



"Seniors helping seniors use computers and the internet"

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Greg Elmore

## President's View

The fabric of our humanity has been snagged on a bush; someone had pulled on the thread and all of society, as we have known it, has unraveled.

Who could have imagined that every aspect of our lives is connected and can be shattered with one single event? From the terrible loss of life and suffering to the loss of livelihoods, closures of business and service providers, places of worship; the list seems never-ending, no one has been left untouched. Our generation has been affected differently. Among other consequences, elder members of the community have suffered more from isolation and being unable to see our loved one's face to face.

However, governments, advised by experts in their fields, have now mapped a clear path forward, but all plans are conditional on how the virus is controlled. We'll be able to join friends for coffee, meet at cafes and restaurants for meals and have friends around for afternoon drinks; travel to wherever we want whenever we want and above all, we can share visits with family and loved ones.

But it is all baby steps for a while.

Now is the time for us to reboot SeniorNet. The Management Committee is formulating plans to recommence classes and social events. We would like to get back to a version of normal as soon as it is safely possible to do so and involve as many of you as possible.

As we move forward and are in a position to confidently plan, we will keep you informed of actions we are permitted to take to bring us all together.

Greg Elmore

## Tech Talk

### COVIDsafe app

I have found some misunderstanding about the need and functions of the government's COVIDsafe app both in conversations and in the newspaper feedback columns. This is my take:

COVID-19 is rated a pandemic for very good reasons. The virus is significantly lethal (about 1.5% of cases as long as top quality intensive care is provided, though the rate is higher amongst older people and those with pre-existing health problems) and is so new that nobody has any pre-existing immunity from it. But the clincher is that most people who catch it are infectious for at least two days before displaying any symptoms (unlike, say, flu where you take to your bed before you can pass it on).

The result of this is that, if uncontrolled, cases will double every two days, or by a factor of a thousand every three weeks. Given that about 10% of cases will require hospitalisation it will take only a couple of months before the need overloads even the best resourced health system (a fact well illustrated in Italy and now USA where death rates of 14% and 6% of cases respectively are occurring).

So governments have two options – keep on as normal and kill substantial numbers of their citizens, or cut the spread of the virus by isolating as many of their people as is possible and accepting the resulting economic collapse. So far Australia has taken the second option, and has achieved a death rate of 1.4%.

But there is a third way, and that involves contact tracing; if you know those who have been in contact with a COVID sufferer you can isolate just them before they get a chance to infect other people, thus controlling the epidemic's growth. That can be done by asking the sufferer who their contacts are – trusting they remember everyone – but better still is to automate the process with an app.

The COVIDsafe app does just this. It uses short-range low-power Bluetooth communication (the same functionality that allows you to use cordless earphones) to identify nearby phones and to record extended contact (that is, it ignores people you just walk past). In the event you catch the virus you will be asked to hand over your phone for downloading the data and all recorded contacts can be telephoned and asked to self-isolate. Since the incubation period for COVID is less than two weeks all records of contacts over three weeks old are automatically deleted from your phone.



The app is available by searching for COVIDsafe in Android Play Store or Apple App Store. It is not necessarily the first to appear on the list, so look for the icon on the left and tap on it. Then tap on Install, then on Open when it has completed installation.

The app will first ask for your name (it does not mention this, but if you are concerned about privacy you can enter a pseudonym such as 'Fred Bear'. Just be ready for a call from the health people asking for 'Fred'!). The next field is for your age group; the tracing team can then prioritise the older groups who are most at risk. You then provide your postcode so that the health officials know which jurisdiction you are under. The next field asks for your phone number so that the system can text you a verification code number which you enter into the last field to complete the process.

The government believes that if 40% of Australians use the app the economic effects of isolation can be minimised and lock down can be phased out. Right now about 30% of mobile phone users have done so.

One conspiracy theory – which even has extended to politicians – suggests that COVIDsafe is a surveillance tool (using GPS to know your location). In fact, GPS would be useless for the purpose as it fails to register positions if you go into, for example, a shopping centre, and it is not accurate to the required 1.5m separation measure. Even if your data were compromised the only information would be the phone identity of recent contacts (and the police have been told that information will NOT be made available to law enforcement).

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Another comment in a letter to the paper is ‘that there will not be a vaccine for COVID because there is no vaccine for the common cold’. In fact, the common cold is a rhinovirus (not derived from rhinos – or bats) although 15% of ‘colds’ turn out to be another kind of coronavirus (one wonders if those who are least affected have been infected with that kind of a cold). There are vaccines for many virus diseases (polio, measles and mumps for example) .

Unfortunately the app cannot be installed on older mobile phones – it requires that your phone uses Android 6.0 (Marshmallow) / IOS 10 or newer, which means the phone was made after 2016. About 4% of all Australian phones fail this test; but the authorities would be thrilled to get 96% sign up! It is also true that iPhones work less well with the app – they can turn it off if they get busy – but Apple and Google are working hard to overcome these shortcomings.

Finally a word of warning. When lock down is phased out there WILL be new COVID hotspots detected and hopefully the app will enable their suppression (and until hotspots erupt there won’t be many contacts for the app to trace). So app uptake and lock down amelioration go hand-in-hand. It should be noted that in Australia about 0.03% of the population have had COVID – so 99.97% are at risk of infection (and at the current rate everybody would have immunity in 250 years). So the only hope for return to the pre-COVID normal is a wide-ranging vaccination programme – and the most optimistic expectations for such a programme are a year away (for the record, 0.4% of Americans have been infected so far).

Ken Curwen

## Don’t have a webcam? Try DroidCam

With so many people working from home and using video conferencing software such as Zoom to keep in touch, sales of webcams have soared. It is currently almost impossible to purchase a webcam and if you do find one, it is selling for an outrageous price.

If you have a laptop, phone or tablet, then you already have a webcam and microphone built in. But if you have a desktop computer then you need to add a webcam and microphone if you want to take part in video catchups.

With webcams almost impossible to purchase, that has created a problem for folks with desktop computers.

Enter DroidCam which enables you to connect your mobile phone camera and microphone to your desktop computer (you could happily use that old phone you keep in the bottom drawer). You need to download the Windows client from <https://www.dev47apps.com/> (there is also a Linux variant). Install this on your desktop computer.

Then go to the Google Play Store (or the Apple store if you have an Apple device) and search for DroidCam Wireless Webcam. There are two versions of this software DroidCam Wireless Webcam (which is free) and DroidCamX Wireless Webcam Pro (which costs a small amount). For now it is the free version you want. Install this on your mobile phone. It should also work on a tablet but I haven’t tried this.

Your mobile phone needs to be connected wirelessly to the same network as your desktop computer. At home, if your mobile connects to your network for Internet this should be the case.

Start the program on your desktop computer. Start the app on your mobile (or tablet). On your mobile you should see a screen showing the IP number of your mobile on the network (something like 10.1.1.xxx) and a port number. On the desktop computer program, you should see a Connect window. Make sure it says Connect over WiFi. Enter the IP address as it is shown on the mobile. The Port number should be already filled in. Tick the boxes for Video and Audio. Click the Start button and the connection will be made and you should see video from your mobile camera on the desktop screen.

If you now start a video conferencing program such as Zoom, it should recognise your mobile as a webcam and you should be able to adjust video and the audio from your mobile’s microphone.

The paid ‘Pro’ version will allow you to adjust the video controls which are inactive on the free version.

Phil Buchanan

## Potty History

### The Mongol Probe Beyond the Caspian Sea

The last episode saw Bukhara, the capital of Khwarizm, fall to Genghis without resistance as the unpopular Sultan Muhammed fled. Muhammed took refuge in Samarkand, the second city of Khwarizm, but despite having a platoon of elephants the city was unable to resist when the Mongols surrounded it. Again Muhammed fled towards the Caspian Sea, hotly pursued by Genghis's two best generals, Subedei and Jebe; Muhammed abandoned all his treasures on the sea shore and took a boat to a small island where he died of shock and despair.

There is an interesting back story about Jebe; in a battle during his rise to power Genghis was hit by a poisoned arrow and nearly died. After the battle he asked who had fired the arrow and one Jirko admits to doing so, saying "If you kill me for it I will rot in a plot the size of your hand; but if you spare me I'll cut through oceans and mountains for you". Genghis replied "This is a man to have as a companion. He shall be named Jebe [which means 'arrow point'], and I will use him as my arrow".

Genghis now chased after Muhammed's son Jalal ad-Din who made a fighting retreat through Afghanistan and the Khyber Pass to the banks of the Indus. With the Mongols upon him he spurred his horse across the river; Genghis, admiring Jalal's courage, abandoned the pursuit.

But back to Subedei and Jebe who now received permission to explore the lands beyond the Caspian. The resulting Great Raid covered 7500km in just over two years. At this time rumours of the Mongol Empire had reached Europe, but they were considered 'on our side' because they were slaughtering Muslims (this was during the Fifth Crusade); and also the Mongol falcon standard looked like a cross. Little did they know what the Mongols could do if trifled with.

The first cab off the rank was Georgia. Like a whirlwind the Mongols swept nearly to Tbilisi (the capital) and cut down the opposing Georgian knights. They then returned to Khwarizm to reinforce the action there returning to attack again, this time killing the King and his entourage. As a result of this the promised Georgian contingent to the Fifth Crusade never showed up.

The Mongols then turned their attention to what is now Chechnya, ruled at the time by the Polovtsy (think Polovtsian Dances from the opera "Prince Igor" by Borodin) whose realm stretched right into modern Ukraine. The Mongols recognised that the Polovtsy were too strong to defeat in open battle, so they sent an envoy with all the goodies they had looted in Georgia. The Polovtsy thanked the envoy and set off back to base, laden with treasure; whereupon the Mongol army ambushed them, smashed them, and recovered the loot.

Jebe's army then moved to the Dnieper river to set up a base camp on the east bank from which intelligence about Russia could be obtained. Subedei went to the Crimea to make mischief – at that time the Venetians had set up shop at the mouth of the Sea of Azov, in competition with nearby Genoese settlements. Subedei signed a treaty with the Venetians and torched the Genoese posts (thus Marco Polo travelled from Venice, not Genoa).

Meanwhile the Polovtsy khan had amassed large forces from all the Russias to confront the Mongols on the Dnieper. The Mongols sent a peace delegation – and guess what, the khan had them executed. This meant war; and although the Polovtsy alliance had many strong units – archers, armoured cavalry, marines – they were used to European set-piece battles, not the running fights that were a Mongol speciality.

Small groups of Mongols taunted the alliance which then crossed the river. The Mongols retreated for nine days, by which time the different alliance units had separated (due to their differing marching speeds). Thus the Mongols could attack them piecemeal. The allied forces fell back on themselves in chaos and were heavily defeated.

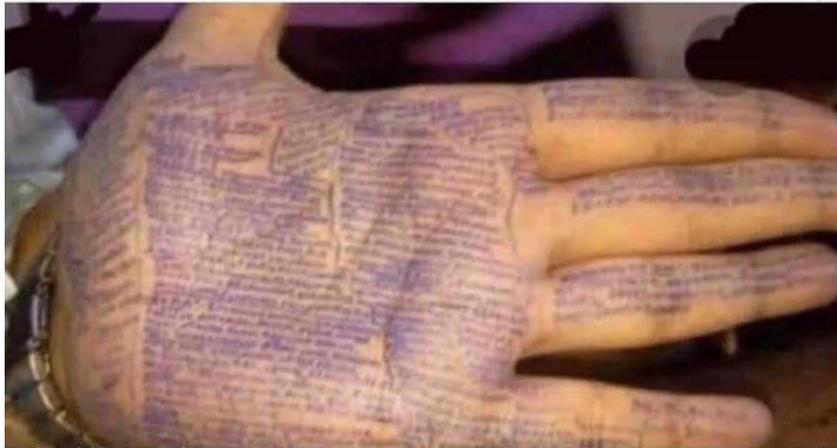
As a result of the Great Raid the Mongols knew the weakness of a fragmented Russia and of the hotchpotch of small European states behind them. They would return.

Ken Curwen

## Lockdown Humour

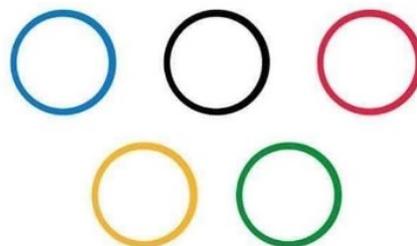


I washed my hands so many times, I found the answers to my 8th grade social studies test.



**Home schooling day 3: they all graduated yesterday**

**THIS IS THE SOCIAL ISOLATION LOGO FOR THE NEXT OLYMPIC GAMES**



**“Why is my sister’s name Paris?”**

**“Because we conceived her in Paris”**

**“Thanks Dad”**

**“No problem, Quarantine”**



Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the married men who have told their wife “I’ll do that when I have the time”

My wife yelled from upstairs and asked “Do you ever get a shooting pain across your body, like someone’s got a voodoo doll of you and they’re stabbing it?” Sounding concerned, I said “No” She responded “Well, how about now?”

After 2 weeks of quarantine with her husband, Gertrude decided to knit him a scarf..



## Further Information

### SeniorNet Committee

The listing of the 2019-2020 committee can be found [here](#).

### Computer Repairs

A listing of repairers who our members have found satisfactory can be found [here](#).

**Disclaimer:** While we have made every effort to give accurate information and tips in this Newsletter, we cannot guarantee that their use will provide the desired results in all circumstances. In no event will the Editor or SeniorNet be liable for direct, indirect, special, incidental or consequential damages arising out of the use of URLs and tips given in this newsletter. *We recommend members verify details before acting on information or suggestions contained herein.* The Editor would appreciate being informed of any erroneous information so that it may be corrected.

Ken Curwen. Newsletter Editor.