

Keeping in Touch with PDS

PDS SLACK CHANNEL

The PDS Slack Channel is open for discussions on any aspects of postdoc life, or to pick the brains of your colleagues. Click [here](#) to join. It has been particularly active during the VC briefings and faculty meetings.

PDS MIX & MINGLE

We have run two Thursday afternoon Zoom mixers to meet others in the faculty with breakout rooms for smaller group discussions. Watch out for info on the next one via email or the PDS social media accounts.

Coffee Mornings



Every morning in lockdown is coffee morning!

For the University's notices on COVID-19 click [here](#).

Who is ready for some PDS PD in their PJs*?

Professional Development from home. The first workshop will be on Thursday May 28th from 2-3pm via Zoom on the topics:

1. Using social media for research - Evie Southwell
2. Academic impact and wider research impact - Derryl Hayman.

Zoom link:

[\[Redacted - refer to email version or contact us\]](#)

Password: *****

Evie Southwell and Derryl Hayman both work as Research Services Advisers for Te Tumu Herenga, Libraries and Learning Services, and are based in the Philson Library at Grafton. They provide guidance to postgraduates and academic staff to develop researchers' skills and to make maximum use of library resources.

They will be joined by their team leader Jo Simons for the Q&A so we have three great brains to pick!

*Please note PJs are optional but clothing of some description is required (we don't want to end up on a Zoom blooper reel!)



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Lockdown Life - aka Working from Home

Dr Brya Matthews

Role at the University: Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Molecular Medicine and Pathology, and co-president of PDS.

What has been good or challenging about working from home? I live in an apartment out the back of my parent's place, so I share a bubble with them and a burmilla cat. They're good company and great cooks. During the lockdown, I've mainly been working on finishing a manuscript which I should have submitted months ago! It was great to hit submit the other day, although it felt weird not being able to announce it to my workmates around the office. My only teaching for this semester also coincided with the start of lockdown, but I was able to use recorded lectures from last year and run short tutorials on Zoom. Listening to recordings of yourself is a very awkward experience! I've been running most days, although I'm not as good as I thought I'd be by now. I'm lucky to have a pretty good work environment, but I've definitely found working from home all the time challenging in terms of maintaining motivation and focus. When you get in the right headspace it's great for writing, and definitely easier to make video calls to colleagues and friends overseas than in a shared office. I just haven't been as productive as I'd like.

Outside of work what has been the biggest positive of lockdown? I think the lockdown has really encouraged staying in touch more regularly with friends and relatives. My friends have been doing daily(ish) challenges, and we've done a couple of virtual quiz nights (thanks UoA Zoom licence!) My extended family is also having regular group meetups including a pretty amazing Anzac day presentation by one of my cousins about the war experiences of some of our forebears. I'm considering volunteering to talk about my research to see how I do with presenting to a more general audience.

What are you most excited to do once restrictions have been lifted? I'm excited to be able to get out windsurfing again in the next few days, and I'm really looking forward to being able to see my sister and 3-year old nephew who live in Northland once we move to level 2.



Dr Brya Matthews rocking this look for 'craziest outfit challenge' one of the many fun not work things she has been doing from home.



Dr Catherine Tsai with her husband and daughter enjoying a unique experience of home ownership in lockdown.

Dr Catherine Tsai

Role at the University: RF at MMP, co-president of PDS

What has been good about working from home? My husband (also a postdoc, in cancer bioinformatics) works and lives in the US, but luckily he came home for the holidays just before lockdown so he has been with us. We set up a schedule to take turns between working in the home office and looking after our 3-year-old daughter. I actually quite like the flexible working hours and the undefined work/life boundary under the WFH situation. For many of us, it's hard to feel really productive without doing any lab work, but this period also provides a chance to concentrate on thinking, reading and writing.

What has been challenging about working from home? I had difficulties setting up remote access right from the beginning, and even IT couldn't help solve the problem. Eventually I got the VPN set up and could access my P drive, but working on my 13.5-inch MacBook isn't as pleasant as using the bigger desktop screen.

Outside of work what has been the biggest positive of lockdown? The world is quieter, cleaner, and slower. I have more time with my family and more time to take notice of and enjoy the things that I have been taking for granted.

What are you most excited to do once restrictions have been lifted? I really miss socialising with people and attending various events. I also can't wait to go shopping in stores. Most of all I'm excited to move into our new home! We bought a house just before the lockdown. The settlement date was during the first week so the agent could only leave the key in the letterbox. We couldn't move in but we have been enjoying it by staying in the empty new house over a few weekends -- sleeping in airbeds and dining on a picnic mat, just like indoor camping!