

## Ballarat 2 14 April 2020

A few days ago Bridget Delaney wrote in the online Australian edition of the *Guardian* that with the social restrictions currently in place initial fears and concerns had in many cases been succeeded by what she called ‘listlessness’. Of course, those in many industries on the ‘frontline’ (grrr, as a military historian I hate military metaphors) don’t have the time for any form of listlessness. I wonder how true it is anyway – are people slopping around, eating Doritos, watching atrocious television, not changing their underwear as regularly as they should?

If one can make sensible observations on this subject, I think that throughout much of Australia there have been several switches in the public mood since restrictions were first put in place. One, at the outré level of the media (traditional and social) is let’s get back to business NOW, it’s all been exaggerated, good old Aussies won’t go down the path of the Italians. At its relatively more sophisticated level this opinion is held by NewsCorp’s battery of economists and columnists, especially on the *Australian*. At a more vulgar level is Andrew Bolt in the *Herald Sun* who has been arguing for some time that the crisis is not really a crisis, that things have been blown way out of proportion, that a police state has been established. Bolt can have his muzzle off because his piece of meat is Daniel Andrews and the Victorian Labor government whereas his colleagues on the *Australian* have to be more circumspect as they don’t wish to criticise the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, too much.

What are other prevalent points of view in the public arena?

- A belief that the restrictions need to be maintained for some time yet, with many hoping that this is measured in weeks, not months;
- Hardliners who say we should have gone tougher earlier and who argue we stay tough for some time – see many contributors to the *Melbourne Age* blog;
- Local variation number one: Here in Ballarat the local newspaper, the *Courier*, keeps stating that there has been no increase in the number of local cases – stuck on ten for some time;
- Local variation number two: Here in Ballarat many people think it would be nice if we could get to Melbourne again in the foreseeable future.

And I am getting heartily sick of the local neighbourhood.

Richard Trembath

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