

AGM 2026 President's Report

It has been another highly productive year since the last AGM. Please find below a brief summation of the year. There are so many great moments from classes and courses that are not included here. There are a thousand stories of learning and laughing that have occurred across the twelve plus venues we use, with even more delightful tales from the classes that make 'the great outdoors' their classroom. I encourage members to write a short and sharp article accompanied by a photo or two for sharing in the U3A Bulletin (space is limited folks, so economy of word is vital.) Similarly, the U3A Ballarat Facebook page editors are happy to receive a paragraph or two along with some images of an event or class activity that will help promote U3A Ballarat.

Please be aware that the editorial teams for the U3A Ballarat Bulletin and our Facebook page, work with the space and time available. Not every contribution can be used in the next edition or next page update. But don't be discouraged by that reality, keep on submitting regardless.

Finances

The past year was once again a successful one financially. We ended the year with an operating surplus of \$21k. Our main source of income is the membership fee, which at nearly \$86k, represents the strong membership growth year on year. A reminder when paying your Membership fee, that you can donate an extra amount to our Building Fund, which currently stands at \$685.

Hiring rooms for our various classes is the biggest expense. – nearly \$32k. With the loss of Eastwood Leisure Complex for some years, our Class management team has been able to find some other facilities, of special mention, the Ballarat Performing Arts Centre. Facility. Availability of venue remains the greatest inhibitor to growth for our organisation.

In recent years we have invested heavily in the Blake Gordon Manual Arts Workshop (BGMAW), which is now valued in our assets register at \$134k after depreciation. During this year, we invested in purchasing outright the office printer/photocopier, replaced the data projector in the BNCC Hall (in conjunction with the other leaseholders), and updated the furniture fit-out of the Office at BNCC. Cash at Bank (most in Term Deposits) remains close to \$100k.

Classes and Courses

For the last two years Miriam Peck has taken on the enormous task of co-ordinating classes, venues, Tutors and Class Convenors. With the closing of the Eastwood Complex, it became an even bigger task. On behalf of everyone, thanks for a job well done, Miriam. Our heartfelt thanks also go to Leonie Benson who has assisted Miriam in this role

for the past year. Her wisdom and practical help have lightened the load of coordinating such a large program.

It is staggering that U3A Ballarat now has a membership that exceeds 1450 and currently offers 140+ courses, with additional short courses on offer during our January Summer School. The breadth and depth to our program is remarkable.

February to November classes fall into these categories:

Creative arts	25
English, spoken and written	18
History	10
Digital technology	3
Languages	14
Health & Physical Activities	33
Science	7
Games & Hobbies	8
Music	15
Humanities	6
Travel	1

Our Tutors and Class Convenors put an enormous amount of time and effort into their various courses. While some are new to our tutoring team, others have continued in the role they started decades ago.

Tutors and Class Convenors are the absolute lifeblood of our organisation. The generosity of these members, many of whom run more than one class, is extraordinary. There is such a wealth of knowledge, skills and understanding that resides amongst us: we are rich beyond the wildest imaginings in terms of learning opportunities. To a person, our gratitude and thanks must go to the selfless Tutors and Class Convenors who give of their time and energy to make your world just that little bit better. From the Bushwalkers and cyclists, to the mosaic and print makers, the historians and literature buffs, the dancers and musicians, to the card and mahjong players... you know what I mean... everyone adds to the lifeblood of the organisation and everyone helps bring connection and joy into the lives of their classmates.

Needless to say, we are very grateful for their input. Our October 'Thank You Lunch' for Tutors, class Convenors and Volunteers is a heartfelt token of our gratitude to these members.

Several new venues have been used this year: Ballarat and Sebastapol Libraries, Sebastapol and the Wendouree Community Hub, the Ballarat East Men's Shed and the Ballarat Performing Arts Cooperative (BPAC). All are proving to be suited to our needs and bring to twelve (12) the number of locations around Ballarat we use. This count doesn't include several pubs and some private homes.

Over the last two years the January Summer school (JSS), in its current format, was organised by Nina Netherway with some initial assistance from Elaine Maberley. The JSS program continues to be a very welcome adjunct to our program. What started three years ago as a 'let's see how it goes' idea has continued to adapt and has proven to be an important event for those who don't go away over January or are not minding grandchildren. Our thanks to Nina for her dedication to the program.

Events and Catering

The U3A year is filled with a plethora of events, from concerts to guest speakers, from movie nights to the ever-popular Trivia afternoon. In just the last six months many events have occurred: The movie *Jimpa* was sold out, Jim Morrison, past Director of the Ballarat Art Gallery attracted a large audience as did our musical performances by the Ukulele Minstrels, The Choristers, the Combined Chorale and Recorder Concert, and the ever-popular Celtic Band concert. The Ukulele Minstrels and the Two Little Ducks (ukulele) have continued to perform in Aged Care facilities and other public events and, in doing so, brighten the days of folks in the wider community.

Look out for the special combined concert featuring six music groups. This concert will be held at BPAC (Neill St) on the afternoon of October 24 2026. There will be two performances so more members and family can be accommodated. We will also have at least one more guest speaker later in the year.

Catering Crew

As always, a shout out to the members who make up the Catering Crew. These members work consistently throughout the year to provide the afternoon tea service at major events. They not only serve audience members, but they also make scones, slices and cakes, as well as savoury and gluten free options.

Gallery

The gallery exhibitions continue to receive positive comments. The three exhibitions so far this year have involved Photography, Printing and Painting Groups. The last one for 2026 will be the Papercraft Group. I know Barb Burnett has enjoyed co-ordinating the exhibitions, even when the process of hanging and bumping it out has had its challenges. Barb has been the Gallery Manager for almost three years and will relinquish this responsibility come the end of the U3A Ballarat year. Thanks must go to

her and all who have contributed to the magnificent displays over the past twelve months.

Blake Gordon Manual Arts Workshop (BGMAW)

The relationship we have with the Ballarat Specialist School (BSS) grows thanks to the work of Steve Walsh and Blake Gordon who continue to find ways to bring the BSS students and staff into the orbit of the BGMAW and the skillsets that operate within the walls of our workshop. The classes that are run there are made even more special by having access to the space and all the equipment contained therein. Matt Gannon, the Campus Principal at the Ballarat Specialist School deserves a special mention for his commitment to ensuring the relationship and interactions between our two learning organisations remains fruitful with everyone learning from each other. Of course, our own classes held there are many and varied, and I don't believe the appreciation of the members, who have access to such a magnificent creative space, has diminished one iota over the past year.

Facebook Presence

Thanks to the consistent work of Robert Hammond and Madonna Quixley, our Facebook gurus. Our social media presence continues to be relevant and real in its ability to capture many of the facets of our organisation.

Operations Committee

Once a month the three tenants of the BNCC meet to ensure everyone is on the same page with regards to the functioning of the building. Thanks to Ben Hewitt and Gerald Liew from the City on a Hill Church for their participation and contribution to discussions and decisions; and to John Olsen and Di Ingle from the Senior Citizens for their work in helping everyone to enjoy the facilities at BNCC.

Member Wizard

Over the last year we have had a largely smooth transition from My U3A to Member Wizard. So many members easily made the jump into a new cyberspace. My fellow Wizards (Jeff & Nina) invested many hours into supporting the transition at the backend, whilst also helping those members who needed a little assistance with accessing the platform. We continue to work in the background, helping to improve workflow and use of the Member Wizard environment.

The New Look Office

Over the past two years, the need to re-organise the Office space was 'on the list'. Thanks to some excellent research from Bec Black, the office ugly duckling has now turned into a beautiful office swan. The members who volunteer in the Office are a fantastic group of people who help make the office a cheery and comfortable place

where assistance is on hand. Thanks must go to each of them and to Office Manager Bec Black, who is there week in week out organising rosters, answering calls and leading the team at the U3A Ballarat Office.

The U3A Ballarat Committee

Quietly working away in the background, these members work diligently to ensure the SS U3A Ballarat ship steers a steady course through seas both calm and rough. Always trying to find ways to improve what we do, the unseen hours of commitment do pay dividends. On your behalf, I thank them for their unstinting commitment to managing change on so many levels, whilst ensuring we maintain our high level of professionalism and the superb quality of our programs.

Everyone works hard but a few people deserve a special mention: After eight years in the role of Treasurer, Jeff Langdon is stepping down from a responsibility which has many time sensitive demands. Many thanks to Jeff for his commitment and fine work with the finances over many years.

Miriam and Leonie have done a superb job with Class Co-ordination. Adele Byrne took up the cudgel of Governance and has guided us to bring greater efficiency and co-ordination in this area; Coral Hiscock assumed the role of Secretary for the U3A Ballarat Committee of Management this past year: this is a role with many facets and can be a daunting challenge ~ particularly in the first few months. Coral has done a superb job.

My final thanks: to the members of U3A Ballarat. Each of you re-affirm the need for an entity such as ours. We connect, learn and laugh together in convivial companionship bringing joy and light into the hearts and homes of so many. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, skills, available time and friendship with others.

We are a high functioning organisation that is run completely by volunteers. Remarkable. My thanks to the Committee for their support. It has been an honour to serve as President of U3A Ballarat.

Don

Don Collins
President
U3A Ballarat