

New Members Guide 2024



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U3A - New Members Guide

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1. Introduction

Welcome to U3A Wonthaggi (U3AW). We are delighted to have you with us and hope you come to enjoy and value U3AW's contribution to your life and well-being.

This guide aims to help you to settle in as a member by acquainting you with U3A's operating environment, policies and practices. If you need to know more, you are welcome to contact a member of the committee who will direct you to the person best placed to assist.

THE U3A MOVEMENT

U3A is a volunteer-driven movement that exists to provide life-enhancing opportunities to members. Retired and semi-retired people over 60 come together to learn together, not for qualifications but for its own reward: the joy of discovery. Add to this the pleasure of finding new friends and sharing interests with old ones.

Members share their skills and life experiences: the learners teach, and the teachers learn, and there is no distinction between them. Volunteers run every aspect of U3A's operations.

U3A is a worldwide movement that originated in France but has now spread across the globe. The Victorian U3A movement comprises over 100 individually incorporated U3As providing learning and activity services to around 40,000 members.

2. About U3A Wonthaggi Inc

Classes started on 24 February 1995, on Fridays only. In the early days everyone attended everything that was going to keep the ball rolling. Courses included Australian History, Poetry, Australian Constitution, Our Bodies and How they Work, and Creative Writing.

PURPOSES

The official purposes of U3A are documented in our Rules (constitution). Go to the About Us tab on our website to read or download the rules. Copies are also pinned on the noticeboards at the White Road classrooms

The basic principles underpinning all U3As are similar:

- all work is voluntary – both administrative and tutorial;
- funding comes from membership subscriptions, grants, fundraising activities and occasional gifts and bequests;
- membership subscriptions are kept as low as possible so that anyone can join;
- the target membership is people aged over 50 who are not in full-time employment;
- a shared belief is that we never stop learning;
- courses and activities offered to members aim to enrich our lives through learning, exercise, personal growth and social engagement;
- no formal qualifications are required for membership, admission to classes or volunteer roles;
- we are not a professional training body, there are no exams, and no credentials are awarded.

GOVERNANCE

U3AW is a not-for-profit organisation incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 ('the Act'). Consumer Affairs Victoria regulates and oversees Victoria's incorporated associations. The Act and our constitution govern how U3AW operates.

We also have policies that document our operating principles and procedures. For example, we have a [Membership Terms and Conditions Policy](#) and a [Privacy Policy](#). All current policies are available on the website; go to the **About Us** tab. Other policies will be added occasionally.

MEMBERSHIP AND ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES

The annual membership subscription is \$60, payable at the start of the year or on joining. The

membership fee is halved for tutors and waived for 'Life Members'.

The committee appoints Life Members from the ranks of members who have served the interests of U3A in various volunteer capacities over a long period.

Members' subscriptions are used to pay rent on the Garden Room and Mawson Hut classrooms, utility bills, insurance, building maintenance, the cost of learning materials, audio-visual equipment, computing and printing equipment, furniture and so on. A small course fee may be levied if a course imposes significant additional costs on U3AW; this will be disclosed in the course information section of the website.

MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

At the end of 2023, there were 255 members. Of these:

- 78% reside at Wonthaggi, Inverloch and Cape Paterson;
- others are mostly from smaller communities across Bass Coast and South Gippsland Shires;
- 74% are women, and 26% are men;
- range in age from 60 to 90+ years.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

A committee manages U3A's operations and determines policy. Committee members are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), usually held in March.

At the time of publication, the committee members were:

Mary Schooneveldt	President	president@u3awonthaggi.org.au
Werner Theinert	Vice President	
Lynn Kirk	Secretary	secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au
John Laing	Treasurer	treasurer@u3awonthaggi.org.au
Glenn Cant	Member	
Peter Fitzgerald	Member	
Sue Fitzgerald	Member	
Susan Hacker	Member	

During 2024 the committee will meet on the fourth Thursday of each month¹.

The minutes of committee meetings are available for members to read; a folder of minutes is available in the Members Library inside the Garden Room building.

All members are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions to the committee; this is best done by [emailing secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au](mailto:secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au)

COURSE AND ACTIVITY LEADERS

Our volunteer class leaders (referred to as tutors) are the backbone of U3A. Without them, our organisation would not exist. Please remember to give them a Thank You now and then.

All members are encouraged to volunteer as a tutor/activity leader or in another capacity. Please consider becoming a tutor if you have an interest or skill that you would like to share or further develop. If you would like to talk about the possibility of running a class, contact a member of the program management team at 0493 471 254 or secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au

Our course offerings vary throughout the year. Many courses are offered for a whole year, while others may run for a term or two. All options are possible.

Our course offerings routinely include singing, recorder, Bocce, walking (long & short distances), yoga & exercise, history, art, crafts, Saturday lunches, Japanese, French, Spanish and Italian, Shakespeare, book groups, gardening, cryptic crosswords, Tai Chi and current affairs. Course

¹ This date may change after the 2024 Annual General Meeting.

offerings are subject to the availability of course leaders and vary from year to year.

MEMBER ID

New members are provided with a badge and lanyard. Your membership number will be printed on the badge. Members are asked to wear their badges when attending U3A. If you misplace your badge, you can ask for a replacement by emailing to secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au.

COURSE ETIQUETTE

- If you have enrolled, changed your mind about a course and no longer wish to attend, please let the secretary or tutor know so that someone on the waiting list can be assigned your place.
- We ask that mobile phones are turned off during classes or made silent. Please do not take calls during class other than in an emergency.
- When attending classes, please wear your U3A badge.
- Ensure that your emergency contact details are on the back of your badge. If you entered these details into our database when you joined, they will be printed on the reverse side of the badge before it is issued to you.
- All members are expected to respect tutors and class members and refrain from disrupting a class with inappropriate or dominating conduct.

VENUES AND CAR PARKING

U3A shares its Wonthaggi location at the campus at 239 White Road Wonthaggi with three other organisations: Bass Coast Adult Learning (BCAL), Wonthaggi Woodcrafters Inc and Wonthaggi Community Garden. There is parking for U3A members at the rear of the site; the accessway is sign-posted. Parking is also available at our off-site venues.

Affordable classroom accommodation can be challenging to find for not-for-profit organisations. We are fortunate to have exclusive use of two buildings at the White Road campus. The Garden Room is leased from Bass Coast Shire Council via BCAL, and Mawson Hut is owned and maintained by U3AW. Some classes are conducted at off-site venues, including:

- Cape Paterson Community Hall; and
- Goat Island Gallery 18 Boundary Road Wonthaggi.

NEWSLETTER BULLETINS AND EMAILS

The committee's main communication channel with members is a quarterly newsletter containing information about people, activities, courses and events relevant to our members. The newsletter is published quarterly and distributed to members via email. Members without email receive a printed copy by post. The newsletter always includes the course program for the upcoming term.

Our newsletter is useful for informing members about what is happening at U3A. We welcome regular contributions of stories, reviews and photographs from tutors and members.

Occasionally, the committee will email members to provide timely information about events or emerging issues. Please look out for these emails and read them.

2024 TERM DATES

U3A follows the Victorian Government's school terms, except for Term 4, which usually concludes on the last Friday in November. The U3A Wonthaggi 2024 term dates are:

- Term 1 29 January to 28 March
- Term 2 15 April to 28 June
- Term 3 15 July to 20 September
- Term 4 7 October to 29 November

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Classes are not scheduled on public holidays or during school holidays. Some tutors may negotiate with their class members to meet on a public holiday or during a term break. Alternatively, a tutor may want to extend a little beyond the end of November to allow time to finish a course.

CATERING & AMENITIES

Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided in both classrooms at White Road. Refreshment costs are not included in the membership fee. Members are asked to contribute to the honesty jar to cover expenses; 60 cents a serve is usual.

CLASS SIZES, ADMISSION TO CLASSES & WAITING LISTS

Maximum class sizes are fixed to comply with fire regulations and to encourage member participation by not over-crowding rooms. Any change to permitted class sizes will be communicated directly to members. Unfortunately, members may find themselves on the "waiting list" for some courses. In these cases, we encourage members to enrol as this will enable us to assess the demand for a course.

ENROLMENTS, RECORDS & MEMBERS' PRIVACY

U3A Network Victoria developed the U-MAS database system used by U3AW. We ask members to enrol and pay their annual membership subscription online via U-MAS, which is accessible from our website. A guide to online enrolments is available on our website.

If you are unable to enrol online, please ask for help by telephoning **0493 471 254** or emailing to secretary@u3awonthaggi.org.au or president@u3awonthaggi.org.au.

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER & PASSWORD

When you join U3A, you are allocated a membership number and asked to create a password. This process preserves the privacy of your data. Please keep a record of your membership number and password so that you can quickly enter the database in the future. If you misplace your password, there are options within U-MAS for setting a new password.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER & PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

An attendance list is maintained by each course/activity leader for each class. The registers are used for general recordkeeping and insurance purposes.

A SAFE & HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

U3A Wonthaggi is conscious of its role in providing a safe and healthy environment for its members and applies COVID safe measures related to Victorian and Federal roadmaps and mandatory public health orders.

ABSENCE FROM CLASS

If you plan an extended absence from class for health or recreational reasons, it is helpful to inform your tutor/s by phone or email. Some courses are in high demand, and this information helps U3AW to distinguish planned absences from a withdrawal from a course/s.

MEMBERS' PRIVACY

Each course leader is provided contact details (telephone number and email address) for their class members. This information enables course leaders to contact you, for example, if a class needs to be cancelled.

Tutors are instructed to treat your contact details as strictly confidential. Apart from course leaders, your contact details can only be accessed by some committee members. We do not share your contact details with anyone else at U3A or outside U3A. U3AW complies with all relevant privacy legislation and annually reviews its privacy practices.

MEMBERS' LIBRARY

We have a book library in the Garden Room building, which is available to all members. We operate an honour system for borrowing and ask borrowers to record loans in the record books stored in the library. Our volunteer librarian is Bev McEwan.

WIFI

A WiFi router is located in the Garden Room, and WiFi is available for members' use at the White Road campus. The network details, including the password, are posted on noticeboards in each classroom.

3. Health & Safety Issues

The committee relies on each group leader to help maintain a safe environment. Each leader has a role to play in emergencies and when a member suffers an injury or illness while attending U3AW.

As a member, you are responsible for your health, and you must take all reasonable steps not to place yourself or other members at risk. You should only participate in courses and activities which you are physically able to undertake. We ask that you refrain from attending if you have a contagious illness.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If you are taken ill or injured, and the situation appears serious (e.g. unconsciousness, heavy bleeding, seizure or severe pain), the group leader will call an ambulance. Where possible, you will be consulted about how the situation is handled.

We ask members to record an emergency contact in U-MAS; this information is then printed on the back of each member's badge. Wearing your badge enables U3A, a hospital or doctor, to contact a relative or friend to support an ill or injured member.

Tutors are required to record and report accident and safety incidents during class. Among other benefits, this information will assist the committee to review the incident and take steps to reduce future risk.

FIRST-AID SUPPLIES

First Aid supplies are located in the classrooms – please look for the green signs.



COVID & PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

U3A Wonthaggi is conscious of its role in providing a safe and healthy environment for its members and applies COVID safe measures related to Victorian and Federal roadmaps and mandatory public health orders. Tutors, activity leaders and members are provided with updates on how the government's COVID and other health regulations affect U3A Wonthaggi. U3A Wonthaggi has already installed air filtration equipment in its two meeting rooms.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

In an emergency, members must follow the course leader's instructions and move quickly to the **Emergency Assembly Point** in the car park at the White Road entrance to the campus. Look for the green sign.



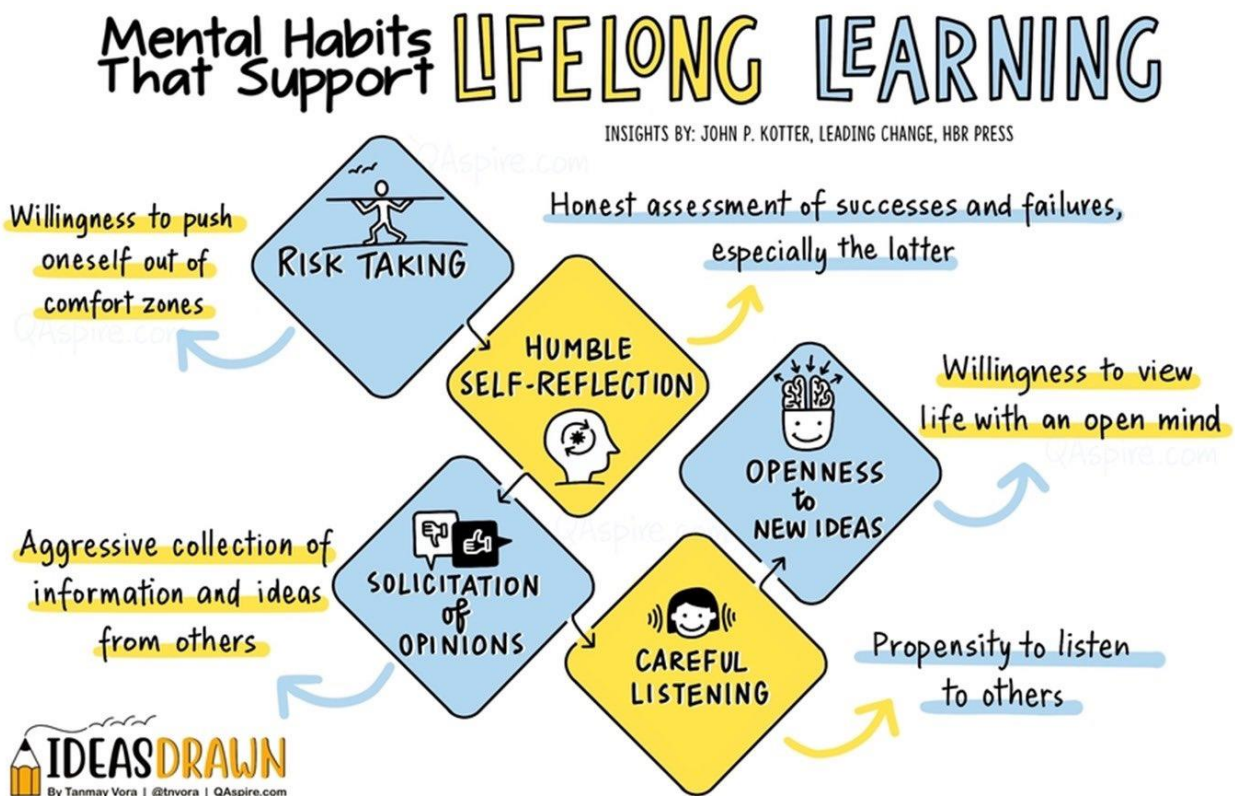
The following procedures must be adhered to during an emergency evacuation.

- The person identifying the emergency – fire, gas leak, security threat – must immediately notify BCAL's office (ph 5672 3115). BCAL will ensure that emergency services are notified.
- Care must be taken not to put yourself or any other person in danger.
- Please do not leave the campus during an emergency without informing your tutor
- Follow instructions given by Emergency Services personnel and BCAL's fire wardens.

8 HABITS OF HEALTHY SENIORS

- Maintain an active mind. Read the paper, do the crossword, play chess, complete a jigsaw, enrol in a course. ...
- Maintain an active body. ...
- Attend regular health appointments. ...
- Drink enough water. ...
- Enjoy social activities. ...
- Manage your medicines. ...
- Make a meaningful contribution to the world. ...
- Sleep.

<https://www.focusedhealthcare.com.au/news/8-habits-of-healthy-seniors/> retrieved 10 November 2023



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