

At Home Marooned by COVID-19 – March, April and May 2020

Rod Shearing

Royal Geographical Society, Adelaide, South Australia.

This paper was edited by Melissa Nursey Bray – *S.A. Geographical Journal* Editor.

Received for publication June 20, 2020.

In this piece Rod reflects on a time of lock down and how he spent that time

The international pandemic of corona virus has led to a virtual shutdown of much non-essential commercial activity in Australia, travel between states and overseas.

Left operating have been food manufacturers retailers and wholesalers, trades persons, health and welfare, primary and secondary education, and local, state and federal government services. Many aspects of these operations are being performed 'at home' by wholesalers, government workers and some health professionals.

These are some of the personal outcomes noted that have occurred during the shutdown.

Isolation from extended family – this is now treated cautiously.

Having time to undertake tasks both domestic and 'professional' that have always been on the wish list, with plenty of time.

Playground access and sport have been cancelled nationwide, more children in the neighbourhoods at home.

Frazzled parents at home, all day coping with education and supervision, and entertainment.

Dropping off grandchildren at school and staying outside the school grounds with all the other grandparents and carers and parents as the children walk themselves into the school grounds has been the norm.

Eventually schooling devolved into learning at home, with school holidays extended. NSW and VIC closed schools, despite national health advice that continuing with primary and secondary schooling is minimal risk.

Many teachers say, anecdotally, that they have learnt an awful lot more about technology and communications in such a short space of time.

Social distancing – ensuring as you shop that you stay away from others, sanitizing hands at the shopping centres and follow the arrows and standing markers on the floor!

While shopping wondering why the following products have disappeared off the supermarket shelves so quickly:

- Toilet paper.
- Sugar.
- Flour.
- Baked beans and spaghetti.
- Canned soups.
- Pasta.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Disinfectant.

These products started to reappear at the end of April, but where are the stockpiles? (There was never going to be a food shortage in Australia, why the rush?).

On occasional visits with grandchildren watching the Sleeping Beauty ballet and explaining what happens next! Or inspecting or undertaking garden chores and with an iPad advising the grandchildren what type of plant/flower/bird/insect that might be. Catching up with children and grandchildren on the phone.

Having short at distance conversations with neighbours and society members, checking that they are regularly coping.

Having an ANZAC vigil with others in the street.

Self-learning how to manage society activity with 'Zoom' style communications.

Isolation from society activity, such as visiting the rooms regularly, not meeting with members at lectures regularly. Wondering how members with no e-mail access are being contacted.

Doctors' visits and specialists' visits seem to be special due to the small crowds, vetting upon entry and sanitizing hands.

Dealing with communications from the society and other organisations, knowing that every commercial type activity is practically frozen.

Observing more virtual tourist type applications through the internet.

Noting that there have been so many smart and funny e-mails circulated amongst family and friends to lighten the isolation.

Noting the collegiate approach to National Government and decision making in Australia and the really expert advice from the health professionals.

For the first time there have been, on weekends, queues at the supermarkets and hardware stores about 100m long, queuers standing 1.5 metres apart waiting their turn as the store allow 1 person per 4 square metres into the store. Priority access has been given to senior citizens and health care workers, and some public holiday trading altered to suit.

Places of worship and other gatherings such as concerts cancelled.

The State borders in each Australian State and Territory have been closed to regionally contain the spread of the pandemic. (Only exception is Antarctica)

Isolated student in Outback Regions can pay and get a seat with the Flying Doctor Services to attend schools.

Airports are shut, the number of planes in the air is minimal, we live on a flight path at Modbury, except for the FIFO mine work eras there is only about one or two flights a day.

Sport activity seems to be being created as there are no fixtures but rather through the media a re-hash of what might happen and when – there is always a section in the daily paper!

Corona virus, where and how did it start, will there be a vaccine?