

Ballarat 1, 8 April 2020

Yesterday my wife, Anne Marie, claimed that on her several walks around our part of Ballarat the place was denuded of other people taking the still permitted pleasure of exercise. She thought that it was probably due to over-zealous policing of the latest stage of social restrictions – social restrictions, which, probably inevitably, have led to confusing interpretations, ambiguities and some public disquiet. (At least, measured by the thin number of blogs I have read.) Stage Four of social restrictions keeps getting held over us as a threat if we don't behave, and in that final stage I presume even exercise might go. Having agreed with Anne Marie that the threat, the actuality, of very stiff fines, plus a wiggling by the coppers, would deter a few potential pedestrians, I also added that I don't think that Ballarat is much of a walking or cycling city anyway except in set spots around the Lake. (Travelling to the Lake might now be courting trouble) – and I also think that the wet weather, and the cold, of April so far might have been discouraging too.

Of course, public attention in this matter seems to have coalesced around the photogenic seventeen year old, Hunter from Hampton, who was pinged while travelling to Frankston with her mother on a driving lesson which was deemed non-essential. She has since had her fine rescinded.

In the brief period I was in Ballarat Central yesterday the streets were predictably empty, and the car parks near the supermarkets between Eastwood Street and Little Bridge Street predictably full – quite full rather than packed, though I wasn't paying a huge amount of attention. Interesting to see once again what was open and what wasn't. *Cheap as Chips* was open, there was a strong smell of frying and/or roasting meat at the corner of Peel Street and Little Bridge. From what? The supermarket? – I've never noticed chickens slowly turning on a rotisserie in there but once again I wasn't looking for it either. Despite the fuss a week or so ago regarding hairdressers (essential? not?), and their original cutback to appointments of thirty minutes or under, the rather gloomy place we use, the Metro, in the Mall, is closed. My psychologist, in our first telehealth session, thought the initial restriction on hairdressing appointment was a 'gendered decision'. But the ABC Bookshop opposite was open, literally, as its front door on the mall side was propped ajar as per usual these days. Some coffee shops were open for take-away business – others such as the popular *Wen and Ware* have

been closed for days. The newsagents and the UFS pharmacy were both still open, both with their doors on the mall side shut, presumably to regulate traffic inside the stores.

The headlines of the Ballarat *Courier* online this morning are interesting. What was the lead item there has now been displaced to second. This is ‘Six days, no new COVID-19 cases in Ballarat.’ No 1 now is the editorial piece, ‘Why Ballarat now needs to see the full picture about Pell.’ No. 3 item is ‘lawyer calls for systemic changes to improve outcomes for sexual abuse victims.’ Pell-oriented items elsewhere in this morning’s issue. Well, the Cardinal is a local boy.

One nuisance, though a minor one, is that I was overdue for a haircut just as haircutters were becoming scarce. Anne Marie has borrowed proper hairdressing scissors from our son, Martin and his partner, Alysha but I suspect I’m still going to look like Ben Gunn from *Treasure Island* in the end. Good thing I like cheese.

Richard Trembath

Ballarat, Victoria, Australia