

ANNUAL REPORT 2011

Membership

Membership has grown 12% (510 to 570) in the last year. That is almost exactly double the number in 2008. We had a brief glitch last year with the cancellation of a couple of popular courses but the numbers are growing again. The loss of Warlters St does not seem to have had a deleterious effect. The current surge is partially due to the Laurieton expansion.

Courses

Courses are our main raison d'être and a clear measure of success is the increase in number and range of courses offered and well attended. A total of 52 classes or gatherings form our program for term 4, 2011, as against 43 for term 4, 2010. More significant perhaps is the growth in long courses (6 to 8 weeks) from 24 to 30. Maggie Wilson has picked up where Ursula left off and is doing an excellent job as Course Coordinator.

Convenors

As a U3A we have, somewhat belatedly, begun to properly appreciate the work of this important group. We recognised those who have been convening courses since the beginning of our U3A with the presentation of Special Certificates at the last Social Day to Maureen Johnston, Bessie Jennings, Eric Graham, Frank Jennings, and Brian Tolagson. We are also hosting the first Annual Dinner for Convenors in November. We are lucky to have so many members willing to take on this task, remembering the U3A adage that "the learners teach and the teachers learn".

Premises

We had a wonderful year in the luxury and convenience of our own premises in Warlters St. It was disappointing to lose it but we need not regret having it. The generosity of the Diocese meant that we paid no rent and the money we saved in venue rentals more than covered the expenditures we made in furniture. Having a headquarters and an office was a huge advantage and with our increasing size and activity something we have to have. The new arrangements, while not perfect, at least allow us to have an office and to have exclusive use of classrooms to leave equipment set up. I acknowledge the work of those volunteers who worked on the move and the set up and especially Brian Tolagson who managed the arrangements as well as being largely instrumental in finding and negotiating the new premises.

Long Term Planning

A long term planning committee, with Brian as convenor, continues to explore options for our future including several possibilities for securing again our own premises. Father Donnelley and the Diocese, the Council and local member Robert Oakeshott are all familiar with and supportive of our needs. Frank Jennings and I also met with the Hon Andrew Constance, the NSW Minister for Ageing, and followed up with a submission outlining the general problem of accommodation. The Planning Committee is also working on a business plan for our future.

Administration

We are introducing new and efficient membership and enrolment procedures appropriate, even necessary, for the increased membership. For those with computers, the online service will provide added alternatives and ease of enrolling and registering. The new processes will be in place by the time you read this. No doubt there will be some teething problems but they will be overcome. Nick Osborne, our webmaster, has been the moving force in this initiative ably assisted by the membership team of John Jones and Margaret Lennon.

