

Coast U3A will mean learning option for aged

A Hibiscus Coast branch of the University of the Third Age will be formed at a Stanmore Bay Community Hall meeting at 9.45a.m. on November 7.

A former president of the Takapuna branch, Ken Adam, will explain at the meeting what U3A is all about.

The university is a new learning option for retired people.

It was founded in France in the mid-1970s and has now spread to many countries.

U3A is a response to the idea that human life is divided into three periods -childhood and schooling, child-rearing and work, and retirement.

The third age is seen as an important opportunity for listening, learning and understanding.

It is during retirement that people can put into practice the idea of a university as a community of those who seek a greater understanding of life.

Learning topics are selected by members, and there are no compulsory activities or examinations.

Costs are minimal, and meetings are held during the day.

A range of subjects is decided upon from time to time and any member may suggest a new study group at any time.

Most U3A groups have topics that have been stud-

ied continuously for years, but there are short courses which run for just a few weeks.

Some typical courses are ancient and modern history, geology, music, comparative religion, art appreciation, current affairs and literature.

A general meeting is held once a month.

Group meetings are usually held twice a month at members' homes.

'University' for Coast over-50s

The Hibiscus Coast has just formed its own "university", and organisers are hopeful its intended students will leap at the opportunities being offered.

The "university", as such, is the U3A, also known as the University of the Third Age.

Aimed at anyone aged 50 or older, U3A is a well-established organisation in New Zealand and internationally, providing an informal environment for participants to learn in group situations about whatever takes their fancy.

The Hibiscus Coast branch has been off the ground less than a month and has already attracted strong interest, says one of the co-ordinators of the launch, Sylvia Arcus of Takapuna.

Mrs Arcus has been involved in setting up U3A branches in different parts of the country and says that the opportunities are limited only by the wishes of the participants.

U3A studies are conducted in self-organised groups, with no teachers; the study sessions take place during the day, in participants' homes, with the group members setting the agenda about what they will study, what pace they will work at, how to research their subjects, and so on.

Subjects are chosen by the members - the inaugural meeting of the Coast U3A has set up groups to study writing, history and geology, but more groups will be formed as demand arises.

Monthly meetings are also held with guest speakers and for contact between all the local U3A members.

Mrs Arcus said there were now eight or nine U3A branches in the Auckland area alone, each one being autonomous and running itself as it saw fit.

There were no pre-requisites for membership, other than a desire to take part - for people wanting to "keep their brain active and meet other people", she said.

Mrs Arcus recalled her own first experience of U3A and

the fascinating feeling of the "no-one-minority" concept