**Working Through COVID19 at Home in East Melbourne**

By Terry Henderson

Throughout life we are constantly told ‘You’re never too old to learn’. Golly, has that proved true as I’ve tried to embrace the challenges of working from home during Covid19.

My morning coffee at the George St Café, chatting with the locals, has been replace by a Zoom meeting with my staff. Three months ago, I though a Zoom was the bit on the front of the camera. My younger co-workers, far more savvy with IT issues than I, quickly steered me towards this new way of communicating. After three days, I had mastered the art of logging in to the communal chat.

Life was different! My team of six people were getting an insight each morning into how their co-workers functioned at home each morning. My general manager appeared in a beanie, giving the appearance he had spent the night in gaol (he has three young kids). Our accountant, who is a touch portly, has trouble positioning his Iphone camera so we spent meetings looking up his nose. With no doors on her wardrobe, the rest of us could see if our Sydney manager had done any ironing since the previous meeting.

One morning, as my wife, Susan, swept the floor behind me, the team caught her on camera and were quick to point out she’d missed a bit! Even our man based in France was soon joining in our afternoon meeting as he sipped his morning coffee.

One would think that working together in an office would create cohesiveness and teamwork. The irony is meeting as a group on Zoom a couple of times a day, as my team has done, has brought us much closer together. Amazingly we were becoming more intimate, despite our physical separation.

My walk around the Fitzroy Gardens now occurred after the first Zoom meeting of the day. This jewel in our area had taken on a different feel. More people seemed to be saying ‘Good morning’ as I walked in my customary anti-clockwise direction. And there seemed to be a lot more people out walking. Our beautiful Gardens not only encouraged us to be more friendly, but had opened their arms to newcomers who were seeking solace. I’d be surprised if Kere Kere, the café across from Captain Cook’s Cottage, didn’t enjoy record take-away coffee sales.

Don’t get me wrong, these last few months have been no ‘Walk in the Park’. Many of our clients are suffering economically. Even with the government support, we could not escape a drop in sales. We’ll get through, but many of our long-time clients won’t. Globally, this modern-day plague has wreaked havoc on many people’s lives and indeed, we still do not know what the world might look like once we’re through it.

However, despite the challenges, to not relish the wonderful benefits we enjoy by being in Australia and living in a place like East Melbourne, would be a sin. We are bloody lucky.