



AUSTRALIA

U3AAA BULLETIN No. 37

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Canberra U3A group Recorder Rondo

This issue:

■ *Member reports:*

- 👂 *Canberra knows all about wind*
 - 👂 *WA finds pit of vipers*
 - 👂 *SA polishing product*
 - 👂 *NSW squeeze into Deniliquin*
 - 👂 *Victorians popping up hubs*
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From the Editor

Pleased to have contributions from U3A Canberra this issue. See their generous offer to join their forums. In operation for 40 years, U3A Canberra is a mega U3A with about 5,000 members. Being the only representative for the ACT, it has its own seat on the U3AAA committee. Despite this, it still maintain its membership of the NSW Network.

Just as members need to support their local U3A and the good people who have volunteered to lead it, all U3As should support their state networks by being active participants and helping find the talent needed to hold office. Talent spot new members with backgrounds in publicity, finance, etc. U3A is an organisation where you should start at the top and then enjoy stepping back once you have made your contribution.

And to quote my mother, if you can't be a help, at least don't be a hindrance. I recently suffered a major computer crash and had to pay an exorbitant sum to extract the data in a hurry as I had four big projects almost complete for a range of bodies. It made me think about why they hadn't been finalised and it all turned out to be a story of waiting on other people: missed deadlines, failure to RSVP, unanswered emails, etc. Chasing them up not only causes delays but unnecessarily increases the workload. It is every secretary's lament. If you want to encourage volunteers, first don't abuse the goodwill of those you already have.

Just a bit of housekeeping this issue as we have some new contributors. I remind states of the next deadline a few weeks in advance. It is up to each state representative to gather local stories and forward their edited contribution with suitable photographs. No fancy formatting, photo borders, etc., as they just have to be removed. No matter what your typing teacher taught you, don't add extra spaces between sentences or anywhere else.

This is a visual medium so quality of photography is important. Please locate original copies of photos which will be greater than 1 megabyte. Photos taken from the web or minimized for easy emailing from a phone are not suitable for reproduction. Photos need to be sent as separate attachments and not inserted within your Word document story. Each issue I need one landscape photo for the cover but apart from that portrait proportions work fine. Photos of 1 to 5 people doing something are best; group shots of rooms with lots of backs of heads or unsmiling faces are the worst.

Each state is allocated two pages and with one or two photos per page they quickly fill up. Text is edited to fit. Filler articles are always welcome if I have a half or quarter page space to fill. Can't promise they will all be used. (Where possible I save them for following issues).

Deadline for next issue of this Bulletin is Wednesday 29 July.



Claire Eglinton
U3A Lower North &
U3A South Australia

From the Chairman

This is a significant year for U3A as we celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the U3A movement worldwide at the Queensland State Conference hosted by U3A Rockhampton, 8-11 May 2023. The conference theme is U3A Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

I would like to reflect on the conference's theme in the context of the pride of the achievements of the organisation, the efforts of the U3A state networks in sharing knowledge and experience to ensure that we will have a sustainable relevant organisation in the future.

Incorporation of the U3A Australian Alliance is progressing in line with our legal advice. An update report is to be circulated on timing for the completion of the incorporation process prior to the NSW Network State Conference in April. Discussions with the Federal Government and other peak bodies that our state networks are collaborating with to source resources to benefit their member U3As have included encouragement to incorporate.

Both the U3A Network Victoria and U3A Network Queensland have developed strong partnerships with nbn to support scam awareness programs. Nbn confirmed it would support the extension of the program to each state network. This is another example of state networks working together for the benefit of all member networks with the U3A Australia Alliance providing a supportive national voice.

Generally, I am hearing that our member U3As have continued to provide their membership with support to upgrade their digital skills to enable them to use technology devices to continue to live independently and that membership of our U3As is increasing.

The topics at the Queensland and New South Wales network conferences are indicative of the strength of connection U3A has to other organisations and in particular its contribution into research programs. Presentations and discussions with other organisations will significantly benefit the U3A organisation in the long term as we further evolve at a national level communication of the needs of our U3A members to all levels of government.

In closing, my thoughts go out to those of our membership adversely affected by the recent extreme weather events across the country and hope you are recovering back to a normal life. I know many U3As not affected by these events have reached out and supported other affected U3As through these difficult times. This is another example of the collaborative sharing and caring culture of the U3A organisation.

I again acknowledge the good work of our member networks, member U3As in each state and the commitment of their committees, tutors and leaders to ensuring U3A in Australia can look forward to a bright future.

Let us all look forward to the future with optimism and enthusiasm.

Glen Wall
Chair,
U3A Alliance Australia



CANBERRA

Canberra U3A group Recorder Rondo had the privilege of hosting Emma Davidson, ACT Minister for Seniors and Veterans. The Minister, along with other guests had a fun time learning the challenges of playing the recorder when they joined for a section of *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* on descant recorders.

This visit in March was a perfect way to engage our Minister for Seniors and Veterans in some U3A fun and entertainment. Emma Davidson spoke generously and genuinely about her enjoyment of the morning and about her appreciation of the community engagement that U3A brings for so many older people in the ACT and surrounds.

Rondo was proud to dub Emma an honorary life member of Recorder Rondo.

Right: Gift presented to Minister Davidson by Lutana McLeod.



Recorder Rondo is a popular group within the U3A in Canberra with over 35 participants. Led by Pam Cooke, the group meets to play music, improve their skills, and socialise with other music enthusiasts. There are two small practice groups that also meet weekly. Their formation arose during the pandemic years when only small groups could play instruments together and they have stood the test of time. One meets northside and the other south.

Rondo began nearly 10 years ago and now includes all levels of experience from intermediate/beginner to advanced players. Some have only learned to read music and play an instrument since retiring. Others have played and performed for many years. Each session begins with warm-up exercises and then progresses to learning and playing pieces of music. The group plays a variety of genres, including classical, folk, and modern.

Playing music is a great way to exercise the brain and improve cognitive function. Learning to read music and play an instrument can also improve hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. It reduces stress and improves overall well-being.

Each week sees new music being learnt. Performances for community groups and at various functions inspire members to practise and improve and give them confidence and self-esteem. At the end of last year, Rondo was delighted to play some Christmas music at the Cooleman Farm Neighbourhood Park celebrations before an audience of 400.

SHARING COURSES, BUILDING ENGAGEMENT AND MAKING USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Australians are retiring later in life (average age 66) and often continue working part time. KPMG research shows this particularly applies to the tertiary qualified; that those over 60 are looking for freedom and choice; and the ongoing move by retirees out of the cities.

This implies that as an organisation U3A needs to be flexible into the future in its course and subject offerings to attract potential members whose time may be limited, regionally based, and social interaction is not as important as intellectual stimulation. Advances in technology such as Zoom provide scope for new offerings tailored to members' preferences.

An example of such flexibility is the very popular 'Tuesday Forums' of U3A Canberra which have a focus on current affairs. Prior to COVID the forums were held face-to-face but after moving online in 2020, have now continued online in response to feedback from members (saves travelling, easy to hear and see, bigger range of speakers, no parking hassles). A number of hybrid forums were held but physical participation was very low.

U3A ACT is fortunate to access experts from local tertiary institutions (e.g. Australian National University, University of Canberra, and Australian Catholic University) and current and retired senior commonwealth government officials (ministers, policy advisors, ambassadors). Being online we also attract speakers from interstate. Talks in March included: doomsday clock; the science of COVID three years on; Voice to Parliament (background to the call for constitutional recognition); and the power to go to war. All with highly qualified expert speakers.

The forums are open to all U3A members in Canberra and attract audiences of up to 100-150 members with very interactive question and answer sessions. U3A members are offered pre-registration so interested members can be placed on a mailing list for the series of talks and do not need to register on a weekly basis. There is no cost for the forums although on occasion we may seek a nominal contribution to meet Zoom and speaker gifts costs.

Given the advances in technology and access provided by Zoom and large audience capacity there appears no reason why other U3As across Australia could not also access the forums. For instance, we have a number of past U3A ACT members who have moved interstate but requested to stay on the mailing list for the forums.

We are talking to a number of interstate U3As about providing access for their members to the forums. This appears to be particularly attractive to small rural-based U3As. U3A Canberra welcomes the opportunity to talk to other U3As to provide access to the forums and the logistics are pretty simple. If your U3A is interested in accessing these sessions please send an email to forums@u3acanberra.org.au. U3A Canberra is also looking at running a series of quarterly half-day 'Topical Insights', both face-to-face and online, with speakers who can address issues in depth.

*Alex Gosman
Vice President,
U3A Canberra*

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

U3A ARMADALE

A recent Armadale U3A study group focussed on Australian reptiles. Each member of the study group choose a reptile to research and then gave a presentation to the group during the study sessions. Organisers and participants alike found the sessions rewarding and fun.

It all culminated with a group visit to the Armadale Reptile and Wildlife Centre. Of course no amount of study can quite prepare you for the real thing. No matter how interesting, I bet none of the topics this year made hearts race quite as hard as the hands-on experience at the reptile park.



Those topics of the non heart-racing or heart-stopping variety being enjoyed at Armadale include presentations on moths, fungi, history of Kings Park with Judy Burn, the Royal Flying Doctor Service with Trish Thompson and *Walk a War in My Shoes* with Murray Hall.

U3A Armadale continue to offer their members a wide range of activities including music, yoga, book club, travel online and technology updates via the Connecting Up programme.

Future outings include a bus trip to the historic Benedictine Spanish-style monastic enclave at New Norcia. Another planned trip will take

members on a tour of the Gravity Discovery Centre near Gin Gin. This state-of-the-art science facility is at the leading edge of gravity wave measurement and visitors can participate in the many interactive science displays.

U3A DONNYBROOK

The new Donnybrook U3A in WA, supported by the Donnybrook Community Resource Centre and U3A Bunbury continues to flourish. In February, the group entered in the Masters Donnybrook Dunny Do Over challenge. This is a community arts project to enhance the town's amenities and in particular the town toilet block.

The Donnybrook U3A entry *The Seat of all Knowledge* consisted of Margaret as sitting member; Dieter and Alan as pushers, with Maddie, Liz and others egging them on from the sidelines. All things started well, but it wasn't long before disaster struck and the steering rope broke. No matter, the U3A team finished the race and had a lot of fun along the way.



Competition for the event was fierce amongst the various teams including the *Mad Cowz*, *The Bog Buggy*, *Op Shop Long Drop* and *Chariots on Fire*.

There is talk of the chariots being displayed in the street parade for the re-vamped Donnybrook Festival, which combines the Apple Festival and the Donnybrook Food and Wine Festival traditionally held over the Easter weekend.

In other news the WA State U3A Network is in negotiation with the Perth U3A group to re-join the Network after suddenly withdrawing support in February.

Peter Flanigan
WA Network



[Congratulations to the WA Network for their excellent new-look newsletter which appeared a few weeks ago and my thanks to them for circulating it to all U3AAA representatives. I know how much cat herding is required to assemble such a publication. The WA network are certainly working hard to make U3A better known in the west and are presenting an increasingly professional image. Anyone who wants to read it in full can find it on the WA State network website: <https://u3anetworkwa.org.au/>. The Editor.]

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

When one has to rebuild numbers people naturally think of better promotion. First it helps to look at what you are promoting. Do you have the best possible product?

How often is a U3A's most popular group full up with a waiting list? If there is a demand, why not do everything possible to cater to it. At one stage one local U3A, blessed with an enthusiastic tutor, seemed to have a ukelele group for every day of the week. U3A Lower North just started their third Mahjong group without any great expectations. With a different day, different venue, different style of Mahjong, it has turned into a real winner with enrolments increasing every week. Product approval is obviously 10/10.



Maybe the venue is the secret. The friendly people at the Clare Valley Tourism Centre are happy to host a couple of U3A groups and our members are delighted to have bright, airy premises with a ready supply of cake and barista coffee. Once the open wood fire starts in winter we may have to prise them out. Lower North uses about a dozen different venues, some quite drab and uninviting, so perhaps it is no wonder that better venues draw better numbers.

Socialising and having fun have always been the sub-text to U3A activities and why we always encouraged coffee breaks during or after more serious pursuits. Now we are more than happy to cut straight to the chase and making it all about having a good time.

U3A Lower North's new lunch club numbers soon exceeded expectations and the group are all set to eat their way around the Clare Valley's dining establishments building friendships as they go. U3A Strathalbyn went one further and started a Laughter Club.

They say laughter is the best medicine and Strathalbyn secretary Jasmine Hunt agrees. Beginning in the depths of winter 2022, Laughter Club was just the thing to give their program a boost. The presenter was trained by Laughter Yoga Australia after being introduced to it through an holistic wellness journey.

Laughter Club combines laughter exercises with yogic breathing and gentle stretches. Your immune system benefits by increasing oxygen to the cells, improving circulation and helping

to normalise blood pressure. There are no yoga poses, but lots of laughing and having fun. It's suitable for all ages, as well as people with dementia, in wheelchairs and with disabilities. It doesn't rely on comedy or jokes, and the brain doesn't know the difference between real and fake laughter. The good chemicals begin to flow, and before you know it, you are feeling good and the laughter becomes real.

As part of U3A Strathalbyn's strategy to rebuild post-COVID, they introduced this and other new courses and are partnering with other community organisations to promote the wellbeing aspects that are part and parcel of U3A membership. Participants were asked about the wellbeing benefits gained from their chosen activity. The responses were added to a display at a wide-ranging Wellbeing Expo where members were on hand to provide information, answer questions and chat with passers-by. Member responses included:

'Learning Italian at U3A with Doriana is a joyful experience. Knowing the benefits are backed by science, I can definitely say it's supported my brain's ability with increased focus in daily life. I also feel I've become a more mindful communicator, and it's encouraged me to expand on ways to be more creative.'

'At Laughter Club, (right) we laugh, we clap, we breathe, and we connect with others. It's a unique concept that allows you to laugh even when you least feel like it. Then our bodies relax and we produce some lovely endorphins and hormones — and the laughter becomes medicine, mentally and physically.'



Unsurprisingly, their wine appreciation group, hosted by a winemaker with decades of wine industry experience, also produced a flow of positive reviews.

U3A South Australia's Statewide program of online courses continues but is not receiving the support it deserves. There is a general reluctance to join an online group but you start wondering if 'the product' is lacking. Then along comes a wonderful letter of appreciation from a country member who couldn't find the course she wanted through her local U3A. *"I joined the Memoir and Novel writing group last year and thoroughly enjoyed it. I am in the process of assimilating my memoirs and Margaret has been a great source of encouragement and advice. It was not easy for me to submit my experiences and thoughts for critique but have found Margaret and the group (the tenor set by Margaret) to be most constructive and helpful.'*

A few words of thanks or praise make all the effort worthwhile and help ease us all through the inevitable complaints and negativity. Blessed are the praise givers.

Claire Eglinton
Secretary
U3A South Australia



NEW SOUTH WALES

In the second week of March 2023 the NSW Network held three two-hour Cross Regional Meetings (CRMs) over three days, by Zoom. Participant U3As across the State were divided into three clusters that coincided with the number of members in their U3A.

Discussions ranged from advocating to your local State members prior to the State election, to recovery processes for U3As post-COVID. A PowerPoint presentation on *Promoting and Advocating for your U3A* was shown and offered for use to all members.

The U3A NSW Network Conference entitled *U3A: Emerging from COVID* was held on 18/19 April in Deniliquin (South West NSW) with a full two-day program geared at engaging participants in a relaxed and informative gathering.

Some of the program highlights:

- History of Deniliquin and surrounds
- Round table discussion/Introduction of U3As attending: *What is working? What isn't?*
- Scam awareness, mental health issues, technology update, long COVID.
- Network website, status of U3A Australia, future of U3A Network NSW.

For further details, see <https://nsw.u3anet.org.au/conference23/>

Lake Macquarie U3A

Rosalie Menzies, President LMU3A says:

At Lake Macquarie U3A we have been enjoying a series of talks called '1+2'.

One of our members, Sue Shute, interviews 2 local guests who have had interesting life experiences. We have heard such fascinating stories: a U3A member who was a ballerina living in Spain for 10 years in the 70s; a forensic scientist who worked on some of Australia's famous murder cases; a member who was born in India and then lived in Iraq, UK, Indonesia before coming to our area; and a scientist who spent years visiting Pakistan and Thailand and helping with soil salinity.

Recently over 60 people came to hear the stories of a lady who had lived with a Kenyan tribe and raised money to build them a school, and the story of a drug addict and bikie who recently was awarded an OAM for his chaplaincy work in prisons.

The talks are illustrated by a PowerPoint presentation in the background and the audience has the opportunity to ask questions at the end.

Port Stephens U3A

Alan Young, President PSU3A says:

We are delighted to announce that in the 2023 Australia Day honours list, our Port Stephens U3A founding member (1995) Paul Whittemore has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

It is Paul's contribution to the Port Stephens community in his third age at U3A for which he is recognised. In addition to spending fifteen years on the Port Stephens U3A committee

including as president (2004-2005), vice president (2006-2013), social secretary (2014-2018) and the organiser of many wonderful excursions, Paul will be most appreciated by many as the presenter of his highly popular astronomy classes which ran for over 25 years.

Unfortunately hearing loss has meant an end to his presenting days but his passion for knowledge remains high. Paul is co-leader of our poetry group and a mainstay at social events, enthusiastically greeting newcomers.

Maitland U3A

Alan Pring says:

The Maitland 2022 Christmas party held at Telarah Bowling Club was a great success, with good food and a party spirit prevailing. Entertainment was supplied by U3A Maitland's belly dance group and their ukulele group.



Irena Watson, belly dance course leader, flanked by four of her talented dancers.

Photo: by Donna Reilly

*Jean Lewis
Regional Representative
Central Coast/Hunter Region NSW*



[My apologies that we were unable to locate a suitable photo of Susan, the strip-tease Santa performing at the Maitland event. Readers will just have to use their imagination. Let this be another reminder of the importance of high resolution photographs to properly record these priceless moments in U3A history. ..Editor.]

QUEENSLAND

When you are thrown in the deep end you can either sink or swim. Fortunately, Queenslanders are good swimmers.

In mid-December we found ourselves unexpectedly having to create an entirely new registration and payment system for our state conferences.

With registrations due to open on 1st February, this may sound like ample time to add this process to our website. As it turned out it was but those of you who work in IT will know just how many hours of hard work that took to accomplish. The talents of our vice president John Armstrong, who managed this transformation are greatly appreciated.

Instigated by Nancy Pachana, Director UQ Age Friendly University & Healthy Ageing Initiative I had a Skype meeting with Professor Dr. Mike Martin Head of the University of Zurich's Department of Psychology – Gerontopsychology. Professor Martin is very interested in how we manage our community-based U3As in Australia. Also of interest for Professor Martin is the possibility of student exchanges between our countries.

The Liaison program is continuing to be a positive strategy, one that our member associations find to be of enormous benefit on many levels. One president commented to me recently that “it puts a friendly face to Network and removes the idea that network is that elite group in SEQ”.

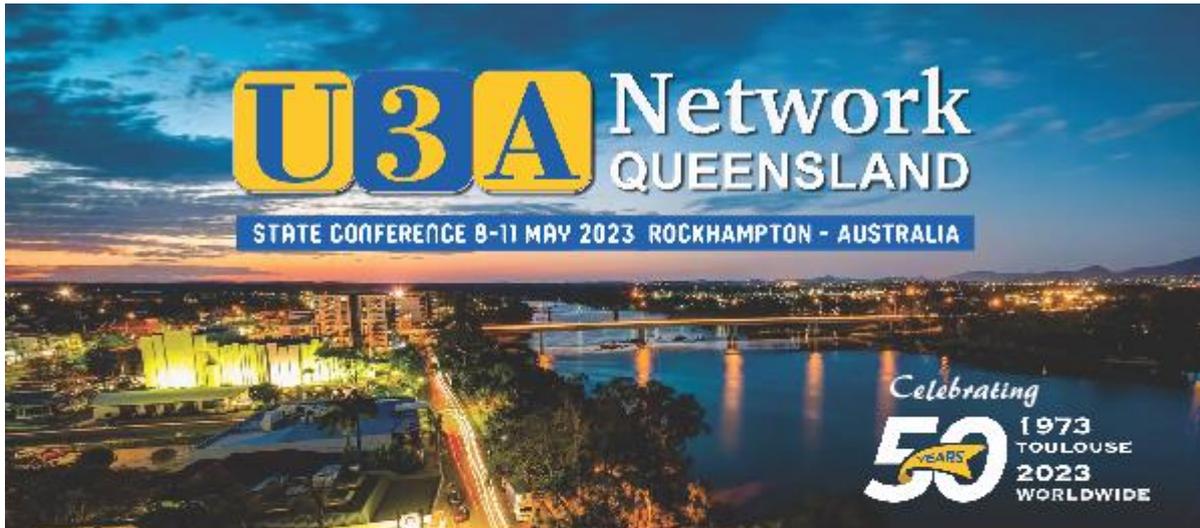
Like community groups everywhere U3A committees are facing the common complaint of lack of people coming forward to volunteer. When and why did our Aussie spirit of volunteering disappear? How can we overcome this appalling lack of commitment? Many hours are spent around tables discussing how to attract, retain and appreciate volunteers. Unfortunately, no one seems to have a solid answer.

On a positive note, our members seem to be completely over staying at home due to the restrictions around managing the COVID pandemic and are rejoining U3A in their hundreds.

The natural course of life is to have activities and interests that enable us to engage with our peers and this desire has been a contributory factor in the surge of new members and renewing members coming through our doors. Long may it continue.

I look forward to catching up with you, my colleagues and friends at the Queensland State Conference in Rockhampton 8th-11th May, celebrating 50 years of U3A worldwide. It will be a once in a lifetime event, not to be missed.

*Rhonda Weston AM
President
U3A Network Qld Inc*



This year's U3A Network Queensland State Conference 2023 hosted by U3A Rockhampton in May will celebrate 50 years of U3A worldwide. The conference combines an impressive program of guest speakers and event celebrations that will make for a once in a lifetime U3A experience.

Conference Theme: 'U3A Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'

Conference Timetable:

- 9 May – Network Conference & Celebration of 50 years of U3A
- 10 May – Network Conference & Celebration of 50 Years of U3A
- 11 May – Network Conference & Network AGM

Events:

- Meet and Greet (8 May)
- U3A 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner (9 May)
- U3A Network Queensland Dinner (10 May)

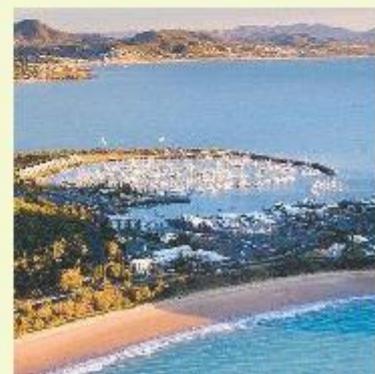
Rockhampton:

The City of Rockhampton is booming; a modern throwback to the heydays of Queensland's colonial past, offering cosmopolitan conveniences in a contemporary riverside setting and close to the fabulous Great Barrier Reef. And when the sun sets on the mighty Fitzroy River, premium dining can be found along the heritage-listed streets.

[Register for the Conference at: u3aqlld.au](http://u3aqlld.au)



Conference and Event Venues



VICTORIA

The digital hub has popped up in Victoria, offering U3A members and community seniors digital training, mentoring, and hands-on experiences in a relaxed, informal environment.

Victoria's first digital hub resulted from co-operation between U3A Network, U3A Geelong, City of Greater Geelong, Geelong Regional Library and NBN Co.

The U3A selected a group of its members as mentors and then organised open sessions at three regional libraries within the City of Greater Geelong. The hub offered four two-hour sessions over three months and was advertised throughout the U3A and the general community. NBN Co provided extra training for Geelong's mentor team and also provided telecommunications equipment to set up the hub.

U3A members and older members of the community could join a session, and could bring their own equipment to practice on or ask questions about. Each session had some prepared lessons, but participants could also go 'off script' and work on their own interests or questions.

The background purpose of the hub project was to improve general digital skills and thus to help tackle social isolation and loneliness in the community.

U3A Geelong president Nanette Tunnicliffe said she noticed that owning a digital device like a smartphone, or having an email account, did not automatically mean that a person could make use of the device or service. During COVID lockdown it became increasingly clear that having digital skills helped keep people connected to their families and communities. 'Our project promoted the benefits of home-based broadband, safe use of technology, and of improving general digital skills.' And, improving these skills amongst older Australians gives people some of the tools to remain living independently as long as possible.

Topics at hub sessions included a number of smart devices and the Internet of Things, how to stay safe online and scams awareness, home internet optimisation as well as guidance on how to do important tasks online such as accessing government services, banking, installing applications, and using email services.

Network Victoria has integrated its overall Digital Inclusiveness Uplift program into its Technology Community of Practice, which includes a number of partnerships and co-design projects. Participating organisations include U3As throughout the state, local councils, state government departments and bodies, and other community organisations.

Technology Community of Practice leader Glen Wall noted that these partnerships and projects demonstrate the effectiveness of 'peer to peer exchange of knowledge and experience' in older people's learning. He commented on the importance of viewing technology as an enablement tool to help older people connect with their family, friends and the many support services now accessible almost exclusively on line.

Susan Webster
Vice President
U3A Network Victoria



Network Victoria
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE