

## THERE'S A PIECE MISSING: LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

I hear my sister, Catherine's voice, on the other end of the phone... "There's a piece missing". Catherine is referring to the 15th jigsaw puzzle she has done since March. Jigsaw puzzling is a new hobby she has taken up since lockdown. "I'm doing one with flowers".

The jigsaw piece is not the only element currently missing in Catherine's life. Catherine lives alone in Melbourne. "I wish someone could come and have a cup of coffee with me". Living in lockdown during a pandemic is difficult for anyone. However, when you live alone with an intellectual disability, reliant on family and services for support and social contact, it can be particularly challenging.

"I can't go to the coffee club anymore, which makes me feel a bit down, but I have plenty of jigsaws to keep me going". Catherine does have some visitors during the week. "I am lucky because the lady who cleans for me comes, and we have a chat. My Occupational Therapist (OT) is coming too, but she said she might have to stop".

Catherine's OT has been working with her to develop her digital skills. "I want to learn Zoom so I can talk to people, but it is hard. I need more lessons". Developing these skills is important to Catherine. For many people with intellectual disability the digital divide is real. Although she sometimes expresses frustration about being excluded from the digital world, Catherine's digital skills are progressing. "I'm using Facebook more on my tablet. I share photos of my jigsaws". Catherine understands that her regular social interactions are severely curtailed at the moment, but is hoping she can learn how to use her computer to "catchup with people more often".

Catherine and I chat about the restrictions, and what they mean to her. "I saw a thing on the telly about COVID. It didn't make sense because there were all drawings. They should use photos of someone wearing a mask and washing hands. I think that would help people understand what they have to do". Catherine has worked with Scope Australia's Accessible Information service as a consumer tester for many years. Ensuring information is accessible to everyone is something that is very close to Catherine's heart. "When Dan [Andrews] talks to us, it's good he has a signer [Auslan interpreter] there. But what about Easy English".

Catherine feels that the restrictions aren't all negative. She is now "the jigsaw queen of the world" and is "learning new things on the computer". She says, "I'm lonely, but everyone is in the same boat".

Catherine, I am sure we will find that missing piece in the puzzle before we know it. Hang in there!

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