



# Covid-19: Temporary crisis, short term shift or lasting changes?

Opportunity in the new normal.

September  
2020

Report by Ryan Babbage and Lachlan Mee  
Strategy Hubb

# Introduction



The overall aim of this report is to contribute to a broader understanding of the mental issues that are associated with confinement. The shifts in relationships for one, the loneliness factor, the growing number of depressed and anxious minds. The climbing suicide rates and the ever-increasing family violence that is directly attributed to the lockdowns. As stated by Beyond Blue (2020), 'In Australia, it is estimated that 45 per cent of people will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.' 'In any one year, around 1 million Australian adults have depression, and over 2 million have anxiety'.

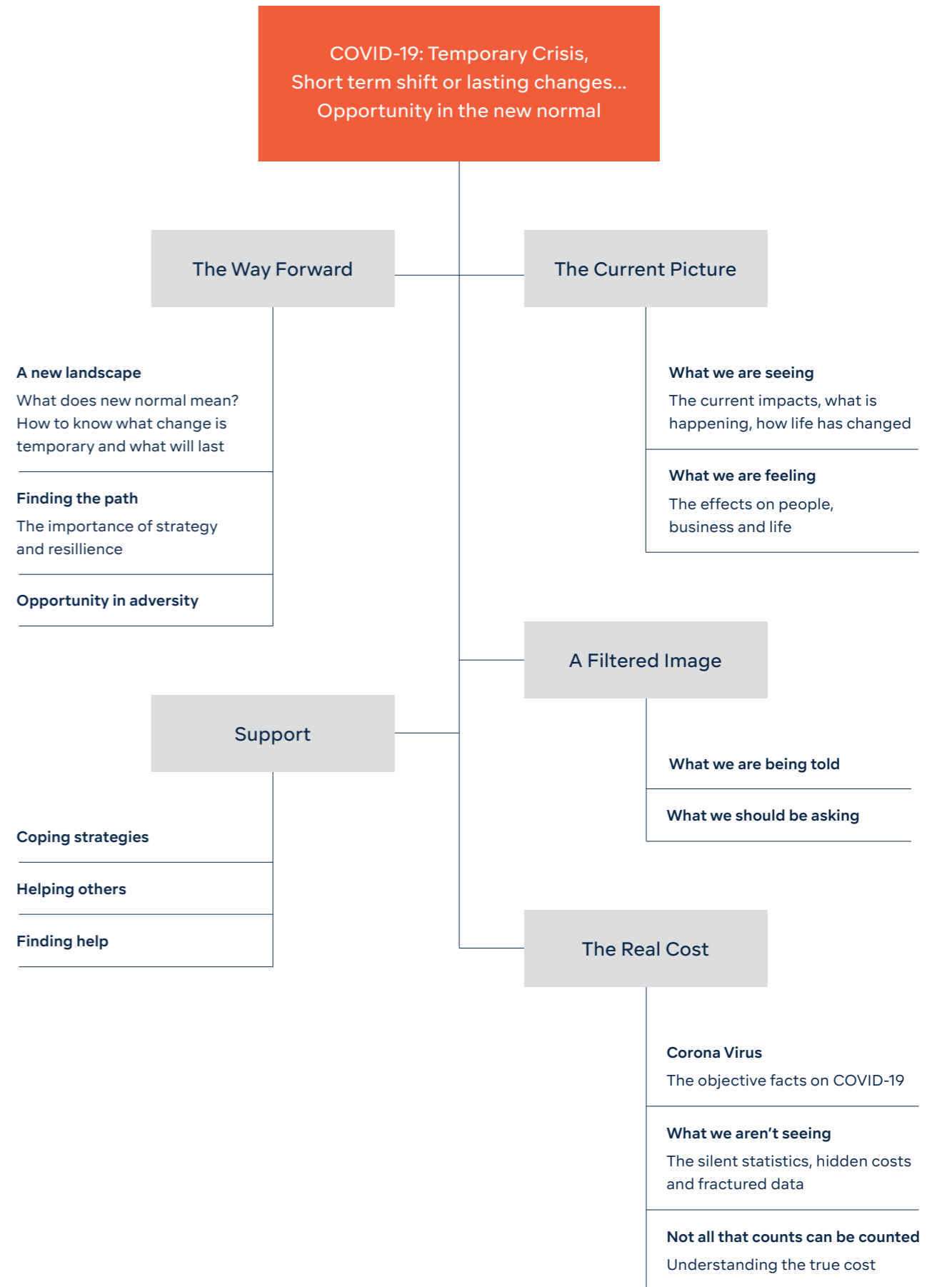
However, amidst the COVID pandemic, the real figures have not yet been quantified, or are suppressed in order to prevent panic and the backlash of complaints that will accompany more in-depth scrutiny. The world is afraid, and fear and uncertainty have got us fixated on the number of COVID patients within regions and the mounting deaths associated. However, there are mounting deaths from other areas that are even more worrisome than the Novel Coronavirus. A deeper dive into the costs

of confinement are warranted, as all lives matter, not only the lives directly attached to the virus but the circumference of life's that are going unnoticed as the virus steals the spotlight at every turn.

The reassessment of fear, anxiety and phobias in a COVID gripped world require an expanded focus. This contribution aims to place into perspective and evaluate the effects of locking down a state like (Victoria), as well as to understand the broader dynamics we face in a world where a "safe" cure is still approximately 18 – 24 months away. Eliminating some of the widespread fear is heavily dependent on safely administering a vaccine that has gone through adequate trials to be approved as safe.

# Contents

- 6 The Current Picture
- 8 A Filtered Image
- 17 The Real Cost
- 23 Support
- 24 The Way Forward
- 34 References



# The Current Picture

## What we are seeing

Whilst it has only been around seven months since life began to change in response to a novel coronavirus, the reality is that living in a COVID world is proving arduous, straining, and depressing. As civil liberties are removed, the lines of authoritarian rule and democratic choice have been blurred. On a seemingly constant basis, wide ranging laws and rules are either introduced or altered and as a society, we are informed that the decisions to do so, stem from health concerns and a need to control the spread of a new disease, yet despite our efforts, the virus continues to run rampant. Confinement and segregation are the new reality, and even in areas of this vast Australian continent that are untainted by the virus, communities are subjected to the same rules of law that mandate separation and confinement.

People are struggling to make sense of what to do. Combined with the fractured border control measures and perceived self-reliance of the individual states, the rhetoric tells us that we are all in this together. Yet as, the premiers of the various states continue to act as though they are self-sufficient, it would be easy to question if we truly are one Australia united in our response to coronavirus.

As we continue down the path into a new COVID world, governments must understand the mandate they have been given. Leaders must remain aware that they have a finite window of time, as each iteration of lock-down and control rolls through, the fatigue of confinement and segregation serves to weaken the resolve of a community response and inevitably, people grow ever more restless and resentful. As a country and aspiring leader on the world stage, we have much to worry about beyond

our borders, as rising powers challenge the status quo. Taking our eyes off the cause and the discovery of solutions to this situation are fatal to our economic wellbeing and our mental wellness. Political games should not be played when the lives and livelihoods of so many hang in the balance.

## Chronic restlessness

Like many people, I have been trying to understand why I am feeling so frustrated and restless about life at the moment, as I guess the impacts of not having control over every step that I take, is a somewhat, foreign concept. I work all day from my home office, make contact with the broader community and offshore clients to maintain relationships, progress what we can and attempt to get a gauge of things, however, the frustrations of chronic restlessness continue to irritate me as there seems to be no end in sight to these dreaded lockdowns. The local Victorian government has provided no clarity of reasoning for extending the lockdown period and state of emergency other than the segregated data they provide in the daily media. Without a solid plan of action other than restriction of movement, there seems to be no strategic approach toward alternative planning or solutions.

A continuation of movement restriction is reducing the numbers as the weeks' turn to months, however, even if there were no cases (like the example of New Zealand sheds light), that does not mean that the virus will not reappear. If that were to reoccur, then we would remain in a continuous cycle of lockdowns. This strategy is serviceable to a point but cannot be the only solution to the problem.



**“If that were to re-occur then we would remain in a continuous cycle of lockdowns. This strategy is serviceable to a point but cannot be the only solution to the problem”.**

# A Filtered Image

## What we know

In December 2019, whispers about the appearance of a coronavirus never seen in humans before, spreading among the population in Wuhan, China, began to permeate daily news threads around the world. Whilst at first information was limited, the rapid spread of the virus around the world and its sobering effects subsequently saw it named as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on March 11, 2020. Officially named SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus itself causes the disease known as COVID-19. Only two other coronaviruses have caused global outbreaks in the past, these were SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2002 and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) in 2012.

Whilst much of the media reports a wet-market in Wuhan China as the origin of the virus, the reality is that disease specialists are still unable to determine the true source of the virus or even confirm if there was a single point of origin.

(Cohut 2020) We do however know that the virus is able to effectively transmit from person to person, being more contagious than influenza but less so than measles and that most people will see onset of symptoms within 2-14 days. However, it is critical to note that the virus may also be spread by people who are asymptomatic and according to some research, infectiousness may even peak prior to symptom onset. (He et. al. 2020) Essentially, the closer you are to an infectious person and the more time you spend with them, the higher the chance that you will contract the virus.

(Joseph, Branswell & Cooney 2020) At the time of writing this report, the most recent World Health Organisation (WHO) dashboard update showed that globally there have been 23.51m confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 810,492 deaths reported to WHO. (World Health Organisation 2020).

## Choropleth Map

### Cases

206,382

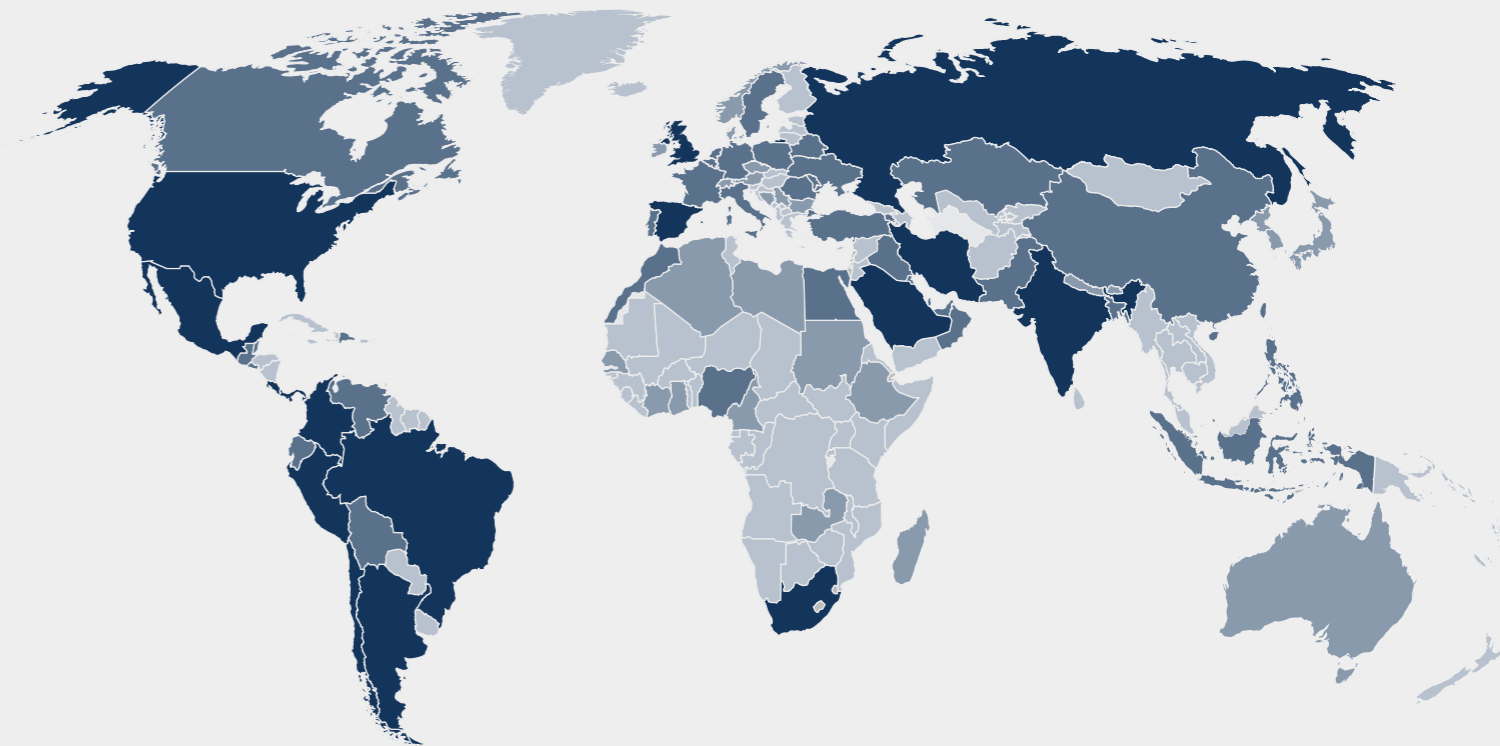
new cases

23,518,343

confirmed cases

810,492

confirmed cases



## What we should be asking

Just as COVID-19 has spread rapidly around the world, so too has the amount of information and content available on the disease. At times this information has spread faster and further than the disease itself, leading to what some experts are calling an 'infodemic'. (Orr 2020) This rapid increase in information has also propagated a significant increase in misinformation and rumours, at best complicating the already difficult task of communicating rapid policy changes and health directives, and at worst, jeopardising our response to the virus, creating fear and division and influencing risk taking behaviours.

A report by the University of Technology Sydney (commissioned by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC]) as an input to the Digital Platforms inquiry has found that Australians are consuming more news, more often and prefer online access over offline.

(Wilding et. al 2018) The report also highlighted a transformation in the way information is shared with news producers now having to make their content available to search engines and social media, often for little to no financial return.

A seemingly innocuous change, this in turn has led to an environment where the complex interactions between search engine algorithms and online platforms mean that news producers are forced to create content that is more emotive and shareable, feeding a culture of digitisation and sensationalism. In the words of reporter and commentator Walter Lippman, 'the health of society depends on the quality of the information it receives'.



**"The function of news is to signalise an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act."**

Walter Lippman



The appearance of Coronavirus has led to a 24/7 news cycle saturated with information on the latest cases, infection rates and government responses. Whilst there is an absolute need for the public to be informed about such a fast-moving situation and response, it must also raise the question of quantity over quality. Our local premier 'Daniel Andrews' continually refers to 'the data' as the primary source for his decision-making process. However, as a society of consumers, we must understand that data itself is only valuable if it can be analysed, interpreted and applied. In a rapidly evolving situation such as COVID, Leaders must be able to quantify and qualify their decisions and faced with often disparate or isolated data, their challenge will always be to make the connections between seemingly unrelated datasets, to find an interlinking key in the vast amounts of data being collected and most importantly use this to inform multi-faceted strategy decisions.

In an age of 'big data', advanced information collection platforms and vast database arrays you could be forgiven for thinking that more data means better decisions. However correlation does not always equal causation and if we focus only on one dataset or objective without taking into consideration all of the other relating data sets, then we fail to accurately assess our environment, adopting an almost myopic approach to strategy, an approach that would be fatal to any private business or organisation. The reality is that having 'big data' and even the people or ability to manipulate this data is not enough. Business and Government alike must create an environment where decision makers partner with data analysts to ensure that the data yields better strategic and tactical decisions, converting data into insights and taking advantage of the opportunities that these insights create. (Demirkan & Dal 2014).



“Data alone is not enough.  
We must focus not only on what  
the data shows us but also explain  
what it can - and can not - tell us  
about the questions we are asking”.



We are well informed on the daily Coronavirus data, which includes new infections, the areas of infection, the hospital load, the total tests conducted and the loss of life caused by the virus. But as consumers we must ask the question. Is this the complete picture? What is missing? Where is the growing domestic violence data, followed by the depression and anxiety data, the information on alcohol and prescription medication use and abuse and finally, the increase in suicides that are also directly linked to the confinement measures. Australian citizens and residents should question the data as it is presented, and make educated decisions from combined data sets, instead of being led by component, subjective data.

It is important to understand all of this against a broader context and background, allowing people to develop informed decisions around the responses and rules being implemented and also the extent of the coronavirus impact against the broader issues affecting society. Before we can ascertain the true extent of the psychological damage and the economic destruction, a total evaluation of data analysis that covers the impact on livelihood's as well as the constraints of being bound to the confines of home for lengthy periods is warranted. The diagnosis of depressed minds far out weights the Novel Coronavirus in Australia, but is not receiving the same airtime and attention that COVID-19 is afforded across media channels throughout the world.

**“The function of news is to signalise an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act.”**

Walter Lippman



FY2020/2021

# 184.5 bn

Forecast Budget Deficit

30 JUNE 2021

# 851.9 bn

Forecast Gross Debt

30 JUNE 2021

# 8.5%

Forecast Unemployment Rate

## The Real Cost

The Australian Government July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update paints a bleak economic picture against the backdrop of a 'once-in-a-century shock', calling COVID-19 the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression, acknowledging the impacts of the pandemic itself but also the accompanying containment measures. To soften the impacts of the pandemic, the government has consequently responded with a support package of around \$289b dollars (or approximately 14.5% of Gross Domestic Product), with the caveat that whilst our economy is well positioned to handle this, the overall cost will see estimated deficits of around \$185b dollars in 20-21. (Commonwealth of Australia 2020) It is of importance to note that the economic outlook remains highly uncertain, with the predominant focus being on controlling the spread of the virus. To this end, it is likely that Australia (and many other countries) may remain in a form of quasi-hysteresis loop for the foreseeable future, whereby the lagging outputs of policy drive the decision-making inputs – the result being a system that always looks backwards in an attempt to move forward.

### A tipping point

With many Australian's now under lock down or subject to new pandemic rules and requirements, people are reaching a tipping point. Without a strong, sustainable strategy, this will become a breaking point if not addressed with urgency. For most of 2020, we have been in some stage of lockdown.

Criticising leadership is not my intention, but very little has changed in the way of strategy to afford alternative thought. With emergency

powers extended for further twelve months in Victoria, any confidence that the 'new normal' will become more bearable is eroded with every press conference, media release and virus update. There is little confidence that things will change until we somehow are able to gain access to an approved vaccine and even with a vaccine, there is no certainty in its longevity, as we do not know how the virus will morph.

It should be evident at this stage that there ought to be other measures taken into account to enable a way of life that does not shut down the economy every time a new outbreak is located. It is clear that our governments and leaders must adopt an open systems approach by breaking down self imposed hard barriers and understanding the environment in which every Australian person, business and government operates. In a closed system, the boundaries are hard and impermeable, we must create porous borders through which useful ideas, information and strategies can be exchanged and understood. Our leaders must actively seek out feedback internally (within Australia) and externally from around the world, looking at the actions and outcomes of other countries, critically analysing their responses, successes and failures. From this we can begin to draw threads of information, knowledge and experience together to form a path through the fog of the pandemic.

South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have all found alternative solutions to prevent shutting down of their economies. These countries are in a much better situation to recover the debt than we are, and when COVID-19 is behind us, the cost of management and control in those environments will be utilised as a blueprint for future pandemics.



"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt



### What we aren't seeing

No matter what you call them, outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics have shaped the human psyche for times immemorial.(Moukaddam 2019) For centuries, civilisations have been affected by various outbreaks and diseases, unsurprisingly, the larger the outbreak the greater its impact of human life and also living memory. However, as humans, we are often subject to the bias of availability, a mental shortcut that relies on immediate examples that come to a person's mind when evaluating a specific topic, concept, method or decision. With the increasing exposure to and availability of information, media attention paradoxically affects the way in which we view and understand outbreaks, often sensationalising information and heightening alarm whilst simultaneously being the most effective way to instantly reach millions of people around the world, serving as an invaluable tool for encouraging precautions and prevention.

In light of the pure volume of information, reporting, analysis and commentary available on COVID-19 and the seemingly endless stream of press conference, media releases and advertising campaigns it would be easy to believe that COVID-19 is the most pressing, all encompassing, existential crisis facing humanity today. And while, with all sincerity and concern, COVID-19 has presented a fast evolving and significant threat to global health systems and economies around the world, there is also a significant, almost invisible, undercurrent circulating just below the surface of the tide of mainstream media, news and policy information, an undercurrent that plays on fear, anxiety, misinformation and mis-calibrated emotion.

### The truth about fear

Fears, anxiety and phobias play a significant role in the quality of life you enjoy. Fear is an either crippling or motivating—the paralysis of panic grips the mind, which in turn grips the body into obedience. The perceived safe zone that ensnares the fearridden into an area of stagnation is the ultimate trap. In times of great uncertainty, great leaders must be even more certain of their convictions, being courageous in their vision whilst having the humility to acknowledge their shortcomings.

Fear is a necessary boundary in certain circumstances, while in others, it's a hindrance. At times it's difficult to tell the difference between fears that are life-saving, and fears that unnecessary bind the mind. Many people feel trapped by a crippling fear that is unnecessary, yet are too close to the fear to realise the escape routes. They might also be too consumed by fear to realise that all it takes to move beyond the boundary is the right perspective. We are well aware of symptoms of fear and are programmed to pay considerable attention to mitigating fear at all cost.

We are therefore more tuned into highlighted threats and are consumed by the daily accentuation of the possible danger of attracting the virus. However, we have become blindsided by the other facts of lives lost, which should be taken into account if we are to measure the extent of all threats accurately.



### The silent effects of COVID

In an attempt to curb the coronavirus pandemic, wide ranging emergency powers have been granted to various levels of government all over the world, allowing for a raft of wide-ranging measures to be put in place, with typically far less oversight or scrutiny than might be expected in 'normal' times. Australia has not been immune to this either with a variety of strict controls enforced including home confinement, social distancing, closure of 'non-critical' businesses, schools and aged care facilities and work from home requirements to name a few. For many parts of Australia (and the world) this is still the current reality, with the obvious impact being excessive job losses, financial stress and feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety.

The World Health Organisation considers mental health as an integral and essential component of health, being more far more than just the absence of disease or infirmity.

(World Health Organisation 2018) Whilst there has been a considerable level of resources and support made available to society in response to COVID-19, there appears to be a seeming disconnect between many of the measures implemented to counter and control the effects of corona virus and the consideration given to the more wide ranging, collateral impacts felt by many.

**“Unemployment alone can contribute to up to a three-fold increase in relative risk of suicide when compared to being employed”.**

In July 2020, it was estimated that approximately 2.5 million Australians were either unemployed or underemployed, a considerable increase when compared to 1.85 million in July 2019. (ABS 2020) Whilst these figures may not be of surprise to many, it is important to understand the correlated data that suggests that unemployment alone can contribute to up to a threefold increase in relative risk of suicide when compared to being employed and that sudden spikes in unemployment are also associated with corresponding surges in population suicide rates. (Deady et. al 2020) Evidence like this highlights the significant psychosocial impacts of mass unemployment, and by considering the projected unemployment figures, under or non-reported employment figures, elements of the population with pre-existing mental health conditions and the impacts of isolation, prescription drug use and general uncertainty, it is clear that a focus only on corona virus statistics and information will most certainly result in at best an ill-informed strategy and at worst contribute to increasing numbers of preventable deaths and suicides. In a recent publication by the Black Dog Institute, it is suggested that between 25 and 33 percent of the community are likely to be experiencing high levels of worry and anxiety as a result of the current pandemic.

In addition to the many people who already suffer from pre-existing anxiety and mental health disorders, there is clear evidence to suggest that health care workers, people placed in quarantine, unemployed and casualised workers will also be likely to experience long term negative psychological effects.(Black Dog Institute 2020) Furthermore, for those lucky enough to retain employment during the recent months, the increasingly blurred lines between work and life have also been exacerbated (and possibly irreversibly changed) by the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent case study

on global tech giant AMD found that almost two in every three employees are feeling burnt out as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, an alarming statistic when the resilience of companies and employees alike is being tested like never before and the options for truly disconnecting from work are critically limited and organisational leave rates at uniquely low levels. (Gartner Inc 2020)

As a society, we are at cross-roads. In a media release by the Australian Government's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Nick Coatsworth responded to calls for Australia to pursue an elimination strategy as 'surprising, unrealistic and dangerous', stating that Australia must strive for 'local elimination' as opposed to 'true elimination' (which would only be realistic with a successful vaccine).(Australian Government Department of Health 2020) Given that 'local elimination' is our goal, then it goes without saying that we must adopt a strategy that effectively minimises the risk of uncontrolled spread of the disease but also balances the expected impacts to our economy, our society and our way of life. The basis of any such strategy must be rooted in openness, transparency and sound decision making that considers all available information, not just that which is popular or supportive to the political pressures of the day.

**"Only if we end the pandemic everywhere can we end the pandemic anywhere."**

Our world in data

## Support

The rapid onset of coronavirus and its seemingly overwhelming presence in our work, society and life continues to be a story that unfolds daily, and for many of us, its far-reaching implications a constant reminder of the challenges, known and unknown, yet to come. In times of stress and turmoil it is natural for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions ranging from restlessness and agitation to anxiety, fear or worry to depression, disconnection and anger. But despite the isolation, confinement and separation many of us are experiencing, technology means we are also more connected than ever with help often only a click, call or email away.

### Help yourself to help others

With the over 23 million people having been infected by corona virus, daily cases still increasing by hundreds of thousands each day and a

successful vaccine still far from a certainty, the future reality for many of us is that if we don't already, we will soon either know someone who has had coronavirus or become affected by the disease ourselves. Studies in terror management theory show that reflecting on our own mortality can powerfully shape our values and goals and that when people consider their 'place' in the world and the fluid nature of life, we begin to develop 'pro-social motivation'. When people are made more aware that life is limited, we more readily experience gratitude and appreciation for what we have in life and are more likely to help others. If we take the time to reflect on and understand our current environment, our feelings and our response, we position ourselves better to re-evaluate our goals and help and support those around us.

### Coping strategies

Governments and organisations around the world have acknowledged the significant impact that a pandemic can have on the mental health and wellbeing of they represent or employ. For many, Covid is fundamentally altering what we desire from our jobs and lives, with these divergent reactions the result of a pandemic that threatens both our economic and physical health. Accordingly, there is a wealth of

information available to those who require it for dealing with the stress and anxiety of living through a pandemic. Key to any response is the understanding that everyone will respond differently to stress, with factors such as background, social support networks, financial situation, health and emotional wellbeing all having a range of influence. Success lies in finding a healthy way to cope with stress.

### This may include:

- Staying informed and knowing what to do if you are sick or concerned about COVID-19.
- Knowing where and how to get treatment
- Taking care of your emotional health
- Taking breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories (including social media)
- Taking care of your body and making time to unwind
- Connecting with others, your community or faith-based organisations.

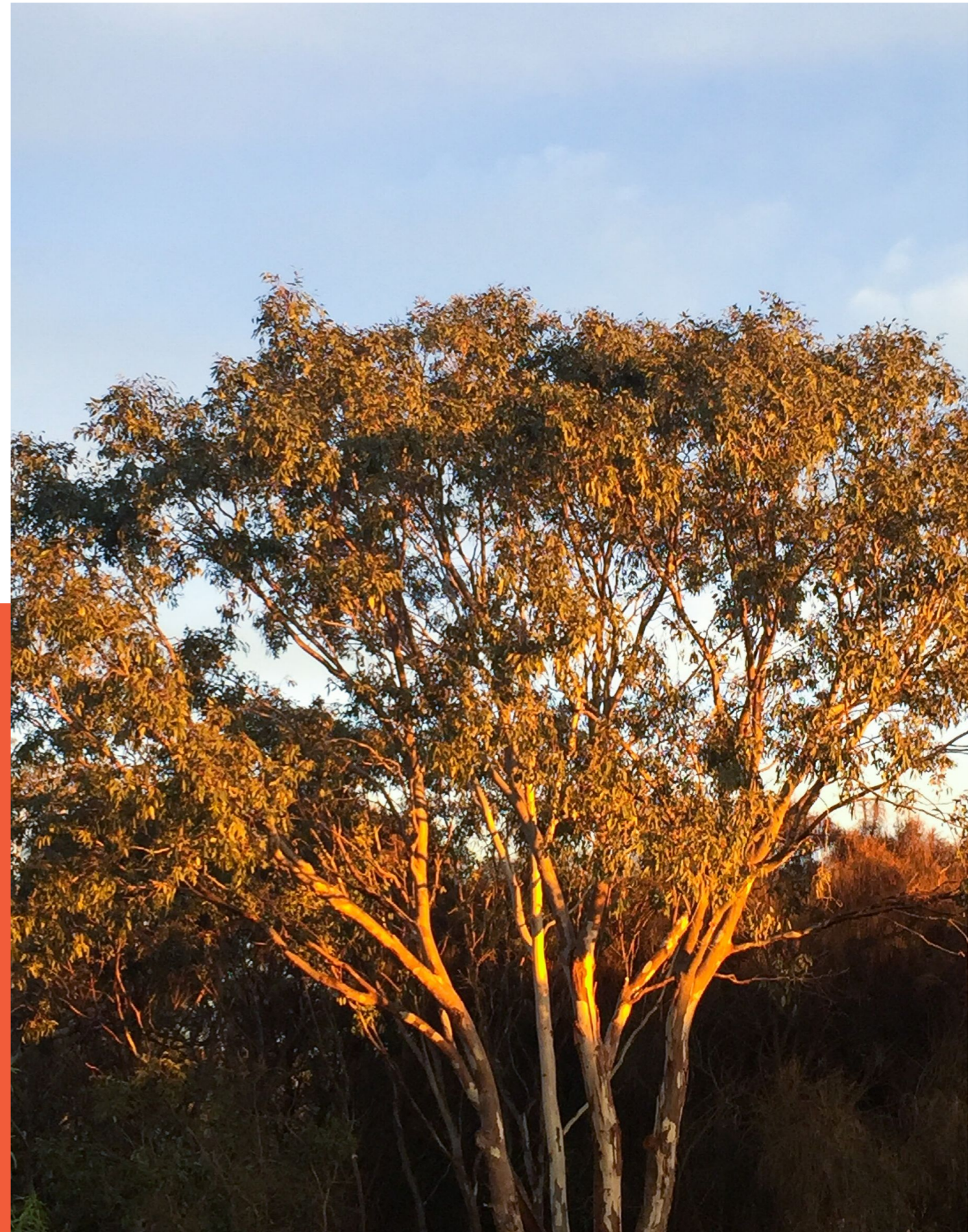
# The Way Forward


Covid-19 has been a disruptive force that has challenged many governments and businesses around the world. Whilst the full impact of the crisis is in many senses still unfolding, the resultant economic downturns, recessions and supply chain impacts have tested even the most well-conceived strategies and time-tested businesses. For many, the pandemic has indiscriminately highlighted vulnerabilities and weaknesses, forcing many leaders, governments and industry alike, to make wide ranging, rapid decisions with limited or disparate information.

Faced with a plethora of changes in policy, process, demand and environment, the challenge for all governments and organisations will be sifting through the noise to identify those changes that are temporary and those that will be long lasting. In any crisis there is inevitably loss but also, opportunity. The key to success will be the ability to leverage big data, process, analyse and interpret the information and finally develop a systematic process of detecting and assessing shifts before they become obvious to all.

“Change is the only constant in life.”

— Heraclitus





“Instead of a black and white, single track, everyone knows that this-is-due-to-that approach, get used to the idea that this a world of multiple causes, imperfect correlations and sheer unpredictable chance.

It is true that scientists, with their statistics and the probabilities, have made a stab at the harnessing of change, but they know very well that certainty is unattainable. A high degree of probability is the best we can ever get.”

— Rudolf Flesch

## A new landscape

As humans, we have an innate tendency and desire to see patterns and have evolved to create meaning from patterns in the environment we perceive around us. This enables us to make predictions and informed decisions with pattern recognition also imperative to learning. (Hale 2018) Whilst this pattern recognition serves us well in many instances, the same tendency can also lead us to see patterns that don't exist. As a country we must not only look for patterns in the data locally but also look to information in other countries in an attempt to learn from others.

Seven months on from the declaration of the pandemic, there remain a handful of countries that have not reported any cases of coronavirus, however for the rest of the world there are some countries that have failed in their response,

whereas others have risen to the challenge far more successfully. Having initially avoided a large-scale outbreak through a variety of quick shutdown measures, testing and mandatory quarantine, Australia now appears to be in a state of strategic ambiguity, attempting a phased exit of shutdown restrictions with a continuing strategy of 'targeted' response when outbreaks are recorded.

Under the guise of a well-rounded, pragmatic approach that is founded in data, the reality appears closer to a fractured strategy of divergent paths where successful health and socio-economic outcomes are mutually exclusive. A plan that when faced with a new outbreak, rolls out the tried lockdown and suppression approach, controlling the health impacts and hoping that the socio-economic impacts will resolve themselves.



“Failure is sometimes a necessary part of learning but it need not be a prerequisite for sustainable business. Learning from others is a much more costeffective form of education.”

— Ryan Babbage

# Hope is not a strategy.

## Finding a balance

For some, Australia's ability to target outbreaks of coronavirus as they happen may be regarded as an enviable position and a hallmark of a successful response. Whilst there is no denying that we have performed much better than many countries in the world in terms of coronavirus infections, we must first consider what a successful response might look like. The number of cases and deaths is obviously a critical metric, but responding successfully means two things: limiting both the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic. (Roser et. al 2020) Countries that have responded most successfully have been able to avoid having to choose between the two, avoiding the high mortality and infection rates whilst also limiting the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. For Australia, there is no doubt that our efforts to flatten the curve and limit outbreaks through shutdowns, lockdowns and closures have certainly worked to control the spread of coronavirus and limit the direct impacts of the pandemic, but in doing so have we put our business environment into a state of government mandated paralysis? The Australian government has enacted a \$289b dollar stimulus package to soften the socio-economic effects of the coronavirus, strongly targeted at personal income support and helping small to medium enterprise retain employees and continue operating. Yet, despite the stimulus available, there has been a significant

fall-away in non-mining business investment activity to the tune of -9% and -19.5% for the 19/20 and 20/21 financial years respectively. Against a drop in real GDP growth in Australia of -6.7% and with loan deferrals and stimulus beginning to wind up in the coming months, we must now look forward and question the longevity of these measures and also ask, what will the picture look like once the support props are removed from various areas of the economy? Unlike other recessions where consumers dip into savings to make up shortfalls in spending, the reality has been far different with coronavirus, with consumption and investment seeing marked drops around the world, likely due to factors such as voluntary social distancing, lockdowns, heavy job and income losses and generally reduced business and consumer confidence.

The pressure is mounting and the time to act is quickly counting down. We must develop a holistic strategy that seeks to preserve the good work we have done to limit the health impacts of the pandemic whilst simultaneously working to contain the economic fallout and facilitate recovery. We must ask to what extent will our current strategy of reintroducing containment and lockdown measures further scar the economic landscape and as a country, what have others who have walked the same path done differently?





“What will the picture look like once the support props are removed from various areas of the economy?”



### Mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive

The MECE principle is one that has been around for decades and is widely used in many consulting firms around the world today. Drawing a thread, there is a connection between the definition of a successful response and the principle of mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive or MECE. In the grips of a global pandemic, Australia is by no means alone in its need to understand, adapt and overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19. In the same thought, there are other countries who have successfully responded to the pandemic, managing both the direct and indirect impacts at the same time.

Countries like South Korea, Germany and Vietnam have also performed well in the efforts to control coronavirus whilst also being able to limit the socio-economic side-effects of disease control. Common to the successful response of each country has been their ability to firstly manage the direct impacts to health through detection, containment and treatment but it importantly, secondly learn from previous outbreaks such as SARS and MERS to limit the indirect socio-economic impacts through the use of technology, systems and strategies that allow them to reopen their economies earlier and subsequently keep them open.

How does MECE fit into this picture? MECE by itself is a power tool, but alone it is often an ineffective way to organise people. Successful countries demonstrate a hybrid adoption of MECE, firstly combining the clarity afforded by breaking down various scenarios into a series of categories that do not overlap but together cover everything, allowing them to effectively communicate complex ideas and information rapidly whilst knowing that the elements of their strategy are collectively exhaustive. The second element of this hybrid approach leverages clear lines of accountability, communication and shared

understanding – giving these countries the ability to holistically respond with every element of their society understanding the role they play and the linkages between managing the direct impacts and reducing the indirect impacts.

In the business world, those without a clear and compelling strategy are doomed to fail. As a country, Australia and its leaders must also understand this. We have taken initial pragmatic action to reduce the direct health impacts of the pandemic but must now focus on the bigger picture of limiting the socioeconomic damage through a clear and aligned strategy that supports, encourages and facilitates economic growth and recovery. We must use the collective information, data, experience, technology and brightest minds at our disposal to clear a path through the strategic uncertainty. If we keep slogging with the status quo we risk loss of investment, deferred decisions, frozen resources, fear, uncertainty and doubt. If we can adapt, we position ourselves to be at the forefront of the global economic recovery, demonstrating our resilience and strategic agility in what will be a vastly different post covid world.

# References



Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020, Labour Force, Australia Jul 2020, cat. no. 6202.0, ABS, Canberra. Black Dog Institute 2020, Mental Health Ramifications of COVID-19: The Australian context, viewed 24 August 2020, [http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200319\\_covid19-evidence-and-recommendations.pdf](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200319_covid19-evidence-and-recommendations.pdf)

Australian Government Department of Health 2020, Eliminating COVID-19 a false hope, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/eliminating-covid-19-a-false-hope>

Babbage, R 2019, Ride the right tigers: Scale into Asia without being eaten alive, Ryan Babbage, Australia.

Cohut, M 2020, 'Novel coronavirus: Your questions, answered, Medical News Today (online) 24 August 2020, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/novel-coronavirus-your-questions-answered>.

Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, Economic and Fiscal Update July 2020, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://budget.gov.au/2020-efu/downloads/JEFU2020.pdf>

Deady, M, Tan, L, Kugenthiran, N et. al. 2020, 'Unemployment, suicide and COVID-19: using the evidence to plan for prevention, The Medical

Demirkan, H & Dal, B 2014, The Data Economy: Why do so many analytics projects fail?, Analytics, viewed 25 August 2020, <http://analyticsmagazine.org/the-data-economy-why-do-so-many-analytics-projects-fail/>

Gartner Inc 2020, Case Study: Global Recharge Days Program (AMD), viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.gartner.com/document/3989012?ref=solrResearch&refval=260243596>

Hale, J 2018, Patterns: The Need for Order, Psych Central, viewed 25 August 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/patterns-the-need-for-order/>

He, X, Lau, E.H.Y, Wu, P et. al. 2020, 'Temporal dynamics in viral shedding and transmissibility of COVID-19', Nature Medicine Journal, vol. 26, pp. 672-675.

Joseph, A, Branswell, A & Cooney, E 2020, Seven months later, what we know about Covid-19 – and the pressing questions that remain, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.statnews.com/2020/08/17/what-we-now-know-about-covid19-and-what-questions-remain-to-be-answered/>

Moukaddam, N 2019, 'Fears, Outbreaks and Pandemics: Lessons Learned', Psychiatric Times, vol. 36, no. 11, pp. 28-29, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://cdn.sanity.io/files/0vv8moc6/psychtimes/cbb7699ccd495e77d6a1a3ff8bdc3a653c69aa54.pdf>

Orr, C 2020, 'The truth about corona virus is scary. The global war on truth is even scarier', The National Observer (Canada) (online) viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/03/13/analysis/truth-about-coronavirus-scary-global-war-truth-even-scarier>.

Our World in Data 2020, Statistics and Research: Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), viewed 25 August 2020, <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>

Roser, M, Ritchie, H, Ortiz-Ospina, E & Hasell, J 2020, Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), Our World In Data, viewed 25 August 2020, <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>

Wilding, D, Fray, P, Molitorisz, S & McKewon, E 2018, The Impact of Digital Platforms on News and Journalistic Content, University of Technology Sydney, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.accc.gov.au>

World Health Organisation 2020, WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, World Health Organisation, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://covid19.who.int/>.

World Health Organisation 2018, Mental health: strengthening our response, viewed 24 August 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>



Expand into Asia  
with Strategy Hubb,  
your gateway to success.  
[www.strategyhubb.com](http://www.strategyhubb.com)

