

## **“Unproductive and stir crazy”: Students’ experiences of 2020 as their final year of secondary schooling.**

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The final year of secondary schooling is an intense and important one for many young people. In 2020, Australian students in Year 12 were subject to a range of disruptions to their learning practices because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health measures that distanced them from their schools, teachers and peers. This paper reports on a survey of 241 Australian Year 12 students collected between May and September 2020, as they navigated a range of changing circumstances through the unpredictable year. The survey sought to collect insights into how these students experienced learning in 2020. The online survey included open-ended questions about how students connected with their teachers and their schools and how their experience of social and educational arrangements had changed. The survey was distributed via social media channels and implied consent was gathered as participants opted-in. The survey data were analysed initially through examination of commonalities as well as some interesting exceptions that were evident for each question. The initial analysis was then considered using the theoretical framework of Practice Architectures and Illeris’ Theory of Learning. For the purpose of this study, these theoretical tools helped to understand the rapid and large-scale changes to the arrangements of students’ final year of schooling. All student participants experienced the closure of their schools and upheavals in the physical and social spaces in which they were learning. They were also impacted by the events and significant changes to lifestyle and routines that affected all members of their communities. supported consideration of how. Overall, this research contributes to an emerging body of literature seeking to understand student learning during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In recognising the importance of hearing and valuing students experiences directly, the research goals were to access and value the voices of students during this tumultuous time. We found that the students noted that the provision of engaging content with clear understandings of performance, access to motivational events and activities, and strong and supportive relationships with teachers and peers were challenges to their learning practices as a result of the 2020 disruptions. These stories show that these are important to the learning experiences of final year students.