

### LIVE | LEARN | ENJOY

#### From the President

Term 1 started with quite a buzz on 1<sup>st</sup> February. It was great to see everyone back after such a long absence! We did have to make some quick adjustments to class sizes and room changes to ensure we are working within safety guidelines for social distancing and contact tracing requirements. Monash responded immediately to our room changes, everyone came together and made it a quite a pleasant return. Thank you for your very positive response. The overall assessment is great! But, before we could take a breather, here we are again, in lockdown, with the current state-wide Stage 4 restrictions. It does go to show, how quickly things can change. Unpleasant that it is, let's look at it as something we are all doing together, not only for our own health and safety but for the greater good.

To turn the 5-day lockdown to a positive and with the luxury of peace and quiet at home, I thought I'd share my observations of the past 2 weeks to see how we can all improve the U3A experience for everyone.

#### Classroom behaviours - Your efforts can help

Many of our larger classes are over-subscribed, with members waitlisted. It is uplifting that tutors are agreeing to take more students, hence the urgent need for venue changes; this inconvenience may continue until things settle in. But, with larger room, more students can attend classes, even though it means more work for our tutors. We need your help to make the experience better for all. Tutors only have a small time slot to share their skills and let's face it, for us, beginners and learners, we are not easy to teach. I truly applaud the tutors' efforts; in my own experience, the dancing teachers trying to make my brain believe I actually only have a left and a right leg, not 3 left ones, is a quite a challenge – quietly, even frustrating, I'm sure!!

So, let's help the tutors. I am looking for volunteers, particularly for the larger classes; come early to class to help with the set up. Nominate at least one class monitor to mark and sign-in attendance as members arrive. Check that attendees are carrying/wearing masks (as the rules allow). Contact tracing signing is mandatory. Tutors may allow a guest or two from time to time, but the guests too, must be recorded and signed-in. And please, consider the tutors with any unnecessary distractions; manage social chit chats and noise levels and together, leave the rooms clean and tidy for the next group!

#### Enrolments

As I previously stated, there are very limited numbers for every class and if classes are full, you will just have to wait. For Intermediate and Advance level classes, please understand, tutors may want to assess your competency levels before accepting your enrolment. To help make this work for everyone, if you are enrolled into a class, please make every effort to attend. If the class is no longer suitable for you, formally withdraw from the course and give others the opportunity instead. Where you do want to stay in the class but cannot attend for some reason, please send in your apologies. It has only been 2 weeks back and many enrolled members have been absent for both weeks. I make no excuses encouraging tutors to remove members from the course after 3 unacceptable absences.

#### Administrative Matters

Tutors and office volunteers can't deal with your administration queries, particularly in class time. Outside of office, they also have their own lives too. I get private messages asking for assistance how to enrol or to be put into classes. Please stop. Send your queries to [u3awheelershill@gmail.com](mailto:u3awheelershill@gmail.com) instead and we will do our best to assist you.

#### Membership Refund Requests

Office volunteers have been approached by members to refund membership fees because the course they want to enrol into is full. And our office volunteers are uncomfortable dealing with this. Classes at U3A are offered free of charge on a "first-in, best-dressed" approach. To differentiate membership from course enrolments, taking up membership in the organisation does not guarantee you enrolments into any class you want. When you take up membership, we expect that you want to be a member of the U3A Wheelers Hill community and for the benefits it offers. To put this into perspective, membership fees this year is \$25. This helps cover the cost of running the organisation and keeping the lights on. For the small amount and U3A being a non-profit organisation, it is somewhat distasteful to talk about membership refunds, so, please don't approach the volunteers on this, come and have a chat with me directly instead.

With all that out of the way, sit back and enjoy this edition of our newsletter. In just 2 weeks back, we have so much news to share!

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We include photos to show off our new classes and proposed new courses, seeking your expressions of interest. An interesting proposal of a new Bike Riders' Group may be of your cup of tea if you are a bike rider. If you feel you may be interested in any of these new classes, send us a message and we can talk about whether or not we can make this work.

You may be interested in joining the Walk & Talk group to raise funds for Cord Blood. We are running a series about our tutors; in this edition, we feature Diana Farmer, who tutors our Gardening Group. Applaud Elaine Forde, receiving the Order of Australia Award, Australia Day 2021!

And – as we promised!

We have booked a large venue for an End of Year event on 3<sup>rd</sup> December at Southern Community Centre. It will be an evening event, from 7pm to 10pm. Please mark this in your calendars and start making preparations to showcase your stuff!!

Lan Tiet, one of our Line Dancing tutors, with vast experience in organising similar events – even taking dancing troops abroad, has offered to lead the charge to help us put this together under a sub-committee. We need your help to make this a memorable event for U3A Wheelers Hill and to showcase what we do! Stay tuned!

**Ann Findlay, President**



### New Classes Commenced Term 1, 2021

#### Lan Tiet's – Exercise for Seniors



Our Line Dancing tutor is offering a new Exercise class for seniors. This has proven to be very popular, being quickly over-subscribed and receiving very positive feedback from members.

#### Jerry Tien's – Mandarin Intermediate Level



We are fortunate with Jerry's offer to run a course to members who already have some level of exposure, either written or conversational, in the Mandarin language. Jerry brings with him, a professorship with 33 years lecturing at Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri-Rolla, or UMR) and Monash University, not to mention his vast background in the mining industry, Chinese language, history culture.

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### Walking for A Good Cause

#### Proposed New Classes and Activities

1. Older Women's Conversation Group
2. Mahjong Gin Rummy
3. Classical Guitar – Advanced Level
4. Bike Riders' Group

There are endless skills and talent out there and potentially, we may have some new classes and activities to offer members.

But before we progress any further with these, we need to know if you are interested. Don't miss the chance to have a say!

1. Dr. Kristin Henry, recently awarded a PhD, for her study topic *Clans and Tribes: attachment networks of older Australian women*, is proposing a 10-week discussion group on the impact of significant relationships on wellbeing of older women. Discussion topics to include family, partnerships, relationships, friendships and ageism.
2. Mahjong Gin Rummy. We have temporarily closed our Mahjong classes considering the risk of not being able to socially distance. But as soon as it is safe to do so, mahjong will resume, this time, to include Gin Rummy, an interesting game, using mahjong tiles rather than the conventional playing cards.
3. Classical Guitar – Advanced Level. U3A Wheelers Hill is offering Classical Guitar lessons at Beginners and Intermediate levels. If there is sufficient interest, we may be able to get a tutor for Advance Level classes.
4. Bike Riders' Group. Absolutely new to our U3A! Do we have enough bike riding enthusiasts to form this new group?

Please forward your expressions of interest for the above proposed classes by email to [u3Awheelershill@gmail.com](mailto:u3Awheelershill@gmail.com)

We want to hear from you!



Pictured here, are some of our members in the **Walk & Talk group**.

On Friday February 26<sup>th</sup> our Walk & Talk group will be walking to raise money for a good cause – Cord Blood Research\*.

The walk will be held at the Cranbourne Botanical Gardens starting 10.30am from the gift shop near the main entrance.

If you'd like to join them, you can obtain a registration form from Linda Wallace via her email [lwal19951@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lwal19951@bigpond.net.au)

\*Cord blood is used in the treatment of blood cancers such as leukaemia & lymphomas and blood disorders such as Sickle Cell Anaemia.



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### Tutor Feature: DIANA FARMER - GARDENING TUTOR



"I can't grow anything. I'm a hopeless gardener!" Diana has heard it all before and is unimpressed. "Everyone" she announces "can grow something and the benefits for them are significant." She herself tends a small garden in a retirement village and as well as conventional flower beds, displays her quirky and inventive side, by including both an old toaster and a child's tiny piano, as plant containers. There are no hard and fast rules here.

When asked what drew her to gardening, her vision however is expansive. "It's the satisfaction of being part of the environment. Without nature and gardens there simply would be no world. Plants literally provide the food we eat and enable the oxygen we breathe. It's a balm for our mental wellbeing." For Diana, a garden rewards you with a sense of peace and leading gardening classes is her way of sharing her passion and enthusiasm with other likeminded people.

The classes themselves sprang out of a walk around Jells Park with another U3A member, about their mutual love of gardens. Why not bring people together to share their experiences? And so it began. However, the enjoyment of plants is not purely an academic pursuit. For Diana's garden group it meant visiting and savouring the special qualities of many Victorian gardens. She was hard pressed to pick a favourite – maybe Broughton Hall near Jindivick; or the Alowyn Gardens in Yarra Glen; then again there's the impressive Australia Garden in Cranbourne; and of course, don't forget our world standard Botanic Gardens in South Yarra. There are too many to choose from really.

### Congratulations & Achievements

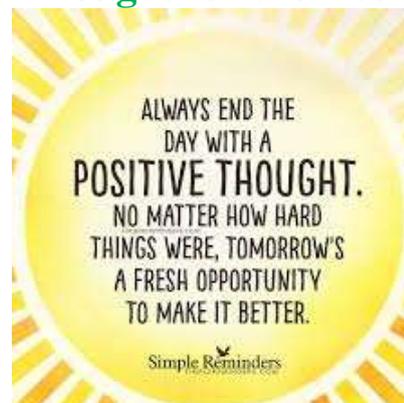


One of our delightful members of U3A Wheelers Hill, Elaine Forde, has been honoured with an Order of Australia Award in the 2021 Australia Day Honours List and is now entitled to use AM after her name.

It is an award to recognise the many roles Elaine has held over years in Business Management, Marketing and volunteering in such areas as, National Seniors Australia, the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE Board and Committees, being a Monash Council, Aged Friendly Ambassador, Community Advisory Committee, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries, Nunawading Youth Issues Working Party, St. John Ambulance Brigade and the founding of the group, Women in Management.

What a wonderful achievement. Congratulations, Elaine.

### Thought for the week



**Lastly, don't miss the chance to share your news in our next edition of the newsletter in April!**