

## U3A Brisbane Annual report 2022

2021 has been a year of great challenge and uncertainty. At the end of 2020 we had hoped that we could move on from the COVID virus and could reopen with some confidence under COVID Safe rules although this 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.

Despite this we were looking forward to early access to vaccinations and life perhaps approaching normal.

However, in 2021 the Delta strain of COVID emerged which proved to be more easily transmitted and more deadly than the original. Lockdowns across the country were frequent and, in some cases, lasted for a considerable time. There were problems with the vaccine rollout and more recently with the acquisition of RAT tests and N95 masks

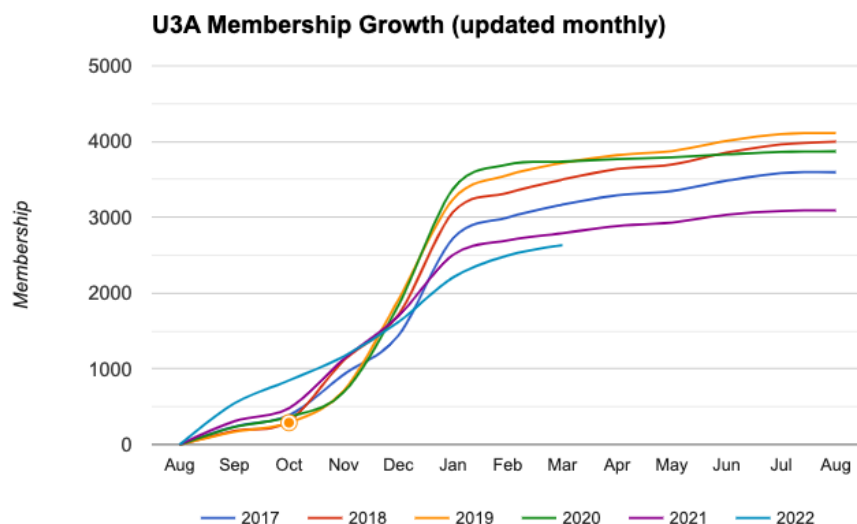
In Term 3 we closed for several weeks, and it became necessary to allow members to pay a voluntary fee for classes in Term 4 rather than a set fee as they had in the past.

The main outcomes of these decisions were:

- Reduced class fee income
- Continued reduction in the number of possible Face-to-Face classes because many could not run in a COVID Safe way.
- The number of members able to be accommodated in Face-to-Face classes reduced to 50% of pre-covid capacity because of Government regulations.

### Membership

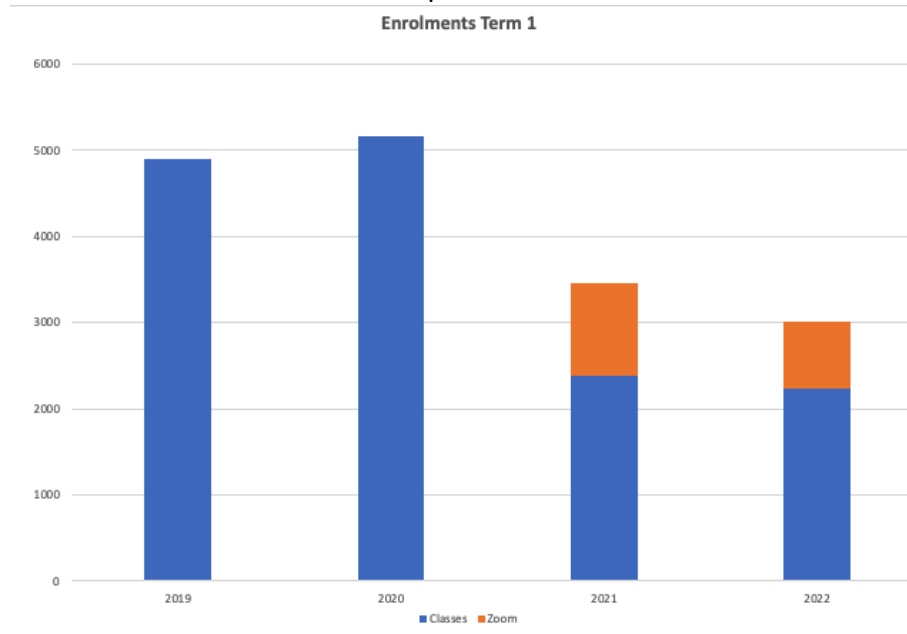
Our paid membership for 2021 was 3092, a drop of 20% from the previous year. There is a further drop in 2022 but not as great. However, as U3A was closed for most of 2020 and given that we frequently could not offer Face-to-Face classes in 2021 because of intermittent lockdowns, social interaction was still limited and the future uncertain this was not unexpected.



Despite the lockdowns, the problems with Vaccinations, the difficulty in getting tested etc our members, tutors and volunteers stayed with us showing remarkable resilience and adaptability. We are grateful to have the ability to offer online learning using Zoom. This has allowed many classes to continue despite the many shutdowns. We appreciate the willingness of our Tutors and Members to move to a different mode of teaching and learning whether on a permanent basis or as required because of lockdowns. Their support has been so important in keeping U3A Brisbane viable.

## Enrolments

Our enrolments have followed a similar pattern to our Membership as would be expected. Many are still cautious in returning to Face-to-Face classes. There is a slight increase in Face-to-Face enrolments since the implementation of our Vaccination Policy in 2022.



## Financial position

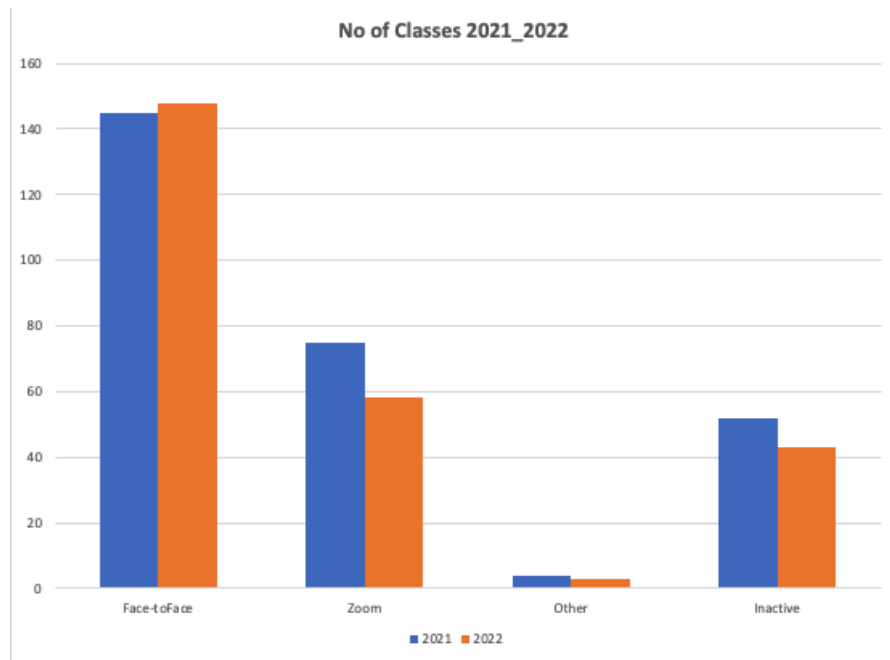
Our Treasurer Lyndall Beattie will shortly be giving an overview of our financial position. Lyndall is leaving us this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lyndall for all her hard work. She has done a wonderful job at a difficult time which has been complicated by the Lease repayment arrangements introduced because of COVID and other changes which she will explain. Lyndall also restructured our property debt in 2019 resulting in huge savings in future interest and this has been an important factor in ensuring our financial viability during the last 2 years.

It is noted that in Term 1 2021 when we finally reopened Members were asked for the first time to pay their Face-to-Face Class Fees upfront for the Term. This has become a permanent arrangement. We also asked members in online classes to make a voluntary contribution of \$25 and many complied. We are very grateful again for the support of our members.

## Classes and Tutors

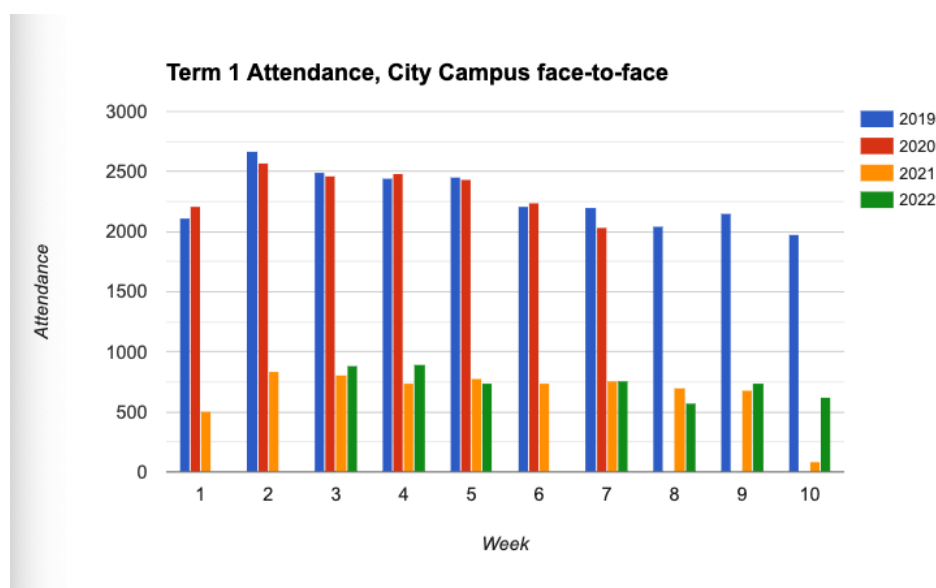
U3A aims to provide mental stimulus and learning opportunities for our members. We have tried to do this throughout the pandemic and continue to do so despite the necessary rules to keep us safe. Many Tutors moved their classes online. These online classes have proven

to be very successful and offer opportunities for members who are not able or not prepared to return to Face-to-Face classes. When we reopened in Term 1 2021 there were 145 Face-to-Face classes spread across the City and the Districts, 75 Zoom classes and 4 other classes using different and creative approaches. In 2022 Term 1 we have 148 Face-to-Face classes, 58 Zoom classes and 3 other classes.



## Attendance

It should be noted that the attendance graph only represents attendance in our City campus. Attendances for online classes are not generally recorded. It should also be noted that in Week 10 2021 Brisbane went into lockdown on Monday and U3A closed Face-to-Face classes again. This can be seen when looking at the orange bar in Week 10.



In Term 1 2022 we introduced a Vaccination Policy in line with Government mandates and to support our vulnerable community. We were fortunate that this extra precaution was in place because, as can be seen from the graph, we had to delay opening in Term 1 2022 because of the Omicron Virus.

## **Special Events**

Because of COVID-19 there have been very few other Educational Activities possible, but we have continued to offer online Presentations to members. Marilyn Wagland organised these in 2021 and always found interesting speakers. Thank you, Marilyn. However, we are still unable to run our Winter School but have started to organise some Social Committee events. These are dependent on COVID restrictions.

## **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. Gail has done a remarkable job in organising classes in Term 1 2021/22 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 Bernadette Ketter (Logan), Gabrielle Power-West (Westside), Rod McLary (Northside and City Precinct), Pat Collins (Southside) and Chris Hobbs (Wynnum).

## **Accommodation**

The Bendigo Bank loan to assist with payment to our Noteholders was repaid by June 2021 and we have secured Creek St. We are very pleased that we were able to do this.

In previous years we have had increasing demands for more classroom space. COVID has changed this. We still have less capacity in our city campus rooms because we are running at less than full capacity because of COVID but we are fortunate that many classes now run online or as Concurrent (Hybrid) Face-to-Face and Zoom classes. The clever use of a combination of Online, Face-to-Face and Hybrid classes into the future will take some of the pressure off our current venues although, at the moment, because so many of our members are still concerned about returning, even with reduced capacity many classes are not yet full.

## **Administration and IT**

Throughout 2021 when we could not open our City venues because of lockdowns 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, Mary-Anne Scott, Rod McLary, 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.

## **IT Systems**

Our excellent IT Systems have 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. In 2021 he also implemented:-

- a Discussion Forum for Classes
- a Zoom licensing system
- the incorporation of our Vaccination Policy
- a hardening of website cyber security

## **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 2021 when the Office was closed suddenly because of lockdowns. In the case of emergency, we have the ability to send SMS messages to targeted groups through our Administration System. This was once again a feature implemented by Greg.

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 over the last 2 years as 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 our IT Manager, 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.

## **Strategic Plan**

In 2021 the Management Committee participated in a Strategic Planning Process. This was facilitated by Chris Waller from our Management Committee. We produced a plan to give us direction through to 2024. There were 4 Goals identified:-

- Maintain and Grow Membership
- Recruit Tutors and Classes
- Succession Planning
- Accommodation and Financial Planning

We thank Chris for his organised and encouraging approach. We now have a plan which is available on our website.

## **New Constitution**

I wish to thank Rob Hill for all his work on the new Constitution. Rob started work on this in 2015. It originally was to be presented at the 2020 AGM but due to COVID this did not take place. It has been updated this year to include the changes in the Incorporated Associations Act which are now required by 2022.

## **Management Committee**

The Management Committee, consisting of Deslyn Taylor, Gabrielle Power-West, Lyndall Beattie, Mary Denver, Martin Bridgstock, Mary-Anne Scott, Peter O'Loughlin, Neil Brown, and Chris Waller worked together to steer U3A Brisbane through the biggest crisis in our history. Neil and Chris resigned in 2021 and were replaced by Joan Mackay and Nick Bricknell. We are fortunate to have such willing volunteers to step in when needed. Hopefully there will be no further lockdowns. We will continue to do everything possible to make sure that we survive and thrive into the future.

As I mentioned previously Lyndall Beattie, our amazing Treasurer is leaving the Management Committee as is Peter O'Loughlin. Peter has worked on Management Committees for many years. He was instrumental in setting up Adelaide St and has always been willing to share his expertise and help us whenever required. I thank them both for their contribution.

## **The year in Summary:**

we implemented COVID Safe Plans for our city venues  
we implemented upfront class fees for City Campus and voluntary fees for Zoom classes.  
we implemented QR Code attendance recording.  
we repaid our Bendigo Bank Loan  
we are in a good financial position and expect that 2022 will see a small improvement  
we developed a Strategic Plan to guide us through until 2024  
we have implemented a Vaccination Policy which is still recommended for vulnerable settings, schools etc

we have revised our Constitution to meet current government rule changes.

## **The Future**

In 2021 The Management Committee produced a **Strategic Plan (2021 – 2024)** outlining the direction we expect to take over the next few years. We have started to implement some of these objectives.

We are still in a viable financial position. Although we still need to repay some of the Adelaide Street rent which was deferred in 2020 as part of the arrangements with the landlord.

We expect to retain Adelaide St. The decision to retain Adelaide St has to be finalised by the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

Currently enrolments in Term 2 2022 are underway. Because we have implemented a Vaccination Policy which we shall retain for Term 2 2022 and as restrictions ease, vaccinations including boosters are in place for a large percentage of the population and RAT tests and N95 masks are now readily available we can offer many of the classes that we were unable to offer in 2021.

Our members have been amazingly resilient and without their support U3A Brisbane would not have been able to continue in these difficult times.

Thank you

Deslyn Taylor  
President  
U3A Brisbane