



## My COVID Experience

*This is an excerpt of the forthcoming publication 'Come Closer' developed by Dr Catherine Barrett, commissioned by LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's ageing and aged care program Silver Rainbow.*

### Mieke van Dijk speaks of her experience.

I was panicked initially by the reports of Coronavirus. But I live in a miasma of fur with three huge rag doll cats, they have been a huge part of me surviving this.

How computer literate we have become! I was very resistant to all IT to start with, but one of my friends convinced me at the age of 70 that I needed an email address. And now I know how to do Zoom. I am more confident online, including paying bills.

I usually have an LGBTI book club, film club, coffee club, rainbow outings and Elder's lunch. The outings stopped – but the other activities went to Zoom. That was ok; but it was not the same without face-to-face contact and hugs, which are an important part of these groups through the Council on the Ageing South Australia [COTA SA] Rainbow Hub and ECH aged care and Catalyst who are all looking out for us.



I don't have a car, so I have to travel places by bus. As the restrictions have eased, I found myself being a bit reluctant to get back on a bus. There is a danger of becoming house bound; we could so easily lose confidence and just stay at home.

I want to say how well the LGBTI community looks after us. I had regular contact from an athletic friend who called and asked me to come for walks. It has been very, very nice. It seems more so than usual, LGBTI community members are looking out for each other – and for us older people. These are people I have always had in my life – but they have come closer.

What I have learned from Coronavirus is that we are stronger than we thought we were.

Younger LGBTIQ people and mainstream organisations have reached out to support us. This is reassuring. While so many will look back on this time with horror – we have also seen a side that is positive. People who care have come closer. That matters.

### JOIN US

- **Attend LGBTI lunches and events.**
- **Read our free newsletter.**
- **Be supported accessing aged care services.**
- **Be part of our visitors program.**
- **Access aged care inclusivity training.**

**Visit the Rainbow Hub section of the COTA SA website for more information.**