

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

THE MANNINGHAM U3A VISION

To ensure that lifelong learning is a real and essential part of later life.

THE MANNINGHAM U3A MISSION

To promote the intellectual, psychological and physical benefits of learning in later life and to achieve this through a programme of self-help learning.

THE MANNINGHAM U3A COMMUNITY FOCUS

To make appropriate and health-enhancing activities available to retired people in the local community regardless of ethnicity, background, gender or educational attainment.

Manningham U3A is now in its 28th year. At the time of writing we have 1712 members, of whom 1671 are full members, 11 are life members and 30 are Honorary Members (tutors who do not enrol in classes). We are fortunate in having over 150 members who are prepared to put on approximately 200 courses throughout the year. We continue to meet the needs of retired members of our community and neighbouring communities in terms of lifelong learning, physical and intellectual activities and social contact. The research-based evidence mounts day by day emphatically demonstrating the beneficially essential role of these activities in an individual's later life. In the last few years the focus in much ageing-related research has shifted to the crucial role of social inclusiveness in later life. Manningham U3A, along with the 109 other U3As in Victoria, continues to make a vital contribution to keeping Victorians healthy. We can take justifiable pride in this but recognise that we could not do it without the support and contribution of numerous bodies and individuals.

Firstly, I am happy to acknowledge the essential support that we continue to receive from Manningham City Council. It was, of course, the visionary awareness of the contribution that our organisation could make to the social service provision in Manningham that resulted in our being provided with the splendid building in which we meet today. Throughout our history we have enjoyed the most fruitful collaborative relationship with Council and for that we express our sincere gratitude in full confidence that this will continue far into the future.

Secondly, Manningham U3A is pleased to recognise the immense debt that it owes to its many dedicated volunteers, who contribute in a variety of ways: the Committee of Management, the office staff, the tutors and activity leaders, the class reps, catering volunteers who will provide us with our lunch today and the many and varied sub-groups. A wonderful example of superb teamwork.

Thirdly, I would like to acknowledge the extremely profitable collaborative relationship that we enjoy with Pines Learning. There are many areas of common usage and responsibility that we share with them and we are most grateful for their considerate and helpful cooperation.

Important Highlights of 2018

All successful organisations are successful because they continue to develop, adapt and progress. Inertia usually results in decline and decay. Much of the work that goes into this development usually takes place unnoticed and unacknowledged. Manningham U3A is no exception to this. Working continually in the background, the Enrolment Team, the Treasurer and his assistants and the Communications Manager have made a number of important adjustments to our management strategies; some of these have been in response to comments and suggestions from members; others have been initiatives emanating from discussions in committee:

The MyU3A Membership Management System

This system was introduced some four years ago and has proved to be not only functionally powerful and effective but also capable of adaptation and modification to suit the constantly evolving needs of our organisation. Throughout 2018, the Enrolment Manager and his colleagues have made nearly 50 modifications to the computerised membership management system. This amounts to more than one modification per week. Traditionally committee members do not calculate the number of hours that they put in over the year, but it takes very little imagination to see that in this area alone there has been a vast input of energy and hard work. To list these changes would be unnecessarily onerous but every one of them has contributed to a smoother, more efficient and member-friendly experience.

Finance

Similarly, the Treasurer and his colleagues have introduced a number of initiatives to improve the flow and recording of financial transactions. Some of these innovations have also been put in place to make financial savings. Generally, there has been a determined and purposeful move towards electronic accounting. By way of illustration members may be interested to learn:

- We have moved away from high cost suppliers like Fuji-Xerox (colour printer copier) to Copysonic (black & white printer-copier) saving about \$1,700 p.a.
- The Treasurer successfully negotiated a reduction in PayPal transaction fees from 2.5% to 1.25%, an estimated saving of about \$900 p.a.
- The Treasurer reviewed in depth computer and equipment maintenance fees. Changes were consequently enacted producing a saving of about \$6,000.
- All suppliers now provide tax invoices electronically, with payments processed in timely fashion
- Manningham U3A has now established business or corporate accounts with all major suppliers including Manningham City Council, Officeworks, Australia Post, Telstra, Bunnings, MSY Computers, Harris Technology, Harvey Norman, etc.

In view of the pressure of work that the Treasurer now has to deal with, the new role of Assistant Treasurer was created in mid-2018 to relieve him of bookkeeping responsibilities.

Communication

More of our members now have an email facility. Consequently, important notices are sent by email as well as put on the website and distributed in the form of class notices. This has simplified and streamlined the important management role of keeping members informed and up to date.

The MyU3A system now provides us with the facility to quickly select in one prospective email various and ad hoc groups of members (tutors, class members, class reps etc) making rapid communication with such groups remarkably speedy and effective.

The website is regularly updated and kept relevant. Anything people want to know about our U3A can be found on the website.

As a result of more members having email the delivery of the newsletter has become more efficiently managed. Because the newsletter is electronic, we are able to put in links to other documents and to information on the website and elsewhere on the internet.

In 2018 the website was modified so that it can now be accessed by tablets and phones as well as laptops.

Other Innovations

The organisation of next year's brochure and the programme to be uploaded to the website is a major operation undertaken jointly by the Curriculum and Enrolment Managers. In order to ensure that we meet our deadlines, a new post of Brochure Project Manager was created to oversee this operation, liaising between the two managers and reporting directly to the President. This proved to be very successful and ensured a much smoother operation than in previous years.

For 2019, we introduced a number of reforms to try to make enrolment for new members more successful: limiting the number of course choices to five and reserving 10% of places in the most popular courses for new members. It would appear that this has had a beneficial effect as more new members were successful in securing admittance to their first choice of courses than in previous years. Overall, we have increased our number of new members by approximately 9%.

Fees

In 2017 we were faced with ever rising charges emanating from the large number of external venues (including the PFR) that we use, having outgrown the confines of The Pines Building. As a consequence, we registered an uncomfortable deficit. Considerable discussion and deliberation then took place over several months in meetings of the Committee of Management to find a solution to this problem. Two possible solutions were available: an increase in the annual fee or a practicable scheme to impose a small levy on those courses taking place in external venues which incurred rental payments. Having raised the annual fee the previous year, the Committee was reluctant to impose another rise on the totality of the members. It was considered unfair to burden the membership as a whole with an impost which only related to those members who opted for a course in an external venue that incurred extra expenditure. A general increase across the board would have given members no choice; however, by introducing the levy scheme the freedom to choose to pay extra passed to the individual member. The Committee considered this to be

fairer and more democratic. It was judged financially sound to introduce a general levy of \$15 per annum per activity. This has had the expected result of transforming last year's deficit into a small but welcome surplus.

Grants

The system for distribution of financial grants from ACFE and funding for Program Growth Support has changed fundamentally. Consequently, we did not make any applications in 2018. We were successful however in receiving a community grant from Manningham City Council of \$1600 (dependent on a reciprocal injection of \$1600 from our own finances) which enabled us to add 4 more laptops to the 8 that we purchased last year. This total of 12 laptops will enable us to introduce computer-based classes in rooms other than Room 1.

Community Involvement

- We continue to be represented on the Manningham Local Dementia Alliance Group
- As in previous years our members donated generously to Doncare in terms 2 and 4.
- At the beginning of Seniors Week in October we participated in Celebration Day at Federation Square. Demonstrations of a variety of craft skills and other class activities were presented together with performances from the Line Dancing classes.

Australia Day Awards

Jillian Gange, Communications Manager, was nominated by the Committee of Management for a Menzies Award which was presented *in absentia* by The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP on Australia Day.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Committee of Management I would like to thank our very many volunteers for their invaluable and essential contribution to our organisation. As I come to the end of my presidential tenure of four years, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for their support and goodwill. I would especially like to thank the members of the Committee of Management who have happily and unhesitatingly shouldered considerable workloads to ensure the smooth running of Manningham U3A. Their conscientious, reliable and, above all, cheerfully uplifting presence has made the last four years so very enjoyable. I am confident that the new president will take control of an efficiently organised and responsibly managed operation.

Geoff Sheldon
President

