



111. Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 Update

Recorded on 16th 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: Good morning to you folks on this Monday, 16th of March, 2020.

In a world which is certainly different to the one it was a month ago or even a week ago, or even a day ago, I hope you're doing well out there; I hope you are doing the right thing, so to speak, doing the best that you can do to keep yourself healthy and safe and protected, preventing infection and the spread of anything that might be out there. It's not an easy time, that's for sure. Panic is not going to help, fear is not going to help, but judicious and discerning action certainly will. There's plenty of information out there regarding the coronavirus and all attendant necessities. As you would know, the Australian government has now made it compulsory that all people coming into the country, whether they're Australian citizens or not, will have to go into self-isolation for two weeks. That's affecting many people and probably many people that you know—certainly many people that I know.

There's no point trying to be light about things when things are increasingly getting a little dark, but still light shines, love shines, and that is the truth, in my opinion at least, and we will certainly see our way through this. I was in the supermarket yesterday doing some shopping and it was very crowded and the obvious toilet paper shelves were empty, but there are also some of the shelves that are starting to get pretty vacant, especially hand sanitisers and the obvious things. It certainly brings forth in this very First World, very wealthy country that we are, the vulnerability that we do share with many other countries in many other ways, and while we are certainly better off than many other countries, being an isolated island for one, we are certainly not immune from the vagaries and the distortions of human activity, politics, culture, society and disease and all the other things that mean that really we are on one planet together—we really are on this Gaia planet together—and these kind of crises that we're now facing with the coronavirus, whatever it is, wherever it came from and wherever it is going and whatever the agendas might be—because there may be those agendas out

there somewhere—the truth is that there is a serious issue that we have to face and we have to be sensible about that now.

As you know, my co-host, Steve McDonald, is overseas at the moment. In fact, at the moment, as we speak, he's at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. and I'm hoping to talk to him in about 10 or 15 minutes briefly about the state of play in the US. He's actually trying to change his plans because he's been stopped from going into Europe via Denmark to Berlin, and is going to have to make other plans possibly to go to Iceland, Reykjavik.

I've got a few pieces to share with you about the coronavirus a little later on, but we'll see how we go with that. We didn't have a morning news bulletin today for a few reasons, but certainly BayFM here as a community service, as an essential service in Byron Shire and broadcasting via the Internet around the world—if you're listening somewhere out there, hello—we are looking at the strategies that we need to put in place. Some of them are already here in terms of disinfecting things and minimising traffic into the station and the like. Certainly, if you are planning to come to the station and you have any symptoms of anything, it would be really good if you didn't come in now, and the same, of course, with anywhere that you go. So we're looking to bring the best practise that we can in a situation which we really have no experience of; none of us have experience of this kind of crisis that we're having now.

This morning, Mia Armitage from the Community Newsroom has interviewed Dr. Dan Ewald, a Lennox Head GP and adjunct professor and primary adviser to North Coast Health District, and he's a clinical adviser for the North Coast Primary Health Network. We will hopefully be playing that some point in the show today. We'll see when she gets that finished and back and loaded up here so that I can access it. So we will be doing that at some point—getting a local perspective from a GP who's in the health network. I also have a piece sent by my co-host, Steve McDonald, from the *Arlington Institute* in West Virginia—an interview with John L. Petersen.

John L. Petersen is a pretty remarkable chap, considered by many to be one of the most informed futurists in the world. He's best known for writing and thinking about high impact surprises, wildcards—well, we're in one right now—and the process of surprise anticipation. We are going to be listening to him talking more about the larger perspective of transformation that we talk about a lot on this show and his perspective currently from over there in the US, recorded just a couple of days ago. That comes in a few parts and we'll be playing that a little bit later in the show.

We're flying by the seat of our pants, in a good way. Fortunately, BayFM is flexible; we are adaptable, and really, that's the thing. Can you be adaptable? Can you change your lifestyle now, when it is clearly absolutely necessary that to some degree or other we do?

As of today, you probably are aware that events like the Bluesfest [an annual music festival held in the Byron Shire], very likely won't be going on. I don't think there's been an official announcement, but it's certainly true that Brad Hazzard, the New South Wales Health Minister, has said now that, employing certain powers, events over 500 people will literally be banned at the risk of fairly significant fines. So we shall see what happens there. Sad news indeed for many, many people who work here and who depend on things like the Blues

Festival, not to mention the patrons and not to mention, of course, the artists. It's a complex thing. I'm not saying that is cancelled, I'm just saying that it's the likely outcome of this escalating situation that we now find ourselves in.

We will come back shortly and see what is next. Stay tuned here. You're tuned to *Future Sense* with Nyck Jeanes in the chair 'til 11 o'clock this morning here on BayFM. Hopefully we are going to be broadcasting right through all of this. Whatever happens here in this country, in this region, we're going to be here on air as best we can and providing as much information as we can for you. Thanks for joining me here and staying with BayFM, your local one and only radio station.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM; you're tuned to *Future Sense* here with Nyck Jeanes by himself in the chair this morning, but in a very short time I'm going to be talking to my co-host, Steve McDonald, from Dulles International Airport in Washington, DC, in the US of A. He's looking to fly out of the US today and we're going to be catching up with him and some of the things he's seen, heard and felt there in the *Future Sense* way. So stay tuned for maybe a bit of edgy stuff there. After that, I'll be playing to you a piece with John L. Petersen, who Steve has been interviewing over there at the *Arlington Institute* in West Virginia. It's a not-for-profit future-oriented research institute. Very interesting man indeed, with a very long and complicated history.

Indeed, on the phone from Dulles International Airport in Washington, DC, we have my co-host, Steve McDonald. Good morning, Steve, or good afternoon Steve to you. How are you doing?

Steve: Hello Nyck! I'm doing pretty well, considering what's going on.

Nyck: Well, what is going on? Because you're kind of stuck. You were to fly to Europe today, but you're trying to change that at the moment because going to Europe is, well, maybe not the best option. Not so easy anyway.

Steve: That's right. I had a few connecting flights that I was hoping would get me to Germany, but one of them has been cancelled overnight and that's disrupted the whole trip, so I'm just trying to get some flight changes done here at the moment but the airlines are absolutely overwhelmed, as you might imagine. On the ticketing phone line that I've been calling, I've just got a recording saying 'we're sorry, we can't take any calls'. Simple as that. The people at the desk at the airport here can't change tickets, they say, so at the moment, I've got one of our staff from Australia calling the UK line trying to get through there.

Nyck: How are you feeling? How does it feel in the US? I mean, obviously you've been away for a couple of weeks now. Things have certainly ramped up in Australia, one way or the

other, and certainly it would seem the US—well, the criticism is that the US has been a bit behind the eight ball in responding. Trump has certainly been criticised heavily for his responses generally. What's the feeling like, though, in the places that you've been so far in the US?

Steve: It's been OK. I went to Austin, Texas first and everything was very normal there. I've heard just today from friends there that things are starting to get a little bit silly in the supermarkets there. Then in the last few days I've been up hiding in the hills in West Virginia in Berkeley Springs with John Petersen at the *Arlington Institute*, so it's been pretty fine up there, although he did have to go looking for toilet paper in about three different stores before he found some. So we've still got similar things happening over here as well.

Nyck: What's the general sense in the media? We're going to be talking a little bit about panic and fear anyways—we usually do on this show—so what's the temperature of that whole thing going on there?

Steve: As you probably know, I rarely look at the mainstream media, but sitting at a bar in the airport here, they had one of the continual news channels going, and it was just continual coronavirus. Every topic that they had was 'this in relation to the coronavirus' and 'how is the coronavirus affecting that?' So it's getting pretty hectic in the media but it's been like that all along. They seem to be playing it up as far as I can gather.

Mitch [Schultz] and I were at the *Arlington Institute* to do some interviews for a documentary with John Petersen, and that went really, really well.

Nyck: Yes. I've already told the listeners that I'll be playing a fairly large part of that after this interview and through most of the show today. Just a bit of a background about the *Arlington Institute*—I'll just read from their website, in fact, which is <https://arlingtoninstitute.org>.

You mentioned John Petersen, who was the founder of the *Arlington Institute* in 1989: "a non-profit, future-oriented research institute, the purpose of which is to work with the leadership of the National Security Committee (originally) to change the idea of 'national security' (which is an interesting thing) from death and destruction to a broader understanding of security that included environmental degradation, climate change, social value shifts, science and technology breakthroughs and other global issues that clearly contributed to our security." John is considered by many to be one of the most informed futurists in the world. You've just spent some time with him, and we will be playing that interview, but what can you tell us about his take on the coronavirus?

Steve: Well, John is on the same page as me in that he thinks it's been overblown right from the beginning, and that a lot of the response doesn't make sense when you look at the facts and figures; and that's certainly still the case ... [*online communication dropped out*]

... Both John and I feel that the virus came out of the lab at Wuhan—and I must say that all of this is really uncertain. No-one, certainly neither John nor I, pretends to know what's actually going on here. We're just trying to piece together bits of information to get a picture of what the most likely scenario is that's unfolding. So we both lean towards the virus coming from the lab at Wuhan. I know that the Canadian lab in Winnipeg was helping Wuhan upgrade its security measures, so that may point to the fact that they were a bit loose with their viruses perhaps, which might explain things. And then, of course, we had the other strange issues that we've mentioned on the show previously of the Chinese nationals who were working in Winnipeg and travelling backwards and forwards to Wuhan, currently being accused of stealing viruses. A former head of the lab at Winnipeg died unexpectedly recently—and again, these things might not be connected, but you've got to throw them into the plot to kind of help understand what's going on.

As the international response has been rolling out—I mean, I've spent 15 years in the military; I've done a lot of exercises in what people in the general public would call 'war games' I guess, and you get used to the way that they work. There's someone with a script—a schedule of activities—and things kind of go quiet for a while, and then something will happen and the next item on the schedule will come up two hours later and something will happen again; and I'm just kind of seeing that sort of pattern in what's going on around the world at the moment. It's almost like somebody is reading from a schedule and playing to a script, and that it's being planned and it's being rolled out rather than being an in-the-moment kind of reaction, if you know what I mean.

Nyck: So if that's the case, what do you think—what do you postulate—is the agenda behind that? Obviously, it's a political agenda of some sort.

Steve: Yes, it seems that way. Both John and I, again, lean that way without any real evidence, of course. One of the possibilities is, if you think about the way that global politics has been going, we're seeing the fragmentation of political parties, so what that means is that the system is starting to break down. I think the US is a really good showcase when you look at what's going on between the Democrats and the Republicans here and how nasty it's got and how they've tried every trick in the book to manipulate the system—to impeach Trump, whatever they can do—and it's possible that they are taking advantage of this virus outbreak to push those agendas. I think it's probably likely, actually. Whether they planned it from the start, we don't know, but certainly if it was just an accidental release from the lab and they watched what was going on and then thought, 'OK, maybe we can take advantage of this by just overemphasising it a little bit and making people do exactly as we want them to do so that we can get away with a few more things while everybody's panicking about the virus', that's possible. When I ran that idea past John Petersen, he said that he's been

contacting people from all sorts of different places—all his sources—and he said the most exciting conspiracy theory that he came across pretty much ran along those lines: that this was an opportunity to sort of settle some scores.

Nyck: I mean, whether the virus came from the lab or not, the possibility that it's been used, manipulated or distorted in response, in some way or other, by some people in various countries, is not a big stretch of the imagination in the current state of affairs on the planet.

Steve: I think it's to be expected. Even just looking at the economic implications, which are enormous—most people wouldn't realise because it's not just the economic implications today, but also the downstream implications as these issues mount up.

Nyck: Well, in Australia today, some government officials have said it could take 10 years for the Australian economy to recover from the coronavirus's economic impact. 10 years!

Steve: Yes. One of the things that came up in conversation here was the possibility of a total economic reset globally, and it could be an opportunity for that. I mean, it could be an opportunity for the forgiveness of debt and even the repositioning of the whole economic system somehow—maybe going back to taking it to gold or ... I think it's probably a little too early for cryptocurrency to take over at this stage. I think it needs some more time to mature.

Steve: It's certainly a very, very interesting situation. I think there's an awful lot to learn from this. It'll be interesting to watch it continue to unfold and just see where it goes. I mean, China, from what I hear, they seem to be on the back end of their issue now. I saw that *Apple*, in the last day or so, announced that they were shutting down stores around the world except for in China where they're reopening stores.

Nyck: Well, I guess that makes sense, being the first place that it appeared, and yet with a population the size of China, it's quite remarkable that they have seemingly contained it to the degree that they have and are, as you said, possibly on the back end of it. That's interesting and sort of counterintuitive, given everything else is going on in the world elsewhere.

Steve: Yes, well, there's been quite a few counterintuitive activities around this whole thing, which is why both John and I are a little suspicious.

Nyck: Indeed. Well, Steve, we'll let you go and leave it there. The line's a bit shaky, it comes in and out a little bit, so let's let you go and see if you can get on a flight to somewhere out there in the world.

Steve: I guess I'll get back to you and let you know where I end up.

Nyck: Absolutely. Yes, that'd be good. Thanks, Steve. Travel well, mate, and look after yourself out there.

Steve: Thanks, Nyck. Cheers.

Nyck: Thanks for your a couple of texts that have come in. Yes, I appreciate the feedback, especially from some experts—and we do have some experts here in the station, in fact—saying the virus does not come from a lab. All I would say to that is we don't absolutely know anything. What we do know is that there is a virus out there, and irrespective of where it comes from, we have a major situation on the planet, as we're all talking about. My personal view, while I don't have a lot of fear or anxiety myself, even though I'm in the demographic which is particularly vulnerable to this virus, I would say that we're still, even in this region of supposedly quite conscious people, I don't think we're really doing all we could do to minimise the possibility of it spreading. Prevention is better than cure, of course. The various things you can do to help prevent and to minimise that exchange and the social contact are many and they're out there. So take note and do it anyway, because I think it's very easy for us in this region to think, 'oh, no, we're okay. Because we do this, that or the other, somehow we're vaguely immune from things.' Well, we're not, of course, and no one is in this kind of situation, so no matter what you think about the virus, et cetera, or whatever you might think about any kind of conspiracy theories or other theories about how it is, what it is, where it's coming from, what it's doing and what it may be being used for—all of which I think are valid enough questions—that does not or should not, will not, cannot, stop all of us from doing exactly what is necessary to minimise the spread of this virus.

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