



114. Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 Update

Recorded on 23rd March, 2020, in Byron Bay, Australia.

Future Sense is a podcast edited from the radio show of the same name, broadcast on BayFM in Byron Bay, Australia, at www.bayfm.org. Hosted by Nyck Jeanes and well-known international futurist, Steve McDonald, Future Sense provides a fresh, deep analysis of global trends and emerging technologies. How can we identify the layers of growth personally, socially and globally? What are the signs missed; the truths being denied? Political science, history, politics, psychology, ancient civilisations, alien contact, the new psychedelic revolution, cryptocurrency and other disruptive and distributed technologies, and much more.

This is Future Sense.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM 99.9 here, your own and only radio station on the very tip of this island ship floating around in the ocean here in a fairly high degree of shut down, as we know. The updates in the news are running so thick and fast, it's pretty hard to keep up with, so we'll do our best to touch on a few issues here this morning on *Future Sense*.

So you're tuned to *Future Sense*, and in the studio with me this morning, my co-host again this week is Ross Hill. Good morning, Ross.

Ross: Good morning.

Nyck: Nice to have you in here as a bit of company—a bit of a safe company because we hang out a bit.

Ross: At a distance.

Nyck: We do have some distance and we also know each other well, so we know where we've been—well, I think I know where you've been!

We are going to be talking, I think, with a bit of luck, to our co-host and my usual regular host of the show, of course, Steve McDonald, who is currently in Edinburgh in Scotland on his way home—if he can get home, which is a question. The increasing number of countries and borders that are closing up for one reason or another—what's the latest on that? How are we going?

Ross: Aviation is typically down. There's some interesting charts online from *Flight Radar 24* showing the before and after of this time last year and this time at the moment, and there's just not many jets in the air. Of course, when you park them, you've got to park them somewhere. I read a report that Avalon Airport are going to have 50, I believe, Qantas jets sitting there for a little while.

Nyck: So that's Avalon down in Geelong. That's not a huge airport, of course. I've never been to Avalon.

Ross: It's not big. They do host the air show, though, so they can pack in those jets into the park there.

Singapore announced that they're not accepting transit passengers into the country.

Nyck: Yes. You can still transit through but you can't get out of the airport.

Ross: You can transit through if the flights are still going. And Emirates announced—they had a bit of a backflip as well—they cancelled everything, then they un-cancelled a few.

Nyck: Yes, that was interesting, wasn't it? We thought about that with Steve because we think that Steve is coming through Dubai—through the United Arab Emirates—and for those who travel a lot know that airport, that's a massive airport with a lot of traffic. So to close it down, lock, stock and barrel, was probably not a wise idea at this point.

Ross: Well, we'll see. I guess we have to respond to feedback as it happens, so things are going to be choppy a little bit until people figure out what's best for them.

Nyck: And we've heard a lot of the current news there, on *the news*—on our local community news—and thanks to Mia Armitage and the team, as usual, for doing such a great job in this current situation where everything is moving that quickly. A couple of things about that, though. We've been asked and recommended just to remind, particularly younger people, because as most of you know, in this last week or so, there's been quite a lot of talk about Bondi Beach being crowded with people. The other day, it was closed again. Straight after that, other people—for example, local councillor Michael Lyon—has pointed to the fact that Byron night is still thick in streets with people. I don't it's quite as it normally is by any stretch of the imagination, but it would seem that people, maybe a bit younger than you because you're a 30ish-something person—but that sort of age group, particularly, I

think in their 20s—not so much teenagers, because they're probably at school and probably getting a lot of information.

Ross: Until tomorrow. In Victoria, at least, school holidays are starting, so there's going to be everyone at home, I guess. And what better time to use the NBN [National Broadband Network] than right now? There's a lot of video gaming happening.

Nyck: If you have the NBN. That's a point, too, isn't it? Because video gaming—and you also talk about a platform which I wasn't familiar with: *Twitch*—where a lot of young people are finding community there via gaming, but also being used by other by other artists, possibly, as a platform.

Ross: Yes, there's heaps of options out there. I think most people know about *YouTube*, which was the first big video website, and it was about videos that you record and then you publish and post and people can watch, but in the last five or so years, there's been a huge explosion of live streaming. So just like radio is live, you can have live video online. The distinction online is you can broadcast live to 5 people or 50,000 people, and so *Twitch* popped up as quite a popular website, especially with video gamers. So just like you might watch the footy on TV, you can also watch someone play the top video games online.

Nyck: If that's what you're into. But you can also do things, as you're saying, with entertainers, because there's a lot of musicians who have gone online to give stuff to their fans, like performances and other things. It is a great opportunity in some ways to disseminate and to get that part of one's career actually motivated and moving even better than it was before, perhaps.

Ross: Yes, and with so many cancelled gigs all around the world, it's a perfect time to move online with some of those things. Some platforms, also, are more friendly to earning money than others. With *Twitch*, for example, you can tip people. Some of the professional streamers who are streaming every day actually make a good living by doing that.

Nyck: There are other different kind of platforms—things like www.patreon.com which has been around for a few years now and supports artists in setting up their own pages and creating their own community there. People pay tithe of some sort or other, towards them, and people are supplied with creative content all the time.

Ross: Yes. There's a huge amount of different sizes and different streamers and people doing things online. In the media, we've heard a little bit about *Netflix* and some of these bigger centralised websites, but there's heaps of community sites as well—heaps of people

streaming videos to each other. I've seen a barrage of emails from yoga studios moving online this week.

Nyck: Yes, that's happening a lot, indeed.

Ross: So there's heaps of things beyond just watching pre-recorded content. There's heaps of live stuff happening. Then, of course, working from home, there's a lot of conference calls and video meetings happening as well. It shows the power of connecting with video, which is why we need such strong internet networks in the country.

Nyck: And you mentioned to me off air this morning as we were talking about these issues that: is there enough bandwidth? Some people are criticising things like *Netflix*, for example, and those other streaming platforms, which clearly, if there's twice as many, three times as many, five times as many people using those platforms around the world at this time, it's going to create—or is it?—a bit of a pressure there? How do we deal with all that?

Ross: Yes, we will see. The NBN have made a few changes on how they bill the Internet providers, and I think the real test will be in the next couple of weeks as people kind of exhaust their, you know, cleaning their cupboard or whatever, and settle into the Internet. With school holidays as well, there's going to be a big boost in things. There's already been some reports around the world of platforms like *Steam*, which is another popular gaming one. They hit 20 million people online all at once, and so I think we're going to see some of those records just get shattered as people do make the most of having the Internet and using it.

That is one of the biggest differences with previous pandemics, is that we didn't have the Internet, so in some respects, we didn't know what was happening. If it was across the world, we usually wouldn't hear about it just a few decades ago. So it's very different this time.

Nyck: Very true, yes. Also, for those who aren't aware, our Premier here in the state of New South Wales in Australia, Gladys Berejiklian, has just been doing a news conference and updating things, and some of those things include the fact that schools in this state and New South Wales are still open at the moment. However, about 30 percent of students are staying away, and she's actually saying, 'if you want to keep your kids at home, keep them at home.' So there's a change because there's no real agreement in Australia at this point about the closure of schools, is there? Different states are doing different things—they're not on the same page at this point. It's a bit hard to know whether it's the right thing to do to close schools completely or keep them open; keep some jobs. It's a tricky situation.

Ross: It is tricky. But also, it is different in different places. What works for Tasmania is maybe not going to work for New South Wales. So it is good, I think, to keep an open mind with

different options for different places. There's probably only going to be a few things that apply broadly to everyone in the country, and there's going to be a lot of local things that are quite different. So it has been pretty cool to see in the Byron area—especially through Instagram, you can see so many local businesses starting to respond to things. Even last week, a lot of restaurants and cafes started doing takeaway orders and setting up the systems for that ahead of what's been announced today. So there's a lot of good stuff happening there so that we can still connect with local suppliers and local producers and support them, even if it does mean moving to home delivery. I think a lot of independent businesses that I've been speaking to are pretty excited about that. It's not as if they didn't consider doing it before, but if you do look broadly at Australian online shopping, it's been a little reserved compared to what other countries across the world have been doing.

Nyck: We like to go out; we like to drive to our shops—we like to do that.

Ross: We do, but also we don't always rush to setting up websites. For example, when Woolworths shut down their home delivery, it was just at the moment when people needed it most, especially people who couldn't get outside to do their own shopping. So I'm pretty excited about this burst in new shopping options, delivery options, and also just the range of—it's not just the generic products that you can get, but you can get some of the local farmers' boxes and things that are popping up as well. So it's worth having a look out for some of your local favourites online to see if they do have special options at the moment.

Nyck: Very good.

You're tuned to Future Sense and my special co-host guest—not the first time—is Ross Hill in the studio with me this morning. We are going to be hopefully talking to Steve McDonald, my normal co-host, of course, from Edinburgh in Scotland in about 15-20 minutes or so. We'll see if we can get him on the line and talk about some of the big issues.

We've got a lot of stuff to talk about today. There's no real particular theme. I think we're just looking at many of these pieces that are coming across our desks, through our computers, the conversations that we're having with people out there in the world—when you are out there and having conversations, from two metres apart or whatever—of course those conversations are still happening. It's kind of essential, too, I think at this time, that we actually have those conversations in person when you can, when you're actually are doing your shopping with those social distancing parameters, and really get as much information and see where people are at. What's interesting to me is the tone of our response. What's the tone of the response generally? Of course, it's not one tone, but I think that's an interesting place and we'll come back to that. It's an interesting point for me to think about.

If you want to join the conversation at any point, you can text in and make any comment and bring our attention to anything that you wish to.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM on *Future Sense* here with Nyck Jeanes and our special co-host this morning, Ross Hill, here in the lockdown of BayFM. We're certainly doing all the right things here: spraying everything, polishing everything, cleaning everything all the time. We have only a skeleton staff and just a few presenters, and hopefully trying to stay on air as long as we possibly can in this. There is a possibility that media outlets may not be able to stay on air. We won't go into that area today, but it could get that serious. In fact, we even talked about the Internet going down. You said that this morning, that there's that possibility.

Ross: The usage is definitely up, and it's going to be interesting to see what happens. For a lot of people in Australia, there's a big divide between those who have the fibre NBN—and does the fibre reach your house or just the kerb? Or are you still on copper? There's a big disparity already, but I think it's a good test of: are we ready for this? In many ways, you could have predicted 10 years ago that people would be doing a lot of online entertainment, online video conferencing. There was all sorts of promises of the future, and yet here we are 10 years later—the network's kind of mostly finished, I guess, in some respects.

Nyck: It's a work in progress.

Ross: But here we are. We're using it. We're working from home, we're yoga-ing from home, we're online shopping from home, and so we'll see what happens.

There have been a few changes that have been made with the NBN responding to ISPs and asking for more data and seeing what the total capacity is. I think it's probably almost too early to tell whether there will be enough Internet for everyone, but you can see heaps of online gaming happening.

In Italy, there's been some interesting statistics around livestream viewers, which grew 66 percent since the first week of February when the quarantine began there. Lots of video channels are growing in size and the amount of different channels is also growing, so there's heaps of stuff out there to watch. *Telecom Italia* announced that there's been an increase of more than 70 percent of the Internet traffic over their landline network as well, and interestingly, they mostly attribute that to gaming. So we'll see what happens.

Nyck: We'll see what happens.

Now, I mentioned the notion of the tone of our response, which I think is an interesting point—exactly how we're responding. Of course, the government's regulatory bodies, institutions and the like, are responding the way that they feel that they need to, or as directed from government and so forth, so there's that. But on a personal level, on the community level, what's the tone of our response? We mentioned earlier, just to reiterate, too, for those younger people who perhaps are thinking like they're safe and it's not a big

deal and I'm still going to go to the beach and hang out with my friends in the pub—well, there's no more pubs, clubs and the like that are going to be open after midday today, anyway. Bondi Beach, as we said earlier, was closed the other day after it was full of people on last week, so we do need to really self-reflect on what we are doing. I think this is one of the big opportunities that we've got here to ask: who are we? Because people are hoarders—they're scrambling to get the last toilet paper; we've seen that crazy enough—or maybe they're too *laissez faire*, like some young people, perhaps. I don't want to just put it on young people; I'm sure there are other people who also have that attitude: the idea that we know what's going on; or we don't know what's going on, so why bother, these sort of things? What do we trust? Who do we trust?

Ross: And what is essential?

Nyck: And what is essential? And we'll talk a lot about that today, also with Steve, when we get him on the line shortly. What *is* essential? and that changes continually. As you said, I think in a joking thing, *Crown Casino* was still essential until a few days ago when the casinos were closed down.

Ross: And also, what's essential changes. What's essential for one week? What's essential for six months? They're pretty different.

Nyck: And I wonder whether people have really thought that through enough yet. I guess they're scrambling to do that sort of long-term projection and planning.

Friends of ours have commented—and it's an interesting comment—that many of the essential services identified now: child care, health services, food services—are largely female-dominant in terms of roles. How do you see that? Is that the case, do you think, that the essential services that have been identified at the moment are actually those kind of usually underpaid services—teachers, nurses—and largely occupied, or certainly majority occupied, by women in the workforce?

Ross: I'm not sure in the specific breakdown of gender, but it is interesting that some of the financial remedies and programmes so far have been targeted at casual workers and those different groups that have been probably laid off quickest from some of these jobs. It is interesting to see just how that affects people. I think it's also almost too soon to tell. We'll just have to keep an eye on what's happening and listen to the feedback that comes in and go from there.

Nyck: Yes. It's also interesting to look at who we're trusting—our sources that we're trusting.

Ross: There's a lot more experts around now.

Nyck: There's a lot of experts. As I said to you jokingly yesterday when we shared a coffee at distance, someone said to me years ago about an expert: an 'ex' is has-been, and a 'spurt' is a drip under pressure. That's a bit silly, but it does point to the fact that, you know: how do you trust the expert? Whose expertise are you trusting? Just because they have a bunch of credentials behind their name—because we're getting a lot of different health information. It's kind of beginning to cohere into a fairly solid piece, I think, after a lot of random ideas about what's going on, from a lot of different sources. That's not to say that some of the things that are being put out there on the fringes may not have some truth to them in some points, but it doesn't really matter now, does it? Or does it?

Ross: Well, there's such a big spread and I think it really does depend who you talk to and who you listen to. A lot of us do want to hear the one thing that we should be doing. Does that come from the government or not? I think it's quite interesting that a lot of the people who previously haven't been seen as big government supporters, are suddenly saying things like: 'you must listen to this particular government and their medical officer', which I was shocked at when I first heard some of these things. I'm like: 'are you talking about the same government as a few weeks ago? because they haven't changed.' And so, yes, a lot of us do want the one right thing, the one way, the list of five things we should do.

The *World Health Organisation* today put out a list of the top five things for washing your hands and general cleanliness, but then there are different experts too. So we have a medical officer in each country, we have one in each state, we have a local doctor—you have your own GP—and you have your alternative sources of information. There's heaps of different treatments, and I think there's no one right way that will meet every person's needs.

Nyck: It throws us back into a sense of self-trust—figuring out one way or the other from your sources of information, or intuitively from your own truth inside—what is the right thing for you to do? And it may change. To be flexible within that so that—in fact, we said this yesterday, too—everything rigid is counterproductive. Yes, there are rigid laws in place, and our prime minister just yesterday said 'we will give as many rules to you as we can, and as many guidelines', which they like, 'but we need you to think carefully about what you are doing and your behaviour and the impact it has on others.' And that's a good statement, that second part. I mean, for many of us, the idea that they're going to give us as many rules as they can is a bit scary and frightening, to say the least.

Ross: Yes, and how far do the rules go? There were some interesting rules that were just passed in the parliament in Denmark about mandatory vaccinations and they were passed quite quickly last week while the parliament was still open. But some of these ideas are very controversial. Also, Internet metadata tracking—very controversial last year when the laws

were going through, but they're here. What it does mean, though, is we could roll out contact tracing pretty quickly because the metadata is in a big pile.

Nyck: Well, the *Sydney Morning Herald* just yesterday did a piece on that. We fear phone tracking, but that kind of technology could be the help we need. It's a scary thing.

Ross: Yes, and it's a great paradox. In medical situations, some of these things are very useful, but they're also complex and they don't get any simpler just because there's a crisis.

Nyck: Very true. So all of these pieces, folks. What do you think about that? What do you think about tracking? Did you see that piece about the notion to track—where people who may have the virus, who've come in contact with one of the cruise ship people, for example, or you've travelled somewhere--would you be willing to have your phone tracked or have that available to you so you know that people in your area have been, or may be at risk; may be carrying the virus? Is that a good thing? What do you think about that? Drop us a text.

Here on BayFM, you're tuned to *Future Sense* with Nyck Jeanes and Rose Hill. We'll be talking to Steve McDonald over there in Scotland fairly shortly.

You've been listening to Future Sense, a podcast edited from the radio show of the same name broadcast on BayFM in Byron Bay, Australia, at www.bayfm.org. Future Sense is available on iTunes and SoundCloud.

The future is here now, it's just not evenly distributed.