



Participant Coral Wilson is unable to attend the arts programs at Kingston Learning centre due to mobility issues and inaccessible parking. Pictures: Linda Higginson

# Mobility access denied

## Writing on the wall as safety issues close classes, carpark

**Genevieve Holding**

Hundreds of senior students in Kingborough may soon be unable to attend classes as upgrades to their government-owned learning centre prevent access for many members with mobility issues.

About 420 students from U3A are affected. U3A is a volunteer-run not-for-profit education organisation which offers education for senior adults provides educational, social and wellbeing activities for older people in the Kingborough and Channel area.

Delivering 9000 classes annually to members aged between 60 and 90 for the past 25 years, U3A runs its classes three days a week out of the Kingston Learning Centre on Hutchins St.

The centre is managed by Libraries Tasmania, but owned by the Department for Education, Children and Young People.

U3A Kingborough presi-



The carpark outside Kingston Learning centre

dent Maureen Robinson said the carpark at the rear of the centre had been in disrepair for some time, with concrete cracking and pulling up from the ground.

On August 22, she was sent a notice by Kingston Library that said, effective immediately, the carpark and Blocks C and D at the Kingston Learning Centre were closed for upgrades.

While the upgrade was welcomed, Ms Robinson said works had now shut access to

the closest parking to the Learning Centre.

"What we have been asking for is that we can drive across that open area and park on the bitumen and on some grass next to the nearest parking," she said.

"That's what we're after because most of our members are older and many of them have walkers, walking sticks and just have mobility issues because of age."

U3A Kingborough's classes start again on September 22,

with Ms Robinson hearing from many of the members that they would not be able to attend due to access issues.

Each class can attract anywhere from 30 to 90 people.

The centre also houses 40 other community groups, Ms Robinson said.

"If we can't run classes or if we don't get sufficient attendance at classes and if people have to park 250 metres or more away, it's just not viable," she said.

"To suddenly close the whole carpark is just such a massive over-reaction, that it's just not in proportion to the risk."

Independent Member for Nelson Meg Webb MLC has written to the Education Minister Jo Palmer urging an investigation of immediate and long-term options to restore a fully accessible Kingston Learning Centre.

"The abrupt and disruptive partial closure of the Kingston Learning Centre should have

been avoidable, given the crucial role it plays in fostering community involvement, engagement and connection," Ms Webb said.

A DECYP spokesman said the carparks and blocks were closed by Libraries Tasmania to "protect the safety of staff and the community".

"Classes are being rescheduled into other available spaces, wherever possible, to minimise disruption," he said.

"Alternative parking options nearby include free street parking on Hutchins St, Auburn Rd, Freeman St, and Denison St, up to three-hour parking at Channel Court and all-day parking at the Kingston Hub.

"We are assessing options to safely re-open the carpark as a matter of urgency, but safety remains our highest priority.

The DECYP encourages questions or feedback to [kingston.library.meeting\\_rooms@libraries.tas.gov.au](mailto:kingston.library.meeting_rooms@libraries.tas.gov.au)