

# A Junior's Reflection

By Kayt Hogan

I am soon approaching my third anniversary of coming to the Bar; and I practise in common law/ personal injury and criminal law. At the commencement of the pandemic, I worked at home for a period of time; however, I recommenced coming to chambers approximately one month ago. Living in an apartment with my husband, working at home soon became difficult as we took turns sharing the dining table for meetings; or in my case, telephone hearings, settlement negotiations or appearances via AVL. I always got priority if it involved an appearance, with my husband sitting out on the balcony hoping there was no nearby construction noise!

After the initial panic about potentially negative impacts on my practice, I have been fortunate that in hindsight I have not been adversely impacted by the pandemic. While jury trials were vacated, I was able to keep occupied with other work such as advices and trial preparation. I expected there would be some opportunity to have a break given limited court work, but I soon found that I really missed being in court and the chambers work felt somewhat monotonous.

Being in the first few years of the Bar, I certainly missed being able to wander down the corridors of chambers and ask questions of colleagues, or run a matter by them, should anything arise. However, despite barristers working apart (whether on the phone, or via AVL), there was still a strong sense of collegiality. When participating in settlement negotiations, for instance, such negotiations were often commenced by opponents asking how things were going during the pandemic and just having a general discussion about any impact on each other.

I have not gone without my technological failings. At the start of the pandemic, I appeared in the District Court via AVL. I could not work out why I could not be seen on the screen, and soon discovered the rear-facing camera on my laptop was activated and all that could be seen was the clutter on my dining room table. Fortunately, I was able to work this out before court actually commenced (well, my husband worked it out in all fairness!) I think the most challenging thing about

Photo taken on my first physical appearance during the pandemic. At the time, I was excited about the 'novel' experience



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AVL, after sorting out the technology, is that it is very difficult to properly see – and read – the Bench. Furthermore, when conducting settlement negotiations via telephone, not being able to read your opponent adds its complexities.

We have of course all been in this together, and I think the real willingness to do the best we can in the circumstances to facilitate the course of justice has been readily apparent. **BN**