

# A Brief History of Frankston U3A

U3A (The University of the Third Age) is a voluntary, non-profit, world-wide organisation which aims to offer older people, low-cost educational opportunities operating in pleasant, supportive social settings.

There are no formal entry requirements, no qualifications, no examinations, no graduations and no "awards". This organisation is open to anyone over 50 who is not working full time and fees are kept to a minimum.

U3A began in France in 1972 and the idea spread rapidly throughout France and Europe, and then around the world. When U3A surfaced in Cambridge, Great Britain, the "French model" was to undergo a significant change. Whereas in the French model there were strong ties to the universities, in the British model these university ties were to disappear. In this new system, which came to be known as the "Cambridge Model", there was to be no distinction between the teacher and the taught – members would, as far as possible, be teachers as well as learners.

This Cambridge model was introduced into Australia in Melbourne in 1984 and has since spread rapidly throughout Australia. At present there are 119 U3As in Victoria and Frankston U3A is one of the oldest, having been started in 1985.

## Looking back...

On the 4th August 1985, eight enthusiastic local people met in the Administrative building of Caulfield Institute of Technology's Chisholm Campus in McMahons Road Frankston to discuss how to form a University of the Third Age in Frankston. Within weeks, 40 members had signed up and classes in Art, Current Affairs, and French were being held in an Administration office before being moved to Chisholm's imposing red brick Struan House (pictured right). This first classroom had only a long table and many chairs. Eventually a portable building and a "broom cupboard" were provided. The broom cupboard was used as our office!! The first committee meeting was held on the 24<sup>th</sup>. March 1986 with Mrs. Bobbie Moorfield as President.



New members came from all over the Peninsula to attend the now many diverse classes. As the Membership grew so did the need for more space.

In 1994, Monash University took over the Chisholm Campus and Chisholm moved to the Frankston TAFE site on Fletcher Road (pictured right). We originally occupied a large room in Building M before moving to two large portable rooms in 1998.



Although this was not ideal we managed.

We knew it was only temporary for the order had been given that we must move again because TAFE also was growing and needed the portables' area for a new "High Tech" building. We appealed to the Frankston Council for assistance and Councillor Max Batchelor was instrumental in keeping the U3A in the portables for another 3 years. So we were looking at moving again, but it took more than 3 years for us to find a new home.

A small sub-committee of David Abbott, Bill Forward, Gail Dudeck and Patricia Blackham was formed and they worked tirelessly in inspecting various sites for a suitable venue. With the support of the then Mayor, Christine Richards, Frankston City Council CEO George Modrich and John Paul College Principal Mrs. Jane Tibb, we moved into the vacant class rooms from the Old Stella Maris Girl's school in late 2010. We lease these rooms from John Paul College with Council assistance on a five year lease agreement at a nominal rent ----- and here we are.

When we moved in 2010 we had a membership of 250. By 2011 we were over 600 and by 2012 over 750 with 60+ classes. Now, in 2015, we have computerised our membership data base; up-graded all audio/visual technology in the rooms; made improvements in heating and cooling; put in three beautiful gardens with assistance from Dame Elisabeth Murdoch and Frankston Sunrise Rotary Club; and have over 800 members, 66 Tutors and 66 different subjects/classes including 5 languages and a 90 strong choir.

Parking at this site is one of our best assets but our greatest assets are our volunteers. They are the office workers, the tutors, the Committee members; all who combine to make Frankston U3A a positive experience for all the members and who, on a daily basis, give real meaning to our motto

**“Learning For Pleasure In Retirement”**

*Thank you to past Presidents Faye Harris, Gail Dudeck and Audrey Moore, foundation member Margaret McKenzie, past Vice President Patricia Blackham, past Secretary Margaret Mace and Mark Dunn for drawing together the above information about our own Frankston U3A.*