

# Fourteen Days of Quarantine in Lane Cove – My Diary

## by Eric Aubrey

### Day 1 (Friday March 20<sup>th</sup>)

We finally arrived home at Sydney International airport, approx. 30 hours in transit, an enormous feeling of relief<sup>1</sup>. We did some duty-free shopping where social distancing was not observed, we kept our masks on. We were asked to sign a declaration that we would go into immediate 14-day quarantine and head home directly with no stops on the way. We proceeded to Immigration where we had to put our passport into the automated machine, answer some questions and print a ticket. There was no evidence the machines were being sanitised regularly and there was no hand sanitiser available. During this whole process passengers were queued six inches apart, no social distancing here, and none at the baggage carousel or lining up to leave. In addition, there were no temperature checks before we left the airport, everyone was released into the community. Really not much different than the cruise ships which are causing an uproar by releasing passengers into the community unchecked. So as instructed we headed home for our 14 Day Quarantine period.

We had the slowest cab ride in history, the driver did not go over 60 kph, the fare ended up being \$120, this was \$20 higher than any airport trip we had taken previously. I can't blame the driver; I don't think he was overwhelmed with work and he has bills to pay. Soon he will have no International travellers arriving.

Today was easy as we had to unpack, put everything away and do several loads of washing. Before we knew it, we had completed all our tasks, the day was gone. Shaun<sup>2</sup> had put groceries in the fridge the night before, so we had food. Karen<sup>3</sup> had decided we were inmates' number 1 and 2. We were in bed by 9pm and got a good night's sleep due to sheer exhaustion.

### Day 2 (Saturday March 21<sup>st</sup>)

I did not shave today as I may grow a beard.  
We are both feeling healthy.

Many government announcements are made today, too many to list. State borders are closing over the next few days, if they are not already closed. As is customary for me I write lists and work to a schedule, so I set about planning the next 3 days and getting us back onto our normal weekly schedule, not that anything was normal about what was happening in the world. I added a few jobs that often get forgotten, this the positive of being home for 14 days. The "experts" say planning is an important tool for remaining under control. The priority was to order home delivery supplies as we are not permitted to leave home and go into stores. Woolworths was first and we completed the order but a window for delivery was not available. We will have to check the order tomorrow. Next was an order for Harris Farm and we placed it with delivery on Thursday, 6 days!! Next was Dan Murphy's and we placed an order and delivery was next day. We also placed an order for gelato at 11.30 and it arrived at 12noon. Wine and gelato can be delivered no problem, groceries wait 6 days, fortunately we had someone looking after us, what if you don't have that someone? In the afternoon I had a

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<sup>1</sup> We were returning from Boston USA

<sup>2</sup> My nephew

<sup>3</sup> My wife

very pleasant surprise and found out that the AFL was playing, so I switched on the Sydney Swans game, there were no spectators. It was most interesting to hear the AFL was protecting the players by taking their temps as they arrived at the ground, if they failed, they went home. They showed the special device being used, not sure why these devices are not available at Sydney International airport. In the evening I watched the A League, Sydney FC played to an empty stadium, it was the Sydney derby, very strange, eerie. The Rugby League was playing to empty stadiums this weekend too. By the end of the weekend all three codes were suspended.

We stuck to our usual routine of making sure we got 8 hours sleep

### **Day3 (Sunday March 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

Did not shave today.

We are both feeling healthy.

More government pronouncements, too many to mention. All church gatherings have been banned so we did church via Zoom in our PJ's with coffee, a very different experience.

Checked the Woolworths order and no delivery window is available, a software glitch tricked us into thinking there was, but it quickly disappeared!

Staying with the task list and the day goes by quickly.

We are finding things in the pantry that are very useful, our attention to detail when viewing the pantry has been lifted dramatically.

### **Day 4 (Monday March 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

Did not shave today.

We are both feeling healthy.

News that the petrol companies are gouging their customers and the price for fuel is completely unreasonable given the fall in crude oil prices, this is very sad corporate behaviour in very difficult times.

Karen made an awesome fruit cake from supplies in the pantry, really yummy, half has gone in the freezer.

We are watching The Crown on Netflix and really enjoying the machinations of a simpler bygone era.

Karen tried the Woolworths order again and secured a delivery window on Friday, 7 days to get groceries, again what happens if you don't have people looking after you?

The political blame games have started, politicians just can't help themselves. They are asking the general public to cooperate and be kind to one another, but they just can't set an example and stop the political games and taking pot-shots at each other, they also can't bring themselves to say I was wrong, I made a mistake and I'm sorry and we will do better.

Groves House<sup>4</sup> is only permitting Dad one visitor every two days for 15 minutes and the visitor can only go to his room. Many nursing homes are in lockdown.

All restaurants were ordered to close except for take away and home delivery and thousands are losing their jobs. What I did learn from this, was that Uber Eats take 38% of the order value from the restaurant, charge the customer a delivery fee and pay their drivers a pittance. I have always had my suspicions, but this is corrupt and adds no value to the economy but just moves money from the producers to Uber cutting the producers margins significantly.

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<sup>4</sup> The retirement/nursing home in Newcastle where my Dad is

Uber decimated the taxi industry in the same way adding no value and the charges have quickly risen so the consumers saving is now almost gone and only Uber profits but adds no value.

With the restaurant industry job losses, the lines at Centrelink, with no social distancing, and the phone wait times (3-4 hours) are frightening and frustrating as people need support urgently but Centrelink don't have the resources. The government is trying to address the issue.

### **Day 5 (Tuesday March 24<sup>th</sup>)**

Did not shave today.

We are both feeling healthy.

The Nespresso order arrived promptly as usual, but the driver did not understand social distancing, but I had my mask on and kept 2 metres from him and washed my hands on return to the apartment and disinfected the box.

The home Internet has started to wobble, and I cannot use the iPad, the connection is coming and going. The news bulletins advise that the numbers of people working from home has caused unprecedented demand. They are working to improve the situation.

At 11pm the iPad is working perfectly; most people have gone to bed.

Our neighbours called to ask if we needed groceries, they were going to Aldi, so we gave them a list and were very happy to receive everything we asked for. It seems a little ridiculous that a simple sandwich with fresh bread could taste so good. Very thankful for our thoughtful neighbours.

Karen has made some amazing masks for us to wear. The design was found on the Internet. Had a BBQ dinner tonight, the simple pleasures need to be savoured.

### **Day 6 (Wednesday March 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Did not shave today. I think I officially have a beard.

We are both feeling healthy.

Government pronouncements continue to come thick and fast.

The Internet is not working, and Karen is hot spotting me using her mobile. She has isolated the problem to the Netgear router, which is under warranty, but we cannot go out and replace it.

Julian<sup>5</sup> was injured at home and Gavin<sup>6</sup> and he went to hospital for his surgery, because of this Gavin has to work from home in isolation.

The government is asking the military for help, one media outlet is beating this up by saying this is because civil unrest is expected from the younger citizens and the military will be asked to assist the police.

The display case housing my elephant collection was cleaned today, I won't say how long it has been since it was cleaned but this is certainly a positive of the isolation.

Netflix have stopped streaming in HD to help the Internet cope and it is very obvious when watching The Crown.

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<sup>5</sup> My Great Grandson

<sup>6</sup> My Nephew and Shaun's brother

Today we saw Saul<sup>7</sup> on WhatsApp, he is growing fast and was very active in his rocker. The reality is we probably could not see Saul in person now if we were in Boston as Brandon and Miriam are voluntarily self-isolating. The problem in the US is far worse than in Australia, infections and deaths per 100,000. Trump is saying the issue is economic.

### **Day 7 (Thursday March 26<sup>th</sup>)**

We have reached halfway, awesome.

Did not shave today.  
We are both healthy.

Have been limiting the amount of news I watch. When I switched on today, I saw the Centrelink lines are still very long and people started lining up at 6am, their desperation is palpable, they need to pay the rent and buy groceries. The cruise ships are still a problem but I'm not sure how they are different to the airport. Finally, the news reports are showing the chaos at Sydney International airport, no social distancing, no sanitizer and no temperature checking, and thousands of Aussies are arriving home. An airline worker recorded the footage to highlight the risks and lack of control. Schools remain open in Queensland. In Queensland there are significant problems due to the border closures and people are lining up to get across the border and through the checks.

I spoke to Basil<sup>8</sup> from Estée Lauder and the company has been closed down, everyone sent home because 2 staff tested positive for Covid-19. Warehouse is closed for at least 2 weeks. We received our Hummerstons' meat delivery, 100% of what we ordered, and the delivery guy stayed 5 metres away. Received the Harris Farm order, only 60% was supplied after waiting 6 days but they supposedly had plenty of stock in their warehouse according to their emails. The delivery guy dropped the order at the door and went. Both drivers observing the social distancing rules.

Today Australia reached 10 Covid-19 deaths.

### **Day 8 (Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>)**

All downhill from here so to speak!

Trimmed the beard today, gave it the Thomas Keneally look.  
We are both healthy and very thankful.

Magically my iPad is functioning normally again, but the printer is a worry and was before we went away, can't go to store but looking online for a replacement. Corona virus got a third name today SAR-CoV-2, I think I will stay with Covid-19. Interesting fact, the USA dissolved the Pandemic Preparedness Office in 2018 to save money, I think it may have done the opposite. The USA now has the most Covid-19 cases in the world, I'm not sure they want this No 1 record, deaths passed 1500. U.S.A. death rate per million is 9 times that of Australia. The Netherlands are not doing so well either, with a population of 17 million, almost 10,000 cases and almost 600 deaths. I think our decision to

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<sup>7</sup> My Grandson

<sup>8</sup> Friend

return home was wise. I worry about our family in the US and the Netherlands and all our friends in the US too.

Trump announced the US will reopen by Easter, 2 weeks from now, this is an uninformed and incoherent statement from the President, Republicans must take action.

Woolworths online order, which we waited 6 days for, was delivered at 7.30 am this morning, delivery guys dropped the order and left, social distancing clearly being observed. It was supplied 100%, however, there was a lovely loaf of fresh bread in the delivery we did not order, we initially thought it was Woolies giving us a bonus and being very kind, however on further examination it was for another Karen. Called the Woolies help line to report the bread and there was a 3 hour and four-minute wait, I did not wait, we reported the extra bread online.

We changed our Foxtel subscription, dropping the sport package, no brainer, and adding movies and saved a few dollars along the way.

State Governments have announced today that all airline arrivals into Australia will go into hotels for 14-day quarantine. They have taken over the responsibility from Border Force as they believe BF has dropped the ball in regard to arrivals. There are several conflicting versions of this story. Given our experience a week ago I'm not surprised, this is a great decision. Two thirds of all Covid-19 cases have been traced to overseas arrivals. We are so glad we got to go home to all our creature comforts.

Music has been a great companion this week, as it is most weeks, we have listened to many genres through lots of different sources and I marvel at the God given talent on display, I wish I had a little musical talent. Keith Urban with Nicole did an insta concert from his warehouse in Nashville, social distancing was observed, and it was fantastic, light-hearted and I enjoyed every minute.

Feeling a sense of hopelessness today, it is like God has pressed a pause button on the World, saddened by human behaviour, corporate behaviour and how poorly we are stewarding his planet. James, our minister does not agree with my sentiments.

Watched a segment on Channel 9 tonight, best I have ever seen, Tracey did not inject Channel 9 opinion, just let the guest speak. The guest, Dr Tim Southward, an ICU doctor at RPA was talking about the measures they are taking to protect their patients and the additional ICU beds being constructed. It was very apparent the level of concern, the overwhelming responsibility involved and the stress. Everyone should be so thankful for medical professionals like Dr Southward.

Vast majority of retailers shut their doors today, Myer included. Hundreds of thousands out of work in restaurants, hotels and retail.

Day 9 (Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup>)

Beard still intact.

We are both still healthy.

Groves House is now in lockdown, with no visitors, Dulcie<sup>9</sup> can only talk to Dad on the phone.

Sang to Saul on WhatsApp, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. We think he enjoyed it!

Glad we have our balcony where we can enjoy the fresh air.

We have been torturing ourselves trying to get Sonder, Airbnb and Qantas to refund some of our trip costs, going in circles and despite the lovely positive announcements being made we

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<sup>9</sup> Dad's wife

are getting nowhere. Most companies are viewing this event as short term and are paying no attention to the long-term damage to their brands, staying afloat is the only concern. It is inmate's movie afternoon today, with Aquaman on the bill, sadly no popcorn or choc tops.

After making face masks yesterday Karen is making knitted poppies for Anzac Day to display at the church and remember our veterans.

Karen was in contact with an older member of the church today, and she has had a third person pass away in her retirement village, this has left her quite frightened. Now this is becoming very close to home.

Yesterday was the second day running where the daily increase in numbers of Covid-19 cases were reduced, a positive sign.

### **Day 10 (Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup>)**

We are both still healthy.

The beard is intact, and this got me thinking about haircuts and social distancing and I have taken the decision that the hair will just grow, uncontrolled, the other inmate likes the wild and woolly look thankfully.

Again, time on the balcony in the fresh air is important.

We had a WhatsApp chat with the kids and that was really special, it was so lovely to see them and have the contact. Saul was the star of the show and he did not say a thing. They are all safe and self-isolating.

Also, we had our church service via zoom and that was another contact with the outside world, uplifting, followed by a quick chat with participants which we really enjoyed.

A little bit of a reality check this morning, Australian Covid-19 cases more than doubled to 450 yesterday, testing was also doubled. A medical expert advised that Australia was approx 2-3 weeks behind the US and Europe. That means the worst is yet to come but also gives extra time for the hospitals to prepare.

Watched a travel show segment but it seemed quite strange given that we can't go anywhere for months. I also think that Princess Cruises are going to struggle in future and may go into Chapter 11, I think the brand may have been damaged beyond repair. I don't think they handled the virus very well.

### **Day 11 (Monday March 30<sup>th</sup>)**

The beard and the hair are still growing.

We are both still healthy.

TV news showed the police moving people on from St Kilda Beach on the weekend, this is extraordinary behaviour.

Covid-19 deaths reached 18 in Australia, there was a slowed growth rate in new cases, some good news.

Called our GP to get a flu shot but his first delivery is April 14<sup>th</sup> and then going on leave, so will have to look into alternatives.

Karen ordered from Country Road and Chemist Warehouse on Saturday, both orders were delivered today. If you want food, you can whistle in the wind.

Karen tried to order from Woolworths and Coles today but there were no delivery windows available, a lot of time wasted, very frustrating. However, Woolies have a Basics box for \$80 that arrives in 2-5 days. I think this box suits Woolies not the customers. Again, if you are in

isolation what do you do if you don't have help? Fortunately, our neighbours are getting some essentials for us tomorrow and then we will hold off until Friday when our isolation ends, and we can shop for groceries. We can also get a new Netgear device from JB Hifi to restore our computers at home, if they are still open.

On an interesting but strange note the Belarusian Football League is still functioning because of the low Covid-19 impact on their country, and that has led to 11 countries taking live feeds of the games, an unexpected bonus for Belarus and football fans.

At lunch we watched the Elton John iHeart concert on Fox and it was an amazing lineup of artists with great input from health professionals who are doing an exceptional job all over the world.

The Federal Government announced a Wage Support Package today, taking total government support to A\$320 Billion, a staggering number but essential. I believe the strategy is aimed at holding off social unrest, getting the problem under control and hopefully not spending all the money and also for companies to hold onto key employees so that the return to business as usual will be smooth.

Donald Trump will not have the US back up and running by Easter, what a surprise, that was merely aspirational! Meanwhile a makeshift ICU was being set up in a tent in Central Park today.

Karen's face mask production has continued at a rapid pace, even baby Saul has one now, she can't wait to get to the PO on Friday to mail them to Boston and Woerden. Tonight, she will make more poppies for the Anzac Day display at church.

Today the news media has finally caught up with Karen, we have been monitoring the plane arrivals for the last week using an app and seeing and hearing the number of planes reduced to a trickle, all of a sudden this is news.

## **Day 12 (Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup>)**

The beard has entered the itchy stage today.

We are still both healthy.

Email advertising has slowed a lot, but I am now receiving emails from companies that I have not dealt with in years, these are desperate times, business is very hard to come by.

On Friday we are released from isolation and allowed to grocery shop, and I am a little afraid of what the experience might be like. Based on an article I read, grocery shopping has become a dangerous undertaking with the number of precautions that need to be undertaken too many to list here.

Nothing stops Mr Whippy, I heard him today in our area but can't quite grasp how social distancing rules might be met.

The News media and politicians love three terms when referring to Covid-19, first one is unprecedented, yes we get that, only if you were around in 1929-1933 in the Great Depression would you have experienced anything like this and Covid-19 may be worse. My father often refers to the long-lasting effects the Great Depression had. Second, we are all in this together, well in fact we are not, the TV media people and the politicians still have a job, are able to go to work, and are on full pay. No gestures of sacrifice seem to be forthcoming. Third, this is the new normal, nothing is normal about this. Please stop using these ridiculous terms.

Karen continued to torture herself by following up with Airbnb and Sonder regarding a credit, every time someone different gets involved, they obviously have not read the file and give the usual run-around and nonsense responses. Needless to say, Airbnb and Sonder will not be used again.

I wanted to talk to Citibank today, but general enquiries are not being handled at this time, due to safety concerns in regard to their staff.

BUPA advised that their planned April first premium increase would be postponed for six months, very nice gesture and much appreciated.

On the news this evening we got a tour of the Central Park Field Hospital ICU in NYC, they are used in war zones, and saw the Hospital ship USNS Comfort sail up the Hudson River, given the special place NY holds in our hearts ( our home for 5 years ) we were both brought to tears, we are very worried about our friends and family in the US.

### **Day 13 (Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup>)**

The beard looks more Abe Lincoln like today.

We are still both well.

We got a very pleasant surprise today, the ZIP technician phoned and wanted to repair our tap today. I explained that the ZIP office wanted to do the job when the isolation ended, for his safety, even though we are perfectly healthy. He advised that he was running out of work and wanted to do the job, I assured him we would observe all the protocols, so I left the door open, he let himself in and I stayed 2 metres plus away at all times while he did the repair. Mission accomplished in a very different way and very happy to have our ZIP tap working again. The technician thought our happiness was because of the human interaction, but in fact that scared us a little after 13 days in isolation and being healthy. A bit sad really. But I did enjoy chatting with him, although he did say his last trip to the supermarket was unnerving and he just wanted to get it over with.

Everyone wants to email me Covid-19 updates, the volume is overwhelming.

Ordered wine today and it arrived in two hours, gave up on ordering groceries as we can shop Friday.

Covid-19 deaths reached 21 today in Australia.

Last night three parties in Sydney were broken up by police, it's all about me remains the motto of many.

### **Day 14 (Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

The beard is still there and quite grey.

We are both healthy.

The weather has been cool for the last 2 weeks and this reminds me, Australia is heading into winter and flu season, all the more reason to be vigilant and develop good habits that protect us from illness.

We watched a TED Talk by Bill Gates from 2015, which was outlining what was learnt from the 2014 Ebola crisis in Africa. The medical professionals were incredibly important and dedicated and contained Ebola successfully. He warned that war was not our greatest threat, but a flu outbreak or virus was. He said that the government should be preparing, because if they didn't the cost could be catastrophic. Can't say a credible, high profile person did not warn the US government as I'm sure he did. As previously mentioned, the US Government responded by closing the Pandemic Preparedness Office in 2018, saving a few bucks!

The Wimbledon Tennis was cancelled for the first time since World War 2.

Inmate No 1 has been playing the ukulele and it does my heart good.

According to the NRMA petrol prices are overpriced by 30 Cents per litre, the petrol retailers and the oil companies are enjoying the benefit of this gouging, continued bad behaviour by



these companies. What they are losing in volume through reduced road travel they are trying to make up in the most deplorable way. Meanwhile, the ACCC is monitoring the situation. The ACCC has a mandate, they need to step in and deal with this in the same aggressive way the Government are dealing with Covid-19.

Today I should reflect on the positives as we complete the final day in isolation. I spent the time with the most special and amazing person and Karen/Inmate number 1 turned her sewing skills to mask making and poppy sewing and has kept me going with her suggestions and ingenuity. Karen has also kept our home computing running under adverse conditions, faulty printer, faulty router and intermittent internet service but somehow, we got everything done.

We inmates were at our beautiful home not in a hotel.

Shaun, neighbours and church friends provided us with groceries, cooked meals and lots of cake, Thank You.

Friends and family regularly checked in to see we were OK.

We are home in Australia where the medical care is second to none. A Biased comment I know, but true.

There were many tasks that get neglected that have been completed.

We have a very private balcony where we can sit and get fresh air and have a meal.

We love to cook at home and so we have prepared some awesome meals.

Comfy pants and T-Shirts every day, therefore no ironing.

I have discovered new ways to access music.

The tranquillity and low pollution levels.

I'm somewhat of an introvert and home body that abhors crowds, so it is great being at home.

Another observation is how quiet everything is, the building we live in, the main road outside, the planes have all but stopped and just the neighbourhood generally, observed from the balcony of course. However, as has always been the case the leaf blowers continue to disturb the tranquillity of our neighbourhood.

Sadly, Australia reached 24 Covid-19 deaths today.