

My name: David Menadue

My town: Melbourne, Australia

My COVID19 experience

I don't want to sound like I am super resilient, or maybe I do – but I think I did ok. I have mixed feelings. Loneliness was difficult. I am a fairly social person and I really seriously missed my friends and my family. My darling friends looked out for me. Someone would contact me every day or two and we would go for a coffee. I found that very comforting. I felt that people were looking out for others in ways that they wouldn't before Covid. It made me realise that the human race isn't so bad after all.

My partner is in Indonesia. I don't know when I will see him again. That's really sad. He left in March. He has a daughter there. He is trapped in a Coronavirus hot spot and I don't think the Government will let him in again until there is a vaccine – and until he can access a vaccine. That's sad for me and its sad for him.

I had a knee replacement in March and then we went into lockdown. I didn't have a chance to do exercise. My rehab trainer was able to do training with me in the back yard twice a week. It was like a social outing. It boosted my mental health. My knee has come good and I am grateful for that.

I'm 36 years HIV positive and the comorbidities have mounted up and I need specialists. The GPs are ok, but I really need specialists. If I don't keep on top of my health, some of my conditions can deteriorate quite quickly. Sometimes I need the kind of assessment that only a doctor looking at your body can do. The lockdown impacted my health care. None of my doctors would see me one on one because they did not want to expose me to COVID. That affected me because I had a really nasty rash over my body, and I couldn't get anyone to see it. I also had a number of other specialist appointments that were cancelled. My Infectious Diseases Doctor did tele health and that was ok– but there was something missing. The emotional aspects were missing. You can't pick them up the same way on telehealth.

Some of my friends who are in public housing were quite depressed because they didn't have visitors and then drug, and alcohol use increased. If you are strong enough to resist it that's great, but not everyone is. The Positive Living Centre was closed – the staff there are astute and able to pick up on how people are going – but that was closed. They have a food pantry distributing food to people who needed it – but that was closed.

My act of intersectional kindness

The shop attendants in my local community who would see me coming and help me up the steps and make a point of making sure I get a proper container so that I wouldn't spill my coffee. They could see I was frail. Just little things. They worked out what my limitations were and how they could help. It meant a lot. Even just remembering my name was enough to say they value my presence, it's an entree to having a decent conversation.