

CORONAVIRUS CONTAGION

This illness is incredibly easy to catch

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WEATHER

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TODAY

MIN 12
MAX 16



Showers and chance of thunderstorm. Gusty winds, possible hail

TOMORROW

MAX 16



Showers, windy



Tim Brown was given the all clear. Picture JASON EDWARDS

TIM Brown welcomed his colleague into his office at the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute with a bow.

It felt like an odd thing to do when the man had no symptoms of coronavirus, but he had recently arrived from overseas and they were being extra-cautious.

It was March 17 and the warnings about COVID-19 were escalating each day.

Professor Brown, the director at AMSI, and his colleague sat about 1.5m apart and spoke for no longer than 90 minutes.

Later, they would both come down with a fever, be diagnosed with coronavirus and the building they sat in at Melbourne University would be shut down. "This virus is incredibly easy to catch," Prof Brown warned.

ASHLEY ARGOON

The night of the meeting, his colleague reported a fever and Prof Brown went into isolation. After three days, he said he noticed "a subtle difference" when he took a long breath in the morning.

There was also an irritating, intermittent but mild cough. So he went to get tested — his colleague had returned a positive result the day before.

But Prof Brown's test came back negative.

He went back again on advice from his doctor. This time the result was positive.

His worst symptoms came four days in with shivers and a fever running at a temperature of 38C.

Coronavirus also wreaked havoc with his Type 1 diabetes,

forcing him to radically increase his insulin levels with a home pump and guidance from a specialist.

Two weeks on, and after a call from DHHS that he was safe to end isolation, Prof Brown went to pick up a lawnmower he had sent for repair.

Staff were nervous and asked him if he had the virus — he offered to show them a letter of release.

"People are understandably fearful because mine has been the benign end of what has been devastating for others," Prof Brown said. "A friend ... suggests the government should issue smiley face badges for those who have recovered, because we are the least dangerous to anyone and hopefully have immunity from recontracting the disease."