



Providing Learning and social opportunities for people in the "Third Age" of life



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The Third Age

**By the Hon Dr Barry O. Jones, AO
Patron of U3A Alliance Australia**



The English social historian Dr Peter Laslett popularized the term 'The Third Age' to describe a new demographic category, people who had left the paid workforce, were physically and mentally capable and independent, likely to live to an advanced age before the onset of 'the Fourth Age' – the period of dependence, decrepitude and death.

Modern life expectancy and retirement practice mean that most traditional assumptions about age are wrong. The fundamental error, as Laslett wrote, is 'confusing the Third Age with the Fourth Age'. Many people now living will spend more years in 'retirement', however defined, than in paid work.

U3A is a movement, which enables people in their Third Age to continue and share the journey of life-long learning.

I entered the Third Age in 1996, on ceasing to be a Member of the Australian Parliament. My ambition is to spend the longest possible time in the Third Age and the shortest in the Fourth.

What is U3A?

U3A stands for “University of the Third Age” – a title not to be taken literally. There are no academic qualifications, assignments or examinations, and no awards.



U3A is a worldwide movement where retired people – in their “*Third Age*” of active retirement after childhood, employment and parenting - from all walks of life get together to teach and learn from each other.

The first *Univerisité du Troisomé Age* (UTA) was founded in Toulouse in February 1973 by Pierre Vellas. In 1981, Peter Laslett and Michael Young established the first British University of the Third Age (U3A), and the movement has spread throughout the world.

U3As are community-based, not-for-profit groups, which aim to provide affordable learning opportunities for Seniors using the skills and abilities of the members themselves: “*those who teach shall also learn – and those who learn shall also teach.*” The curriculum of each U3A group is determined by the needs and preferences of its members, and the resources available to it. Each U3A is responsible for its own expenses, usually met from individual membership fees.





What is the U3A Network NSW?

The U3A Network NSW Inc. is an organisation of over 65 (as at 2015) autonomous U3A groups in NSW and the ACT, and several more groups from interstate. Its Aims and Objectives, as stated in the Constitution, are:

- To provide information, advice and relevant services to member U3As, and to encourage their involvement in the wider community, while recognizing their autonomy;
- To encourage co-operation and networking between member U3As, and as far as practicable, with other U3A organizations in Australia and internationally;
- To support the formation of U3As within the State of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory;
- To promote the U3A movement by publicizing it through various media;
- To represent member U3As at State and National levels;
- To establish and maintain links with educational and Seniors' organizations;
- To co-operate with and seek support from relevant sources for applied research into life-long learning and related aspects of ageing.

The Network is part of U3A Alliance Australia, a loose national alliance of U3A Networks in all States, the ACT and U3AOnline.

The U3A Network NSW offers the following services for its members:

- A comprehensive Group Public Liability Insurance Policy, covering authorised U3A activities.
- *Newslink*, a regular newsletter, with news and views from U3As throughout Australia.
- A website, at www.nsw.u3anet.org.au, with sub-domain sites for member U3As, and links to interstate and international U3As.
- Website production support for member U3As.
- A Resource Library of courses available to U3As.
- A consultative role when requested by individual U3As.
- Supply of a comprehensive Starter Kit for groups wishing to start a U3A in their community.
- Copyright, Performing and Recording Licence cover for authorized U3A activities.



What does U3A Provide?

Research has shown that as we get older, it is important to maintain our physical and mental health, and that mental stimulation can contribute to your health, and stave off mental deterioration. In an ageing population, this is vitally important to the health and wellbeing of the nation.

Professor Brian Groombridge, Professor of Adult Education, London University, and a co-founder of U3A in the United Kingdom, identified the following values of late life education.

- Education can foster self-reliance and independence.
- Education is a major factor in enabling older people to cope with the innumerable practical and psychological problems in a complex, changing and fractured world.
- Education for and by the older people themselves strengthens their actual or potential contribution to society
- Self-awareness by older people, their self interpretation and the communication of their experiences to other generations fosters balance, perspective and understanding which is valuable in a rapidly changing world of conflict.



U3As provide the opportunity to continue to learn about topics of personal interest, to develop new skills, and to share expertise and experience with others willing to learn from each other. Learning takes place in a friendly, supportive, social environment.



U3A keeps your mind alive!

Every U3A has its own program of classes, depending on who is available to teach them.



Classes might include...

- Aboriginal Culture
- Astronomy
- Brain Games
- Crafts
- Genealogy
- Law & Society
- Literature
- Philosophy
- Art Appreciation
- Australian Studies
- Creative Writing
- Current Affairs
- Geology
- History
- Music
- Tai Chi
- Art Classes
- Book Club
- Computers
- Dance
- Health
- Languages
- Science
- Yoga



For contact details check the U3A NSW Network website at:

www.nsw.u3anet.org.au

or

Email: info@nsw.u3anet.org.au

U3A Online

U3A Online Inc., an independent member of Network, offers short online courses and many other useful resources for older people, especially those who are geographically, physically or socially isolated.



Find out more at:

www.u3aonline.org.au

Annual Conference

Each year the Network holds an annual conference in association with its Annual General meeting. Current policy is to hold a conference in the northern and southern halves of the State hosted by a U3A.



Resource Library

The Network maintains a library of courses which are available to U3As for download, or by post (at a small charge) on paper and/or DVD. The catalogue of courses can be located at:

www.courses.u3anet.org.au

"The continuing learning you do at U3A provides real mental stimulation. In addition you meet interesting people who provide great friendship."

Ron

"When I retired I had nothing to do, I now attend music and current affairs classes."

Stan

WHAT U3A PROVIDES

"They want to be there, there are no conscripts, nobody has to be chased up to go along. They just love going to their classes."

David

"I'm learning French, Italian, and music appreciation. It's a good reason to get up and go out in the morning."

Paul

"U3A gave me a chance to follow up some things I hadn't had time to do in my working life - I attend classes on current affairs, the stockmarket, and philosophy, and I joined a walking group. As well as the classes, there is a great social network".

Dawn

"I'm a voluntary tutor on current affairs. I do this 38 weeks a year. It takes a certain amount of work in preparation. It's very stimulating and it keeps you focused."

Peter

"Surprise at the number and variety of courses and satisfaction at how many interested in trying. There is pleasure in trying new things and finding good company and friendship."

Bronwen

WHAT USA PROVIDES

"In USA, instead of having municipal councils or governments looking after oldies, they look after themselves. We want to keep the fourth age [dependence] at bay."

David

"We are grateful to the many knowledgeable people in our community who are willing to share their time and knowledge with us so freely."

Carol

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