

William & Lonsdale - Lives in The Law

Ep 71. HH Mag. Michelle Hodgson

voiceover: [00:00:09] This is William and Lonsdale, a podcast about the legal ecosystem and the fascinating people who make it tick. Today, your host, Michael Green, speaks with her honor, Magistrate Michelle Hodgson, head of the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court of Victoria. Michelle was admitted in 1993 and worked as a solicitor advocate at Victoria Legal Aid, the Fitzroy Legal Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service all of which crystallised her desire to go to the bar. Then as a barrister, Michelle worked on many complex profile cases, including the Nauru royalty phosphate trust case and the Pungsu heroin import case. As her resume reflects, before being appointed to the bench, Michelle was a powerful advocate. But in the early days, she definitely felt there was, well, room for improvement.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:01:01] I thought that I didn't project to the back of the room. So I had a pretty simple education. Well, not a simple education, but there wasn't voice lessons or drama lessons or any of those classes. So I had been told that I was too quiet and I needed to speak more loudly in order to be heard. Also just physically, if you're talking a lot, it can really take a toll on your voice. So I needed to be able to, you know, to exercise my voice. And I also think I sounded a bit bogan to be honest.

Michael Green: [00:02:03] Our guest this morning in Lodge in the Law is Her Honour, Michelle Hodgson, Head of the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court of Victoria. Good morning, Michelle.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:02:12] Good morning, Michael.

Michael Green: [00:02:14] Michelle, getting straight into the real meaty part of your career, which is the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court. Why do we need a separate division? Why do we need a stand alone court for family violence?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:02:26] Well, violence is such a huge issue in our community. It's got a very complex it's a complex legal and social problem and as such it requires a

complex solution. As you're aware, magistrates and courts are creatures of statute. The Family Violence Protection Act has three main tenets and that is prevention, protection and promoting accountability. The court recognised very early on that we were uniquely placed to provide a specialist response and family violence courts as specialist stand alone courts are not new things. They've in fact been operating in the Magistrates Court since 02/2005. So it commenced as a pilot project and it had a number of unique features to deal with the issue of family violence and that was recognised in 2016 with the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Having had a look at what is achieved and what is able to be achieved within a specialist family violence court, there was a recommendation that all matters be heard in a specialist family violence court. And consequently in 2017, the funding was provided and now we have 13 specialist family violence courts across the state.

Michael Green: [00:03:45] But am I right in understanding, assuming, that there are no specialist family violence magistrates? All magistrates including yourself do various areas of work within the court and are assigned on occasions to family violence matters?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:03:58] Every magistrate who's appointed in Victoria must be gazetted as a specialist family violence magistrate. That involves quite a significant amount of training, an induction which will have a practical and a theoretical component. It's called leading the change. So every magistrate who is appointed in the State of Victoria is expected to do family violence work. The Specialist Family Violence Court is quite a broad court. It doesn't just deal with the civil applications for intervention orders. And the reality is that family violence permeates so much of the work that we do as magistrates across all of the jurisdictions. So it's really important for all our magistrates to be trained in family violence, understanding family violence, the complexities of family violence, issues such as coercive control, misidentification. It's a very complex area.

Michael Green: [00:04:58] You mentioned coercive control. What is coercive control?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:05:02] I think it's best to say what coercive control looks at. For example, Michael, if I start yelling at you, you're gonna be pretty reluctant to ask me another question. So it's that capacity to control that someone has over another person, and that can take many forms. So it can take the form of isolating

someone, it can take the form of financial control. I think the greatest weapon that perpetrators of family violence have is the ability to make a victim think that they are responsible for their own abuse and coercive control is very effective at doing that. Jess Hill, who has written quite a lot about coercive control, describes the perpetrators of, or who use coercive control, they have a playbook or almost like a business plan that they apply in order to gain control in a relationship.

Michael Green: [00:06:03] So when a magistrate sees coercive control being applied to some person, what tools does the magistrate have to help that person who's under coercive control?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:06:13] Well we have a number of different tools. I don't think that when an applicant comes before the court, they use the term coercive control. We will hear evidence from applicants primarily with their first interaction with the court when they come in and make application. So what we will ask is a number of questions or have questions elicited in order to understand whether the evidence reaches the statutory test that is applied for interim applications and often the people who are appearing before us, it's so brave to even make an application. It's terrifying. Most people don't have any involvement with courts so it's very confronting to have to stand up and speak about the most intimate parts of your life and about your relationships. We at the court endeavour to make that responsive, trauma informed court. But what we will ask is, well, what does that look like? You wouldn't have someone standing up saying, I am the victim of coercive control. It's the identification of what is happening to them and their self assessment, that's really important. And we have a number of tools that we use to assess risk when we hear the evidence from people applying for orders.

Michael Green: [00:07:40] It's interesting you mentioned assess risk because I was reading through your background and that's one of the differences you said about the family violence courts compared to an ordinary court is in a family violence court you're assessing risk all the time.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:07:54] Think almost at every turn when you're hearing a family violence matter you are assessing risk. Judicial officers are very used to assessing risk. We do it in so many different ways for different purposes. For example when we're hearing bail applications we need to assess whether someone's going to be an

unacceptable risk of committing further offences. When we're sentencing someone we are making risks assessments when we're determining how the sentence will achieve the purpose of protecting the community. The difference with a family violence matter is that we are doing it at every turn of every application and whether we're hearing a civil application or dealing with a sentence, a family violence related criminal matter or with bail. And we use the MARAM which is the multi agency risk assessment tool that is a tool that was developed post the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Before that there were a number of inconsistencies in relation to the risk assessment tools and different agencies were some were using actuarial tools. So what was established was what is called the MARAM and it sets out a list of high risk factors and risk indicators which we use for, want of a better word, the language or it informs our ability to assess the evidence before us to inform the level of risk to an affected family member.

Michael Green: [00:09:30] And following on with that, I think one of the, it says that red flags are raised with things like pregnancy, isolation,

Michelle Hodgson: [00:09:40] Yes, well what are high risk factors and indicators? It's an evidence based tool in the sense that over 1,500 agencies were involved in identifying what those risk factors were. So that included police, that included lived experience of victims, survivors, it involved the DFFH, it involved a lot of agencies in order to identify what those risks were. Pregnancy is a red flag. That can indicate a high degree of risk. It involves a lot of isolation. It involves, particularly for a perpetrator, the attention being away from the perpetrator onto the new baby. It's a very high period of risk for a woman in a relationship. The other aspect is strangulation. If you see strangulation or around the neck, whether there's a minimising of that, that is something that raises very significant concerns.

Michael Green: [00:10:37] And Michelle, I understand that choking or strangulation, which sounds quite horrible, is a huge red flag.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:10:44] It's a massive red flag. There's a high degree of lethality involved in any strangulation or choking. It's just inherently dangerous. There's a high risk whenever that kind of physical activity is engaged in, and often the victim doesn't recognise the level of risk involved in that.

Michael Green: [00:11:07] Now let's say I'm the perpetrator and I have put my hands around my partner's neck and we're in court because she's seeking an intervention order against me. In those circumstances, you can't sentence me to some criminal penalty because I haven't been charged.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:11:22] No. I might see the perpetrator in a number of different ways when I'm sitting in the Magistrates Court and indeed in the Specialist Family Violence Division. I may see the perpetrator as a respondent in an application for an intervention order. Now an application for an intervention order can come about in the absence of the respondent by way of a family violence safety notice by Victoria Police by an in person application. Most likely if there's been a report of something like strangulation or choking then Victoria Police will be immediately involved. Sometimes they're not aware of it and you have an applicant for the first time disclosing to the court that they have been choked or they've been strangled or this is part of how the physical violence has manifested itself and often there's a minimization and a lack of understanding of just how harmful and risky that is. So in those circumstances, I will be making a decision about whether I make a family violence intervention order, an interim order and the test is whether it's necessary to ensure the safety of the protected person. If I'm hearing something like that, I'm not going to have any doubt whatsoever that an order is necessary to ensure the safety of the protected person.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:12:43] The next part of that is I will then have to determine the appropriate conditions on the interim order in the first instance until the matter comes back to court and the paramount consideration for any magistrate when making orders is the safety of the protected person and there's a wide range of orders that I can make. I might also see the respondent if they have been charged with criminal offences and it could in fact be one of the new strangulation offences that came into place in 2024. Often it will be charged as an unlawful assault or it may indeed be a charge of recklessly causing injury or intentionally causing injury depending on whether there has been any injuries that arise. So I could see that person in a number of different ways. I might also see that respondent who is an applicant for bail or who has been remanded on the criminal charges and I'll have to determine risk in all of those cases in determining what order I'm going to make.

Michael Green: [00:13:59] Michelle, we've been talking about your current life in the law. Yep. But let's get back to the start before you were a lawyer, in fact when you were a kid at school. Did you come from a legal family? Was that your pathway into the law?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:14:12] No, not at all. I had no idea that there were lawyers or even that lawyers existed. My parents were both in the army and really had no idea what lawyer lawyers just didn't touch our lives at all. And why would they? So no. My mother was in fact one of the first women to serve overseas in the Australian Women's Army Service in World War two. So she traveled to New Guinea as quite a young woman in her early twenties and my father was a lot younger than my mother. So he fought in Korea. So both of them had service military Yeah,

Michael Green: [00:14:49] Yeah, Well so what put the idea of the law into your mind? Was there a teacher who was influential or I don't friends

Michelle Hodgson: [00:14:56] Know. Look at school it certainly wasn't on the cards. I went to a regional Catholic girls college initially, then I went to a regional high school. Really, I had no idea about what I would do and I think you have to look at career planning through the lens of a 17 year old girl living in a regional town is really limited. I mean, you don't know what's out there. You only know what you see and what is around you. So at that point in time I had absolutely no idea what my future would hold for me but I think once I got to year 12 I had incredible teachers. I mean I could tell you the names of those teachers you know, forty years on because they were just all about giving opportunity and learning and inspiring. And I think day by day just being engaged in that, that was really important.

Michael Green: [00:15:52] And so did you apply for law initially after year 12 or was it arts originally?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:15:57] No, I applied for arts originally. I just want go back and say the culture that I was in at the time and the environment I was in at the time, and we're really only talking about 1983, 1984. There was a lot of why would why would you go to university? Why would you go to university? You're only going to be working for another ten years or so until you get married. You'll be taking jobs from men and I can't

Michael Green: [00:16:21] Think was the attitude?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:16:22] This is seriously some of the attitudes

Michael Green: [00:16:24] That sounds more like women like your mother coming back from the second world war. They were told that. Yeah. That, you know, you're taking jobs from men, therefore, go back to being a housewife.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:16:34] It's a that's a really

Michael Green: [00:16:35] Interesting In the 1980s you were being told that.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:16:37] In the 1980s I was being told that. But I don't think I think life hadn't changed a lot for a lot of women in the eighties. Certainly didn't come from my family, but certainly in a cohort that I was associating with at the time. But I think what you say about women coming back from the war is really interesting. I mean, there's the David Hare play Plenty, which talks about women who had these challenging, demanding roles when they were overseas and then coming back and finding themselves just not recognised and a community that just couldn't accommodate that kind of person who changed. I mean, women's roles have changed dramatically as a result of World War II. I don't know whether we quite recognise that now but it was just a massive upheaval. But for me, so I didn't know. But I think I always knew that there was something more because I'd read a lot and I didn't really I think I felt that I had to do what was expected of me and a job was for me. Well, job was got for me at the local abattoirs, but that was not something I wanted to do. So then it would be okay, I think, to be a teacher, you know, that would be okay to be a teacher.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:17:47] But then I got a very, very good HSE score as it was. And I think it was the first time when I went down to this careers place that was open for people who got unexpected scores. And they said, you could do anything, you could do this and you could do that. And I had my mom who was with me and she was very excited by this. So I think at that point in time I thought I'll do what I can do and enrolled in arts at Melbourne and then once I got to Melbourne I just discovered that there was just a massive world out there that I had no idea about. That law was something, you know, why not have a go at it? It was something I could do and it had all the things that I

was interested in. So, you know, people and bit of drama, you know, it was very it was really just having my eyes opened. You only know what you know. So education is a really important part of ensuring that people get to know about those opportunities.

Michael Green: [00:18:43] And during your first year at university, you leave your regional town and go into one of the university's residential colleges.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:18:50] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:18:50] That must have been an eye opener.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:18:52] It was a massive eye opener. Look, it wasn't a planned transition,

voiceover: [00:18:57] If

Michelle Hodgson: [00:18:57] I can put it that way. My parents at that time recognised that I had an opportunity and it put a lot of strain on them financially. And I think they just recognised the importance of that sacrifice for them to give me an opportunity. So when I got to Melbourne University and I'm in a college, suddenly I was surrounded by people who had great expectations of the world and great expectations about what role they could play. So I wanted to be part of that. And I think being surrounded by ambition and excitement, it builds momentum. You want to be a part of it. It sets the standard. So to me that also was something that was a real game changer.

Michael Green: [00:19:45] And yet halfway through your course, you take a gap year. Now, I mean, in this day and age, lots of people take gap years and go travelling to the four corners of the earth. You didn't do that.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:19:57] No, I certainly didn't. I didn't have the funds to do that at that point in time. Certainly it wasn't from a wealthy family. So I wanted to make a bit of money and just take a bit of time out. So I think my mother wept when she found that I took a job as a barmaid at Young and Jackson's. But that was a really interesting experience in and of itself. I did a bit of spruiking down at Myer Melbourne as a traveling, you know, cosmetic saleswoman, you know, quite a lot of hospitality. I was a vicar's

secretary at one point in time. A vicar? Yeah, vicar's secretary. So you know lots of great fun jobs and I think it's really important to have that breadth of experience.

Michael Green: [00:20:35] You finish uni with your law degree and your arse degree. Next thing you need is a job.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:20:41] Yes. And again, it was quite funny because I didn't realise that in those days people had been planning their CVs since they were about 16 and I think they still do it, you know. Getting the summer clerkships and writing to firms, I had no idea how this all was meant to work. So towards the end of my final year I started to make some applications. All the big four had really been sewn up by that point in time. So a number of smaller firms and I was very lucky to get an interview at a small firm in the city and they offered me articles as a result of that interview.

Michael Green: [00:21:19] General sort of articles, not No, specifically crime or

Michelle Hodgson: [00:21:23] Was general articles. So what I did was there was a lot of probate in that year, which was fantastic. It was a small firm that had acquired a number of think wills. There used to be a lot of small firms around the city, a lot of small general practices and what my principal would do, he had huge wills practice. So I think a number of those firms he was able to acquire that part of the business. He did a lot of conveyancing, general work, general litigation, a bit of commercial litigation, not much, some family law. So it was a very, very broad practice.

Michael Green: [00:21:59] So Michelle, you do your article, but I think that it's a small firm and there's no opportunity to stay there. No. And so you go and work for a firm, Doyle and Considine in Geelong. Yes. Again, a general firm doing general work?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:22:11] Yep, absolutely. Anything that came in the door you were required to turn your hand to. So whether it was criminal law or family law or civil, anything that came through the door you're expected to be able to turn your hand to it. There were four partners who were all very skilled in their particular area. Fact, Michael Carl, who's now a County Court Judge, was just before I was there had been a partner at the firm as well. So it had a long legacy in Geelong and the work we did was always very interesting. And again, one of those firms people would turn up to, that would be

the family solicitor. Whatever problem you had, we'll take it to the family solicitor and they will manage that. So you just had to learn a lot about all different areas of the law.

Michael Green: [00:22:56] And did you start doing some appearance work then?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:22:59] Is that

Michael Green: [00:22:59] When you first got on your feet and started to appear?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:23:02] Absolutely. Here's the file, go down to the Telong Magistrates Court. Mr Bon lynch's in Court 1, make sure that you stand up and speak loudly, off you go. So it was definitely a baptism by fire. And down at the Telong Magistrates Court, one of the clerks there is in fact or was in fact Deputy Chief Magistrate Burke. So I think I learned very early on that the people you meet will keep turning up sometimes like bad pennies, but they will keep turning up in your career. So yes, that's when I started to do some advocacy work and found that I really enjoyed it. I think that I had an aptitude for it and that really informed where I went from there.

Michael Green: [00:23:46] But you didn't go to the bar then. Why are you thinking that you really enjoyed the advocacy work and it seemed to be a natural fit for you, you didn't think of going to the bar?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:23:54] No, I don't think I did at that point in time. I didn't know that being a barrister still was an option for me, so I went to Victoria Legal Aid. I had this, I think a perception of barristers as being very important, very skilled and very articulate and I just didn't see myself in that particular category. Then I went to Legal Aid and I started work in their general law division which included work as a duty lawyer both in the children's court and the magistrates court and I got more insight into what barristers do. They were doing more complex work. I felt that I wanted to do that work. After a while when you are as a duty lawyer or an instructing solicitor and you get more confident in your own skills, you start to go, well, could do that. I could do that. I could argue that. Why didn't they put that point? So I felt that it was something I could do and I wanted to have a go at. I mean, that was after I'd worked at it was very good experience at Victoria Legal Aid. You learn so much learning from watching barristers, being in court. There was no experience for an aspiring barrister than being on your feet every

day and dealing with people and speaking to people, getting instructions and arguing and presenting your case. I then went from there to the Fitzroy Legal Service which was

Michael Green: [00:25:16] Can I just break in? Sure. You did something in the meantime which is unique in our experience of having these conversations, Michelle. Yeah. I haven't heard this before. You got voice lessons.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:25:26] I did, yeah.

Michael Green: [00:25:27] Tell us about that.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:25:28] Well, I thought that I didn't project to the back of the room. So I had a pretty simple education. Well, a simple education but there wasn't voice lessons or drama lessons or any of those classes. So I had been told that I was too quiet and I needed to speak more loudly in order to be heard. Also just physically, if you're talking a lot, it can really take a toll on your voice. So I needed to be able to exercise my voice. And I also think I sounded a bit bogan to be honest. So I had voice lessons just so that I could. And I also read a lot more big words than I'd ever had to pronounce. So I thought it was important that I learned how to do that.

Michael Green: [00:26:20] And now sitting as a magistrate, do you ever have people come before you, appear before you and you think yourself that person could do with voice lessons?

voiceover: [00:26:27] I do.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:26:27] I I mean, just look up. Don't look at your notes. I can't hear you, but you know, to me, you know, that yes, I do. I quite often do And there's skills too about being able to look up and read and, you know, be able to speak from notes is a real art. So I think it was a really wise investment on my wage.

Michael Green: [00:26:47] Maybe they should consider it in the readers course.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:26:50] Because not everyone's born with that degree of confidence or belief that what they have to say adds value. So if you don't have that

belief, you're not necessarily going to be the loudest voice in the room. And sometimes it's really important to be able to use your tone strategically as well when you're having those arguments in court or when you're addressing a jury.

Michael Green: [00:27:11] Facial expressions, are they a part of it?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:27:12] It's part of it. It's that neutrality of how you sit and I think it's really important for me now when I'm delivering a decision which can often have a profound impact on how people's lives, particularly in the family violence division, it's important that I do that with a measured tone that I look interested and I sound interested. I think there is nothing worse than perhaps someone looking down and reading from their notes when they're delivering a decision. I think it's really important to look at people and speak to people.

Michael Green: [00:27:46] And neutral body

Michelle Hodgson: [00:27:47] Language? Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Interesting.

Michael Green: [00:27:50] I mean it's very, very interesting indeed. You learn a lot of things through being with legal aid.

voiceover: [00:27:56] Could you

Michael Green: [00:27:57] Tell us about those? Because they make about ethics and about transparency, etcetera. I mean, they sort of sound they don't need to be said, they're so obvious, but they do need to be said.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:28:06] Oh, absolutely. I think how you are inducted into the profession is really critical. I was very, very fortunate to have very principled people who taught me early on, you know, you do need to have a very clear understanding of what your role is and a very clear boundaries. There's no shortcuts and you just have to operate with integrity all the time. One of the always when you're having conversations with clients always assume you're being recorded. That was really good advice. When you're having conversations with police officers always assume you're being recorded. So very, very important to always operate with a high degree of integrity and principled

and no client, no one client is worth compromising yourself in any way. Reputations are so important in the law, absolutely vital. Particularly, as I said before, people you meet as a young person, will keep meeting in your career in varied roles. You're in it together for the long haul and first impressions count. It's so important.

voiceover: [00:29:25] William and Lonsdale is brought to you by Greenslist, one of the leading multidisciplinary barristers lists in Australia. Greenslist believe in promoting conversation around the ideas and issues that shape not only our legal system, but our wider community.

Michael Green: [00:29:45] I buttered in a bit there, Michelle, apologies. No. Because you were going to tell us about Fitzroy Legal Yes. Did you work there full time?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:29:52] I did, I did. I'd done a lot of volunteering at community legal centres. I think that's a really important part of the profession is giving back and volunteer work. So I'd worked at St Kilda as a volunteer and then I'd worked at Fitzroy Legal Service as a volunteer and then a role came up, a position came up to be a solicitor so I took that on which was a really interesting role. I did quite a bit of work with the Atherton Gardens Estate. I would do outreach there every week, so I would go down and speak to the people in the estate and deal with whatever legal problems they had, whether it be criminal or minor civil matters. I also one of the things I'm really proud of in what I've done is at that point in time there wasn't an independent women's legal service and we were able to establish through a grant from the Women's Trust some funding for interpreters so that women could access a day drop in legal service. In those days, most of the community legal centres would run their outreach at night from five till seven using lawyers who came in after work. But there was recognised at Fitzroy the need to have a day service so that women in particular who may indeed be subjected to family violence could come and see us during the day and have access to interpreters. So I think that improved access. It didn't give equity of access to legal services but it worked in some way to remedying that.

Michael Green: [00:31:30] You were there for about a year?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:31:32] Yes, yes.

Michael Green: [00:31:33] And then VELS, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:31:36] Yes, now before I'd even gone to Victoria Legal Service I'd made up the mind that I wanted to go to the bar and Tom Munro who was at Bell's at the time, he knew that I wanted to go to the bar and he said, Would you like some experience coming to work with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service? And I jumped at that opportunity. It was amazing work. I would travel regularly throughout Victoria, whether I would go to Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale with the liaison officer. We would go out to the community, get instructions and advocate on their behalf in the different courts.

Michael Green: [00:32:12] Was it any different being a lawyer on behalf of Indigenous clients as opposed to acting on behalf of non Indigenous clients?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:32:20] Yes, I think there's some, you know, there are some I'm always very careful when I speak about my experience at the Aboriginal Legal Service. The more I know about Koori justice the less I know and I want to be very respectful to the importance of community. I don't think I was particularly well educated in relation to cultural issues or the unique challenges faced by the Aboriginal community before I went there, I certainly learnt very quickly what some of those barriers to justice were.

Michael Green: [00:32:54] Do you think that any of those barriers have been broken down since then?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:32:59] I think there's some incredible work that's being done by community and for community. We have, of course, the Magistrates Court and I know that you've spoken to Magistrate Birchall, I don't know whether you've spoken to Magistrate Fowler yet but the work that they do for Koori Justice is extraordinary. And increasingly the court recognises self determination as a very important part of the work that we do. We certainly in the Family Violence Division do a lot of work ensuring that services and programmes and our court is culturally safe for Aboriginal persons. There's a lot of work and I think a lot more education around those issues these days.

Michael Green: [00:33:43] Moving on, you finally get to the bar.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:33:45] I do.

Michael Green: [00:33:47] This is 1998, so when were you admitted?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:33:50] 1993.

Michael Green: [00:33:52] Okay, all five isn't too bad.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:33:53] No, needed a bit of experience, Exactly.

Michael Green: [00:33:55] So you come to the bar in 1998, who do you read with?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:33:59] I read with Michael Burke who ended up being my brother-in-law. So he wasn't my brother-in-law at the time but he was fantastic. So Michael had a very, he had a criminal practice, a very strong criminal practice. He did prosecuting within regional areas and of course defending within the city area. He is a man I have a great deal of respect for, not only in his work as a criminal advocate but also in his role as chair of the Youth Parole Board for a number of years. One to shy away from a difficult decision. He was someone who taught me that you're just going to have to have difficult conversations in the role that we have. He also taught me importantly that it's not about me, it's about the client. When you are representing someone, leave your ego at the door. It's about your client. And even now, I think that is really the marker of a good council. When you are listening to them, you're listening to them talk about their client. That's the most effective advocacy you can do because you can become caught up in how fabulous you are. But it's not about you, it is about the client. I think Michael really shaded that home for me and you know the diligence and the work that is involved in being a barrister is just a yeah. I don't think that's recognised just how hard it is and the preparation that goes into being a good barrister.

Michael Green: [00:35:26] Were you busy from the start? Did you immediately have a busy practice? I'm assuming it was all crime.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:35:31] Yes, was. Well I did a lot of children's court work initially, but I did, I was very very lucky. I got picked up pretty quickly by a number of solicitors and very early on I was junioried in a supreme court trial. So that really was I got picked

up by Maitland Lincoln. I don't know whether you remember Maitland. Think he was one of the legends of our bar. He had been a magistrate himself in England and then came to Australia and joined the bar. So I joined him pretty early on when I'd gone to stay at Deakin Chambers or gone to share Deakin Chambers and they needed someone essentially, think, you know, really just put some papers in the folder or whatever on Tupper and Sedai or whatever it was paid but it was just such an amazing opportunity. You know, I've had an incredible career by, you know, I think good luck and good fortune but that was an incredible trial. That was the Nauru Phosphates Royalties Trust trial that went forward.

Michael Green: [00:36:29] That's a commercial fraud.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:36:30] Yes it was, yeah.

Michael Green: [00:36:31] And you were prosecuting or you were?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:36:33] I was defending. You were So if you know anything about Nauru, they made their money through the royalties from phosphate. It had been placed in trust for most of the, I think the 50s and 60s. By the time I was involved in that matter there had been quite a lot of litigation in relation to alleged misuse by the trustees or poor investments. I was acting on behalf of a gentleman who had sold the trust what was called prime bank guarantees which don't exist by the way. They were this creature of 80s, 90s fraud. They were these mythical beasts that financial institutions traded in that would give you this incredibly high yield and of course like most things, if it's too good to be true, it's too good to be true. So it was indeed a product I think at the time when financial institutions didn't really understand or investing institutions didn't understand how the internet worked or how computer transactions worked. Really think that was part of it. And also it was a unique constellation of events that made the 80s and not just right for the picking for fraudsters. I also think when people see a huge amount of money, they become less vigilant to protecting themselves or having their eyes open to potential frauds.

Michael Green: [00:38:02] You're assuming because of greed?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:38:03] I think there's a bit of that involved. But sometimes the bigger the lie, easier it is to believe. That's the reality and you wrap up these investments or devices in enough of the language, then people don't unpack it. They just take it at face value.

Michael Green: [00:38:20] And so what happened to your client?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:38:22] Unfortunately, my client was convicted.

Michael Green: [00:38:25] Doesn't sound unfortunate.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:38:26] He was found guilty in relation to those matters. That was my role as junior in that matter. He went on to appeal that decision as well subsequently. Successfully? Not successfully.

Michael Green: [00:38:44] Now what about the Dreamworld case? Maybe not the detail of the case, but it seems to me you've distilled a very important piece of information for yourself in that Dreamworld fraud case.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:38:54] Well at the end of the day what I realised is that complex commercial frauds are not all that complex because someone wanted some money and they went about getting it. I mean people are very, very resourceful when they want to have access to funds. It's just not that complex when you unpack it. There might be folders and folders of, you know, white folders in your room at that point in time.

Michael Green: [00:39:18] But you learn from all complexity, people want to make money. That's right. And make cheap to get it.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:39:23] Absolutely. And they'll work it away and it's not that hard if you look at it, if you work out how to do it. So you can almost reverse engineer some of these matters. That was I acted on behalf of the accused in that matter. And then I moved into doing some prosecution of commercial frauds as well. So that was quite interesting.

Michael Green: [00:39:40] Was this acting or sorry, working at the Commonwealth DTP?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:39:43] No, no. This was whilst I was still at the bar. So I did a number of commercial frauds and then I was briefed in the Pung Su while I was at the bar. So that of course is the importation of heroin in the think it was the early 2000s now. And I was briefed to be junior on that

Michael Green: [00:40:02] And matter with that's the John North Korean

Michelle Hodgson: [00:40:03] Ship That's which was down off right, yes, yes. So that was a fantastic case that had everything in it. So it had international intrigue, potentially state sponsored crime, massive amounts of heroin, there was surveillance, listening devices, there were the army chasing or the navy chasing boat up the coast of Australia. So that was fascinating, really fascinating. And in

Michael Green: [00:40:28] A case like that, one silk and one junior or more than one silk and

Michelle Hodgson: [00:40:32] It many was just one silk and one junior. It was John Champion and I did that case right through to the conclusion of the committal then I got pregnant so I couldn't do the trial. But by that point in time, by the end of my pregnancy I'd been hired by the Commonwealth DPPs in house Counsel.

Michael Green: [00:40:52] Why did you take not many people, not many barristers leave the bar? Most barristers love being barristers.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:41:00] Well I loved being a barrister but it was very much set up at that point in time like chambers are for the state DPP. So Rosemary Carlin came while I was there. We had John Champion. I think Robert Barry was there. I think we should maybe I'm not sure but there was a really great group of people doing Commonwealth work at that point in time. Betty King had a role at the Commonwealth DPP so it was somewhere and you got access to amazingly interesting work and it was well resourced work, really committed solicitors. It was fascinating, it was great.

Michael Green: [00:41:36] And while you're there, would you prosecute matters on your own or were you basically a junior?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:41:40] No, no, would prosecute my own trials, yes, So I would be doing a lot of drug importations. At that time there was quite a bit of tobacco work but yes, no, they were my own trials.

Michael Green: [00:41:52] After a couple of years you come back to the bar?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:41:54] Yes, yes.

Michael Green: [00:41:55] I'm getting a bit giddy here Michelle, following all these movies. Why did you come back to the bar?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:42:01] Look that's a bit, you know I do want to mention this, at that point in time I'd become pregnant and I was pregnant with triplets. So I had gave birth to them very premature, twenty three, twenty four weeks. And I think at that point in time, I've always had a lot of energy, but I think it was time to reflect and where I wanted to use my energy in my career at that point in time. Already had a young child and it's difficult to talk about but I think it's really important to talk about that because so many women experience having a loss or a miscarriage and it's okay to sit back and step back at that point in time. Know, no one expects you just to carry on as if it didn't happen but it did make me reflect about where I wanted to put my energies for my career. So that's why I left the Commonwealth at that point in time. You know, they were great to me. Were fantastic and very accommodating and very understanding. But it was a very difficult time.

Michael Green: [00:42:57] Of course. And you decided you would prefer to put your energies into being self employed so you could make decisions about what you did and

Michelle Hodgson: [00:43:06] Didn't do. And you know some flexibility in what I did and yes, absolutely. I mean it's a big commitment. Know working at the Commonwealth, it's very long hours and hard, high stakes work.

Michael Green: [00:43:20] Yeah, very high stakes work Although that you were it's not that easy to control your life as a barrister because all the barristers I've ever seen or known are worried about where that next brief's

voiceover: [00:43:30] Oh, going to come you

Michelle Hodgson: [00:43:31] Do, you do. You're terrified, absolutely.

Michael Green: [00:43:34] But you're never going be briefed again.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:43:35] Yeah, and you always are. If you want work you can find it. That's really been my belief, know, and that would be my advice to any young barrister, take whatever work you get. I think at the time didn't want to keep doing children's court work but wow, that made me fantastic with experts. If you want to get run cases as a junior barrister, go to the children's court, go and cross examine some psychologists, go and cross examine some social workers, run some cases, you will gain exceptional experience in that jurisdiction. So everything teaches you something. It doesn't matter what you're doing, just take the brief.

Michael Green: [00:44:17] And I guess as long as you put the effort in, as you learn along the way on many occasions, from McBoob.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:44:25] Oh yeah, absolutely. It is hard work. It really it's not about having this being able to stand up and say something brilliantly in the moment. You do have to be responsive obviously and read a room and but the amount of work that goes into preparing, reading, understanding, being strategic about how you work is absolutely vital to any appearance. You really have to put in that hard work.

Michael Green: [00:44:52] You come back to the bar. Yep. Soon thereafter you're appointed a magistrate.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:44:56] Yes, yes. Yeah. So that was I think I applied to be a magistrate sometime before that because it was always something that had been very visible in the work that I'd done. I'd seen a lot of magistrates who I admired greatly. I like the breadth of work that magistrates did. I thought it would be something that I would

like and be interested in. And it also it is, of course, the court that most people interact with. So it was an opportunity to really make a difference and to really do some good work within the career that I'd chosen.

Michael Green: [00:45:31] And you'd expressed interest earlier and then maybe heard nothing.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:45:34] Heard nothing for a number of years until I get a call out of the blue. So you don't know what brings your name to the attention of the attorney at any given time. So then I went and had an interview and there was a big panel for the interview and asked a number of questions.

Michael Green: [00:45:50] So when you say a big panel, fellow magistrates or politicians or

Michelle Hodgson: [00:45:55] No, it was look at the time there was the head of the JCB, there was the head of CSB, there was the chief magistrate who at the time was Ian Gray, I think there was a transcriber. So there was quite a few people in there asking you lots of different questions. So that was reasonably daunting but obviously I got through that process okay.

Michael Green: [00:46:17] Now Michelle, it's all very well to say you did well in the interview process to become a but you actually have to thank Julian Burnside.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:46:24] I do. I do.

Michael Green: [00:46:24] Because you pinched a line

Michelle Hodgson: [00:46:25] For me. I absolutely did. When it comes to the end of the interview they ask you what do you think is the most important quality for a magistrate? And I had heard Julian Burnside speak recently and speak about the qualities of being decent and the importance of being decent. So when I was asked the question, gave the answer which I would give today that the most important quality for a magistrate is to be decent. I think the term just encapsulates all of the qualities that that are necessary to fulfil the role. It's a phrase that has a meaning, you know, being decent. I

think we all understand what that means. It's about being respectful, it's about having empathy, it's about treating people decently.

Michael Green: [00:47:13] And people being not only the people who come before the court but also the people you work with, the TIF staff, everybody who you come in contact with must be treated with respect and decency.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:47:25] Oh, absolutely. It's absolutely critical. Everyone.

voiceover: [00:47:30] Lives in Law is proudly sponsored by City Maps Illustrated. Their recent publication, The Melbourne Map, is a celebration of our wonderful city. This stunning, hand drawn illustration, which took more than three years to create, is available as an art print, jigsaw puzzle, and calendar. The perfect acquisition for your home, office, or corporate gifting.

Michael Green: [00:48:00] As I think happens maybe with all magistrates here for a lot, you had a period as a regional magistrate in Ballarat?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:48:07] Yeah. I mean everyone is expected to do a regional placement. So I had originally been assigned to the city then to Ringwood. I did twelve months out at Ringwood and then I was assigned to Ballarat. So that was a great experience. Again, one of the great things about being a magistrate and the career as a magistrate is that there are so many opportunities within the court to do different things and have different roles. So one of those roles is obviously as a regional magistrate. So I was at Ballarat at that point in time. It was a two up court. There was myself and Kay Robertson who had formerly been a solicitor for the DPP and we had someone we would refer to as our boundary rider up in Horsham. So that was a really broad circuit, the Grampians up as far as Eden Hope and Neil Horsham and out west to Hopetoun. So it was a really interesting role as a country magistrate and I know that you've spoken to True recently about being a country magistrate. So there's some unique cases that you will hear in the country that you won't hear in the cities, you know, cases that relate to water usage or land usage, you know, livestock's very important obviously in the country but also you do get to see the divisions within a community such as Ballarat. It's quite stark. Think the difference between the haves and the have nots. You know, in a local community you see it very, very clearly.

Michael Green: [00:49:36] And maybe because you live in the community, whereas in the city of Melbourne with 5,000,000 people, you're not going to see it. You live in your own bubble and wherever it may be, whereas in Ballarat or Bendigo or down in Bairnsdale, every day you're in the supermarket. And people you see in the supermarket are coming before you in the court sometimes.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:49:56] You do. One of the things I think about regional cities is often quite a geographical divide, know. Wrong side of the tracks is a really interesting expression because I think you do see that in a lot of regional communities where where different suburbs are much less wealthy or poorer than others. But yes, you do. You I I think there is definitely a time limit on how long you can work as a regional magistrate because conflicts will arise, people become used to you being their magistrate which is not a good thing. You know more about them than their council and it can provide security issues as well for yourself. So that's right.

Michael Green: [00:50:35] And so you get rotated and you were rotated out of there. You were rotated to the Children's Court

Michelle Hodgson: [00:50:41] Yes, back in was. I spent some time being the Regional Coordinating Magistrate down in Ballarat. So that was a really interesting role. I really enjoyed that, dealing with the different stakeholders and learning a bit more about the operations of the court. Then I went to the Children's Court in Melbourne under Mandy Chambers, who's now the Chief Judge of the County Court and that was a really interesting experience as well. Very challenging work in the Children's Court.

Michael Green: [00:51:04] And you have said that the people who work in the Children's Court are the unsung heroes of our legal community.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:51:10] Oh absolutely. You know, day after day these magistrates, I won't name them because they would be embarrassed by being named, but I've seen them turn up for the last twenty years day after day hearing the most complex, saddest cases and difficult cases both in the criminal division and in the family division. And they do outstanding work. They do extraordinary work, yet they are often

criticised by the media in their complex and appropriate responses to very complex issues. But they just keep turning up and doing

Michael Green: [00:51:45] You that for called a left wing ideologue.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:51:48] I think I was at one point in time. I think that's right. You can often left wing ideologue I think I was called. And you know, you can make decisions that you are the scrutiny the media has on decisions you make is something that you're conscious of but you can never let that inform the decision that you make.

Michael Green: [00:52:05] How do you protect yourself from having some sort of emotional breakdown in dealing with such well, mean, all of us, although every human being, seeing children in terrible situations, it's going to have an impact upon I

Michelle Hodgson: [00:52:19] Don't think there's one case that I would not have shared or I could not have shared a tear over in the children's court and indeed in many of them I did because they are so sad, so difficult. One of the there's a number of things that are protective. First of all, your colleagues, they are really really important and having a shared understanding of what our roles are and what we do, their humour and their good grace and their reinforcement that the work we are doing is important and valuable, that is really significant. So when you have those very, very difficult days and you go, I just don't want to see this anymore. I don't want to do this anymore. This is really hard. Just understanding just how valuable it is and how important it is that keeps you going.

Michael Green: [00:53:04] Sometime, I don't know if it was now or earlier, you picked up this habit, strange habit of running marathons.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:53:10] Yes. Which assume

Michael Green: [00:53:13] Is was part of your process to get yourself out of the court and clear your mind and clear your emotions after difficult work.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:53:22] I think I'm slightly obsessive. That has been levelled at me from time to time. But I really enjoyed running. I actually didn't really take up running

till I was about 40 but it was a wonderful way. And when you're a young mom and you're busy, don't have time to be going to the gym and you don't have time to be scheduling exercise. It was something you could just put on your runners and go out the door and do. But I loved it. I just really loved the fresh air, the headspace. I listened to podcasts, I listened to music. I just really loved the running and of course it just kept getting longer and longer and longer. I'm not sure what that says until suddenly I'll do a marathon. And of course, once I'd said to someone I'm going to do a marathon, I then felt compelled to actually go through with it. And it So, was a great thrill to do my first one which was in 2011 and that was at Sydney and it was just magnificent. It was just a real sense of having achieved something even just lining up on the day. So I love, love running marathons and I love the training for it as well. So because I live in such a beautiful part of the country, can go for long runs from my home and just be surrounded by beautiful countryside and kangaroos and all of that.

Michael Green: [00:54:39] So how many marathons have you run now?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:54:41] I've done five now.

Michael Green: [00:54:42] Five have you? Yeah. And are you in training for one Well coming

Michelle Hodgson: [00:54:46] I've just finished one two weeks ago. I just did the Brighton marathon so I'm just having a little bit of a break. But I'd like to do one of the big ones. I'd like to do

Michael Green: [00:54:54] Boston or London or

Michelle Hodgson: [00:54:55] Something Absolutely like London, Paris, I'd like to do one of those. I had a bit of a setback. I had collapsed lungs in 2021 and I think one of my

Michael Green: [00:55:07] What causes collapsed lungs?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:55:08] It was called a spontaneous pneumothorax. It can just happen. Don't know, don't really know. A bit rare in someone of my vintage, but it just

happened. I just happened to be running one day and had a bit of a pain in my chest and went to the hospital. They all thought I was having, you know, a woman in mid fifties with chest pain. They just immediately thought I was having a heart attack. But ultimately it turned out to be a collapsed lung and there were some surgeries that got a bit dicey at one point in time and I had to have emergency surgery, which was really quite terrifying because they'd given me ketamine instead of a general anaesthetic. So that was really confronting. And then the recovery from that. But then as soon as I could, I started running again. So I just really enjoy running.

Michael Green: [00:55:50] And it does help you with the stress, a very stressful job, what you do. To be a magistrate appears to me to be maybe the most stressful of all those useful jobs.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:56:01] I think it's relentless. It's relentless because we have so many different things that we have to do and we have to be across so many different jurisdictions. We direct ourselves in relation to evidence in criminal trials so that we make the decision like a jury would but we have to articulate how we've used the evidence at each step. So we don't just come out and say guilty or not guilty. We actually have to give adequate and sufficient reasons for that. So that can be tricky. We deal with a very broad cohort in the community. Some people are very difficult to deal with. We always endeavour to have a therapeutic approach to the work that we do. There's some incredible work being done in our court, in the assessment and referral court and the specialist jurisdictions. There is incredible work being done in the family violence court. I do just want to go back to that for a minute because it is just so important to me. My colleagues do such incredible work across the state in family violence, hearing the most challenging of cases and dealing with the most difficult scenarios and being required to make decisions that really do have a profound impact on people's lives. But in the Specialist Family Violence Court there are some unique features that really support that as well. We have, which I don't think we've talked about yet and I'm just going to direct the conversation there, I want to talk about our applicant practitioners and our respondent practitioners. That's a specialist feature which we don't have in other courts. We have the availability of these practitioners who we can refer people to, who can provide assistance to these people, which we don't necessarily have in other divisions.

Michael Green: [00:57:47] Could you clarify that for me please, Michelle? There are solicitors I'm assuming?

Michelle Hodgson: [00:57:51] No, no. They're actually drawn from different professions. We have people, I think we have people in the office, they might be pathologists, social workers, but they are family violence specialists so that we have applicant practitioners and we have respondent practitioners so that if you come to court as an applicant, they will read and triage all of the cases before the court to assess what services they need and make contact and make necessary risk assessments so that we have that particular because our role as magistrates is to make decisions based on the evidence we have before us to make different orders in that court. But what the Specialist Family Violence Court does is recognise that this is not just a complex legal issue but there's some complex social underlying work that's taking place or issues underneath that. So the practitioners can assist with that and make referrals and assist people on the day in court as well. So now I've forgotten what I was talking about because I've just gone off on my own trajectory.

Michael Green: [00:58:53] That's okay, it's an important trajectory so I'm pleased you did thank you. But we will let's just go back a little bit onto the path of your career. Again a rotation after the children's court is a rotation into the coroner's court. Yes. A very different form of judicial work.

Michelle Hodgson: [00:59:13] Yes. Well as a magistrate in the country, when I first was appointed a magistrate, we worked as coroners. And in fact when I was doing my training as a magistrate to go to the country, had to do some training in coronial work and it was at that point in time it became a court in 02/2009. So I had been trained to be a coroner and had been appointed a coroner. So a vacancy had come up in the coroner's court at that point in time. It was long served sleep so I was only meant to be there for six weeks. So eighteen months later, I ended up being called back to the magistrate's court but it was a fascinating role. It's a very, very different role. Know, it's such an important role in our community. It's a true multidisciplinary court where you have the forensic pathologists and a whole support team there in solicitors. It's not just about finding the cause of death but it's also about public safety and being able to make recommendations to improve public safety. So that was really valuable and it's very important work that the coroners are doing down there across the board in the

prevention of death and making those recommendations. But it's challenging work as well and emotionally draining at times.

Michael Green: [01:00:31] Across the many areas you've worked in as a magistrate, Children's Court, Coroner's Court, Head of Family Violence Division, Regional Coordinator for Ballarat and West Of Ballarat, have any of them been more fulfilling?

Michelle Hodgson: [01:00:45] I think all of them have had real challenges. I am very much valuing the role that I'm doing at the moment. I think I feel very as head of family violence, I'm very satisfied in the work that I'm doing professionally because I think it's such important work. I think it's recognised as important work by the Chief Magistrate and the judicial leadership. It's such a significant issue in our community. The role that the court can play in addressing family violence is a really significant one. I'm very, very pleased to have that opportunity and it's very rewarding when I see that we are making it more accessible, when I can see that we are looking at how these courts have operated, Specialist Family Violence Courts have operated, how can we make them better? That's really challenging but when we are able to make changes that are making it a better system for applicants, that we're fulfilling our functions about accountability through leading projects such as the court mandated counselling program, having engaged and genuine conversations with my colleagues about how we can achieve the aims. I find it really rewarding. It's really important work.

Michael Green: [01:02:13] We're getting towards the end of our conversation, Michelle.

Michelle Hodgson: [01:02:16] Good.

Michael Green: [01:02:18] And hearing you speak so passionately about your role in the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates' Court, Would you be happy to work the rest of your judicial career in that area? Or are there things you haven't done that you think, gee, I wouldn't mind doing that?

Michelle Hodgson: [01:02:33] Oh, that's a difficult question. I think I also get very passionate about whatever I'm doing at the time. So it's an all in for me. As you can see, I have over the last seventeen years really made the most of what is there, what challenges and what opportunities there are. Sometimes it's required me to pivot to a

completely different area of law. For example, going into head of family violence, I don't think I'd seen myself in that particular role. But then when I looked back, I realized I'd been doing that for sixteen years. I've been working within family violence for sixteen years. So you just don't know what opportunity is going to come up. You don't know what is next. So I don't know. I really don't know. But I want to finish this. I really want to finish. I want it. There's things I want to achieve in the division and I want to make sure that I, if I do leave that role, that I leave it with the job done or with what I set out to achieve having been completed.

Michael Green: [01:03:32] Now you came out of university with no idea about the law. No. Zero. So let's look at a young Michelle Hodgson coming out of the university now with no idea about the law. What would you say to her?

Michelle Hodgson: [01:03:46] Oh gosh, now that wasn't on your list of questions. I don't know. Hang on tight. It's going to be a white knuckled ride, but you'll be fine. Yeah, I think, you know, you just got to take everything is an opportunity. There's, you know, I think they often say about actors, there's no small role. There's just small small actors. I'm not I'm not sure whether that's quite the expression, but everything you do doesn't matter how small or what it is. It leads to something. It provides you with skills. And one of the things I have realised is big jobs go to people who do little jobs well. And just maintaining a work ethic is really, really important. I'd probably try and say have a bit more balance in your life, but you know, that's always tricky. That's the great tension, isn't it? You know, having a family, getting some leisure time and doing work, it can become quite You've got to balance that a bit better, think. That would probably be my only advice. It'll be interesting. That's what I'd say to her. So you know, it'll be fine. It will be fine.

Michael Green: [01:04:45] Michelle, thank you for taking us through your life in the law this morning. It's been interesting for us and it's wonderful to hear your passion for what you have done and what you continue to do. And I agree with you, family violence is no more important issue in our community. And so to be a pivotal worker in that area I would think is a privilege and it's something which I'm grateful as a member of our community to have you doing. Thank you.

Michelle Hodgson: [01:05:07] Thank you, Michael.

voiceover: [01:05:13] Show notes from today's episode can be found at greenslist.com.au/podcast. There you'll find links to things we've talked about in this episode, a transcript of the show, and some wonderful photos of our guests. If you're enjoying lives in the law, please tell your networks, subscribe, rate, and review the show. Your host is former lawyer and Greens list clerk, Michael Green. Our show is produced and edited by me, Catherine Green, mixed and mastered by Windmill Audio, and recorded by Alex McFarlane, who also wrote and performed all the music for the series. We're coming to you from the iconic Owen Dixon Chambers on the corner of William And Lonsdale Streets in our beautiful city of Melbourne. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to their elders past and present. There is no doubt that conversations about justice have been taking place on this land for thousands of years, and we are privileged to continue that discussion here today.