

U3A AUSTRALIA TURNS TWO!

U3A Australia Ltd, the national body for the U3A movement in Australia, is celebrating its second birthday.

Seniors know U3A as a volunteer-led, locally-based, face-to-face and digital movement that provides lifelong learning and social engagement opportunities. Australia has 260 U3As with collective membership of over 100,000. They offer low-cost education, social activity, and connection to communities across all states and territories.

In 2023, the national U3A Alliance Australia was incorporated as U3A Australia Ltd, a company limited by guarantee, registered under ASIC and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission.

Our two years have seen both growth and some challenges too. Opportunities in the path ahead are boundless, as we have moved from an informal 'sharing' group to a more formal company structure. Like all volunteers, we learn as we progress. We are particularly proud that U3A Australia has developed without need to draw on financial support from U3A state bodies.

Our Achievements

COTA Australia

U3A Australia has formalised a collaboration with COTA Australia to focus on expanding the influence and on amplifying the voices of older Australians. Two projects have been completed: a) Older Australians Electronic Prescribing and Active Script List and b) Digital Champions Project to recruit and train 'digital champions' with an aim to ensure that older Australians have the skills and confidence to use digital health technologies.



NBN Co.

NBN Co's Digital Inclusion & Stakeholder Engagement Team formed with U3A Australia a national partnership to create a new 'digital mentor' program – initially set as a test and learn with the objective for use with multiple national partners. Findings from the previous pilot of the 'Live Life Connected' program with U3A Whittlesea and U3A Geelong in Victoria support digital mentor programs to the next stage of increasing take-up and assisting seniors to improve their digital abilities nationally.



Telstra

U3A Australia supported U3A Whittlesea with U3A Strath Pines (Qld) and U3A North Gold Coast (Qld) to pilot a Digital Skills Mentoring seniors support program. The program was based on a 'peer to peer sharing of knowledge and experience' approach delivered in shopping centres. The experience gained from the project has strengthened the Digital Skills Mentoring support provide to seniors.



Officeworks

U3A Australia successfully negotiated with Officeworks to form a U3A Officeworks buying group to give all U3As the opportunity to receive more favourable pricing on a range of products purchased from Officeworks. A significant number of U3As have joined the buying group.



Keyton Retirement Living

Keyton Retirement Living which operate 76 villages nationally have formed a collaboration with U3A Australia to provide local U3As in selected geographical areas with access to Keyton facilities for classes and local events. The support under the collaboration includes assistance to local U3As with the delivery of the Digital Skills Mentoring programs, formation of pickleball classes and promotion of U3A activities in local communities. Local U3As participating in the initiative have benefited from the support and increased their membership.



Member Wizard

N F Software (trading as Member Wizard) provide member and syllabus management, plus financial and administration modules to U3As and other organisations. Working with U3A Australia and U3A Online, Member Wizard have developed features that support enrolment and provide access to and participation in online classes and forums.



U3A Online

U3A Online, a 20th century pioneer of internet-based education, has partnered with U3A Australia to create a comprehensive online platform. From the U3A Australia website, a variety of webinars, forums and interactive sessions can be offered by U3A Online, by U3A Australia and by other local U3As.



Formation of U3A Tasmania Network.

U3A Australia has worked with Tasmanian U3As to reach agreement to form a U3A Tasmania Network. Incorporating is progressing.



EveryAGE Counts

U3A Australia has representation on the EveryAGE Counts initiative steering committee which is leading an advocacy campaign aimed at tackling ageism against older Australians.



NSW Parliamentary Friends of U3A

U3A Australia has worked with U3A Network New South Wales to set up within the State Parliament a formal 'friends' group. The purpose of such groups is to provide more information about the U3A movement and to explore how the movement can work more closely with government to achieve mutual aims.



Developing collaborative relationships

U3A Australia has been approached by a number of other peak bodies to work more closely with them to support older people and based on the mutual experiences advocate to Federal Government. These organisations include Community Health Networks, Arts National and EveryAGE Counts counter ageism initiative.

Our Research

U3A Australia is a research affiliate of RMIT University, working under co-design principals in areas of digital engagement, Pathways to Healthy Ageing, and Organisation and Social Change. The impact of this relationship is presented in the following :



- www.shapingconnections.org
- U3A Digital Mentoring Program Improving the digital skills and competencies of older Australians September 2024.
https://www.shapingconnections.org/files/ugd/4dba99_3d0112deb143451bb7f9c59d2231b2d4.pdf
- Pathways to Healthy Ageing (PHA) Network: <https://www.audiencecomms-research.com/>
This interdisciplinary initiative focuses on healthy ageing, integrating research, teaching, and community partnerships.

Our Future

U3A Australia will continue to promote recognition of the U3A movement as a premium provider of lifelong learning opportunities, health and wellbeing programs, and social engagement activities for older people. We work to

- Advance and strengthen the U3A movement in Australia
- Represent the movement on a national level and work with national and local bodies in achieving U3A goals
- Support lifelong learning, health and wellbeing interests, and the reduction of social isolation among retired and semi-retired people.

Glen Wall
Chairman