

Escape from the COVID-19 blues

'After years of grappling with population growth pressures, NSW now faces an historic collapse in new arrivals that will drag on the economy and reshape the state's demographic complexion.' SMH 11/10/20 Matt Wade

While there has been a welcome drop in the COVID-19 surge in NSW, there has been a surge in recent articles on what a post pandemic world may look like - but not all are negative.

Yes, there are degrees of economic and cultural downside, but also some benefits that the pandemic has paradoxically unwrapped. Peak hour traffic has certainly dropped off, it's easier finding parking spaces and the skies have been so blue! There has been elevation of the relative importance of our public realm and natural environment - places where we have needed to relax and recreate while dealing with lockdown blues, even if done at 1.5 paces or the length of a beach towel!

With many offices mothballed or substantially downsized, working from home has been a further change for some who have also discovered a new lifestyle balance, between remote working and online meetings. But this has also reinforced the importance of face to face contact and keeping in touch with community, very necessary given some remarks recently gleaned from Instagram posts on *The Glory Days of the Office are GONE!*

There are no boundaries, people are working more hourshumans are social animals, who not only crave but need contact with otherswork life has never been more stressful or less rewardingworking boundaries have disappeared.....the social interaction bit of work is completely lost ...try doing this in a shared houseI lose track of the days and miss work colleagues...best ideas and work is created when people come together in the real, not virtual world.

The Sydney CBD may be suffering from lack of life, but local suburban centres are booming and benefitting from the extra trade as cafes, libraries and outdoor spaces become alternative work or meeting places. The Canopy, Lane Cove's recently opened mixed retail centre and urban park with playground, has injected new life into the village and become a major drawcard - not just for families but also those needing a break from home-work or a different place for meetings. Perhaps there might be scope for some co-working spaces to open up and inject further life and business into the local economy?

Working from home near Stringybark Creek I have also been observing the increase in street life - regular exercise routines with locals walking, walking dogs, jogging, riding bikes or scooters, prams being pushed by proud new dads, and the ubiquitous fast food delivery e-bikes delivering to home workers. Just need to slow the traffic down and have drivers respect other users!

Our public realm has never been so important, and we should all be finding ways to get out and enjoy it more.

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