

# COVID -19

and its impact on students, families and staff at Wyrallah Road Public School



*This book is designed to capture what has been an extraordinary year in the history of Wyrallah Road Public School. We recognise that our experiences are similar to that of so many other schools across Australia, and indeed, the world. We also acknowledge that what we have experienced is so much less traumatic than that of many.*

*This collection of personal reflections and illustrations, mostly created by students, aims to capture this moment in time for perpetuity. It is a record of ordinary lives in extraordinary times.*

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## Foreword:

In November 2019 Mr Gareth Hockings, the substantive Principal of Wyrallah Road Public School, embarked on a planned thirteen-month overseas adventure with his wife and two daughters. I had the pleasure of being appointed Relieving Principal of Wyrallah Road Public School in his absence. Neither of us could have predicted what would happen next.

In December 2019, in Wuhan City, China, the first recorded cases of a disease caused by the novel coronavirus causing COVID-19, were reported. From the safety of our homes, half a world away, we looked on, curious yet unaware of the impact that this would have across the world.

A man from Wuhan who travelled to Melbourne on 19 January 2020 became the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Australia. Two months later, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic, confirming surging numbers of cases in Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan. Governments and communities across the globe were now on high alert. Questions were being asked about what should be done, nationally and locally, to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. On 16 March schools were provided with the following advice:

*The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has met to consider the issue of school closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19. The Committee's advice is that pre-emptive closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time.*

Within a week that advice had changed. The NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, announced that families had the option of whether or not to send their children to school. At that point in time, schools in NSW remained fully operational.

On the 23 March, the Education Secretary Mark Scott, in support of the NSW Premier and NSW Health, made a statement encouraging all families to keep their children at home. The school's doors remained open to vulnerable students as well those whose parents were front line workers, employed in the essential services. Following the announcement, staff at Wyrallah Road Public School threw themselves into developing their knowledge and expertise around planning and delivering virtual lessons to students who would continue their studies at home. It was a steep learning curve. Despite the inevitable stress and unfamiliarity associated with the task, teachers and support staff at the school embraced the challenge with positivity and determination. It was a pleasure to see it in action; the acquisition of new-found skills and confidence unfolding before my eyes.

At the same time as schools were advising families to keep their children at home, many work places across the country, including here in Lismore, were changing the way that they operated and were instructing staff to work from home wherever possible. And of course, for some work places, providing opportunities for staff to work from home was not an option. In those cases, COVID-19 restrictions resulted in businesses temporarily closing down. Some, sadly, did not survive the closure and never reopened.

The demands put on parents who suddenly found themselves working from home, or not working at all, and having been thrust in to the role of educator was, for many, overwhelming. In acknowledging the challenges faced by many families, members of the school's Parents & Citizens Association sent an email to me. The following is an extract:

*We would like to acknowledge that this is an incredibly difficult time for all of us. We really appreciate the care and dedication of the school and staff. Anxiety is running high in the community and we can only imagine the deluge of questions you must be receiving from confused/irate/stressed as well as 'just tired' parents. We are concerned for the mental health and well-being of families, suddenly thrown together in a pressure cooker of self-isolation and potentially holding their own unrealistic expectations around home schooling their children. We are not trained teachers, nor superheroes.*

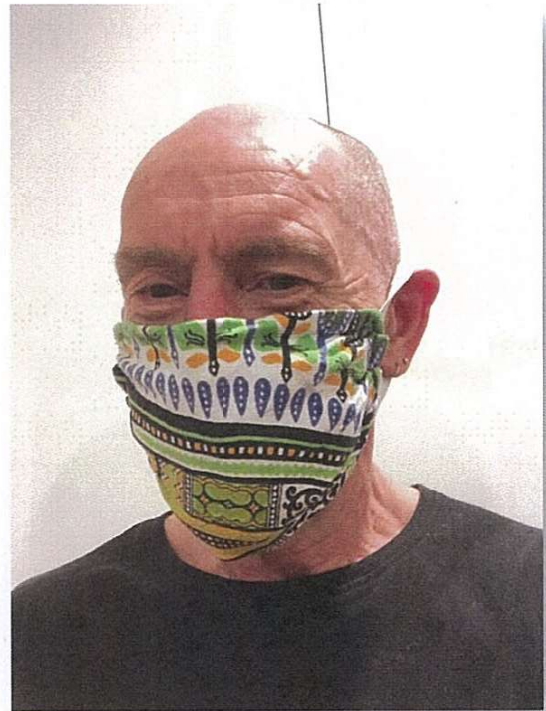
It was a heartfelt communication, and one that reflected the anxiety that many families within the school community were experiencing.



By the end of April 2020, regulations had been put in place restricting parent/carer access to the school, with parents only allowed on site in exceptional circumstances. Drop-off and pick-up zones had been established at the entrances to the school, with clearly defined 1.5m physical distancing regulations imposed. Many staff were working off site, delivering virtual lessons/learning packs to students to support home learning.

Across the world, stories of countries in lock-down and international border closures was daily news. Many Australians were trapped overseas, unable to secure flights back home. Among them was Glenn Maxwell, a permanent teacher at Wyrallah Road Public School, who was participating in a teacher exchange program to Canada. At the time of writing this, Glenn was still unsure how and when he and his family would be returning to Australia. The school's substantive Principal and his family, having travelled as far as Guatemala in South America, were among the lucky ones, and less than half-way through their adventure found themselves on a flight back to Australia. Following a period in quarantine, the Hockings family reassessed their situation and set off on an altogether different adventure, travelling around Australia.

In the midst of a global pandemic, Australian States and Territories worked with tireless determination to manage and suppress community transmission of the virus. The Far North Coast, NSW, was faring better than many regions in Australia. Community transmission rates were exceptionally low. By the end of May, following advice from leading health officials and the Department of Education NSW, it was decided that it was safe for all students to return to school on a phased-in basis. Children of essential workers and families with specific needs continued to attend Wyrallah Road Public school five days a week, others were eased back in to school, slowly returning to a new 'normal'.



Relieving Principal, Mark Scotton

Strict COVID-19 hygiene practices were introduced and maintained.

20 second hand washing drills became the norm. Students stood, hunched over the sinks, scrubbing their hands reciting 'Happy Birthday to you' twice over (because that takes 20 seconds!) as part of their good hygiene practices.

By June, all students at Wyrallah Road Public School were back at school full-time. Students and staff had adapted to new ways of experiencing school. COVID-19 was still out there, menacingly lurking, but Wyrallah Road Public School felt like a safe, COVID-19 free bubble. A delicate, fragile bubble.

As we draw towards the end of the year, with many countries across the world still struggling with the impact of COVID-19, we are reminded of just how fragile the little bubble around our school is. We remain hyper vigilant, committed to keeping our students and our school community safe as we continue to navigate our way through these extraordinary times.

Mark Scotton  
Relieving Principal





## A Parent's Perspective:

Covid-19 brought out some of the best and worst in human nature - remember those empty toilet paper aisles? Seniors mornings at the supermarket to allow the elderly time to shop from near empty shelves? But contrasting this it also spawned The Kindness Pandemic - A Facebook group with over 560k members, sharing the outpouring of generosity and support that surged to counter our darker moments.

At the outset it was unreal. We tuned into each news report anxiously, wondering how far it would spread. With advice from authorities constantly changing and often contradictory, there was constant uncertainty. It felt as though we were on our own in trying to determine an appropriate response to keep our family safe. We made the decision to take our children out of school before the State Government recommended it.

Juggling working from home with home-schooling at times felt over-whelming. The experience increased my appreciation of teachers and their ability to maintain the attention of a class across a full school day. We decided that the mental health and well-being of our children was our priority, we turned down the volume of the news stories and made sure that we were there for our kids. As our world contracted to a nuclear family, one of my biggest struggles was not being able to hug my own mum.

We started a few family projects including a food garden on our verge. While at times it was tough, I did appreciate the sense of reclaiming my children for a few short months. I missed our social interactions, but I also appreciated the break from our busy routine. As a family we learnt that we are resilient, that we can get through together and that we can learn from one another.



I write this from a position of gratitude for having weathered this storm. I recognise that there are many people who have lost loved ones, suffered through fear, isolation and loss of work. And that there are families still experiencing the impact of Covid-19. Although it sometimes feels life has returned to normal in our region, the rest of the world continues to struggle and I wonder what the future holds.

Emily Grace - Mother of Imogen (8) and Elliot (6)







Name Henry George Year Kindergarten

The school was very quiet  
and I was worried. I was  
afraid of COVID-19. It started  
to spread around the world. I  
started home schooling.  
I went outside most of the  
time. I played with my  
brothers and climbed trees.  
We went for walks with  
the dog down at the creek and  
along the grass track. I was  
quite sad because I couldn't  
see my friends. It felt like  
the school didn't exist.







Name Layla Ross Year 3

## My COVID-19 Reflection

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus. kids are less likley to get it but sadly, ages near 18 are the closest to get it.

When COVID-19 started alot of people were scared, including me. When we went into lockdown a positive is that we got no school! Well...for a little bit. To stay safe my family never went out to stores unless grocery shopping. When in lockdown after online school dad and me would walk the dog to wade park.

A sad thing is that we never had any zoom classes for school, we did it all on google classroom. if u dont know what I mean, I dont get see any of my friends. I missed them all alot. When I came back to school after about 2 month. I was so happy to see all my friends again.

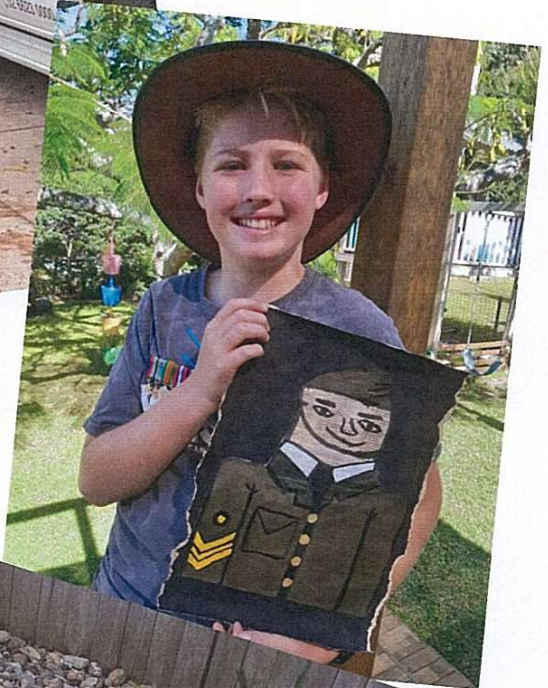
Speaking of months, about 2 months we were in lockdown! It was very hard doing school work at home. To be honest, I like normal better than home school. Home school is not for me.

COVID-19 started in 2019 thats why therer a 19 in it. Another word for COVID-19 is Coronavirus. hospitals are filling up. the goverment has said that they want masks to be handed out of been warn to stores. for your saffety. People work at stores to get money so the owners of stores have upped prices of handsantiser.

Corona is a big thing going around the whole world Right now and the goverment is doing what they can and recommending things to keep us from danger and to keep us safe.







Learning from home...







“Mum, when can we go camping? Mum, when can I go to Lily’s house across the border?”  
These are questions I ask a lot. But the answer is unknown.

One of the ways Covid has affected me and my family is church, because we are not all allowed to meet at the same time, same place. The church is split into groups and we meet at different places. This makes it hard to see some of my church friends. At least we can go to church.

My family and I love to see your extended family. But because I have a big extended family we can’t all meet.

My family loves to do out of school activities like ballet and piano, but for some of this year we did them online. We couldn’t always hear correctly which was annoying, especially trying to do ballet or piano.

Seeing friends helps a lot in these times. Make sure you keep in contact with people you can’t see. Learn from these months. My mum learnt to tell kids things that are important.

Learning is the only thing we can do.







*Social distancing can make you feel  
as if you're drifting away  
from your loved ones*

*During COVID-19 I've been  
doing everything I can to protect  
my little brother*



*The flower represents our  
loved ones that we lost  
during coronavirus*



Name Harper Renwick

Year 5

# MY COVID-19 JOURNEY

By now we should all know what Covid-19 is... right? Well if you don't, my journey is for you to read on. It all started when we got up one morning and watched the news, China had a new virus. Apparently, someone in Wuhan ate a bat and got really sick and spread it to thousands of people. I mean, who would eat a bat in the first place?

Next thing we know we are being asked to grab supplies as soon as possible like food, water and even toilet paper! Now we are in quarantine and that means home learning, social distancing, no going on holidays and basically nothing fun! Except for watching all the movies on Netflix. Home learning was hard, not having a real teacher to help, and it turns out my parents aren't very good teachers.

Now I'm worried about my cousin Jordana because not only does she have a mental disability, but she has Cystic Fibrosis and she is in the Brisbane hospital for two weeks because she's sick. If she gets Covid-19 the consequences could be tragic. But luckily, they are treating her well so she will be just fine. It feels so special to have a cousin like her, she is so kind.

Finally! We can go back to school and go on holidays within our State! (It's not the best, but at least we can travel now.) WOOHOO! Now I can go to Victoria to see my cousins... Wait, 117 cases of Covid-19 in Victoria?! NOOOOOOOOOO. Why me! Looks like we will have to wait even longer to see them again! Why would you do this to me 2020?! WHY?!







Name Piper White Year Kindergarten

## My Time in Lock Down

During Lock down, I painted. I played on the trampoline with my Sister. I played with my puppy called Billy. My grandma came over so she was Safer. Aunty Holly and uncle Fabien over to see us and they stayed for a long time. I couldn't go to school, so I had a desk at home that I did my school work on. I got one break a day and I looked on the iPad for learning games. I also got school work from my teachers. I loved writing at home. I missed my friends. I Couldn't make new friends I had to stay at home and not go to school.







Name Maya Shrestha Year 4

At the start of 2020, Australia had extreme bushfires spreading across the country, not long after covid-19 appeared and also spread across the country as well. Nearly every country had to go into lockdown and isolation. So that meant no school, no playing at parks, no sports, no weddings, no funerals, no gathering in public and everyone was encouraged to stay at home.

In NSW most schools were shut but our school was still open, It was optional to come to school or stay at home. Victoria's schools were shut for everyone for about 2 terms, Even the state borders closed for the first time in Australian history. This meant you could not leave your state to travel, Not even to visit family. On the 1st of October, Queensland started letting some people in and called it a border bubble. We are lucky because we are allowed in but most of NSW still can't go in.

If Covid-19 didn't enter the world, It would be much better and 2020 would be an awesome year. When it was holidays you could fly over to Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Newzealand you could go any where and do anything you want. If a family member got sick and went to hospital you could visit them and not need to wear a mask. You could attend funerals, Weddings and other great celebrations. Music festibles, sport grand finals, competitions wouldn't have to be cancelled. If Covid-19 didn't exist all these things could happen which would be very fun.

This shows that 2020 is unique in a different way and that Covid-19 changed the world, So hopefully 2021 doesn't have any more major catastrophies and pandemics.





Name Annabel Gore Year Year 1

During covid 19 I was being home schooled by my nice parents. During covid 19 I got my school work from google chrome. I was able to talk to my friends on google chrome to how amazing is that! The good thing about home schooling is that I can stop doing it whenever I want. The bad thing about home schooling is that I have to do it on weekends. The other good thing about home schooling is that I get good marks from my mami and dadi.







Name Aneeka P-B Year 1

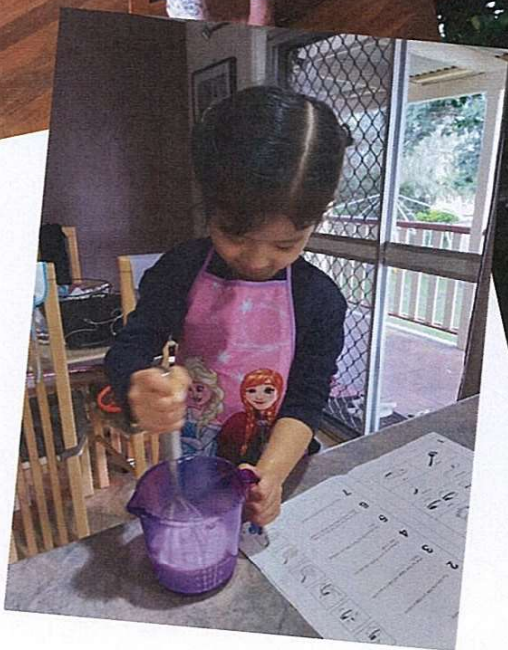
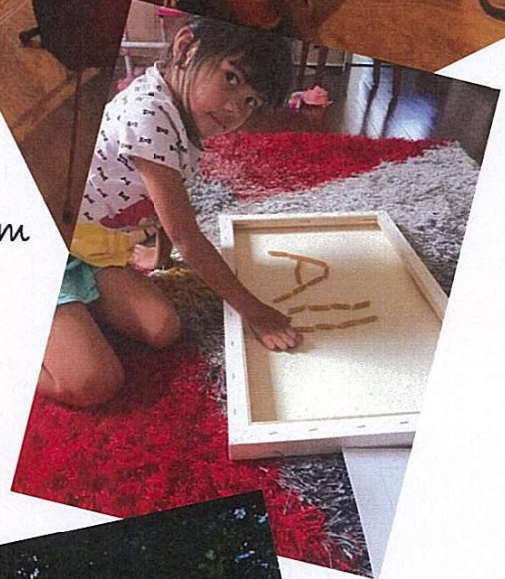
When covid came burshing in children were not allowed to come to school and some children stayed at home and others went to school. I stayed at home and my mum didnt help me with my work because she hade to do her work on the computer. So my sister help me with my work and I didnt like it. I hade to do it because my mum or Dad made me do it. Sometimes me and my mum went to the shops and we had to wear blue masks. Mum said I looked like a duck it was funny.







Learning from home...







Name Isabella George Year 5

# Covid - 19 Reflection

The virus that is all over the news. Corona virus has taken the word 'normal' to a whole different meaning. We couldn't go anywhere because of the restrictions made by the Federal Government. I couldn't even see half of my family because they live across the border. It made me feel like they didn't exist in my life anymore because I hadn't seen them for so long. Some of the time I felt lonely; I require my family to stay happy.

My Grandma and my Great Pop were the two people I was most worried about. My grandma has a bad cough and if she got coronavirus she could stop breathing. That would not be good. My great Pop, Poppy Lester, is now 97 and that is pretty old. I'm worried that if he gets Corona virus his body will be too weak to handle it.

That's the really scary part about Covid - 19





Name Lucy Everingham Year 2

One day we drove to school and picked up some little white packets with all our school books in it and before I knew it, we were home schooling and all the students in the school had to download this app called google classroom and that's how we communicated with our class. It was a smart idea, but I missed seeing my friends in person.

So everything changed for me. I had to wash my hands before I ate food and I didn't just do it at school I had to do it at home, and many people lost their jobs, but lucky for them the government gave them this job called job keeper but that didn't mean they were allowed out of their houses. We all had to stay in and it got pretty annoying.

And there were even restrictions on grocery items. And if we were sick even a simple sneeze we had to get tested for covid and we had to stay home for 2 days and we couldn't go anywhere until we got our reports back. It was that bad that all the restaurants and cafes were closed.







Name: Abigail Glendinning

Year: 6

As countries went into lockdown, cases came up and things were changing as new rules and restrictions came into place. Events postponed or just forgotten all because of covid-19.

When our country went into lockdown and school was cancelled I was still at school. While most were learning from home me and a few other students, whose parents were also essential workers, were sent to school. And because there were only six people in my grade and class, school was so much fun!

I hung out with people I would never really talk to and I made friends with people I hadn't even noticed before. I looked forward to coming to school and having fun even though the world was in lockdown and chaos. Different, fun days through the empty playground, empty desks and places in the room.

And then when things slowly went back to normal and we went back to our normal classes, we stopped hanging out with each other. Still months later we will always remember our "covid school" and the memories and friendships we made in the chaotic year of 2020.





Name Callum Playsted Year 1

Covid, what a strange name. When covid came into my grueling life I thought it was fine until I heard it was very dangerous. Schools had locked down. The world was changing. People had covid tests. I had a covid test it wasn't pleasant. But I got negative. Covid's devastating flames made a big impact. Will this be the end of the world?







Name Ada Sweetwater Year 2

What COVID 19 learning meant for me!

I remember the borders closed 3 days before my birthday! I was supposed to go to dream-world a hotel, rope climbing a lovely hotel and an extremely fancy restaurant. But unfortunately 3 day before my birthday the borders closed.

There was a toilet paper rush and my mummy had to go at six o'clock at night and get toilet paper. We also had to wear extremely uncomfy face masks. There were also other restrictions like we couldn't go to school and we talked on google classroom.

Now its t the tenth month 2020 and the borders are expanding for here in NSW. For me it felt quite dramatic. We also had to get a covid swab when you were sick they took your temp and put a thing up your nose and throat

I wonder what its like for you. cafe are also opening up but not all. we are back at school now and I love it. I hope that covid completly goes away sometime. But for now its getting better.

BYE!

By Ada Sweetwater





Being COVID-19 safe in school...







Name: Grace Mather

Year 4

One March morning as I got out of bed, I heard the sound of the news on the TV. As I listened to the shocking news my jaw dropped. It had just been announced that a global pandemic was sweeping through the world.

The infectious disease causing the global pandemic is named COVID-19, it is a viral infection that causes cold and flu like symptoms that cause severe breathing problems in some people, especially older people or people who are already unwell.

COVID-19 made me worried that the population of world would start going down by millions maybe even billions. COVID-19 always made me scared that I won't be able to live through this pandemic.

When restrictions came around, I couldn't see my friends, I couldn't travel to see my dad and brother. The borders closed so we couldn't see my uncle. There was social distancing in place and we had to change the shops around due to COVID-19, you could not have visitors to your house. It was the worst.

The government agreed that schools should be shut down to maintain social distancing. Instead we did our work from home on our iPad, phones, and computers. We did zoom calls, Mathletics, soundwaves. We only went to school to pick up our school books.

It was very hard to learn how to do home learning but luckily my teacher sent me videos of what we had to do every day. My friend Yuna and I facetedimed each other every day to help each other with our school work.

At one point my mum was exposed to COVID-19 so we had to get a COVID-19 test, and then we were in lockdown for a week, I wasn't able to leave the house and no one was able to come in. I was lonely all week as I had nothing to do.

And then everything changed. COVID-19 restrictions eased. Most things went back to normal. And look where we are now, Lismore is close to normal.

The future right now is still uncertain, I am not sure what will happen going forward. We hope for a vaccine that will cure this horrible virus, but right now all I can hope is that my family is safe.





Name Imogen Anderson-Grace Year 2

The virus that gave nature a break  
Honk! seriously goats could you please get out of the way,  
please?! Oh and lions could you not drink from a puddle in the middle of  
the road?

I believe that mother nature made the virus so that nature could have a break from  
hunting and pollution, even the water got cleaner!

At school I go to green innovations but because of covid and stage separations, it was  
harder to get our idea done by the due date.

At home I was not able to hug my grandma and grandpa. In my family my aunty got the  
virus, so that was scary but luckily she recovered.

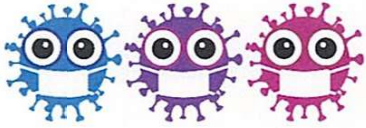
Home schooling was different because my dad had to teach both my brother and I. We  
did lots of computer stuff. I was also hoping for my friend Anouk as she was in quarantine

I believe that if we all work together by washing our hands properly we can crush  
that virus!

by Imogen







Name Harrison Brown

Year 5

# Covids-19's Teaching

Covid-19 is rapidly spreading across the globe. This is what I heard every day until Covid finally calmed down. It is still spreading, just slower.

Covid took most of the fun out of school by making us play in different sections of the playground. We couldn't play or sit and talk with our younger friends. At school I couldn't play one of my favourite games because our years section was in the wrong place. I was unhappy and very annoyed that we changed how school worked.

While my friends were working at home I was stuck at school with. only one friend. It was hard for me to work without my friends because they can help me understand things. It's strange because they're normally there to help me.

Covid was slowly drifting away and this was making me happy because I could see my friends again. It still worries me if Covid is going to come back. But now it is less worrying than before thanks to friends and family.

Covid has taught me lots throughout its time, I got taught that people are always there for you no matter what. Also, whatever happens lots of other people are going through the same thing I was.





Name Nia Thomas Year K

When covid 19 was here I stayed home. We did some home schooling because I couldn't go to school. I wasn't lucky because I had just started school. When I couldn't go to school I missed my friends Helena, Sarah, Lauren, Sophie and Summer. We couldn't go to the shops and people were going crazy for toilet paper! I also couldn't go to my nan's and pop's house or the park. I just played with my brother Owen a lot. We played hide and seek and made cubby houses.

I liked it when corona virus was here because I got to play with my mum, dad and brother. We are lucky



that corona virus is nearly over.





Name Eli M Year 3





Name Kaiya White Year 4

Borders shut, school closed and friendships torn apart. Corona virus was here! In late 2019, Corona virus was just a sickness, then just like the Spanish flu 102 years ago, it spread! Lives were lost, jobs were, too, and hospitals were full. Covid-19 (A.K.A Corona virus) started in China. People didn't know it was a fatal disease, so, as usual, they went on holidays, met people and before we knew it, people across the whole world were infected. Even now in late 2020, Covid-19 is still here.







To dad,

I miss you! It's been nearly three months since I saw you last. The highlight of my week is probably writing to you. It's really dull down here. I face time Momo almost every day and she helps me with my work. I kind of like online learning. Who would've known that it would be really fun. I have more time to do everything I want to and I get to eat when I want. We can't go to Year 6 farewell, it's a shame I was really looking forward to that. COVID is not as catastrophic down here as it is up there. We're also having trouble trying to find food to eat, a lot of stuff was sold out like toilet paper, frozen food, eggs, flour and salt etc. It's a really big hassle. Oh, and guess what? We got a new TV! It's sooo bulky it nearly doesn't fit in the lounge room!!! It was a lot of money but since COVID has us in lockdown we have more money to spend so we could afford to buy it. I really hope the borders open soon. We're all getting sick of each other and mum's about to kill the cat (so am I) because all she does is meow, eat and scratch at the door to go outside. Oh yeah, we got Boots a leash to go outside. She doesn't really go anywhere she just sits outside, but she'll get used to it. That's all for this week. I miss you soooo much.

Bye.

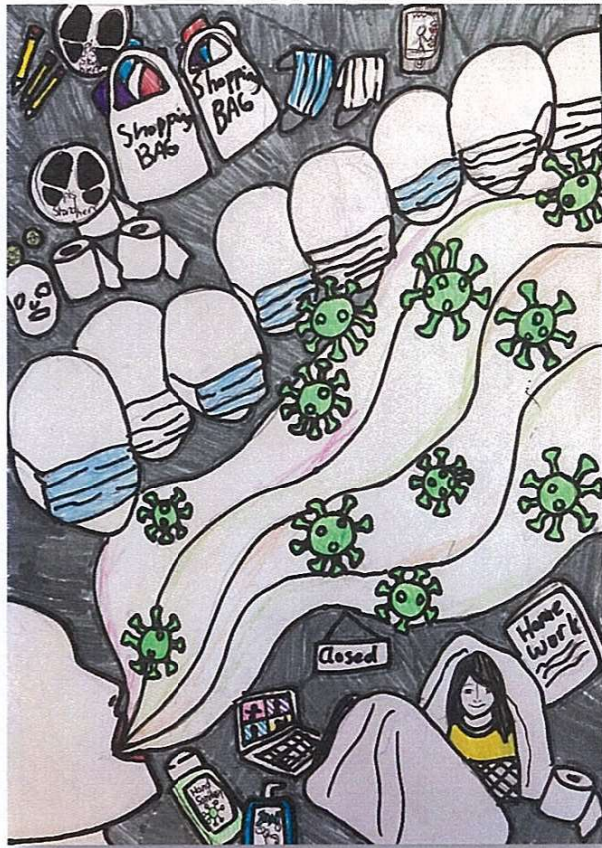
Lots of love Izzy <3.



*Staff at Wyrallah Road Public School social distancing for a group photograph...*







Back cover illustration: Momoka Kretschmar Year 6