

Newsletter - June 2026

*Are you aged 55-plus and retired or semi-retired? Live in the Bass Valley or surrounds? Want to keep your brain and body active and make new friends? Want to share your skills and experience with others? Then join in the University of the Third Age Bass Valley (U3A Bass Valley). For a modest annual membership fee you can participate in a wide range of courses, social activities, excursions and events.
Learn, Laugh & Live*

U3A Bass Valley Committee

President: Pam Richmond	Committee Members:
Vice President: Marg Boyer	Geoff Guilfoyle
Treasurer: Glenda Bent	Janet Cobden
Secretary: David Laing	Marcia Comber
Minutes Secretary: Di Goeman	

News

Learning with Locals - Meryl Brown Tobin Book Launch Sunday 21 June 1.30-3pm @ CDCC Function Room

Meryl will tell the story of her writing journey. The day will culminate in the launch of another 'Unbreakable Bond', her third solo collection of poetry and 22nd book. The book is divided into four sections, Environment, People, Challenges and Reflection. Environment, the biggest section, includes some poems about local big cat sightings. The book cover features a photo of her eldest child, Matthew, with his then hour-old son, Bayley. The book's title comes from the title of a poem Meryl wrote about the relationship between the new father and his first child.

Local prize-winning Wonthaggi writer, Chrissie Michaels who reviewed the book said,

"Meryl Brown Tobin constantly reminds us that depth often lies in what is nearby or close to the heart. By drawing deeply from the rituals of the familiar, the poet's world moves from the personal to communal to universal, elevating the everyday into a collective experience of shared traditions, generational memory, affection and belonging. Therein lies life's continuity, an unbreakable bond."



Meryl Brown Tobin's published work also includes hundreds of poems, articles, mainly on travel and the environment, and educational puzzles published in Australia and overseas. For more details about Meryl's writing see <https://sites.google.com/site/merylbrowntobin>.

Entry to the talk/book launch is by gold coin and books will be available for sale (\$20) and signing. Enjoy a cuppa and a chat with Meryl afterwards. All interested are invited, but bookings on merylbrowntobin@outlook.com are essential.

Learning with Locals- Elder Rights Australia



Morgan Williams from Elder Rights Australia

At our recent U3A Bass Valley information session about the rights of older people and availability of Aged Care advocacy assistance, several issues were observed that undermine transparency, accountability, and the rights of older individuals to make informed choices about their care.

We decided to write to members of parliament and other relevant parties expressing our concerns.

The following are excerpts from our letter:

“Firstly, there have been ongoing issues in regard to financial and service statements being sent late or, in some cases, not at all. This lack of timely communication creates confusion and prevents older people and their families from understanding what services have been delivered, what charges have been applied, and how funds are being managed. Such delays compromise trust and make it difficult to ensure that care plans are being implemented as agreed.

Secondly, there is growing confusion over the nature and scope of services being provided. Many clients report inconsistencies between what is promised and what is actually delivered. This confusion is compounded when providers close their books to alternative services or refuse to collaborate with other organisations, effectively limiting choice and flexibility. Such practices contradict the philosophy of elder rights, which emphasises autonomy, dignity, and self-determination.

Another major concern is the reliance on algorithms to assess needs and allocate resources. While technology can support efficiency, it should never replace genuine, person-centred assessment. Algorithms cannot capture the full complexity of an individual's circumstances, preferences, or evolving needs. As a result, many older people are being under-assessed or misclassified, leading to inadequate support and unmet needs.

Furthermore, some providers disallow self-management of care packages, despite this being a fundamental right under aged care policy frameworks. Older individuals should be empowered to manage their own services where possible, with appropriate support and guidance, rather than being forced into rigid provider-controlled models.

These issues collectively represent a departure from the core values of respect, transparency, and empowerment that should underpin aged care. Immediate action is needed to ensure that providers uphold their obligations to communicate clearly, provide timely statements and respect the rights of older people to make informed decisions about their care and service options.

It is requested that relevant authorities and oversight bodies investigate these matters and take steps to ensure that service providers' deliver services and care in accordance with the intent outlined in the aged care standards and the human rights of older people."

If you would like to offer your support you can also contact our local politicians or Elder Rights Australia on 1800 700 600

How to access U3A Network Victoria website - why is this important?

To get access to the Nutrition Online Sessions below, just log in to their main website. You'll find heaps of interesting courses and tips there. Plus, you can also subscribe to their monthly newsletter (bottom left hand corner) to stay up-to-date on all the latest happenings. Just enter your email address. It's pretty easy to do and definitely worth the time!

The address of U3A Vic website is: [Home - U3A Network Victoria](#)

Which gives access to the various topics on the website. Anyone can access several pages without logging in.

If you go there you will notice in the centre just below the page headings is "Member Log In" If you create an account (free) you can access more information by logging in.

To create an account go to: <https://u3avictoria.org.au/register/u3a-2/>

enter your details including a username and a password (note: must be medium or strong) and click "Register". You will be sent a confirmation email. You then use the username and password you created to log in where it says "Member Log In" in the main U3A Vic website.

You will now be able to access more information under the various pulldown pages.

Healthy Eating In Our Third Age: Dr Mitra Zarrati Online Sessions

By now you should have received links to the first three online sessions created by Accredited Practising Dietitian Dr Mitra Zarrati. Designed especially for U3A members, the course provides clear, practical guidance on healthy eating, gut health, mood, mobility, heart health and sleep — all using simple, evidence-based strategies and everyday foods.

The online course can be viewed at home at any time.

Session 1: Healthy Eating – Understanding Food Groups and Daily Servings

Session 2: Gut Health – Supporting Digestion and a Healthy Microbiome

Session 3: Food and Mood – The Connection Between Nutrition, Gut Health, and Mental Wellbeing

Session 4: Strong Bones and Muscles – Nutrition for Strength, Mobility, and Independence

Session 5: Heart-Healthy Eating – Protecting Your Heart Through Everyday Food Choices

Session 6: Nutrition and Quality of Sleep – Foods and Habits for Better Rest



View Dr Mitra Zarrati's website [here](#).

The Nutrition Community of Practice (COP) space provides updates, an opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with Dr Mitra Zarrati, and to share ideas.

To express your interest in joining this COP, please email

Jabbed into Action

Thirteen years ago, the Welsh government unintentionally created an experiment that might just change the future of dementia care, unmasking a game-changing treatment that was there all along. The strange thing is, what they did wasn't intended to have anything to do with dementia – but there is growing optimism that it could turn the tide when we need it the most.

Welsh officials introduced a new national program on 1 September 2013, offering a shingles vaccine to people aged 70. It wasn't a blanket rollout, it was age-targeted. Shingles vaccines were offered in phases and the timing was largely arbitrary. If you turned 70 on or just after 1 September, you'd be offered the vaccine. If you turned 70 just before the cutoff, you were ineligible.

That seemingly insignificant detail turned out to be the most vital part of the trial – it created what's known as a 'natural experiment'. People on either side of the cutoff were effectively randomised, like participants in a clinical trial: one was offered the shingles vaccine, and the other wasn't.

"If I take a thousand people born one week, and a thousand people born a week later, why should there be any difference on average in those people's diets or physical activity levels?" says Prof Pascal Geldsetzer, an epidemiologist at Stanford University in the US. "It's just like tossing a coin." In 2025, Geldsetzer and other researchers sifted through the data of the Welsh septuagenarians and found something astonishing. The people offered a vaccine were 20% less likely to develop dementia.

In dementia research, 20 per cent is a big number – much higher than a lot of lifestyle factors believed to affect an individual's risk. A follow-up study even found that the vaccine could slow the progression of the disease in people who already had it.

Excerpt From “The dementia vaccine some of us are taking without realising”
BBC Science Focus Magazine (Special issue: May 2026)

Women's risk factors go overlooked - ABC News

In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of how heart attack risk factors and symptoms can differ between men and women, but both experts said continuing to improve knowledge and education was key, including among health professionals.

Despite some improvements in heart attack care, women remain 13 per cent less likely than men to receive an angiogram – a test to check for blocked arteries – and 16 per cent less likely to receive a percutaneous coronary intervention, a procedure to unblock arteries that usually involves placing a stent.

Professor Chow said one reason women experienced critical delays in diagnosis and treatment was because their symptoms often looked different to those seen in men.

Heart attack symptoms in women

- Chest pain
- Pain in the arms, shoulders, back, neck or jaw
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Indigestion
- Sweatiness
- Feeling sick (nausea or vomiting)

Source: Heart Foundation

President's Message

We have now confirmed the date for our **AGM and lunch - Friday 21 August 11.30-1.30pm at the CDCC Function Room**. Pencil it in your diary.

One of the main agenda items at our August AGM is the election of our committee. I would encourage you to nominate for our committee - there are a few vacancies and this is an excellent way to get to know people, develop some new skills and bring along your ideas in a safe environment.

We will also be suggesting different categories of membership and proposing that Marg Boyer be made an honorary member of U3A Bass Valley for her enormous contributions over many years. And special congratulations go to Marg on the occasion of turning 90 in May - a wonderful achievement!

As part of our Learning with Locals program Mark Fernando has agreed to make a presentation in early August. Mark will talk about his experiences as Captain of a cargo ship operating from the Middle East - very relevant in the current climate! This should be a unique and fascinating talk.

Thanks to all our volunteers for your contributions over recent months. You all play an important role and we rely heavily on you.



Memberships

I urge all members to log in to the [U3A Victoria Network website](#) . On the bottom left hand side of the page you will find a link to the [U3A Network Victoria News](#). All you need is to provide your email address and create a password. You can do this at Myli Grantville library.

Brain Games

Trivia Games are available on this link: <https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/services-information/trivia>