliffe are leaving the committee. I thank them for their contribution. Marilyn in particular has been a member of the management committee for many years and in that time has served as both President and Vice – President. In addition to her role on the Management Committee she is our current Winter School Coordinator and as, because of COVID, the Winter School cannot go ahead Marilyn is organising online Presentations which will be advertised through our eNews. She will continue in this role in 2021. We also welcome two new members to the Committee, Chris Waller and Mary-Anne Scott. I look forward to working again with this talented and supportive group which will only be enhanced by the addition of our new members.

The Future

We are still in a viable financial position. Although we need to repay some of the Adelaide Street rent which was deferred in 2020 as part of the arrangements with the landlord, this can be done over time. We will complete repayments on our Bendigo Bank loan in June this year and the decision to have members pay upfront at the beginning of each term provides more certainty.

We would expect to retain both Adelaide and Creek St. but we do have a more flexible lease arrangement and can terminate this lease if it should become necessary in the future. Currently enrolments in Term 2 are underway.

If the vaccination programme is successful and the government relaxes the 2 square metre restriction and we are again able to offer the popular classes that are currently on hold then we would hope that membership and class numbers would increase significantly in the second half of 2021 and into 2022.

In summary:

we moved rapidly to implement online classes. Many of which continue.

we reduced costs and obtained rent relief for Adelaide St.

we have a more flexible lease arrangement for Adelaide St.

we paid a large proportion of the Creek St Bank loan

we implemented COVID Safe Plans and returned to face-to-face classes in a small way in the districts in Term 4, followed by a return to City Campus in 2021.

we implemented upfront class fees for City Campus and voluntary fees for Zoom classes.

we implemented QR Code attendance recording.

we are in a good financial position but expect more growth in the future as restrictions ease.

we are now in a position to provide Zoom licenses to Tutors wishing to work online.

Thank you for your continuing support. If we work together we'll survive COVID and move into the future a stronger band of scholars sure in our ability to survive and grow despite difficult challenges. Some challenges such as the addition of online learning may result in many members being able to continue with U3A despite health and mobility issues. It also may give us an opportunity to offer courses more widely in the future. A challenge turned into a boon by the creativity and resilience of our members.

Deslyn Taylor
President
U3A Brisbane