

**Interviewer:** Over your experience, either in Year 12 or in first Year Uni, or over both, what do you think has changed the most due to Covid?

**F:** Well, there's the obvious thing of doing things online. In Year 12 we were primarily in lockdown so all our classes had to be online and everything, so we had some classes that used google classroom and google meets which is like the most basic form of meeting online that you can do, you can't really you can't like record the meeting you change your background or you can't do anything except just sit in the room and have your meeting. And then the other thing that we used was teams. Teams is a Microsoft owned thing, which is pretty much the same as google classroom, except it's run by Microsoft instead of instead of Google, and it's more confusing, and we have classroom groups and stuff. I had one for one classroom. it wasn't used very well. But the meetings will be better because you feel like the quality was sometimes better, and you could also do more like you could change your background, and you could have reactions and stuff which was easier in bigger classrooms because some of our classes were larger like my psychology classes and for when we would have around like twenty five kids in that class, whereas now in like tutes at uni and stuff you have a maximum of fifteen, so it doesn't matter so much who gets to speak when, like if people are talking about each other, you realize that, whereas it's like in a bigger class it was better to be able to just react instead of have to go, "yes, I can hear you".

**Interviewer:** Yeah, and I guess then you had to learn zoom as well.?

**F:** Yes. Zoom is probably better, so as well. I don't know the different cap numbers. I remember when we first started doing zoom lessons that uh, my friend was like kind of annoyed and I was like, "why can't we just use discord?" cos they all had such low caps to begin with because they weren't used to having like classes, use the things where discord immediately moved up their meeting numbers from fifty to a hundred.

**Interviewer:** And I guess. because you did three practical subjects as well, didn't you?

**F:** Yes. It was I think four. The most stressful one was probably Studio Art because we would be in the class for a bit, and I think she'd just be like, "take home all the materials you need because we don't know if you're coming back tomorrow". And I was doing this like big installation project with this box, painting and lights and all this stuff, and I didn't actually know what things I would need. and then the things that I. didn't have I could only source from like Bunnings, and I'd have to ask the assistant to go in there. she wasn't in every day, and I wasn't in any days. I didn't really know how to contact her, and I couldn't go get them myself because when Bunnings was in lockdown like it only lets kind of official business things that need stockpiles of stuff to go in. so it was very stressful.

And then for drama, we had to like send videos of ourselves include doing monologues.

thankfully, we were able to do our group ensemble thing, before we went into a really hard lockdown, but then we were doing these monologues.

and what would usually happen is that you'd show all your monologues to the other people in classes and get their feedback. But because we weren't in the same classes, we just had to video ourselves, which is difficult to get a whole shot of yourself, and like it's meant to be performed like a five-by-five-meter space. and it's really difficult to film that while still getting all the audio. And most people don't even have that sort of space anyway, and then we just had to email those pieces into our teacher, and she said "okay, you have this amount of time to do it, and at the end, you have to email it" but some people couldn't upload that fast

and didn't have that connection or used that as an excuse to not have to do the work, but yeah. So, I think like there were only seven of us in the class, and I saw about three people's performance.

**Interviewer:** And well I guess how did your transition to uni life go?

**F:** It's weird. So, I did have three of my classes on campus in first semester. Until about week 11 and then we will online. So, I found it really hard to make friends and things because everyone was kinda like paranoid about things and didn't want to go and do anything. And nightclubs weren't open or, like there were so many caps of how many people. So, it was odd. And then this semester with it being online, it's also been an especially strange experience because, you know, not speaking to anyone, and then I was like, I don't know anybody because you're in a zoom meeting, or you can talk about is the subject and content of the content and stuff, you're in a breakout room, and it's timed, and the room will close,

**Interviewer:** Have you found that, in your understanding, being online and on zoom has been harder for you, potentially more than other people because of autism?

**F:** uh, yes. It's been very odd in particular because um I'm not great at keeping up with deadlines anyway, but it was like in first semester at least a little bit people will be like, "oh, have you done this thing?", so then I can't like, keep on track with the deadlines, I misread numbers and stuff. And it doesn't seem like time is passing. So, I've always had a bad concept of time passing anyway as it is. But I don't know. but yeah, and the other thing is that it's hard enough to read people's facial expressions in real life and tone and then over in zoom it's so much worse, and it's hard to keep track of what people are saying with that kind of distance, and then, of course with people asking questions. if I don't understand, you know, it's difficult enough to just start conversation in person, but then there are all these other different protocols if it's online which makes it a lots more difficult like there's a new social protocol that is required and neurotypical people don't even understand it, and I'm trying to kind of make rules around it, and then for someone who is not neurotypical that's an even bigger challenge because there aren't already there aren't even already established rules to learn. It's kind of like relearning how to do something, I didn't know how to do in the first place and it's really, really strange because it's like.

**Interviewer:** I wonder has anything stayed the same from covid?

**F:** In a weird way. I'm not sure if it's the same, but it's like social gatherings are oddly similar within my friendship group because we're primarily introverted people, who like to stay inside and play games. so even when we weren't really locked down, it would be like "let's have a discord call and play a game" and so we kind of started doing that a bit more when we were in lockdown, but we weren't really meeting in person any less. It's just like kind of where we're making is different because we used to go to like, go into Melbourne to have ramen or Korean barbecue places with my friends. Whereas it's now it's like if we're doing something in person, it's like this desperate kind of clamouring of when is everyone able to do things and like it's sort of like. oh, we don't know when we're going to be in lockdown. it's kind of the motivations behind it are different but we're still meeting the same amount because it used to be, we have to organize this. and we have to organize it immediately because we don't know when whose schedule is going to change. And now it's just because we don't know when we're going to be in lockdown and that has a weirdly stayed the same,

but I think that's a pretty specific type of like, because we were very specific type of group of people who didn't go outside much anyway.

**Interviewer:** And I guess you've always been a relatively tech savvy person. but do you find over the past two years, your interests have almost turned more to the virtual electronic kind of online hobbies?

**F:** Yeah, I definitely would. So, like I've always really liked gaming and been interested in things like YouTube and stuff, but in 2020 was when uh we got more internet because of covid. I don't know what it was before. It was like eighty gigabytes of data and bandwidth a month and now it's up to eight hundred. um, something like that. And so, we were able to do a lot more things because it used to be like "oh don't use too much internet or YouTube or something. because then our data will run out and we won't be able to do the things we need to do", but then we weren't sure we would have enough for, um, one person in high school, one person in university and one person who was teaching at a high school. And so everyone will be on zoom all the time, pretty much except dad because the rest of us are all in some way connected to schools and people need to have constant meetings. But because we've got more internet, it's like, "oh, now you're able to use YouTube more now get more games and everything else like, oh, well, all my friends will always play games. they'll get once they do". I sort of started playing with all of them. It's helped connect more with them more actually come to think of it, but also yeah, then um I got into a lot of youtubers and like Twitch streamers um because so then when we got more internet than I started watching in watch like to other YouTube and stuff, and then eventually led to Minecraft, youtubers and my best friend is super into Minecraft, and so I've gotten Minecraft to play with them. because we weren't able to maintain personal or anything so like, this is a great way to make sure that we keep. you know, being friendly and everything because we at the same year, level or in any classes together. So I watched more Minecraft youtubers and got really into them and most of them are primarily streamers. And so I was like, "well, I can do that." and so yeah, I started streaming a bit uh that was that was mostly this year was when i actually started streaming. I really watched a lot of it last year. and then i was like this this is cool, and it seems more of like a...yeah, because of covid my interests have branched out more specifically into content creation. Because I've always wanted to do a job that's artistic. but my impression was always, oh, you can't actually do that like that's going to be your dream that you never achieve. you've got to plan to be a teacher or a producer or...you can't be the person who creates it if you've got to deal with what's been created. but then watching like mostly kids who do it or like teenagers like Tubbo and Ramboo and TommyInnit who've become really, really popular also over covid was like, oh, it's a thing. it's a thing that people can actually do, and I was like, "well maybe I'll do that". because, yeah, um those three in particular, also became really popular in 2020 and 2021 cos they also had more time to stream because they were at home or they were or even they had more motivation do because it made them happy because they couldn't go out with their friends or anything and like, "well, I can play a game with them". And they'd stream and then these people who were at home watching. they got made happy by these people who were still interacting with people while at home and they got a bigger platform because they're making these people happy. And I think it's helped made people realise that you can still create things and things that make people happy and things with other people.

**Interviewer:** It's interesting in a way then that Covid has let you explore options in a weird way.

**F:** Yeah. But I also just thought of Tiktok. Tiktok is not anything that I am interested in doing, or having, however, you know that also became incredibly popular in lockdown, and I've seen a few of them of people who are like existentially coming into themselves over lockdown because everyone's like having time to reflect in their minds. and I guess that's also one of the appeals of philosophy is that it's just it's a brain thing. It's a thing that you do in your head, you don't really need anyone else you don't need an office, you don't need anything to do philosophy. And I think covid has helped at least me realize that you don't need things to do things.

**Interviewer:** And I guess this this will be the last question. what do you think you've learned about yourself and or others over this time?

**F:** There are so many things. It's helped teach me more about people's political standpoint. um. It's helped realize that this in like our entire generation seems a lot more. little "l" liberal than I thought. everyone's really left-wing, or more so than i thought, like, you know, I don't think that the Black Lives Matter campaign necessarily would have been as big as it was if people had access to other people at the time. I think that people being on their own helps them realize that they value people more and that it doesn't necessarily matter who it is. i think people are able to put aside their differences more if they're separated, which sounds really ironic, but it's like you're not looking at how someone is different to you when they're far away. you're looking at how you can bring them closer to yourself if you're feeling lonely. and I think it's help people go, "oh, well" it doesn't like what everyone should be treated the same like they want to be treated well by the universe. they want to be able to go out and do things, and they think, "oh. maybe I'm not...maybe I should treat other people the same way, maybe I shouldn't isolate people socially since they hate being isolated physically. Again, not everyone thinks like that, it seems that's probably how I would analyse it. And that you know, there have been so many online movements that happened because people think, "well, what can I do at home? oh. this this bad thing is happening. maybe I can do something to change it." People are being political out of boredom, which is not the best place to start, but you know it's a place to start uh.

There's also a lot of people who've like come out and realized that they're like queer and somebody, not everyone, obviously not everybody is queer, but like so many people like that, I know that I know of and other people were told me that they had that time to self-reflect and not think about themselves in relation to other people and realizing more about themselves which has helped them become more tolerant of other people's differences cause it's like hive mind is such a bad thing. but it's so common. and it's like, yes, I think there are things that I've definitely realized like learned about myself that are kind of difficult to separate from things that I already knew, because you know, retrospectively, it seems like you knew everything about yourself. But yeah, it's like things that I guess I've learned that I value, about ah, more creativity that I'm like, I think I would rather be you know, trying to do and failing something that I love than be good at something that I hate and being rewarded for it which is, it seems like, again, seems like an old thing to realize in lockdown. I realised there's more in life than making a living and making a living is very different than making a life, you

know, and I think, yeah, people have been forced to make their own lives on their own.