

Dear members of U3A (UWA)

The world as we know it is changing rapidly as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) escalates around the world. The WHO has declared this a pandemic because of its rapidly spreading ability. The Federal and State governments have formed a new national cabinet in an unprecedented move to manage Coronavirus in Australia.

The number of cases in Australia has now passed the 250 mark but in WA we have 17 cases all of which have come from contact overseas. There is still zero community or locally transmitted cases. This may change suddenly and we must all take steps to ensure our safety.

The federal government has advised non-essential gatherings to fewer than 500 people. U3A (UWA) does not come anywhere near this size. What we need to be aware of though is that a lot of our members are over 70 and in that vulnerable age group. Many of our members have health conditions that would put them at risk of being more vulnerable such as having heart, lung conditions, diabetes or suppressed immune system.

In relation to regions I think that each region has to look at their own individual programs and make their own decisions about whether or not to continue running them. Some group activities may be for very small numbers and the risks there would be small as opposed to larger gatherings. In all instances this will be up to the regional committees to decide on how they wish to proceed.

City Courses are currently running and all these courses are for smaller sizes. I do not think that at this time we need to suspend these courses. Having said this I am constantly reading updates from the State and Federal Departments of Health to make sure that we are up to date with the latest information. Their advice changes daily or more often.

There are procedures that all members must make in terms of reducing the spread of the coronavirus to other members and that is

- If you have flu like symptoms and/or
- If you have been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, irrespective of whether you have developed symptoms and/or
- If you have recently returned from any overseas destination regardless of its origin.

You should not attend any classes, programs or events run by U3A (UWA) be it at a regional level or a city course and should stay away for two weeks.

The best advice to all people in terms of your own safety and that of others is to undertake healthy practices

- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise with hand sanitiser
- There should be no handshakes or touching

My advice to all members is to make your own decisions based on your own specific circumstances. Even if programs are continuing if you do not feel that you are safe or your circumstances are such that you are one of the vulnerable groups then you should make the decision to stay at home.

The health department has a very good fact sheet and can be found at <https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/~media/Files/Corporate/general%20documents/Infectious%20diseases/PDF/Coronavirus/coronavirus-faqs-6-Feb.pdf>

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