

Friday, 2 August 2002

Adam Cunningham,
Inquiry Secretary,
Standing Committee on Ageing,
Parliament House,
Canberra. ACT

Thank you for asking us to provide a written submission to your Committee's inquiry. We wish to comment on the. themes of Education/Health.

The University of the Third Age, Hobart, Inc. is an organisation which was founded to -

- (a) To organise and maintain a co-operative learning community for retired and semi-retired people, on a non-profit basis.
- (b) To encourage the pursuit of learning without reference to entry criteria, qualifications, assessments or awards.
- (c) To arrange for voluntary tutors and leaders.
- (d) To exchange ideas with Universities of the Third Age both in Australia and overseas.

The idea of such an organisation was first mooted in France in the 1950's, and has spread throughout the world.. Obviously we can speak only for similar groups in Australia, but it appears that most are self sufficient as regards premises which are hired, and provision of tutors, all of who are voluntary. We exist on a nominal member subscription which covers costs of equipment, rental and insurance.

Until now we have run our affairs comfortably, with enthusiastic members and many keen lecturers from various backgrounds (mainly ex University staff). It has been very obvious that, from our members' point of view, intellectual stimulation together with social interaction has had a positive effect on healthy ageing.

We do not want or expect financial support from Government, whether Federal, State or Local, but it has become quite apparent recently that the impact of savage increases in Public Liability Insurance has threatened the continued existence of organisations such as ours. We consider that the enrolment of older people in organisations like U3A is essential in preserving the mental and physical agility of Australians to an advanced age, and is consequently a cost effective measure.

Something must be done about lessening the impact of these sudden increases in Insurance Premiums, otherwise many voluntary groups like ours may have to fold, since many of our members would not be able to absorb the necessary increase in subscriptions.

Vincent Cockburn President.