



PREMISES AND FACILITIES

**A RESOURCE HANDBOOK PREPARED BY U3A NETWORK
QLD INC. FOR U3As CONSIDERING ACCOMMODATION
ISSUES AND THE PROVISION OF SUITABLE PREMISES &
CLASSROOMS FOR THEIR MEMBERS**

A copy of this document is available for download from www.u3aqlld.org.au
See Resources



PREMISES AND FACILITIES –

This guide is provided as a checklist of requirements which have been put together to encourage further discussion and consideration by your committee. Thank you to those U3As who contributed information about their current situations and aspirations for the future.

As some of you work toward finding more permanent and affordable accommodation, you will be considering a dedicated Reception and Office Administration as the “home” of your U3A and one that is recognised in your community. In addition, to enable consistent provision of classes and activities, it will become important to lease or acquire a high standard of accommodation for the purpose of classes and activities.

Your objective will be to meet the needs of future growth in numbers and classes as well as the high expectations of your current members and volunteer workers.

1) PREMISES

Members of U3A and its volunteers deserve the best possible accommodation:

Ideally, U3As should aim for:

- Purpose built or an existing building which can be modified to U3A specification
- Sole use if possible or if shared there needs to be clear, written understandings about sharing arrangements
- Provision for reception area and office administration as well as storage of equipment
- Premises at street level or with good lift access
- Premises within the community which are easily accessible by public transport
- Sufficient floor/room space to meet current program needs
- Inclusion of a larger space/hall suitable for physical activities, e.g. art, yoga, tai chi, card games, larger presentations, meetings and social functions

- Access for persons with limited mobility and persons in wheelchairs

Classrooms should have:

- Good lighting & be well ventilated
- Air conditioning
- Availability as required
- Disabled access/Ramps
- Wi-Fi
- Chairs with arms suitable for seniors
- Lightweight desks/tables
- Storage for equipment such as easels, laptops, A/V equipment, catering needs, materials for specific classes
- First Aid kit
- Access to a Defibrillator where many classes are held in the same building.

2) FACILITIES:

- Reception area
- Separate Administration area
- Desktop computer/Laptop, printer/photocopier
- Kitchen area to accommodate making tea/coffee for socialising and a wet area for activities, e.g. Flower arranging, Mosaic class, Scrapbooking
- Toilets for the ambulant and those with disabilities
- Parking spaces including dedicated disabled bays
- Proximity to public transport
- Security system to protect members and U3A facilities – outdoor lighting
- Suitable area for display of U3A Signs and/or Banners
- Ease of evacuation in case of fire or other emergency

3) POSSIBLE SOURCES OF PREMISES

From our recent survey of U3As within Queensland, the most common experience for U3As in Queensland is where rooms/buildings are obtained through local Council assistance. These premises are often redundant CWA Halls, Seniors Community Halls or Libraries. Other sources include local Schools, Churches, University and TAFE Colleges.

Currently, some U3As co-share a property to the mutual benefit of the parties. Examples of this are:

U3A Dalby has sole occupancy of a previous Senior Citizens Centre owned by the Western Downs Regional Council in return for managing outside bookings from the public for the attached hall (see attachments)
 U3A Noosa has sole occupancy of a building owned by the University of the Sunshine Coast with a long lease; the building provides for 5 classrooms and reception area with a separate committee room (see attachments).
 U3A North Gold Coast is accommodated within the Council-owned Labrador Community Hub. (see attachments)
 U3A Redlands permanently occupy a classroom within the Cleveland District State High School as Reception area and admin office.

U3A Sunshine Coast has an office and some classrooms within the University of the Sunshine Coast. U3A Townsville has dedicated rooms within the grounds of a Religious Institution where several other NFPs reside.

As a precaution, it is highly desirable to secure a formal lease or licence to occupy the building you wish to use for U3A purposes. It gives your organisation some stability of tenure and will be required if you plan on applying for grant funding in the future to upgrade or refurbish the existing building

4) IDEAS FOR SECURING PREMISES

U3A Brisbane took on the unique process of raising sufficient funding from their members to purchase their own premises (see appendix A for further detail).

So far, no other U3A within Queensland has taken this path - in the main, U3As rely on using rented or shared buildings in which to conduct classes. Some U3As reported they did not have a dedicated office or administration place and committee persons worked from their own homes. As newer U3As evolve this is understandable in the first instance but in time, it is essential to provide more appropriate and professional accommodation.

To obtain the assistance you need with regard to finding suitable accommodation, it is important to build strong relationships with Councillors and Council Officers, Members of your State Government, and other influential organisations within your Community.

This will involve:

- Identifying people who are supportive of your organisation and its aims
- Taking opportunities to address other organisations about the service U3A provides to older adults and acquainting them with the “bigger picture” of U3A in Queensland, Australia and even Internationally
- Inviting Councillors and State members to meet with your Committee, attend your AGM, or other social functions such as Seniors Week activities
- Updating your website & Facebook page with photos and stories of U3A activities
- Regularly sending articles about U3A activities to your local newspaper
- Dropping a copy of your newsletter into other community places, including retirement villages, gyms, doctors, electoral offices
- Networking wherever possible

Other suggestions include: the Education Department with regard to a school about to close or with a falling pupil intake; abandoned Bowling Clubs; or a Health Care facility no longer in use.

5) WAYS TO RAISE MONEY

- Members
- Philanthropists in your area (particularly if they have a current or family link to your U3A)
- Loans
- Bequests
- State Grants – age friendly communities
- Building levy on the membership fee
- Sponsorship

6) OTHER SOURCES FOUND BY SOME U3As TO PROVIDE CLASSES:

Here are other examples of how Queensland U3As have managed to provide premises including the sharing of existing suitable premises with another compatible organisation:

U3A Atherton Tableland share a demountable building with a Bicycle Club and Yoga classes. The building is owned by the Tablelands Regional Council and made available through an annual lease.

U3A Beaudesert do not own or lease any premises but conduct many classes and activities at the Centrecare premises (endorsed by the Catholic Church) with a charter to offer community groups access.

U3A Broadbeach is able to use available classrooms at their local high school after hours and has a small office allocated within the school buildings.

U3A Caboolture leases the old Girl Guide Hut from the Moreton Bay Regional Council and has a 5 year lease. U3A has the right to improve the building but not to extend as it sits on a flood zone.

U3A Cairns leases a suite of 8 rooms which is part of an overall complex managed by the Cairns Youth and Recreation Centre Corporate body. As a condition, one member of the U3A Cairns committee sits on the board to represent U3A interests. They have a tenancy agreement to December 2022.

U3A Capricorn Coast has a formal lease agreement with the Livingstone Shire Council to lease rooms for classes in the Council's Community Centre at no charge. Approximately 40 other organisations also use these premises.

U3A Howard has an annual lease on the Uniting Church Hall which is used on a Sunday for morning tea after services and one other NFP organisation meets there one evening a week.

U3A Ipswich leases a shared house provided by the Glebe Uniting Church and also two other premises provided by the Council. Unfortunately, their previous extensive premises situated in the centre of Ipswich had to be vacated to make way for property development.

U3A Maryborough use rooms provided by COTA with other rooms provided by the Uniting Church.

U3A Pine Rivers has long term leases on a small cottage as well as an old library which they have needed to refurbish at their own cost although they secured donations of chairs and tables etc from members and local businesses. These premises are leased at \$1 per year and are owned by the Council.

U3A Redcliffe occupies the upper floor of a building owned by the Council and which is accessed by a lift and/or stairs. They have a 5 year lease and are responsible for general maintenance and repairs needed, including expenses such as air conditioning, electricity and rubbish removal. A high proportion of classes and activities are conducted in this building.

U3A Twin Towns has sole occupancy of a demountable building owned by the Gold Coast Council and previously occupied by a management team establishing the desalination plant at Tugun. The lease expires in 2024. U3A Twin Towns pays for maintenance and the usual outgoings. (see attachments)

U3A Warwick has no dedicated administration office but occupies 3 rooms in a Council owned precinct with a lease expiring in 2022. The rooms are for sole use and were provided as a concession to U3A Warwick as a community group.



STORIES
FROM SOME OF OUR U3As





BRIBIE ISLAND U3A INC

Bribie Island U3A Inc was formed after a public meeting in 1992. It operated in the early years from tutors' homes, a room at the Neighbourhood Centre and Bribie Library. Incorporated in 1998, U3A moved most classes into its first dedicated space at Montaut House, 21 South Esplanade in 2002. As demonstrated by the accompanying graph, growth has occurred since inception, but acquiring a 'home' was largely responsible for an increased rate. It is certainly a key feature highly valued by the members: demonstrated by a survey of members when the social aspects of belonging to U3A were nearly as highly valued as the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

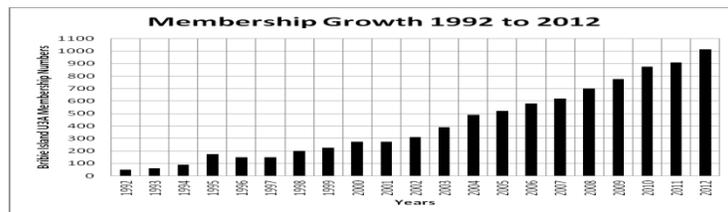
In 2005 Caboolture Shire Council provided U3A with a refurbished section of the Bribie Island Recreation Hall on First Avenue: a Reception area, a computer lab., 2 classrooms that could be joined or divided dependent on group size, a shared meeting room with the Vietnam Vets., a small storage area and a unisex toilet: for 400 members. Furniture and equipment was obtained through successful applications to Volunteer Grants system (Federal Gov.) and Community Benefit Grants Fund (Queensland Government). 2004 – 2005. U3A receives no recurrent government funding.

Growth and consequent need for extension

U3A Demand: With a large proportion of the older age group in the main areas served by B.I. U3A, based on 2006 figures from Moreton Bay Regional Council, 54% of the population is aged 50 and older: by contrast the average over 60 years for Moreton Bay region is 17.2%. – a continued growing demand for such services as U3A provides is anticipated.

Significant Dates:

| Key dates | Year 1 | Year 9 | Year 14 | Year 26 | Year 31 |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Year | 1992 | 2002 | 2005 | 2014 | 2019 |
| Event | Public meeting | Move to Montaut House | Move to Rec. Hall | Extension to Rec Hall | |
| Membership growth | 0 to 41 | 284 to 324 | 485 to 530 | 1180 | 1883 |



From 2009 to 2014 there were many discussions with stakeholders (including receptionist, tutors and general members). Consultation was ongoing during that period with MBRC, especially the Facilities Department and Division 1 councilor, Gary Parsons. In 2014 the MBRC started an extension to the existing U3A and Vietnam Vets area of the Recreation Hall

The extension was funded by MBRC and with a major contribution from Bribie U3A. Equipment and furniture were funded by a grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The building will continue to be Council owned and leased by Bribie U3A, with a 10 year lease. With the extension, U3A now (2019) has 8 classrooms, an enlarged coffee area, administration and storage areas and an additional toilet.

At the end of 2018 the membership stood at 1883 and predictions are it will continue to increase during 2019 and beyond. This continued surge in numbers has meant that additional locations are being rented in the area. A major step has been the development of a campus at Beachmere which will become an independent U3A (similar to the earlier development in Caboolture) to provide alternative U3A options for the region.

Although Bribie rents additional locations the relative cost is extremely low compared with the era before we occupied our current premises. For example in 1996 rental costs as a % of income was as high as 37%, whereas by 2012 this had fallen to 9% and currently stands at 8%. This is a huge benefit to us and reflects the continued support we receive from the MBRC who charge us a peppercorn rent for our facilities.

Ann Brooks, Vice President
 Greg Sibthorpe, President
 March 2019

U3A BRISBANE INC

The following is a brief summary of the unique process that U3A Brisbane used to purchase its own permanent inner city premises. The idea was initiated by U3A Brisbane past-president Ray Bricknell, whose pre-U3A vocation was in property development as a professional Project Manager. For more detailed advice on the process used to harness member resources and goodwill for similar capital intensive projects, please contact U3A Brisbane (07) 3236 3055 or mail@u3abrisbane.org.au .

Background: Expensive, highly disruptive U3A premises relocation had taken place four times previously in Brisbane U3A's 25 year history. These enforced moves were due to commercial imperatives like exorbitant rent increases, building refurbishments/demolition, lease expiration and premises re-designation. The final forced move was out of the CBD and away from convenient public transport, which inconvenienced many members.

Financing by Brisbane U3A members of its own inner city premises:

- Consultation with members about U3A Brisbane's future took place. A decision was taken by members to relocate to CBD strata-titled office property with *option to purchase within 12 months* for approximately \$900,000 (plus purchase costs).
- Many legal hurdles had to be overcome, and some very innovative solutions were found.
- Members supported financing of the entire purchase via a debenture issue with a term of 10 years. (That is, members "financed the purchase of their U3A premises" by becoming 10 year note holders, with a favourable annual interest return each year, with capital to be returned to the note holders after not more than 10 years.)
- The issue was oversubscribed by members within three weeks of opening.
- U3A Brisbane is required to pay all monthly costs of the debt from its income (mainly class fees) for 10 years. Noteholders are secured by a charge over all the assets of U3A Brisbane, not just the property.

Greg Doolan
President

U3A Brisbane's CBD premises



5th Level, 232 Adelaide Street



Ground floor, 97 Creek Street

U3A DALBY INC.



Friendship and Fulfilment

As with all U3A clubs it was a major issue when U3A Dalby was established to find premises for our use. The Dalby Town Council at the time gave us a room to use which was appreciated but we soon outgrew a single room.

Soon after space became available at the old convent and we applied and was granted enough room to continue and grow but it soon became evident that these premises would be too small too quickly.

The Senior Citizens Hall was built with federal government money in Dalby and was a great venue for the town as there were very few places for hire that could be used for public functions. The Senior Citizens Association made good use of the hall. When the Senior Citizens club folded in the town, the hall was given over to the council to manage and U3A members were quick to take advantage of this situation. We were very fortunate that the mayor was one of our greatest supporters.

U3A Dalby now has complete use of this hall. It consists of a main hall that has a polished floor suitable for dancing and is used by our Indoor Bowls and Table Tennis classes with ease. We use this part of the building for our General meetings and Melbourne Cup parties and fund raising events. It has a stage and store room attached.

There is a smaller room that seats approximately 50 people and is also used for classes and smaller meetings. We also have a room that is used for scrabble and mahjong classes and the computer room. We have a permanent office set up and to top it off we have a fully set out kitchen with stove and microwave and have just had the cold room removed as it needed too many repairs and was not getting any use. There is also a smaller servery and a bar off the main hall. Toilets and shower and air conditioning complete this fabulous building.

Even though we have complete use of this building for our daily classes the council still require it to be available for hire to the general public. We have a 3 year lease with an option of extending the time from the council and that requires us to manage the hall. This requires us to take bookings for the hall. We do not handle the payment of fees, that is done by council. We make sure the hall is opened for these bookings, inspect the hall after use and generally make sure all is well. This is the responsibility of the Management Committee. The council pay the electricity and general maintenance and arrange weekly cleaners.

Over the years we have applied for grants and installed air conditioning in the smaller rooms. In 2017 we decided our home needed renovations so with council's blessing we applied to the Gambling Fund for a grant to paint the inside of the hall. We were successful and so applied for another grant to replace curtains with blinds throughout the hall. Council were impressed with our efforts and redid the kitchen and repolished the floor in the main hall. We now have a completely refurbished home.

I would suggest to all U3A's to scout their local area for council owned premises or halls and take the initiative and approach your council to come to the same arrangement as Dalby.

Margaret Cook



The history of how U3A Noosa acquired the premises at 64 Poinciana Ave, Tewantin

In 2009 a member of U3A Noosa offered to purchase a building for U3A Noosa if we wanted it. The then president accepted the offer. The available property was at 64 Poinciana Ave, Tewantin; it was fitted out with input from the U3A Noosa Committee. Most of the important decisions were taken over the Christmas break 2009 and in May 2010 we moved into our own premises. All was done without any costs to U3A Noosa. The Bendigo Bank donated money for a new computer room. TAFE donated furniture and the removal trucks and we received a grant from Jupiter Casino to complete all that was needed to get started.

We started by paying a peppercorn rent while the paperwork was to be completed for the handover. Many meetings later we were advised that there were legal issues that would stop this from being possible.

U3A Noosa would have to be listed as 'Gift Recipient'. To achieve that, U3A would have to be a registered charity. The U3A committee went through the process of becoming a Queensland registered charity but it was not possible to become a Federal Registered Charity which was necessary. The then U3A committee and the donor involved accountants and lawyers but there was no resolution to the problem of achieving a Federal Registered Charity status.

For the donor to gift the premises to U3A she would have had to pay a very high percentage of tax and would not create a tax deduction for her. The money requested by the tax department made it impossible for her to gift the premises to U3A.

If any other U3A wishes to acquire their own premises in this way, the U3A Network would have to negotiate with Canberra to gain the necessary charity status so U3As can become Gift Recipients.

The donor then approached the University of the Sunshine Coast, who have 'Gift Recipient' status and after long and very thorough negotiations with the U3A committee, representatives from the University, accountants and lawyers, a contract favourable to U3A Noosa was signed under a lease arrangement.

Note: the donor also gave extra money to the University for the maintenance of the building for the next 15 years. The University has been very generous and efficient in maintaining the building and has made changes where needed to comply with health and safety regulations. U3A Noosa currently has a 5-year lease with an option to renew for a further 5 years.

U3A Noosa has been very lucky throughout this process and the outcome has been very good. Although the initial intentions of the donor were different U3A Noosa has benefitted greatly from this arrangement.

Griet Hesse
Past President



U3A NORTH GOLD COAST INC

U3A North Gold Coast first began providing educational and lifestyle activities to its members in 1991.

Today, it is well established as a member-based community organisation situated in the North Gold Coast region of South East Queensland, with its central headquarters at the Gold Coast City Council's Labrador Community Centre [The Hub].

It is at The Hub that we provide an extensive programme of educational and lifestyle activities for our active community members.

The Hub in many respects is considered as a unique facility for the services that we provide, being a modern, well presented building in an environment that is supported by public transport and surrounded by other community groups, parkland and public tennis courts. There is considerable off-street shared parking available in and around the building complex, together with street parking, if required.

The Hub has certainly not been central to U3A North Gold Coast's operations since it first commenced back in 1991. Quite the contrary - we have experienced what most community-based organisations go through when identifying suitable premises to operate from and when you believe you have the right formula, the goal posts are invariably changed, bringing you back to the drawing board yet again. We have suffered this fate many times since 1991.

We have operated our classrooms out of people's homes and garages; occupied space in small community halls; shared space with other community groups; taken up residence in a retirement village and so the list goes on. Consideration was seriously given many years ago to acquiring a purpose-built building exclusive to our requirements – this did not eventuate for several reasons all of which were primarily of a commercial and economic nature.

Then around 2010 we were offered rooms at the Labrador Community Centre, which the committee at that time accepted; there began a comfortable relationship with our primary landlord, the Gold Coast City Council. But all of that was to cease some two years later, when Council made the decision to modernise The Hub and increase its footprint. This decision meant that U3A was once again looking for temporary premises which it was able to secure.

At the completion of The Hub's redevelopment in 2014, we accepted a 2-year lease agreement as anchor tenant in the newly refurbished Hub. That lease was re-negotiated during 2017 and we accepted a 5-year lease arrangement, which expires in 2022.

Today, The Hub provides us with sufficient space to accommodate all of our class and lifestyle activities except our choir group – which is housed in modern premises at the Paradise Point Community Centre.

Our lease with the Gold Coast City Council provides us with three secured air-conditioned permanent rooms; an office; a meeting room and a computer-based room capable of providing computer training for 20 members. The Hub also has four additional air-conditioned independent rooms, each capable of accommodating between 20 and 38 members; there is dedicated art space and large lifestyle area suitable of accommodating up to 35 members wishing to participate in lifestyle activities. The additional space is made available to us on a firm agreed booking basis, secured 12 months in advance of use. In terms of total space usage, we have lease arrangements for approximately 70% of The Hub space, 5 working days a week.

The Hub is a vibrant and modern centre, offering an extremely comfortable and pleasant environment for members to participate in class and course activities at the one location.

John Hudson
President



U3ATwin Towns Inc. Accommodation

U3A TWIN TOWNS INC

History

U3A Twin Towns Inc was incorporated in 1991. The new group was formed under the auspices of U3A Gold Coast. U3A Twin Towns was initially headquartered in the Senior Citizens Centre in Coolangatta before being offered accommodation in the Showcase Shopping Centre Building.

The accommodation in the Showcase Building was subject to a monthly tenancy and in June 2008 U3A Twin Towns was informed that the tenancy was to be withdrawn.

For approximately a year, U3A Twin Towns rented premises in a shopping arcade in Coolangatta which housed the office and one classroom space. Outside rental accommodation was sought for classes that could not be accommodated within that space.

In 2009 the Gold Coast City Council offered a 15 year lease on a transportable building which had previously been the administration office for the construction of the water desalination plant in Tugun. The local councilor worked assiduously on behalf of U3A Twin Towns to secure the lease on the building.

Accommodation Today

Current accommodation comprises the headquarters at Tugun and rented premises spread throughout the district. In all, classes are held at seven venues across three suburbs.

The basic accommodation within the Boyd St premise remains unchanged from the original. It comprises an office/reception area, a large open space with a small kitchen at one end and four small rooms, three of which are used as learning spaces and one as storage.

In recent times the verandah at the front of the building has been weatherproofed through installation of clear Perspex sliding panels. The verandah is used as a social gathering space and also by small groups such as card players.

At the rear of the building and separated from it there is a toilet block and a shed.

Major improvements, in addition to the weatherproofing of the verandah, have included the replanting of the garden and the installation of new air conditioners throughout the building. The planting of the garden was undertaken with grant money awarded by the Bendigo Bank. The grant funding covered the cost of erection of a raised vegetable garden bed and the purchase of productive and ornamental plants. The aesthetics of the building have also been improved through painting of the vermin boards and handrails to match the colour of the blue dado height colourbond construction of the building.

Conditions of Lease

The building is held on a 15 year lease at a peppercorn rental (currently around \$400 per year). U3A Twin Towns is responsible for all outgoings (rates, electricity and water) and maintenance. Council donates approximately \$2 000 per year towards the cost of rates.

The lease is due to expire in June 2024. A condition of the lease is that negotiations for a new lease must begin in 2023. As part of the negotiation U3A Twin Towns will be required to cover the cost of a site and buildings survey, expected to be around \$3 000.

If negotiations are successful and the building survey results are satisfactory, a new lease will be offered for a maximum period of 5 years.

Preparing for the Future

The club is accumulating an accommodation fund to cover the eventual need to relocate from Boyd St.

Reasons for relocation could be that the building is not considered suitable for re-leasing beyond 2024 and/or that Boyd Street becomes a four lane road, as gazetted.

The club is also accumulating a maintenance fund to cover any major maintenance requirements for the future. Funds are set aside in accord with a maintenance schedule devised by the committee.

Gail Bonser
Secretary U3A Twin Towns Inc.