

**18<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

The club convened once again on Zoom. Present were president Barry Antees, Malcolm Brown, Bob Rosengreen, Keith Henning, Joy Nel and our guest, ABC journalist Rani Hayman. Barry, introducing Rani, said he had known her for six years since meeting her at the Rotary Club of St George Next Gen. Rani had served as club president.

### **Rani Hayman**

Rani said she had started with the ABC in 2016 as a reporter and broadcaster design with international affairs, dealing with foreign correspondents and filing for news broadcasts, finding that deciding on which items were to do in and which were to be left out, and meeting deadlines was “quote challenging at times”. In 2018 she had been sent to Darwin, working on a “multi-platform” basis as a journalist. There, she reported on things as diverse as the effects of climate change on Kakadu National Park and Anzac Day in Katherine. She had returned to Sydney in September last year, in time for, as it turned out, for the bushfire crisis, followed by the pandemic. She had started as a producer for Radio Triple J.

### **Pandemic Journalism**

Rani said the ABC staff had been affected in various ways by the pandemic. It was an unprecedented situation, affecting not only the stories that had to be covered but the operation of the newsroom itself. Reporters were obliged to go to the airport to speak to people getting off planes, including repatriation flights, but for the reporters themselves the issue was their own protection. Should they themselves use gloves and facemasks? And what about sticking a microphone in someone’s face and then having to speak into the microphone yourself?

As far as the microphone went, the solution was to put the microphone on a stand and then get people to speak into it at a distance, but it meant calling out to people rather than the normal friendly media approach. What about a media conference with the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, when journalists had to resist their instinct to get into a scrum to surround him?

The job of getting the information was however especially important at a time of crisis, when people turned, sometimes in overwhelming numbers, to the ABC for information. It was essential to check and double-check things before they went out. In answer to questions from Bob Rosengreen, she said that although millions of people now turned to *Wikipedia*, there had to be concern about the information that was being put out there. Sometimes it was material that you would not rely on.

Rani said that work practices had changed. A lot of staff were working from home and only occasionally coming into the office. But there were other changes in the media even when things got back to normal. In answer to a question from Malcolm Brown, she said social media played an important role now in the dissemination of information and a lot of video provided by the public was now used in mainstream media because it was not possible for news staff to be everywhere at once. People could now be interviewed on Skype or Zoom. That did have implications for cameramen and sound recordists who were being cut out of the role they normally played.