



OPINION PIECE

3 April 2020

COVID-19 – Unsettling times, but what are we forgetting?

Hour by hour the coronavirus is forcing new and uncomfortable restrictions upon us, dramatically changing the way we live our lives.

Thousands of people in Tasmania have suddenly found themselves out of work and out of money. For these people the idea of buying two weeks' worth of food and a few extra supplies will no longer be a question of ability - but rather an impossibility. Bills may go unpaid resulting in services being suspended or disconnected. Education and rental arrangements may be disrupted – in short, life for many people may be dramatically and unimaginably changed.

Many of us will have family and friends who, through no fault of their own have been plunged into unemployment. We have witnessed the stress, anxiety and sense of loneliness they may be experiencing. It is important that we offer support where we can.

For so many people the coronavirus has become all-consuming. It is as if the coronavirus is the only thing to think and worry about in life.

We forget that terminal and debilitating diseases come in many forms and they have not stopped striking us just because the coronavirus has blown into town.

We must not forget the people, friends, family, colleagues whose lives may have been turned upside down because of an unexpected and frightening medical diagnosis. We must not forget those living with chronic illness or a disability.

We must not forget those who are grieving the loss of a family member, friend or colleague who has died as a result of illness, accident or violence.

We must not forget that; the disadvantaged are still the disadvantaged, the marginalised are still marginalised and the vulnerable and lonely are still vulnerable

and lonely. These people continue to need our attention, empathy, support, compassion and care.

There are people whose behaviours and actions exemplify kindness, optimism, respect and gratitude. That's the team everybody should want to be on.

Unfortunately, in times of crisis and uncertainty the worst of human behaviour may emerge. Evidence of this can be seen in the rise in domestic violence, discrimination, greediness and jaw dropping displays of self-entitlement. At the end of the day these people will need to live with their own conscience. They may also find themselves dealing with the full force of the law.

One thing is clear - the coronavirus is a great leveller. Regardless of wealth, race, religion, gender identity, occupation or geographical location nobody is guaranteed immunity.

The crisis will pass, things will have changed and lessons will be learned.

If we work together, engage our creativity and usefulness and look for opportunities, who knows what innovations we might discover as a result of this experience.

If we are kind and thoughtful toward each other who knows how inclusive, accepting and welcoming our community could be.

If, in this unsettling time of crisis and uncertainty, we are the best that we can be there is every chance we shall emerge on the other side of the pandemic as kinder, wiser and more grateful human beings.

For further information contact:

Sarah Bolt, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Equal Opportunity Tasmania

Phone: (03) 6165 7515

E-mail: office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au

**Celebrating Difference
Embracing Equality**