

*“Connecting Seniors to Lifelong Learning”*

14<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear President and Secretary

The U3A Network committee has recently received quite a few enquiries regarding assistance in determining how a safe return to classes can be managed. In particular there have been requests for documentation that U3As might use to assist their decision making. Many venue owners and operators have been asking U3As to provide a COVID Safe Plan over and above demonstrating that they are following the basic health and hygiene requirements set down by the Queensland Government and Health Authorities.

The Network committee deliberated how best to assist and it was decided that we could best do so by identifying the risks associated with reopening, the basic controls needed to mitigate those risks and document the assessment and controls within a framework that U3As could apply to their own situation.

Consequently, the committee met via Zoom on 12 June to conduct a risk assessment and develop a minimum set of recommended controls that could be shared with U3As to assist them to manage a safe return to classes and activities.

It is acknowledged that no activity can occur without risk and that it is a shared responsibility to manage the risk. It is also acknowledged that every U3A operates under a set of circumstances unique to them. However, the class and venue types and the basic controls considered by the committee will provide the basic information required by the majority of U3As.

Attached is a brochure which outlines the risk assessment process that was undertaken. The brochure also provides information regarding the minimum controls that need to be implemented to ensure a safe return to classes and minimise the risk of further outbreaks of the COVID-19 virus. Also attached is a template for a COVID Safe Plan.

It would be fair to say that the initial exercise, which was to assume the opening of U3As without any application of controls, provided an alarming result regarding possible threats to members' health. However, once the minimal level of controls was agreed and reassessment was done with controls in place, the risks diminished to a very comfortable level.

With restrictions gradually being eased there will be some U3A members who will be anxious to resume classes. Equally, there will be members and tutors who are feeling cautious about returning to U3A activities and classes. Some U3As have reported that they are conducting surveys of their tutors and members to ascertain their willingness to resume activity. This seems an excellent idea as it establishes a baseline from which a committee can work to ascertain class sizes and venue use within the rules.

Being able to demonstrate that all aspects of risk have been carefully assessed and managed will provide the reassurance needed for all tutors and members, no matter which group they fall into.

In addition to seeking information about a COVID Safe Plan, U3As have asked about the implications for insurance cover if reopening occurs while restrictions are still in place. The Network Committee sought a ruling by the insurers and the response from the Insurance Manager was as follows:

*Your Insurers would expect that the Groups adhere to all Government regulations and recommendations for the safety of the members.*

*If you choose to go against government advice your insurer may have the right to decline claims on the basis of deliberate negligence.*

*While I understand the need to get back to normal, the health and safety of the U3A members is paramount.*

On the very positive side, the insurers have agreed to extend the 2019/20 cover until the end of September 2020. This means that instead of receiving insurance invoices in June, U3As that subscribe to the Network insurance policies will not receive them until September and cover for 2020/21 will extend from October 1 2020 until September 30 2021.

The attached documentation outlines the Baseline Controls provided by the Queensland Government and Health Authorities and also the particular controls that are recommended to minimise the risk of adverse outcomes. The document also details the class and venue types and the recommended level of minimum controls to implement to ensure safety.

While the majority of following points are included in the documentation, they are of sufficient significance to detail separately.

- Ensure that members who are unwell are not permitted to attend classes or activities;
- Ensure that sanitization measures are in place with personnel detailed to manage hand sanitization on arrival and surface and equipment sanitization at the end of each class;

- Allow timetabling space to allow sanitization measures to take place – it is recommended that a half hour be allowed to enable sign on and hand sanitization prior to class and surface and equipment cleaning at the end of class;
- All attendance at class needs to be pre-booked which means that walk-ins and casual visitor attendance is precluded;
- Ensure that the name and phone contact details for all class members are recorded for every class and the information is securely stored;
- Observe maximum limits on numbers within a room and consider options when determining which classes will be offered. Such options could include splitting large classes; running split classes in alternate weeks; and/or changing rooms or venues to match new class sizes.
- Emphasize to members the need to follow instructions regarding control measures. Some U3As have suggested supervision to ensure that risk controls are being implemented;
- Remember that venue owners and operators may have specific requirements that must be met as a condition of facilities use; and
- Approach local Council and other venue hosts to assist with the costs for sanitization materials.

The role of the Network Management Committee is to provide advice and assistance to U3As. We understand that this is a worrying time for many U3As as decisions are made about when and how to reopen and we would like to assure you that committee members are available to provide advice and assistance as needed.

Yours truly

Gail Bonser, President, and members of the U3A Network Queensland Management Committee.