

# THE QUARRY

**Sue Osborne**

**Covid-19 Diary**

Date: 1 April

It's amazing how the rain can become a source of entertainment. For months we had none, so when it finally comes it brings excitement and joy. Now it is more mundane, yet still a pleasure. All of a sudden, a dripping gutter is a conversation starter. Our lives have been reduced yet at the same time enriched. Simple things have become important. I believe this time of crisis could see us all appreciate life a bit more.

It's April Fool's Day too. I contemplate a prank but it seems inappropriate. It's a time for contemplation. We must maintain our spirits, stay uplifted, yet resorting to trickery feels wrong.



Date: 2 April

Weather: 23°C Mostly Cloudy

Pyjama parties, toga parties, they're classic rites of passage during the first year at university. The pyjama party many students are now experiencing is very different - festering at home in their sleepwear. What does it mean for 'Generation Covid', who will never properly experience what it is to be a fresher student? University is about more than just learning. It's about making new friends, having new experiences. A whole cohort is missing out on that, forced to study from home. Even before this crisis, university wasn't what it used to be for undergraduates, with so much communication via social media and financial pressure forcing students to work long hours. There was a time when students could explore radical political and social thinking. That doesn't seem to happen as much now. Are we creating a generation of more insular, conformist people? I hope not.

Perhaps next year universities will endeavour to give second year students a chance to make up for lost opportunities, and a new appreciation for freedom, be it political or social, will arise from this year of living singular!



Date: 3 April 2020

Weather: 20°C Partly Cloudy

Prince Charles found self-isolation 'strange, frustrating and often distressing'. So speaks one of the most privileged men on earth. Self-isolation is a novelty for most. But for some it is the norm. Some elderly people can go for days without any human interaction. How does self-pity from the temporarily and newly isolated make them feel? The young can still reach out using social media, the elderly often cannot do this. They move among us invisible and forgotten. We quickly tire of their conversations when they nab us unexpectedly at a shopping centre. It could be the first human contact they've had in days but we've got a deadline to meet and cannot be delayed. The world is shrinking for all of us but for the lonely it was already very small. In times of crisis, people do tend to band together, but this virus is insidious. The elderly and isolated in our community are exactly the people we must avoid.





Date: 4 April 2020

Weather: 24°C Mostly Cloudy

I have often imagined being a fly on the wall while my husband is teaching one of his classes. Now I have that opportunity every day. Every class is being rolled out courtesy of Zoom from our spare bedroom and it's given me a newfound admiration for the teaching profession. I already knew teaching was hard but the intensity, the total concentration and devotion to the students required from teachers is like no other job. My neighbour, also a high school teacher said, you 'just give and give all day'. It sounds like it ought to be easier on screen but in fact, without feedback from the kids and the classroom dynamic, the pressure to keep a lesson lively is even greater. Let's hope at the end of this crisis we all come away with an increased appreciation of our teachers as well as health professionals.



Date: 6 April 2020 at 9:23:00 am AEST

Weather: 20°C Mostly Sunny

Matching pair. But seriously, I'm amazed by how many dog walkers there are on the streets at the moment. I thought I knew every dog in my suburb after years of regular dog park visits, but I've seen lots of unfamiliar dogs and owners these last few weeks. Dogs seem to be the winners during this lockdown. Taking the dog for a walk provides a great routine to our day. Dogs and other animals stay the same while all around seems changed and uncertain. Their unquestioning faith in us, and complete innocence and reliable friendship, are a comfort in these uncertain times, when a simple trip to the supermarket could end up in a squabble over toilet rolls.





Date: 7 April 2020 at 9:49:37 am AEST

Weather: 19°C Showers Nearby

In many parts of Sydney, residents are only a few streets away from places captured in time. In Lane Cove National Park, it can feel as if you are lost in a deep prehistoric forest, surrounded only by the squawking of cockatoos and the rustling of water dragons scuttling into their hiding spots. A wall, built in convict times, remains impervious to the daily to and fro of the city. These places provide important respite for residents, until we decide to build on them. Every hectare counts.



Date: 9 April 2020 at 10:18:13 am AEST

Weather: 20°C Mostly Cloudy

Today is an exciting day. An excursion, a treat. Where to? The local Woolworths no less. A formerly onerous task has become something to look forward to. I get dressed up and put on make-up. It's the only chance I'll have this week to do that. However, in the store I feel guilty about buying things, even though I need them. I look furtively at the other customers and can't meet their eye when I put anything in my trolley that's in short supply, as if I'm committing a crime. There's a tense atmosphere pervading the whole shop. Am I standing too close to you? Did I wash my hands enough when I got here? I feel vigilant and observed, and in fear of being accused of something, although what exactly that is, I'm not sure. So even though this was to be my big excursion for the week, I can't get out of here quickly enough. It's not a relaxing experience like going to the pub. That kind of thing will just have to wait.





Date: 10 April 2020 at 10:14:06 am AEST

Weather: 19°C Light Rain

I've never considered myself a 'girlie girl' worried about 'putting my face on' before I could leave the house. In fact, for a long time I considered make up and high heels anti-feminist and part of the conspiracy to keep women in their place. Nowadays, I've changed my position and getting dressed up is part of the excitement of going out. I never thought getting dressed up for work was anything special. I did not realise how important these routines of make-up and wardrobe are to us. I am not missing the actual work or socialising as much as the preparation and anticipation of it. Clothes and makeup gathering dust in the wardrobe are a daily reminder of how the normal ebb and flow of life has been disrupted. I'm impressed by the way most people have adapted almost overnight to these new rules. Nonetheless, humans are creatures of habit, and we miss our little rituals.



April 12

Easter Sunday is usually a quiet day at home overdosing on sugar, so today will feel like a fairly normal Easter for us. Family time has been quite a pleasure these last few weeks. I know the authorities were worried about this enforced togetherness causing a spike in domestic violence. I hope that hasn't been proved true for too many families. Home is a haven. I can't imagine what it would be like not to feel safe in your own home, to have nowhere to run and hide in times of trouble. We've been getting on fine, no arguments. it's quite nice to be together, but I feel a lot of sorrow for my children, missing out on so much at such pivotal times in their lives. My daughter was to celebrate her 21<sup>st</sup> in a few months. Now she fears losing touch with many of the friends she was to invite to the party. She was also to tour Europe in July for a typical graduation holiday before starting a 'proper' job. I'm sure there are many in her shoes. What of the people at the other end of the spectrum? What if you could count the rest of your years on your fingers? One year taken from that small bunch is a momentous amount. If this was the year to do that one last bucket list trip or activity, to ensure you have lived a life with no regrets, how would you be feeling now? Praying that your health, and perhaps that of your partner's, holds out so you can do it next year. What about those elderly people in nursing homes, forced to live in isolation, not sure when, or even if, they will see family members again. Worst of all, the poor people dying in isolation, unable to farewell their loved ones.



April 14

An unexpected consequence of the shutdown is that we're hardly driving. We are saving a lot of money on fuel bills. The planet must be taking a huge breath. Global emissions will be down this year. Perhaps we'll get an extra month out of the Great Barrier Reef. Maybe it will make up for all the carbon pumped out during the bushfires. It's been noted that Scott Morrison is now taking notice of scientists, something that's been out of fashion since Abbott's prime ministership. When this current crisis is over, will the government continue to listen to scientists? Scientists agree that the climate crisis is a more serious existential threat to life on earth (not just human life) than Covid19 will ever be. Morrison said not one single Australian job should be sacrificed in the fight against climate change, yet he's allowed thousands to be shed to tackle the virus. It's time for a change of philosophy, a new way of thinking and living, if we are to tackle the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced – climate change.





April 17

I've been bushwalking with a neighbour. I have known this lady for several years as we walk our dogs together in the dog park. However, our relationship has never moved beyond a casual acquaintanceship until now. It seems like the unusual circumstances are also freeing us up to be more open with each other, to make social connections even when we are instructed to be distant. I feel much more connected with my local community now I am forced to spend more time in it, and the community spirit is palpable. Just walking around the streets, with so many people out and about, not rushing to the station, is refreshing.



20 April

Weather: 26 Sunny

I'm going for a haircut. It's been a long time. While I must admit I'm pretty keen (being confident about how you look is important), I hope I'm not like the woman in America who wants all lockdown measures removed because she can't get her roots done. It's amazing but very scary watching these Americans taking to the streets with semi-automatic weapons in hand to protest their lack of freedom during the lockdown. I didn't realise the full extent of their cultural beliefs on individual freedom. They'd rather risk thousands of their citizens dying than have the government tell them what to do. And this obsessions with government interference means some eschew government-funded entities like hospitals, welfare and public education. It's a self-fulfilling prophesy. The least educated members of society need such services the most, yet shy away from them. They're also the easiest swayed by populist politicians and vote for policies that will do the most vulnerable (often themselves) in society the most harm. A strange, perplexing conundrum.



April 24

Old friends from childhood are replacing real friends. We're finding comfort in the safe and secure familiar stories. Colouring, jigsaw, puzzles, quizzes, painting, reading, writing, drawing crafts and baking are experiencing a resurgence. Arts, creativity and contemplative work have come to the fore and people have time to take a breath but are also considering what really adds value to their lives when the constant business of work is removed. Perhaps another positive that can emerge from this time is a reconsideration of what we value, what's important. The arts, like health and education, have been starved of funds for years. Maybe it's time to stop valuing GDP over all else and consider other ways we can value things. Why is a commercial real estate agent earning four times more than a teacher or a nurse? Who is really bringing the most value to our society? We can only hope this virus makes us reconsider our worth.





April 27

Ever since the cathedral of Notre Dame almost burnt to the ground in April 2019, things we once took for granted seem no longer immutable. The summer bushfires and the Covid-19 crisis reinforce that impression. The new normal is that there is no normal. Expect institutions, traditions and expectations to change quickly, and evolve with them or be left floundering on the sidelines.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)