

My name: Jess Barrett

My town: Gold Coast

My Covid19 experience:

I'm a supermarket worker and COVID19 was busy and stressful. But there were also good things that happened. We were so much busier than we usually are. There was a high level of customer stress because they couldn't get what they usually get. We didn't have the stock because people were panic buying and also because the supplies from interstate slowed because of border closures.

Toilet paper ran out because people panic bought it. We had a limit of one pack per person but before that people were buying six packs of 36 rolls, which was crazy, but people were panicked. Pasta and sugar and flour were also out of stock. We were only allowed to give out one tin of veggies and so we had to tell people. Most people were fine about it, but some people got really angry and were like: who are you to tell me I can't have two tins of corn! I got a bit stressed about that.

One thing I got really stressed about was when we had lines of customers waiting for check out and we had to make sure people did 1.5 meters. We had to have a staff member walk around to encourage social distancing. We had long queues because we couldn't have all the registers open because of social distancing. One Saturday we had big crowds and it was really difficult to enforce and I had to ring my manager and we had to close the store. I got really stressed, but the manager was really calm and said just take a deep breath.

There were some really lovely things that happened. Around Easter one customer was really appreciative of how hard we were working and so she bought little easter bunnies for all the staff and gave them to us. It was just really sweet. We really appreciated it.

We also had kids at a neighbouring primary school do drawings and send them to us. They were so cute. They were pictures of the kids with staff. We put them up in the staff room and would look at them during our breaks. It was a really cute gesture. It made staff smile. It made us feel appreciated.

I'm studying psychology. My year at uni was very different from how I imagined it would be. I was only there for three of the 26 weeks of the Uni year. The rest was online. It was a little bit of a challenge. I was working double the hours in the supermarket that I usually do. That put pressure on study and getting things done. I found more of an appreciation of the time I had with my peers and tutors when I was at Uni. I think I took that for granted before.

My act of intersectional kindness

Every morning we opened the store for older people and other people who were vulnerable. They were finding it hard to shop with the crowds. Our supermarket is close to a nursing home and retirement village and so there is a lot of independent older people and they wanted to come in and do the shopping themselves. We set aside an hour each morning for them so they could shop without the crowds – in our supermarket and in the shopping centre.