



# U3A LOWER NORTH

*Sharing Skills and Experience with Friends*

JUNE 2017 🍷 TERM THREE

University of the Third Age Lower North Incorporated

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## *Dear Members,*

Greetings from an icy hollow in the Clare Valley which has featured some first-class frosts this year.

The feature of U3A's Term 2 was the number of people who enrolled in Italian for Travellers. We had no idea there was so much local interest. In fact, not so local as students came from as far afield as Jamestown. Originally only scheduled to last one term, Anne has been encouraged to extend for another term however for a limited number. Rather than disappoint anyone, we were thinking of creating an overflow group however the original 22 seem to have whittled down through natural attrition and it looks as if Anne will just have a core group of eager linguists. Learning a second language is quite a challenge and students need to be willing to commit time and effort.

In view of this public interest it seems timely to ask if anyone in the community has language skills which they would like to contribute. I am sure both Anne and I would like to retire in favour of native speakers of either French or Italian.

Last edition's announcement of rising subscriptions in 2018 (with discount for early enrolment) brought no outcry so we hope that comes from understanding our reasons rather than a lack of readership.

At a recent State meeting, I discovered we are not the only U3A which has adopted such a policy.

*See you back in the classroom,  
Claire*

## **POSSIBLE NEW COURSES FOR TERM 4**

### **YOU CAN ENROL NOW**

Expressions of interest are called for new courses which may run in Term 4 if sufficient demand.

- If you are interested in the law, former legal practitioner and magistrate Christopher Cocks has offered to present a series of informal talks, on topics such as:
  - Hypotheticals based on direct experience. Chris acted in a couple of murders which, on analysis, raised ethical, professional and theoretical issues concerned with methods of defending accused people.
  - Analysis of fact situations and the application of relevant law, in both criminal and civil jurisdictions.
  - Anecdotes derived from over 40 years of practice, including time as a magistrate.
- Millie Nicholls is considering starting a group entitled Telling Your Own Story.
- Quentin Fleming wants a group building technical models from packs. He reckons building your own computer should impress the grandchildren.

If you are interested in any of these, contact **Quentin on 0447 601 142 or [asku3a@gmail.com](mailto:asku3a@gmail.com).**

## **PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN FROM MEMORY LOSS AND DEMENTIA**

*A recent report by Professor Michael Ridding, University of Adelaide, [reprinted here under Creative Commons] incidentally provides a powerful argument for the value of U3A and the importance of our motto of "Staying active: mentally, physically and socially". We are not just about having fun and making friends: we are warding off dementia by building 'cognitive reserve'. Professor Ridding says:*

Engaging in cognitively stimulating activities can help build your resilience to cognitive decline.

As we get older we have a greater risk of developing impairments in areas of cognitive function – such as memory, reasoning and verbal ability. We also have a greater risk of dementia, which is what we call cognitive decline that interferes with daily life. The trajectory of this cognitive decline can vary considerably from one person to the next.

Despite these varying trajectories, one thing is for sure: even cognitively normal people experience pathological changes in their brain, including degeneration and atrophy, as they age. By the time a person reaches the age of 70 to 80, these changes closely resemble those seen in the brains of people with Alzheimer's Disease.

Even so, many people can function normally in the presence of significant brain damage and pathology. So why do some experience symptoms of Alzheimer's and dementia, while others remain sharp of mind?

It comes down to something called cognitive reserve. This is a concept used to explain a person's capacity to maintain normal cognitive function in the presence of brain pathology. To put it simply, some people have better cognitive reserve than others.

Evidence shows the extent of someone's cognitive decline doesn't occur in line with the amount of biological damage in their brain as it ages. Rather, certain life experiences determine someone's cognitive reserve and, therefore, their ability to avoid dementia or memory loss.

### **How do we know?**

Being educated, having higher levels of social interaction or working in cognitively demanding occupations increases resilience to cognitive decline and dementia. Many studies have shown this. These studies followed people over a number of years and looked for signs of them developing cognitive decline or dementia in that period.

Cognitive reserve is traditionally measured and quantified based on self-reports of life experience

such as education level, occupational complexity and social engagement. While these measures provide an indication of reserve, they're only of limited use if we want to identify those at risk of cognitive decline. Genetic influences obviously play a part in our brain development and will influence resilience.

### **Brain plasticity**

The fundamental brain mechanisms that underpin cognitive reserve are still unclear. The brain consists of complex, richly interconnected networks that are responsible for our cognitive ability. These networks have the capacity to change and adapt to task demands or brain damage. And this capacity is essential not only for normal brain function, but also for maintaining cognitive performance in later life.

This adaptation is governed by brain plasticity. This is the brain's ability to continuously modulate its structure and function throughout life in response to different experiences. So, plasticity and flexibility in brain networks likely contribute in a major way to cognitive reserve and these processes are influenced by both genetic profiles and life experiences.

A major focus of our research is examining how brain connectivity and plasticity relate to reserve and cognitive function.

### **Strengthening your brain**

While there is little we can do about our genetic profile, adapting our lifestyles to include certain types of behaviours offers a significant opportunity to improve our cognitive reserve.

Activities that engage your brain, such as learning a new language and completing crosswords, as well as high levels of social interaction, increase reserve and can reduce your risk of developing dementia.

Regular physical activity also improves cognitive function and reduces the risk of dementia. Unfortunately, little evidence is available to suggest what type of physical activity, as well as intensity and amount, is required to best increase reserve and protect against cognitive impairment.

There is also mounting evidence that being sedentary for long periods of the day is bad for health. This might even undo any benefits gained from periods of physical activity. So, it is important to understand how the composition of physical activity across the day impacts brain health and reserve, and this is an aim of our work.

Our ongoing studies should contribute to the development of evidence-based guidelines that provide clear advice on physical activity patterns for optimising brain health and resilience. M.R.

## GROUP WAITING LISTS

Three groups (Book Group, Coffee & Chat, Quilting) have reached capacity but if you enrol Quentin will put your name on a waiting list.

If there is sufficient interest, we could start a second group. Of course the vital element is someone willing to act as group leader. I encourage anyone, whether they are a member of an existing group or not, to put up their hands for this. It can be very rewarding and of course allows you to shape a new group along different lines or just on a day which suits you most.

For instance there are many different styles of reading groups. Some concentrate on one particular genre, such as crime fiction or classics, while others dabble in a mix of different forms of literature (including novels, plays, short stories and poetry) and even venture into creative writing.

## AGM IN NOVEMBER

We are already looking at possible guest speakers for Friday 3 November. We always appreciate the input of the general membership so let us know if you have any bright ideas for contributions or changes.

Most of all we want to hear from members who are interested in serving on the committee. There are 2 meetings per term plus 3 special events during the year. We have a great organisation and over 200 members benefit from it. U3A is a self-help body which is based on the theory that everyone will share their skills in some way whether it is teaching, administration or just making the tea. Too often we see the same people doing all those things week after week, year after year.

## NEW NAME TAGS WAITING LIST

Let me reassure those members who have ordered a name tag but are yet to receive it that we have not forgotten you. You are on a waiting list for the next order. Sorry for the delay but postage and handling costs make orders of less than 10 uneconomic. (To order just one name tag would cost about \$35.)

## ITALIAN ENROLMENTS

Enrolments are usually for the full year so you only need to fill out an enrolment form if you want to enrol for a new class. The exception is Italian which was originally scheduled to last only one term. No new enrolments are being taken but existing students who want to continue in Term 3 do need to get their name on the list. There is a strict limit on class numbers in Term 3 so it will be first in first served. Depending on numbers, Anne will do a repeat in Term 4 for those who miss out in Term 3. Advise Quentin for your preference of Term 3 or Term 4.

## VALE CHRISTA SULLIVAN

Christa Sullivan, long-term resident of Watervale, passed away recently. Not only was Christa a foundation member of U3A Lower North, but she could be called *the* founder.

It was Christa who saw the potential for a Clare Valley U3A and spread the idea, getting others on board. At State level we look for people like Christa within a community. People who can see the potential in this rather unconventional concept of a self-help learning body for retirees, and have the determination and drive to get it started. They are rare gems.

## IPADS

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Marian Wickes is gradually chewing through the number of people who want to master their iPads. Taking just 3 students at a time, Marian turns over a new batch of students every 3 or 4 weeks.

If your iPad is just acting like an extremely expensive paperweight, put your name down for Computing 3: iPads. Despite the name, Marian is willing to devote some classes to non Apple devices if there is demand.

## GROUP LEADERS NOTE

Secretary Beth Smith sends her thanks to all group leaders who have submitted their attendance sheets. For those who haven't yet put in Term 2 sheets, they can go direct to Beth or slip them in the black letterbox on the railings outside the Domain.

## 2017 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE

Half-year membership is \$15 and you can pay 3 ways:

- post cheques made out to 'U3A Lower North Inc.' to PO Box 480, Clare, 5453; OR
- pay online. (U3A Lower North Inc., No. 748828019; BSB 085 558. For ID use surname followed by initial, e.g. John Smith = smithj. Emails to u3alownorth@gmail.com)
- Any cash payment would have to be personally arranged with course co-ordinator.

## 2017 U3A CALENDAR

2017 has four 8-week terms divided by 3 or 4-week gaps because group leaders deserve holidays too.

If meeting outside these dates please inform the secretary to protect group leader insurance.

**TERM 3:** \_\_ Monday 24 July to Friday 15 September

**TERM 4:** \_\_ Monday 16 October to Fri. 8 December  
Annual General Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Friday 3 November  
End-of-year lunch & movie: \_\_\_\_\_ Friday 8 December

## 2017: THIRD TERM ACTIVITIES

CLASS	LEADER	TIME	STARTS	VENUE	TICK
Art	<i>Gerald Moore</i>	Wed 9:30am - 1:30pm	24/7/2017	Auburn	[ ]
Book Group	<i>Marianne Holliday</i>	Alt Thu 10:30am - 12noon	27/7/2017	Clare Library	[ ]
Cards, hand & foot	<i>Jan Bails</i>	Mon 9.30 am – 12 noon	24/7/2017	Essington Mews	[ ]
Chess	<i>Ian Bails</i>	Tue 2:30 - 4:30pm	25/7/2017	Essington Mews	[ ]
Chinese (Mandarin)	<i>Ron Bevan</i>	Mon 10am - 12noon	24/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Coffee & Chat	<i>Val Tilbrook</i>	Wed 10:30am	26/7/2017	Various	[ ]
Computing I Basics	<i>Quentin Fleming</i>	Fri 10am – 12 noon	28/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Computing 2	<i>Quentin Fleming</i>	Tue 1 - 3pm	25/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Computing 3 iPads	<i>Marian Wicks</i>	Tue 12 noon- 1:30pm	25/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Contract Bridge	<i>Eleanor Thomas</i>	Thu 3pm	27/7/2017	St Barnabas	[ ]
Cryptic Crosswords	<i>Greta Handmer</i>	Alt Thu 10:30am - 12noon	3/8/2017	25 Edward St	[ ]
Drumbeat	<i>John Monten</i>	Mon. 10am-12 noon	24/7/17	St Barmabas	[ ]
Exercise 1	<i>Chris Roberts</i>	Tue 9 - 10am	25/7/2017	Lutheran Hall	[ ]
Exercise 2	<i>Chris Roberts</i>	Tue 10 - 11am	25/7/2017	Lutheran Hall	[ ]
Film Group	<i>Val Tilbrook</i>	1st Tue 2pm	1/8/2017	Blyth Cinema	[ ]
French 1 Basics*	<i>Claire Eglinton</i>	Thu 9.30-10.30 am	27/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
French 2*	<i>Claire Eglinton</i>	Thu 10.45 am- 12.30 pm	27/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Furniture Restoration	<i>Barrie Smith</i>	Wed 10am - 12noon	26/7/2017	Blyth	[ ]
History	<i>Val Tilbrook</i>	Fri 10am - 12noon	28/7/2017	St Barnabas	[ ]
Irish Culture, Language	<i>Ian Bails</i>	Mon 2.30 – 4.30 pm	24/7/2017	Essington Mews	[ ]
Italian for Travellers	<i>Anne Smith</i>	Mon 1-2.30 pm	1/7/2017	Clare Town Hall	[ ]
Knit and Sew	<i>Mary Clark</i>	Tue 2 - 4pm	25/7/2017	Domain	[ ]
Mah-jong, Auburn	<i>Sue Beaton</i>	Tue 1 - 3pm	25/7/2017	Mellers, Auburn	[ ]
Mah-jong, Clare	<i>Pam Murray</i>	Wed 2 - 4pm	26/7/2017	St Barnabas	[ ]
Meditation (relaxation)	<i>Anne Smith</i>	Tue 10 - 11:30am	25/7/2017	Clare Town Hall	[ ]
Music Appreciation	<i>Helen Weckert</i>	1st, 3rd, 5th Wed 2pm	2/8/2017	10 March Court	[ ]
Petanque	<i>Jim Morran</i>	Mon 1.30 pm	24/7/2017	Cent. Pk, Auburn	[ ]
Quilting	<i>Dianne Richardson</i>	Thu 10am - 1pm	24/7/2017	St Barnabas	[ ]
Scrabble	<i>Carol Stewart</i>	Mon 1:15pm	24/7/2017	St Barnabas	[ ]
Walking, Clare	<i>Margaret Daly</i>	Mon 8 am	24/7/2017	Lennon St east	[ ]
Walking, Auburn	<i>Jan Bowles</i>	Thu 8.30 am	27/7/2017	Auburn Institute	[ ]



**PLEASE RETURN** new enrolments to Course Co-ordinator, Quentin Fleming, preferably before Monday 17 July (17/7/17!) at P.O. Box 480, Clare SA 5453, or phone 0447 601 142, or email asku3a@gmail.com

Enrol me in the following group/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Member? Yes / No

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Country of origin \_\_\_\_\_

**Newsletters** by post [ ] or email [ ]. **Payment** by cheque [ ] cash [ ] EFT [ ] Details overleaf

Payment is for (put how many in brackets): \$15 membership [ ]; \$12 badges [ ]. Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

All information kept in accordance with U3A Lower North Inc. privacy policy