

President's Report. Rotorua U3A 17 August 2022

It's a good job our motto is "Never too old to learn" because this year I am having to relearn how to be presidential by standing up in front of our members at an actual physical AGM. But we can't give in to the covid onslaught forever and despite the fact that 20+ citizens of our vintage are dying daily, Rotorua U3A is still ticking over, and here we are. Must admit though, as the list of members I know who have had or still have covid gets longer, I look over my shoulder and think – I haven't had covid - must be something wrong with me.

This time last year we had 434 members and now we have about 389. The largest fall since we started back in 2007. It's the covid effect I'm sure. Some statistics are showing an improvement though - gender equality. When I first started keeping those numbers 8 years ago we were 73% female 27% male. We are now 67% female 33% male. Hang in there lads, we'll get there one day – just try living a bit longer, that should help.

We have only 23 groups and that worries me. We lost our 2 art history groups this year and I thank Anne Hunt and Cate Frey for keeping those groups going as long as they did. But groups are central to U3A's work and existence and we need more. In particular I appeal to those members who have joined in recent years to step forward and share your skills and interests – convening a group does require some time and effort but can be very rewarding.

We lost 2 forums to covid this year. In February the fast-talking Scott Gemmill told us about cycling at the Cambridge velodrome and how they wouldn't let him wear his high-heel shoes on the track. Footwear fashion aside the medal haul at Birmingham shows how important such facilities are. In April we at last secured Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley whose lecture on the rise and rise of disinformation and conspiracy: the politics of vitriol in New Zealand was both superb and scary. I'm pleased to say that Paul will be back in February for another forum –we'll tell you about that nearer the time. In June, Greg Halse and our own Mike Cresswell from the Rotorua Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society informed us about this little understood but much-needed social service, and the range and depth of members' questions showed our appreciation.

Our committee to be elected for 2022-2023 has the same members and positions as last year, other than new member Liz Love whose skills and enthusiasm will be a welcome addition.

Thank you all
Peter Wood Rotorua U3A President
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