



## **So...podcast – Episode 6 Dorothy, Geoff & Graeme**

*Greetings, listeners and transcription readers. John McKenna from So ...podcast. I'm going to give some background about the episode you're about to listen to. There are three people that I talk to, Dorothy, Geoff and Graeme. My connection with these people was about my involvement whilst sitting on a not for profit board for a number of years and during my time there, I got the opportunity to listen to a range of people speak and basically, really think deeply about what governance is all about. The good, the bad and our purpose.*

*During our conversation that you're about to listen to they share and reflect on their views on existing governance and new governance. My start off question to them all is asking them to share their own personal headline. It's a fascinating interview and I do hope you enjoy.*

Dorothy: I think my personal headline is 'Gratitude and wanting to share my life with others and empowering others the best way I can'.

Geoff: Mine would be 'Impact that's sustainable that matters'.

John: Love it.

Graeme: My headline would be 'Inclusion and Human Rights'.

John: Our listeners and transcription readers would like to learn more about you before we get into the meaty conversation. So, Geoff, I might go back to you, tell us a bit about yourself please?

Geoff: Yes, my background is that I have been in both the for profit and not for profit sectors for a considerable period. I am currently a retired lawyer and I also, have two not for profit board memberships at the moment.

Graeme: For my sins, I have been a CEO of two large disability services organisations over the last 15 years or so. Also, on a couple of other board. So, my professional life is that





whole issue of impact and sustainability, so I see the world that way, so my job need to allow me to do that. So, that's what I do.

John: Dorothy, will you please share a bit more?

Dorothy: My background is human resources at all levels, including nationally and internationally, and I too have been on a variety of boards, all in the not for profit sector and I can see what influence and what direction board members have on an organisation.

John: Okay, so I guess that's the podcast housekeeping. Now let's get into the conversation. No set orders. We've got some dot points on a whiteboard that we're looking at. I'm going to start with number one, personal values. Who wants to start talking about their own personal values?

Dorothy: Okay, my personal values are helping other people because I think that's the way that humanity works best, recognition of people's strengths and values and being authentic in all that I do.

John: Are you concerned when you're trying to identify someone's personal strength?

Dorothy: I would never do that. I would help people lead themselves to do that.

John: That makes sense.

Graeme: For me John, and it's one I've used professionally, consistently as well, 'cause I don't distinguish between my personal and professional life. For me, your values are your value wherever you are and for me, number one is always respect. It's how you deal with people, how you engage with people and learn from them. I think if you do that authentically, as Dorothy said, you learn a hell of a lot and you're then much more capable to do a better job, I think, as well. That applies to your family as much as it does to your professional work.

John: Absolutely.

Geoff: Mine would be the same as Graeme in terms of respect being well up there, but I would also include trust and diversity in my personal values.





John: I'm going to throw in a point that's not on the whiteboard. We're talking about trust and as you know, we're very much involved in technology and social media, and we can talk as people who follow our gut feelings. But when we're relying on things we're reading and twittering and seeing, are we managing with that? Are we coping with that? Is that a bit of a distractor?

Graeme: It's both good and bad John. I mean, technologies been an issue since we discovered that we could throw stones at animals and eat them. This isn't a new thing. The issue is how you use it and technology can do a lot of harm if it's poorly managed. That comes back to the values. If you use your values authentically, you then use technology for good reasons. So, you don't deny the technology because you don't want to lose the benefit, but you have to be very careful that you don't abuse it either.

Dorothy: And I think technology is a help. It's not a thing in itself. It's there as an instrument towards human interaction. So, both are necessary, the direct approach and the technological.

Geoff: The technology can be very empowering and if used properly can lead to great outcomes to assist people to live more inclusive lives. It's also a way to keep boards or organisation honest in that the communication now can be made about good and bad and then, certain actions can be taken.

John: I'd like to talk about, you get out of bed every morning, why do we do what we do? I know that's a very open question, but we've all got different priorities we need to do. We need a cup of tea, we need to let the dog and the cat out, but once we've got through that informal stuff, what's our purpose? What's really important to us? What's on our agendas?

Dorothy: For me, I really like the concept of service and I like the management theory called, 'Service Leadership'. I think that we're here to do the best we can with our fellow human being and with the universe, and with the environment we're in, whatever way that is for each one of us, but I get out of bed in the morning to create service.

John: What about yourself (for a section 0:07:13.4) how do you know you're doing a good job?

Dorothy: I don't, I hope I am and feedback from other people does make a difference.





Geoff: For me, it's about, I get up for communication and connection with people in various stages of life. I always try to have a positive interaction with every person that I meet during the day and for me, that's the reason why I would do what I do.

Graeme: For me John, I mentioned about impact and sustainability that matters. So, that's my mantra. I get out of bed because every day's a new learning experience and I'm really disappointed. You do have days that are not quite so good for a range of reasons, but it's rare that I go to bed thinking, "I didn't learn something that was really valuable today", from other people generally, but sometimes about yourself, just, the light went on at last about that issue that you've been maybe struggling with, but just something connected on that day. So, while there's energy and (0:08:18.9) to your day, it gets you out of bed each day.

John: It does. If I was to say the words, 'personal heroes'. Now, people think, "Personal hero? What's that mean?". For those young people listening, that's like an influencer. So, do we all have in the back of our minds, who has really influenced us and why?

Geoff: Yeah, for me, John, Nelson Mandela has always been my personal hero.

John: Who is he?

Geoff: He is a late South African leader who was integral in dispensing with apartheid in South Africa, but his values were very much around social justice and about not taking aim at those who were having an opposite view, but more, embracing them and then leading with integrity and values that I really admire and relate to.

John: I don't think many people disagree. He is a guy we do know and if you don't know him, Google him.

Graeme: John, for me, mine goes back a bit further, so you might have to Google for some, a man called Leonardo Da Vinci, who was the renaissance man. A true genius. I mean, some people like all geniuses, but he genuinely was, but a flawed genius. He never really finished things very well. He kept moving to the next thing.

He was a scientist, an artist, definitely an influencer of his time. So, beauty was really important to him, so advancing the joy of life, but at the same time advancing the knowledge through scientific and anatomical, a whole range of areas that he just, he never sat still, he kept bubbling into new areas.





It's a shame he didn't live longer and finish off a number of things that he started. I think he changed the world in so many profound ways that I'm inspired by what he did. I'm not even his toenail in terms of ability, but I get inspired by him.

John: Do you have any of his qualities?

Graeme: Well, I'm a musician. He wasn't a musician, so I got him covered there, but he's probably got me covered on about 99 other things.

John: How about you Dorothy, who's your hero?

Dorothy: I certainly agree with Geoff and with Graeme, for me, my hero is a living person. It's somebody that I've had a lot to do with. He happens to be a religious leader and he truly practices what he believes. He is fascinated by every single human being that comes his way. He couldn't be more generous in his lifestyle in helping others. He's most knowledgeable. I would say that he's wise and he's here to learn the lessons of life and share his considerable knowledge and learning with other people who would be interested in that, and to do that cross religion. So, categories irrelevant in his life.

John: For sure, thanks for sharing those interesting insights. One of the topics we've got is quite a big one and I want to go through this quite clearly, new governance compared to old governance and what's it look like and what are we talking about when I say the words, 'new governance'. Geoff, I'll start with you because, can I just before going into there, looking through the not for profit or the for profit, governance is what, Geoff?

Geoff: Governance had been around ever since there were groups of people. Governance is simply the systems and processes by which an organisation runs and that's in its most simple terms. When we talk about old governance, we're talking about systems that are not so accountable, that are run by a board who thinks it knows all the answers. What has happened since the recent Royal Commissions into the financial services sector, but also into the disability sector, I might add, is that the old governance has been found to be wanting, which has created all of the ills of those organisations, which are current.

So, new Government is about a new way of organising an organisation's systems and processes. What new governance has at its heart is human rights and those qualities that bring out the best of human behaviour and those in new governance, the client or the





participant is at the centre of everything that they do, and it's about treating the client or the participant with care and kindness. All of the new governance principles are about that.

John: Can money come into that mix?

Geoff: Certainly, in terms of isolating the ills of the old governance system with the financial services sector where all of the banks were found to be wanting in terms of putting profit before people. So that, John, is a very good question and that was the real problem and the reason why this emerging new governance is coming about. We find the banks now in their advertising are putting the client right at the centre of what they do and not the question of profit.

John: What about people's egos? That's part of it, isn't it? They're still there.

Geoff: Yeah.

Graeme: My commentary on that would be that they're not exclusive. It's not only the good guys and those that make money are bad people. It's not as simplistic as that. You can do both and in fact, for many organisations and it's not just non-profit, but it can be commercial and Government organisations, if they are genuine in wanting to have an impact that matters, you can still make a dollar. It's not illegal and secondly, if you don't make a dollar, you can't do the job anyhow. People, I think, get too simplistic that if you're chasing the dollar, you're missing the point. The reason you need the dollar is the point. That then funds, so it's profit for purpose. That's how I put it.

So, you make a quid because you need to fund what it is that you do. So, you can do more of it and do it better. So, without money, it doesn't fly. I think, you can't get too purist about it. That's my (ten minutes/terminus 0:15:39.9), it's got to be sustainable too.

Dorothy: And I think that governance defines and organisation. It's the brand, it's the image. People will know very quickly if there are good governance policies and systems and process in place, and they will come to respect the organisation or not, depending on them, and a word that I think you used before, Geoff, it also typifies the culture of an organisation.

I can think of one organisation where I've been on the board that was very strong on child protection governance, very strong, and called it, 'safeguarding our children', which was the cultural terminology for it, but it became known as that, not as child protection.





So, governance to me is the defining characteristic of an organisation.

Graeme: John, could I come back to your point about ego, 'cause I think that's a really (0:16:45.2) and some of the failures of governance have been systemic, but some of them have been about people that thought it was all about them, and lost sight of what the purpose of the organisation was. That their role is purely a steward or a custodian for a period of time and should leave it better than what they found it.

It's hard because, if you're a leader in an organisation, you need some degree of ego for that to work. It's not a bad thing, but it needs to be stewed in the juices of good values and a good direction of where the organisation is going. It's like money, it's not bad. You need it to make it work, but don't let it get out of control.

John: When we talk about governance, we realise the power that a good board, as individuals, have in making decision, but still, it doesn't seem to be on the general radar of media or people aren't seen to be proud if they're on a board. Why don't we hear? I'm happy to be challenged on this point, but we're not hearing people putting their hand up and saying, "I'm on a board and I love doing what I'm doing". You don't hear those statements in conversations unless you probe to find what you're involved in. Am I right in thinking sometimes it's a bit of a hit and club that we don't talk about?

Geoff: John, I think, that it's pretty much like a good umpire of a football match, if you don't realise that they're there, they are doing a good job. So, good boards with good people, doing the right thing, usually do so without wanting congratulation. They're doing it for the good of the organisation.

So, for me, it's more about looking at why organisations are successful and a lot of the time that comes back to the board having good people on the board without egos, who have their satisfaction in the impact of their organisation.

John: Well said, Geoffrey.

Geoff: But I also just want to cover off on one last point, I was reading in a magazine yesterday and there was a caption in there about the future of business is about feelings and for me, I think, that's pretty much what new governance is about. That is, the feelings of the people that are the client or the participant receiving services or information from the organisation.







John: Are they measurable? Can you measure someone's feelings?

Geoff: You can measure the impact of an organisation and we know that and good organisations in the not for profit sector will do that and they do that through a series of feedback and also, obtaining information. In terms of the for-profit sector, that's in the shareholder satisfaction.

John: But I want to go back to that word, 'feelings', 'cause when you say, "feelings", you're talking about from the heart. Is that right?

Geoff: That's right.

John: Your gut feeling.

Geoff: Yes.

John: So, you've got eight people around a board table, all with different feelings and the person who says the most at the board table, do they have more feelings than somebody else? How is it measured? Because don't forget, in a board room you're sussing everybody else out, you're trying to get a vibe and energy in the room to go forward, so I think, what you're saying, I'm not disagreeing with you, but I'm just saying, how do other board members measure each other's feelings?

Geoff: When it comes to deciding a decision or how people conduct themselves, certainly the feelings come into it. Certainly, the feelings of the client or the participant is what I'm referring to, not necessarily the feelings of the board member as such. So, it's about this concept of putting the client at the centre of everything that you do. so, every decision or action that you take, the test is, is it going to benefit the client or the participant? The feelings are around their feelings.

John: I can feel it. I can hear what you're saying. Other thoughts from other members?

Dorothy: I think it's an input. Feelings are an input, they're not an output. The output is the quality of the decision, which is based on both logic and feelings, and I would add values, so based on three things. So, the measurable bit to me is the outcome, not the feeling.







Graeme: Totally agree with those points. I would add one, which is, we spoke earlier about why we do what we do and our feelings are important too and if you are true to what it is you say you do, you'll know that, or others will validate it for you. So, that's really important that you feel true to your purpose and true to your values. If you do, people pick that up as well 'cause you've got authenticity, you just are who you are and hopefully that then flows for the benefit of the organisation and the beneficiaries of the organisation.

John: We are coming to a close, but it's very important that we're able to ideally send a message to the world about their feelings and the moment we're having right now, and I am a great believer in, I guess, this is why I do podcasting to be part of a conduit where people meet each other and share views. So, let's go through our last statement or take away message for our audience that we'd like to share with people.

Graeme: I'm happy to go first. My summary would be, 'have a go'. So, for people listening who might be thinking, "I'd like to be involved in something like that", don't underestimate your capability. Every human has the capability to influence for good and for not good. Most do it for good nearly all the time, but you can influence more people if you do it in a systemic way, which could be through an organisation or through involvement.

Nearly everyone I've been involved with on boards or in organisations, very few aren't good and if you're thinking you could be one of those people, nurture it and grow it. So, have a go. Don't think it's only for other people because evil happens when you let other people get away with stuff. If you feel passionate about doing something, have a go.

Dorothy: I would say, and this is summarising, governance is not about ego. Being on a board is a huge privilege. It's not just the next thing you do that you put on your CV and with that comes responsibility and also, the opportunity to form a future that will be the best it possible can be at that period in time when you're making a decision.

Geoff: For me, it's the way that I was always brought up, and that's about always having care and compassion for others and I think, my takeaway message would be that if we have care and compassion for each other, then the world will be a better place. So, even looking at the new governance that we talked about, these same concepts come through and for me, old governance did not have care and compassion as their flagships. So, for me, that would be the take away.





John: Geoff, Graeme and Dorothy, I'd like to thank all of you for accepting the invitation to come onto the So ...podcast. We hope our listeners have enjoyed the conversation and stay tuned and thank you.

*Thanks for listening to the So...podcast. I do hope you subscribe for further podcasts. For more information about So...podcast go to our website: <https://www.johnmckenna.com.au/>*

