



President's Report 2025 AGM

Parliamentary Friends of U3A

I joined the Network in June 2023, as Regional Rep for Sydney Metropolitan. At that time our president (Denis Simond) was trying to motivate member U3As to approach their local state MPs to become Friends of U3A. Denis expressed his disappointment at the lack of response (that's response from U3As not MPs), having gained only 4 MPs in a year. Maybe talking about "advocacy" and "MPs" didn't excite anybody.

When I took on the Present's role last year I made this project a priority. I approached 6 MPs myself, and succeeded immediately with 3. I phoned and wrote to several U3As, stressing the **potential for them to get free insurance, free copyright, free screen rights, free Member Wizard, and more**, which engendered some enthusiasm. Within a month we had 8 MPs signed up and 21 others who were yet to reply. Then things slowed down, because many of the contacts were by email, which in many cases would have gone to the bottom of some very large piles. With the help of the other Regional Reps some progress was made however, culminating on 19th November with the inaugural meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of U3A, in Parliament House. 12 MPs joined the group. Our target was a minimum of 15.

At this year's conference in Orange, in April, I was able to report that we had 15 MPs signed up, including Orange's Phillip Donato, who joined on that day. But how long will those MPs be in office? I worry that our group of friends be reduced. I'm also disappointed that with 93 MPs in the house have gathered only 15. I'd have thought that with 63 U3As in NSW we'd have done better. Your Regional Reps should have equipped you with a list of signed up Friends. If your local state MPs are not on that list, please approach them. Invite them to any of your events. Invite them to talk to your groups about the workings of Parliament. If you send an email you'll need to follow it up with a phone call, or it may stay at the bottom of a pile, because MP's staff are very good at culling out what they don't want to pass on. Face to face contact is almost guaranteed to work. Please help us (the Network committee) to help you.

Talking about our committee.....

For the first time in a few years we have a Rep for each of the nine regions, with Geoff Johnson taking on Mid-North Coast, Doug Barber New England / North-West, and the newest kid on the block, Jeanette Clarey representing Central and Far West.

Denis Simond may have stepped down from being President, but he has still been very involved. No longer caretaker RR for Riverina, he has moved to Wagga Wagga, which enabled him to take the job on in situ (RRs should live in their Region). – He didn't move to Wagga just to achieve that by the way; it was a convenient coincidence. Denis has been assisting Tasmania to set up its own Network, building a relationship between us and COTA, and representing our interests in U3A Australia. He also did a lot of admin on the Census, since our Treasurer was both new and temporarily indisposed, Denis had the most working knowledge of the procedure.

Jean Lewis is RR for Central Coast & Hunter Valley. That region has more U3As than any other, with 12, yet she still found time to be our secretary. It is not easy doing two jobs, so we are looking for a secretary. Our executives do not have to be Regional Reps. We can co-opt anyone who we think is able to do the job. An example of this is our current Treasurer, Pauline Ward. Incidentally, due to work commitments Pauline is quitting this role, so we are also looking for a treasurer. If you (or someone you know) would like to assist by taking some of the workload as our secretary, treasurer, or even president, please contact your RR.

Laurene Mulcahy (RR South Coast) assisted in the preparation of this year's conference, and attended meetings with the Friends of U3A. She also joined COTA and became our COTA contact since Denis moved to Wagga. Laurene has been a helpful mentor to me, a very active committee member, the writer of the Network's Newsletter, and is currently promoting a partnership between us and Keyton.

Alex Gosman (RR Monaro / Southern Highlands) attempted to get a grant from Qantas, and get U3A advertised on their inflight entertainment, but missed out. He was however successful in getting a significant grant to run a series of podcasts about Cyber Security, which started in May. This slotted nicely within the series of Canberra Forums, which Alex continued to spend hours organising and sharing online with many U3As. These podcasts have been recorded and can be accessed online.

Last year we thought that Greg Trotter would take on an IT role, but his health deteriorated so he withdrew. I subsequently arranged access to our website and took on webpage updates and document changes etc. I also uploaded the Balance N' Bones videos so that they could be streamed or downloaded for free. But Phil Warren continued doing the major part of the job, which was to supply IT support for the 40 or so U3As whose websites we host. This is an exposure we need to address. Is there anyone out there with enough IT experience to take this job? It can be done from any location.

Roger Curran, as well as being RR Far North Coast, is our adviser in matters relating to insurance.

As you can see, many of the committee are doing multiple functions, which creates a significant workload on people who are already involved in running their own local U3A. I thank them all for their efforts, but we could do with a little help. Please volunteer, (or find a volunteer) to assist us if you can.

David Davis

President
U3A Network NSW
19th June 2025