

Episode One of Five: Kei roto i te miru: Inside the bubble – ‘We Prepared’ Podcast Series EP01 Covid-19 pandemic lockdown 2020. Produced by Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, Auckland Libraries.

Kei roto i te miru: inside the bubble

Podcast series, oral histories from lockdown 2020, Covid-19 pandemic Aotearoa New Zealand. Produced by Manatū Taonga, Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

### INTRO:

AUDIO PM Jacinda Ardern: 48hrs before lockdown - Non-essential businesses in New Zealand must now close. All bars, restaurants, cafes, cinemas, pools, museums, libraries, playgrounds, any other place where the public congregate must close their face to face function. All indoor and outdoor events cannot proceed. In short, we are all now preparing as a nation to go into self-isolation.

AUDIO: SFX (Sound Effects) Emergency Management Alert

AUDIO Jacinda Ardern: 48hrs before lockdown - These decisions will place the most significant restrictions on New Zealanders movements in modern history.

HOST: Tēnā koutou katoa, Ko Emma Jean taku ingoa. I’m Dr Emma-Jean Kelly -- an audio-visual historian with Manatū Taonga: The Ministry for Culture and Heritage -- and this is Kei roto i te miru: Inside the Bubble.

\*\*\*Theme Music upswell\*\*\*

HOST: As lockdown loomed and you gathered your whanau, your supplies, your nerves, we corralled a team of oral historians, grappled with technology, and (digitally) found our way into twenty five unique New Zealand bubbles to capture your Aotearoa, as you made history.

\*\*\*Theme Music upswell

HOST: It was a journey all 5 million of us made collectively as we prepared...

AUDIO Natalie Healy: That last day before we went in, I went to Bunnings and I went to Baby City to panic buy some more toys.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: She became the panic shopper, and I became the wingman to the panic shopper.

HOST: We cared...

AUDIO Jacque: The first two weeks were very scary, because we didn't know what was going to happen within the hospital.

HOST: And we moved...particularly...

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AUDIO Aliyah Winter: going on lots of government mandated walks

HOST: And ...

AUDIO Caren Wilton: I see a lot of older people, people who like to be in the 70s and 80s, who I don't think you would normally see out on bikes.

HOST: And we learned...

AUDIO Sebastian Nobile: I tried to learn guitar. Three songs... and we have four guitars in the hostel. So, lock down was the perfect opportunity.

AUDIO Zemara Waru-Keelan: We kept the home school thing happening. We made marshmallow putty and we did painting, and we exploded volcanoes...

HOST: And even though we couldn't be together -- we connected...

AUDIO Carol Peters: I am encouraged by the goodness of humans. I think there are the silver linings of connection, and us seeing how the best that we can be in caring for ourselves and our neighbours.

HOST: And now we remember -- in this episode we'll look back at how we prepared ....

SFX: Hot summer sounds cicadas

HOST: On the 31st of December 2019, much of New Zealand was living in that ‘nowhere time’ between Christmas and New Year -- y’know that time -- when you can’t really remember what day it is? Where the days seem to roll together? Remember how over that New Year, the haze from the Australian bushfires turned the sun red? -- But as we were ‘Doomscrolling’ the news of our burning neighbour (before we knew ‘Doomscrolled’ was even a word) another more distant concern was lingering lower in the news bulletins...a cluster of cases of a ‘pneumonia-like illness’ in the city of Wuhan, China were reported by the World Health Organisation. And then...

AUDIO:

China is scaling up its efforts to contain a deadly new virus as millions of Chinese prepare to travel at home and overseas for the Lunar New Year holiday. Six people have died in the central Chinese city of Wuhan from the new type of Coronavirus, and the number of people infected has jumped to more than 300. The World Health Organization is warning more cases of the virus should be expected in other parts of China and possibly other countries in coming days. Wuhan has put in place strict measures to try to stop the spread of the disease.

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HOST: We didn’t know it, but 2020 was going to be a year like no other...But hey, as ominous as that New Year red sun was, on we plodded with our lives, packing away the Christmas decorations, for the most part blithely unaware that what was spreading in China would soon arrive here -- and change everything.

SFX: Supermarket with checkout beeps, trolleys and crying child

HOST: On the 28th of February supermarkets filled and the toilet paper aisles emptied when our Ministry of Health announced that that ‘pneumonia-like illness’, now identified as a ‘Coronavirus’ -- was here.

AUDIO: Coronavirus first case in NZ 28 Feb 2020

AUDIO: What had seemed like a problem just for China or other distant places...was now ours to deal with too. The rush of people frantically buying toilet paper was ...perhaps a symbol of the collective loosening of our bowels as fear began to rise inside us...on the 4th of March another case... on the 5th another, then a crash course in the realities of exponential curves, with us unable to take our foot off the accelerator as we headed into the unknown of how we, Aotearoa, would take this on.

The anticipation of what was to come seemed to both make time drag and speed up as more and more upsets to normal life came at us. And then...

SFX of planes

HOST: On March the 18th we pulled up the drawbridge. For the first time in history, if you weren’t a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident -- the borders were closed.

SFX of planes

HOST: We were now one bubble of 5 million. And then -- 3 days later...

AUDIO PM Jacinda Ardern: LEVEL 01 Statement to the nation on Covid-19, March 21 2020  
I’m speaking directly to all New Zealanders today, to give you as much certainty and clarity as we can, as we fight Covid-19

HOST: Do you remember that Saturday afternoon? What were you doing? I was at home with my husband Jay, thinking about going for a bike ride when the Prime minister appeared on our TV flanked by two New Zealand flags -- It looked serious -- We knew this might be coming but it was still hard to believe, as she delivered the news to the nation that we would need to prepare to disperse into our separate bubbles for the foreseeable future and begin ‘living our lives in levels’.

When I look back at that time, just over a year ago, everything felt pretty surreal, sort of novel, and for an historian like me, kind of exciting in an odd way. What did all of this really

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mean? I’d recently been teaching students about the 1918 flu pandemic, and it was my only term of reference for the current situation. Back then, children in central Wellington were said to’ve run out on the streets to tell strangers their parents wouldn’t wake up -- they’d died in the night, and their children were now left to fend for themselves -- horrifying eh? -- That wasn’t a story I wanted to see repeated in Aotearoa.

I can also remember as I was listening to the announcement feeling worried for my father, he’s over 80 and lives alone in another city. Some of the reports we were hearing from around the world about older people being ‘more susceptible to Covid’ were starting to filter through. So, our family started talking to each other, to work out a plan to make sure Dad would be ok.

AUDIO PM Jacinda Ardern: LEVEL 02 Statement to the nation on Covid-19, March 21 2020  
Today, I’m announcing an alert system for COVID-19. There are four levels to the alert system. At each level there are things we need you to do to keep you safe, and there are things the government will do too. Alert level one is where COVID-19 is here but contained. In this phase we prepare...

HOST: And we did. In the days before lockdown I remember having a sort of frenzied need to prepare and get others around me ready too. Because we live in a small 47 square metre apartment, and there are 60 other apartments in our complex, I was worried about what it would be like to be inside for a long period of time. Would I be able to visit our community garden where I’d only just started growing veggies? How would we manage the lift and stairwells with dozens of people coming and going? I asked the Body Corporate if we could have hand sanitiser dispensers by the lifts, but by then it was already getting difficult to get hold of industrial amounts of sanitiser. My friend Mary and I went and bought gin to turn into homemade hand sanitiser. I set up soap stations by the taps around our buildings to encourage people to wash their hands before coming in, and home-styled a hand sanitiser dispenser beside the lifts in the foyer. (And for those of you with a deep knowledge of hand sanitizer production, we didn’t know it at the time, but yeah, it turns out there isn’t enough alcohol in gin to be effective. I kinda wish I’d listened more in my school science classes, what a waste of gin!)

SFX radio tuning

HOST: Next on my preppers ‘to do list’ was buying a radio, just in case something went wrong with the internet - I don’t even know why we thought this. In my last days of commuting into work I heard people on the bus talking about getting cash out in case the banking system failed, I’m normally that chatty person on the bus, but I found myself looking warily at others, hoping they wouldn’t sit near me, or try to talk to me. Remember that feeling of rising anxiety as lockdown loomed? Would your job or business survive? How would you cope?

SFX Busy Accident & Emergency department with beeping and generic hospital buzz

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AUDIO Jacque: the first week was pretty much chaos, because there was so much stress and panic and nobody knew what was going and nobody seemed there didn't seem to be a plan, there was no preparation.

HOST: That's Jacque, she's a nurse, she knew her job was safe, but the safety of her health and her life was much less certain. As she said, 'There was so much stress and panic...' She's one of thousands of health workers who were prepared to put their own lives on the line to do their job and save others. She's also one of the 25 New Zealanders who let us record an oral history of her lockdown experience, so we and future generations can remember, or find out what it was like living through lockdown.

AUDIO Jacque: And it was like, I think I felt in the whole country, in a way I sort of felt like there was this great big tsunami was about to hit. But no one knew when it was going to hit and how big it was going to be and what direction to run.

HOST: While many of us worried about how we would handle being stuck at home, for Jacque the worry was that she had to leave hers; potentially exposing her husband and two sons to the virus every time she returned.

AUDIO Jacque: we all knew that our bubble wasn't really a closed bubble, that people were working with was included, were obviously included in my bubble. So in reality, it was a very extended bubble. Yeah. Yeah. Which causes challenges.

HOST: Just imagine what that must have been like, going into a hospital or treating patients when most of us were safely at home, avoiding other people and in my case indulging my inner germaphobe pasting on that useless gin hand sanitiser. Part of Jacque's job also involved nursing patients in their own homes during lockdown, so figuring out how to do this safely took a heap of planning.

AUDIO Jacque: ...definitely an effort to begin with in setting it up. And every time you saw them, you had to phone them or visit them new at the door and you have to, you know, make sure to ask the questions. If they've had any, any contacts with anybody overseas or anyone that's been unwell. You have to revisit those questions all the time. And we all put on PPE, but not the full, there's so many different versions of PPE. They hadn't had contacts, we still wore just a surgical mask and just a plastic apron, just to protect them and protect us.

HOST: The plan was never static though and Jacque and her colleagues... just had to roll with it.

AUDIO Jacque: I know that was a little bit, learn as you go, there was definitely a lot of stress and work it out as you went along. And mixed messages about the PPE. First, we did have to wear it, and then we didn't have to wear it. And then we knew that actually, if the patient or the client had no contact, then theoretically, we didn't have to wear masks. But we all elected to wear them anyway. You know, according to the World Health Organization, we didn't have to wear them. But we did that we knew we felt safe, and we felt safe for our Kei Roto I Te Miru Inside the Bubble – Podcast Series EP01 ‘We Prepared’, Covid-19 pandemic lockdown 2020 Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, Auckland Libraries.

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patients to be wearing them anyway. So we elected to still wear the masks even though the World Health Organization said we didn't have to do.

HOST: Eventually as the hospital systems were organised and re-organised Jacque felt less like she was trying to outrun that tsunami.

AUDIO Jacque: As the time went along, and it came a little bit more of a plan and a little bit more of knowing what to expect and a little bit of preparedness. That brought along a calmness too.

SFX Sea wash and music stab

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: My name is Angelique Rosemary Tuaputa. I was born and raised in Ranui, Auckland, and both of my parents are from the Cook Islands. The house that we currently in is the house that we've had for 26 years, which is the amount of years I've been born. So when I was born, they bought this house so I still have it today and it's been part of my bubble.

MUSIC

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: So, in my bubble, it's a very small one. It's my dad and my sister, and myself, we live in a three-bedroom home that we own. And it's a cozy, it's a comfy place for us to be in everyone has their own room, their own space.

HOST: Angelique works as a Pasifika specialist Librarian in Auckland, was initially in denial about going into lockdown.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: I was away with the fairies [laughing] because I didn't know what I was going to do during that time, but my sister was very focused out of the both of us, and I remember I was getting paid, I think the Wednesday before lockdown, I was getting paid the day and all I could think about and all I could really focus on was I need to go shop. I need to go and buy things for the house, and that happened to be our shopping week and I get paid fortnightly so I always look forward to pay week and pay day like everyone else, but my sister had a plan. She'd written this plan down, and shared this plan with me, and I think both of our minds were ... she was expecting lockdown, I wasn't. I was like nope, this is just going to be temporary, we're going to go ... I'm going to go back to work after two weeks. It's going to be all fine.

HOST: Meanwhile, Angelique's younger sister Florence went into full prepper mode.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: She already had it in her mind, we need to start preparing, and she became the panic shopper, and I became the wingman to the panic shopper. So when the news came out those last 48 hours was a big blur and a big rush, but I remember going to four different places to buy all our essential items [laughs]. We went to two supermarkets, one veggie shop, the warehouse, and we got everything from blankets to comfy, just comfy clothes, just to wear during lockdown, like pajamas. And I remember Kei Roto I Te Miru Inside the Bubble – Podcast Series EP01 ‘We Prepared’, Covid-19 pandemic lockdown 2020 Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, Auckland Libraries.

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when we went shopping, we took our dad with us and we had this plan that this person would grab this stuff and I felt like I was in Armageddon because like I felt like we were just gonna grab all of the stuff and we just stock it in our home. One thing I remember my dad telling me was, because he's very religious and with my church, we always have this system, called a welfare system, where you should always have something stocked, you should always have goods stocked up, regardless of the situation you're in, to prepare yourself for these times, and I remember him saying to me in the shop, that's why you need to have a welfare. And so my sister went crazy and bought so much cans as she started the welfare and we actually have the welfare now, outside in the shed. And I remember we were just having a list of things that we're just gonna buy. Even though there's three of us in the home, the goal was to buy enough so that we could limit our time going out, and it worked for us. So every two weeks, we shop and we bought a lot of comfort food, we bought a lot of food, depending on whatever everyone's tastes were. My sister likes things with a lot of veggies and stuff like that, my dad loves a lot of meat, and I like a lot of both. So I became the balance between both of them, because not only were they panic shopping for food, they were trying to discuss what they wanted to eat and couldn't agree on things. So that time was ... it was very full speed, it was a blur, but it was very exciting and strange at the same time to see how people could react to certain situations that were not normal to them. I also remember, gas prices falling down really quickly and us just filling up, you know, our car, extra gas bottles, you know. I remember checking up on my friends and family during that time just to see if they needed anything.

## MUSIC

HOST: I'm Dr Emma-Jean Kelly and you're listening to Kei roto i te miru: Inside the Bubble, a collection of oral histories recorded during the 2020 nation-wide Covid-19 lockdown. For some, the warning signs of a pandemic started to appear much sooner.

AUDIO Albert Traill: I am cabin crew with the short haul operations of Air New Zealand. We fly to all major Australian ports, all of the Pacific Islands, as well as our domestic sectors.

HOST: As an airline worker Albert knew the virus had the potential for disaster and could see he and his family needed to get ready.

AUDIO Albert Traill: So yeah definitely ... flashback to other previous world pandemics, yeah, the influenza, the flu epidemic, and so forth. So yeah definitely, we definitely felt it.

HOST: And then his hours at work began getting reduced -- and he and his wife had to start making plans to survive.

AUDIO ALBERT TRAILL: I could see it with my workplace, a massive international airline shrinking down to just domestic flights only, thousands and thousands of people who normally traverse our airports, just a complete standstill.

SFX of airport interior

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AUDIO Albert Traill: I think ...the first response was ... wow. The heaviness and the gravity of the situation, or let’s say the seriousness of the situation, fully set in when we heard the words of the Prime Minister say we are going to lockdown the country.

HOST: So, Albert prepared to hunker down with his family in West Auckland.

AUDIO Albert Traill: In my bubble is my wife Te Kura Traill who is from the Cook Islands, and our three children, Melanie, Jacob and Tumaia...and we took all the necessary steps to prepare.

HOST: But despite all the early knowledge he had, and provisions to last, Albert still wasn’t above joining in the panic...

AUDIO Albert Traill: though we had already a fully stocked emergency supply, 72 hour kit, so forth, and food supply, to really be honest we did join in the queues to go for that mad rush of shopping, not in the sense that we wanted to stockpile and so forth like most of the people, but we were worried in the sense that everything would run out, and I think that’s what drove many people to join those queues, was the worry of things running out. Of course, the ramifications for all of that was how on earth is this going to work with a complete shutdown across everything, with schooling, work, social gatherings, and so forth. Huge, huge, impact, almost to the point of ...

HOST: And maybe he did let himself get just a little bit carried away with the idea that we might be heading into some kind of cinematic dystopian future...just for a moment

SFX The purge siren

AUDIO Albert Traill: You know I think our generation, our time, we watch too many movies, and for me the first movie that came into my mind was ... what’s it ... The Purge.

HOST: Albert’s talking there about the cult, American, horror, TV series and film where people are allowed to commit crimes for a 12-hour period after they hear that creepy siren. It became a bit of a thing on the internet with people encouraging one another to take to the streets with speakers and play it as lockdown began.

AUDIO Albert Traill: I tell you what, the anticipation of what the heck is going to happen, it was pretty much near the same, and believe it or not, we thought we would be sound asleep at 11.59pm on the deadline before lockdown began, but guess what, we were all awake watching TV and so forth, and movies, and I actually contemplated saying to my wife Te Kura, hey why don’t I put out the big blue tooth speaker in the back yard and crank it up to as loud as capacity and play The Purge siren at midnight?

SFX – The Purge siren and ticking clock

HOST: It’s strange now looking back on what it was like preparing to head into the lockdown, that precise deadline, down to the minute; 11:59 on the 25th of March, 2020.

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It was only a year ago and we’re by no means out of the woods yet, but hearing those heavy-hearted announcements from the Prime minister again made me feel a little emotional; remembering that worrying time, not knowing how or if we would get through. Angelique Tuaputa never wants to forget the effect preparing for the unknown of lockdown had on her.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: But those 48 hours ... I actually started a journal because of those 48 hours, [laughing] because I just wanted to write this down, and I hate writing stuff down [still laughing]. So ... that 48 hours actually changed my perspective on humanity, and how people react to anxious situations, and panic, and it kind of made me reflect on myself and my family and making sure that we should always be prepared.

\*\*\*\*Music\*\*\*\*

### Outro:

HOST: I’m Dr Emma Jean Kelly and that was ‘We Prepared’ our first episode for Kei Roto I Te Miru: Inside the Bubble. The series was written and executive produced by Teresa Cowie -- sound was designed and woven by Anaru Dalziel -- our production co-ordinator was Georgie Keyse -- and the music was by Stefan Patton. The lockdown oral histories you heard in this episode were recorded by Tuaratini Raa and Debbie Dunsford.

Our thanks to The Ministry for Culture and Heritage -- Auckland Libraries, especially Sue Berman -- RNZ for the news archive and of course to those who shared their bubble with us Angelique Tuaputa, Albert Traill and Jacque, nga mihi nui ki a koutou. Listen out for the rest of their stories in the upcoming episodes. Speaking of which...

In the next episode...we’ll look back at how together/alone we cared, and we’ll hear how wāhine toa, Titihuia Keelan, took in whanau during lockdown, caring for a massive bubble of 13.

AUDIO TITIHUIA KEELAN: I mean, it was really hard. And I’ll tell you something, the police actually came over. And they were like, Oh, you know, you got too much people here. And I was like, Yeah, I understand. But I told him the situation, you know. And I was like, yeah, cuz would you rather these kids look after themselves?

HOST: Join me for the next episode to hear more of Titihuia’s remarkable story. Mā te wā.

\*\*\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*\*\*  
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