

# Polyglot Theatre's Voice Lab

## City of Darebin, October - November 2020

### SUMMARY REPORT

Voice Lab is a unique creative installation module for collecting the thoughts and opinions of children. Voice Lab encourages reflective thought and the articulation of opinions and feelings. Voice Lab is curious and pays close attention to what children think, feel and say, enabling their ideas to be shared to make positive change.

In response to COVID-19, Voice Lab's online version offers children the opportunity to reflect on change and uncertainty, and to begin to process the pandemic's impact on their sense of the world and themselves. In this period of isolation and disconnection it is vital that children have their voices heard and valued. Voice Lab shows children that no matter where they are or how alone they may feel, their voices can be heard and shared to make a difference.

During October and November 2020, Voice Lab spoke to 30 children living in the City of Darebin about what life was like for them during the coronavirus lockdown in Melbourne.

Date	Setting	Number of participants
27 Oct	Preston North East Primary School	3
27 Oct	Kids Have Your Say	4
28 Oct	St Stephen's Primary School	6
28 Oct	Reservoir East Primary School	10
18 Nov	East Preston Islamic College	7
<b>Total number of participants</b>		<b>30</b>

### Voice Lab Questions

- What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?
- What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?
- How has your community changed since the coronavirus began?
- How have all these changes made you feel?
- What helps you to feel better if you don't feel OK?
- If the coronavirus was a person, what would you say to it?
- How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?
- How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?
- How have you been keeping in touch with your friends and family during the coronavirus lockdown?
- What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?
- What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?
- What do you think children can teach adults about staying healthy and well?
- How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?



## Preston North East Primary School

For the three students Voice Lab spoke to at Preston North East Primary School the main changes due to lockdown were that they couldn't see friends and family and couldn't go anywhere. Not much had changed for their families apart from not being able to go out, and the changes in the community were that the schools were closed and there were more rules around keeping safe. Schooling from home held some positives, with one child noting that it was good to be able to do their schoolwork on the couch, however another noted that they missed everything and wanted to be back at school. They all mentioned that they were sad and upset that they couldn't see their friends but had been keeping in touch via online games, zoom and text messages. Eating healthy food and washing hands were the main ways of keeping healthy while staying at home, and drinking water, washing hands and going outside were good ways to stay healthy once coronavirus goes away.

### **Q: What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"When the corona started, I could not go outside..."*

A: *"That I can't see my friends and that I can't actually see my cousins or go to their apartment."*

A: *"So if you want to be safe you have to like, stay away from people."*

### **Q: What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"Well I couldn't drive anywhere I wanted to go, and I couldn't see movies that I wanted to see or go swimming."*

### **Q: How has your community changed since the coronavirus began?**

A: *"The schools were closed and I was doing online school."*

A: *"They put in rules for our safety, like we have to wash our hands every time."*

### **Q: How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?**

A: *"I felt like I wanted to go to school and not doing the online school."*

A: *"I felt comfortable in the same time because I could sit on my couch and do it. But in the same time it makes me feel sad that I can't actually go to school and learn."*

### **Q: How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?**

A: *"I felt sad..."*

A: *"It made me feel sad."*

A: *"Upset."*



**Q: What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?**

A: *"Eat healthy food."*

A: *"Staying in houses, staying indoors."*

**Q: What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"Go outside and take a breath."*

A: *"They could probably hand sanitise themselves in case anything is still effected."*

**Q: How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"The world won't be empty and everyone will go outside."*

A: *"Back to normal. People going places. People going to shops. People doing everything."*

## **Kids Have Your Say**

The four participants in the Kids Have Your Say group joined their Voice Lab sessions from their homes. Among this group the changes brought on by the coronavirus lockdown were the inability to spend time with friends and family, and a feeling of isolation. For their families, the changes were about not being able to go anywhere or see anyone, and parents having to work more. In their community they had noticed that people were more anti-social due to the pandemic, and that the wearing of masks and not being able to smile at each other was adding to that feeling of detachment. One child had enjoyed home learning because they could do it at their own pace, but for the others it was annoying, with one child noting that typing is tiring and another saying that their technical skills weren't very good. They all missed their friends and found being away from them sad and lonely but had kept in touch via video calls and texting, as well as the occasional 'walk by' - a socially distanced visit to a friend's front yard. Some of the ways mentioned for families to stay healthy during lockdown were going outside and getting exercise, as well as doing activities together such as cooking and gardening, and that seeing friends and talking about their experience would be good ways to keep healthy once the virus is over.

**Q: What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"I've not been able to see my friends, but now I can go back to school."*

A: *"First thing that's probably changed is I've maybe felt a bit more isolated, lonely..."*

A: *"It's harder to play with my friends. Because I can't really see them that often and... we can't actually touch each other and play the games that would involve touching each other."*

**Q: What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"We haven't been able to see anyone, like, we've only been able to see each other."*



A: *"My mum started to get a bit panicked and she had to start working a bit more, and she was scared that she might have to get posted into the COVID ward, so it was a very stressed atmosphere."*

**Q: How has your community changed since the coronavirus began?**

A: *"Everyone's more detached from each other, they don't really want to see each other because they're scared."*

A: *"People are wearing masks."*

A: *"...people are a lot more anti-social now in COVID..."*

**Q: How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?**

A: *"Honestly the schoolwork bit I liked, because I could do it at my own pace."*

A: *"Annoyed because I don't like doing all writing stuff on the computer."*

A: *"I really disliked it to be honest. I'm not very good with my technical skills."*

**Q: How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?**

A: *"A bit lonely, annoyed and cross at the coronavirus."*

A: *"I felt a bit sad, but then after a while I realised, this is the reality and I have to adapt or else I'm going to be sad forever."*

**Q: What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?**

A: *"You can exercise and you can eat healthy."*

A: *"I think they should go outside more."*

**Q: What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"Having more social interactions with friends."*

A: *"Share their experiences... so they can get it all out, all the stress and all the sadness they've been keeping within them."*

**Q: How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"Life won't be the same again. There will still be, there will still be more viruses."*

A: *"It might just be like, a bit crazy and a bit in a fluster."*



## St Stephen's Primary School

The six children at St Stephens talked about things being boring for them since the coronavirus started because they couldn't go anywhere or see family. The changes for their families were that parents were now working at home and that the house was noisy but lonely. For one child the major change had been that one parent had lost their job and the other parent had a different job. Their community was much quieter as there was no one on the streets because people were staying at home. Amongst this cohort some had found learning from home hard without their teachers and friends, while a couple were happy with online learning because they could sleep in and enjoyed being at home. They were sad and lonely without their friends but we're staying in touch with phone calls and online games. They were keeping healthy at home by going outside, getting exercise and eating healthy food. One child noted that you shouldn't watch too much TV or eat too much food. Exercising, seeing friends and getting back to normal were good ways to stay healthy after lockdown.

### **Q: What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?**

*A: "My after-school sports have now stopped."*

*A: "The things that have changed for me are my mum has lost her job and my dad has got a different job, but it's, but he might lose it again because of coronavirus."*

*A: "Many things, I can't go visit other family members, I can't go to the city or the movies, or some places that I love."*

### **Q: What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?**

*A: "My dad has been now working from home, and my dad never worked at home."*

*A: "It's been really noisy in my house, but it feels really lonely, alone, in the house because we can't go to our friend's house."*

*A: "We used to go places together but now we're home all the time and not doing anything fun."*

### **Q: How has your community changed since the coronavirus began?**

*A: "I think it's just sad, it's very different that we have a little bit more rules."*

*A: "Well, there's not as many people on the streets, um, there's a lot of trouble in the community with protesters and coronavirus."*

### **Q: How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?**

*A: "I was happy at first because I got to stay home, but then after time I didn't like it because I couldn't see my friends, and my eyes started to hurt from looking at the computer."*

*A: "I felt really sad and it was very hard, it felt really hard for me."*



*A: "There wasn't teachers to assist you, your parents sometimes didn't know what was going on, so you didn't know what to do."*

**Q: How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?**

*A: "I felt sad that I couldn't see my friends, but we were calling often."*

*A: "Kind of lonely, because there was only me on the computer."*

**Q: What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?**

*A: "They can talk to each other if they have any problems, so they don't bottle up their feelings and feel even worse."*

*A: "The most important thing would be to go outside and exercise."*

**Q: What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?**

*A: "They can go see their friends to make them feel better."*

*A: "Try slowly reverting back to yourself before quarantine."*

**Q: How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?**

*A: "Everyone will start having fun again and start seeing each other and the shops will open and they can go buy what they want and need."*

*A: "The world would have changed a lot, and most people would ah, be very careful about where they go and what they do, and probably global warming will be a lesser issue, but it still is."*

## **Reservoir East Primary School**

At Reservoir East Primary Voice Lab spoke to ten children. For this group the changes caused by the coronavirus were that they felt sad and lonely, couldn't see friends and had to wash their hands all the time. One child mentioned not being able to see their mother because they lived in another city. Not being able to spend time with friends and family had been the biggest impact on families, with the impact on the community being that shops were closed and there was no one on the streets. The responses about learning from home ranged from boring, lonely and frustrating, to OK, good and excited (at first). One child noted that they felt more confident with learning from home because they didn't have to talk in front of anyone else. Not being able to see friends had been sad, disappointing and upsetting, but most had managed to keep in touch with phone calls, however, as one child didn't have access to a phone, they had no way of contacting their friends. Washing hands, eating healthy food and getting exercise were the main ways to stay healthy at home, and going out and having fun would be a good way to feel healthy once coronavirus goes away.

**Q: What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?**



A: *"It's made me a lot more lonely, and it's kind of made myself and a lot of people big germophobes."*

A: *"Me not seeing my mum. Because I live in Melbourne and she lives in Geelong."*

A: *"One thing that has changed for me is we have to wash our hands and stay healthy and sanitise our hands all the time."*

**Q: What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"Well we've been a lot more separate unlike other families. My mum is a full-time worker, and my brother, he loves to be on his iPad, and my other brother is very moody, so I've just been spending time with my friends on a phone call."*

A: *"Me not actually like, seeing my family members, my nan, my mum, my auntie, my cousins."*

**Q: How has your community changed since the coronavirus began?**

A: *"Well it's very hard for us to do everything, because we actually want to just have fun without the virus here."*

A: *"There's not as many people out."*

**Q: How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?**

A: *"I felt a bit more confident because when you're at school sometimes you have to talk in front of people."*

A: *"I was pretty excited at first, because I was really excited for home schooling, I've always wanted to try it, but I don't know how people do it, it's so boring, and the internet just crashes all the time, I don't like it."*

A: *"Tired of typing."*

**Q: How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?**

A: *"Pretty disappointing and pretty sad since we couldn't even meet up."*

A: *"I felt upset, because I actually really want to see my friends, because I have a really fun time playing with them."*

**Q: What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?**

A: *"Wash your hands and wear a mask."*



A: "Use hand sanitiser and also you can um, do puzzles, you can draw, and you can read a book to your mum or dad."

**Q: What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?**

A: "Keeping a similar routine, since it could come back as quickly as ever like, anyone could just get it and, snap, it's back."

A: "Go out, have fun, have fun, it's fun time, you can do whatever you want, because the coronavirus is over."

**Q: How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?**

A: "There will be more people out and it will be more busy."

A: "I think it will be very different and it will be a bit anxious for a lot of people, since we haven't gotten back to that normal routine yet."

A: "It will be all outside and happy."

## East Preston Islamic College

At East Preston Islamic College Voice Lab spoke to seven children. A couple of the participants noted that their learning had improved as a result of the coronavirus lockdown, however others had felt sad and worried because they couldn't go anywhere or visit family. Some of the changes seen in their families were that they weren't spending much time together because they were on technology all the time, and one person had a relative who was stuck in Melbourne after coming to visit from overseas. All the changes associated with the lockdown had made them feel sad, emotional and annoyed. Some had found learning from home hard because it was confusing and they couldn't hear on their online meetings, with one child mentioning that they had no access to a computer so were using their parent's phone to engage with their classes. Others had enjoyed learning from home, one because they could get away with things, and another found it much easier because they had more time to focus. Being away from friends was sad and annoying, but they had kept in touch with phone calls, web chats and online games. Exercise, wearing gloves and masks, and staying calm were mentioned as good ways to stay healthy during the lockdown. A number of ways to keep healthy after the lockdown were to be happy, go out, and spend time with family.

**Q: What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?**

A: "Being locked up without being able to see any of my friends or cousins."

A: "I was worried because then I thought like, it would spread very fast and like, the whole world would end."

A: "I improved with learning and a bit of my times tables."

A: "It's helped me study more."





**Q: What has changed for your family since the coronavirus started?**

A: *"So my cousin came from overseas before the coronavirus outbreak and now he's stuck, and he can't go back."*

A: *"That we wouldn't be able to see anyone else, and we were stuck in our house, not even allowed to go out and in the streets."*

A: *"They had to stay home, and sometimes they're allowed to go with a mask."*

**Q: How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?**

A: *"Really weirded out because I was confused and sometimes, I couldn't hear, and my screen was blurry."*

A: *"I don't use a computer; I have to use my mum's phone."*

A: *"I found it way easier, and it gave me more time to do it properly and go over it."*

**Q: How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?**

A: *"I felt pretty annoyed, but I did call them a bunch of times."*

A: *"Pretty sad, but I can still see them while playing video games with them."*

**Q: What can children and families do to stay healthy and well when staying at home?**

A: *"Just stay healthy and just make sure you wear gloves and masks everywhere you're going."*

A: *"Staying calm and staying positive."*

**Q: What can help children and families to feel healthy and well after the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"To know that there's less chance of getting sick, and you can feel lucky that you haven't died through all the cases and deaths."*

A: *"Just relax and go do what helps you feel good when you go out."*

**Q: How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?**

A: *"The world will be happy."*

A: *"I think everyone would just be on technology like, don't even go outside, because they would be used to it."*

A: *"I think everyone's going to be way happier and we'll be able to see family more."*



## Pivot table data

The following table gives the top three responses to a selection of the questions asked across the five education settings in the City of Darebin.

QUESTION	ANSWER	% OF TOTAL
Before we begin, how old are you?		
	Eleven.	33%
	Ten.	23%
	Nine.	13%
What has changed for you since the coronavirus started?		
	Can't see friends.	17%
	Can't see family.	13%
	Feel upset.	10%
How have all of these changes made you feel?		
	Sad.	23%
	Annoyed.	7%
	Anxious.	7%
What helps you to feel better if you don't feel OK?		
	Reading a book.	7%
	Relaxing.	7%
	Sleeping.	7%
If the coronavirus was a person, what would you say to it?		
	Go away.	47%
	Please stop.	13%
	Stop spreading.	7%
How did you feel about doing your schoolwork on the computer when you were learning from home?		
	Good.	10%
	It was hard.	7%
	Annoyed.	7%
How did you feel when you couldn't see your friends while you were learning from home?		
	Sad.	57%
	Upset.	10%
	Lonely.	10%
How have you been keeping in touch with your friends and family during the coronavirus lockdown?		
	Calling.	27%
	Online games.	10%
	Web chats.	7%
How do you think the world will have changed when the coronavirus goes away?		
	Will go back to normal.	20%
	People will be happy.	10%
	Hard to readjust.	10%



## Final thoughts

**Q: If the coronavirus was a person, what would you say to it?**

A: *"Can you please go away."*

A: *"I would say, please stop infecting the Earth."*

A: *"I'd probably tell it to mind its own business and stop bothering us all."*

A: *"Go away and don't come near me or anyone."*

A: *"I probably wouldn't say anything to it, but I would probably end up punching it in the face quite a bit."*

A: *"I would say, please stop, please stop, I don't like what you're doing to us in this world."*

A: *"Please stop and to let everyone be free."*

A: *"I would tell it to go away, I want my freedom back."*

**Q: If your voice could be heard by the whole world, what would you say?**

A: *"I would say be careful of what you touch and be careful about people that you meet."*

A: *"Government, do stuff about this climate change. We want to live here; we don't want to go to Mars."*

A: *"I'd say, thank you for listening and I hope you liked it."*

A: *"That everyone should calm down and they should just do what is right and not what's wrong."*

A: *"I would tell them that coronavirus will go away some day, but we've just gotta do the right thing until it does."*

A: *"I would say be careful, get tested, don't go out, listen to your Government, be nice to everyone, because you don't know what they're going through."*

A: *"Treat people how you want to be treated."*

A: *"I would say we're all in this together and let's hope that we can get through this coronavirus."*

