

William & Lonsdale – Lives in The Law

Ep 85 Commonwealth DPP Raelene Sharp KC

Voiceover: [00:00:05] 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 the Commonwealth's director of public Prosecutions, Raelene Sharp, KC. Raelene is one of five kids who grew up and went to school in Ballarat. When she told her careers counsel she wanted to study law, she was advised against it, largely because she didn't know any lawyers and had no connections in the profession. She persisted regardless, and once she made her way to law school, she fairly quickly knew two things: she loved the law and she wanted to prosecute. That instinct has taken Raelene through an extraordinary range of roles. She began her career in the Victorian OPP, went on to work at the then Australian Crime Commission and with the United Nations in Lebanon, before being called to the Victorian bar in 2010. In 2023, she was appointed Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, leading an office responsible for prosecuting offences against Commonwealth law across an enormous and varied jurisdiction. Through all of these fascinating but demanding roles, exercise has been one of the ways Raelene has found some semblance of balance. Never more so than in 2009, when she was engaged by the League of Arab States to work on the independent fact finding committee on Gaza.

Raelene Sharp: [00:01:26] We were staying in a really nice small hotel that was right on the waterfront, and there were no gyms. It's not an exercising culture. There was sort of two and a half flights of stairs, and, you know, we were meeting with people who had been quite significantly traumatized and we were exposing ourselves to a lot of traumatic content. And so I just needed to do something and get my heart rate up and get some of the cortisol out of my system. And so I started just walking up and down these stairs for sort of half an hour each morning. And the other members of the committee was of looking at me saying, really, is this necessary, and what are you doing? By the end of the week, I think most of us were actually on the stairs going up and down just trying to get a break from all of the things that we were we were talking about and thinking about.

Michael Green: [00:02:37] Our guest this morning in lives in the law is Raeleen Sharp KC. Raeleen is the director of public prosecutions for the Commonwealth of Australia. Good morning, Raeleen.

Raelene Sharp: [00:02:47] Good morning, Michael.

Michael Green: [00:02:48] Raeleen, rather than start at the start of your story when you were a child and growing up and schooling, etcetera, I think we might have a few listeners who are like me which are a bit ignorant about what the Commonwealth DPP, you, do, or what... How the Commonwealth and the States overlap, I guess, and synchronise in terms of criminal law. So what does the constitution enable or empower you to do or empower the Commonwealth to do, which is then flows through to your role?

Raelene Sharp: [00:03:15] Thanks, Michael. It's actually a really interesting and complicated question. It's something that confuses a lot of people, And I think we just need to go back a bit almost to Federation with apologies to those colleagues who practice in constitutional law. I may get some of this wrong, but at Federation, the Commonwealth criminal law was not really a concept that was thought about. At federation, the states and territories determined that the Commonwealth Parliament would have power to legislate for the matters listed in section 51 of the constitution. The one that's most easily connected with my work is borders, for example. So one of the first acts of the Commonwealth Parliament. I think the first one was an appropriation act. They needed some money to do something. I think the Customs Act or what was to become the Customs Act is the second or third act passed by the Commonwealth Parliament, and that included some of the first offenses, importation offenses. It's illegal to import drugs or other contraband into Australia. And so offenses that fall within my jurisdiction are all those offenses that the Commonwealth Parliament has power to enact. So in relation to any of the heads of power, there'll be offences, postal offences, for example. They've got the postal head of power, marriage offences, importation, as I said. Foreign affairs is a significant power that supports a lot of offenses. So if we've signed an international treaty, for example, about slavery or terrorism, that supports those offenses being commonwealth offenses. And the telecommunications power is actually a very powerful power, if I can say that so clumsily, in the sense that every time we use our mobile phones, send an email, make a phone call, it's over the

telecommunications internet. Now at Federation, that power wasn't really, I think, thought of as anything that would be anything more than making sure that there was one telecommunications network, telegrams and the postal service. But now with the Internet, it's in all of our lives in every facet, and so there are a lot of offenses connected with that power.

Michael Green: [00:05:12] And yet, as I understand it, prior to about 1980, there was no Commonwealth director of public prosecutions. There was no office of public prosecutions. Mhmm. What did we, the nation of Australia, do about prosecuting those offences prior to 1980?

Raelene Sharp: [00:05:29] Yeah. That's a... That is a really interesting question. It's a... It's an interesting one to track through. And at Federation, there were a few Commonwealth offences, and they were prosecuted by the states. The constitutional drafters looked at the systems in America because there's a federated system there and also considered, I think, some of the Canadian systems. The American system has a fully complete federal system of criminal law. They have their own jails, they have their own courts. And they looked at the population here and decided that there wasn't sufficient population to justify a whole second set of courts and all of the infrastructure that's required. So they identified what was later called this autochthonous expedient, which is there are these offenses that will be investigated. There was no federal police also at Federation. They weren't established until the mid 1970s. They're investigated by various government agencies and departments and that continues to be the case. I get cases referred from various small government officers, Commonwealth officers. But the prosecutions were run by the state prosecuting services and by the state police.

Michael Green: [00:06:33] And they ceded power to them or something like that?

Raelene Sharp: [00:06:35] Yeah. Well, they they sort of did it by arrangement almost at the start. And then there are problems with the constitution, and then you'll have technical arguments about whether an offence is an offence against the law of a commonwealth and who has jurisdiction to try that. So we see in 1914 the Crimes Act being enacted, which clarified that any breach of Commonwealth law is an offence against Commonwealth law and therefore can be prosecuted in those ways. And then it just gradually increased over time. But really, at Federation, federal criminal law was an

adjunct function, think, as I said. But as we've seen in the last few years, the menu of work for my office continues to grow. The importance of the crimes we prosecute continue to expand. They all have a national impact because they're connected necessarily to the constitution. And so I think Commonwealth criminal law is actually a thing now. It's a big part of the system.

Michael Green: [00:07:25] And it interested me looking through our notes for today, when we look at state or we think about state criminal matters, you think of the police. I mean, I'm assuming the OPP down the road here, they're working all the time with the police, and they're basically the main referring agency to our state OPPs.

Raelene Sharp: [00:07:41] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:07:42] Whereas you have a multitude of referring agencies.

Raelene Sharp: [00:07:45] Yeah. We have up to about 60. So most of the state and territory DPPs will have maybe three, sometimes four. They'll have a state police force. They will probably have an anti corruption body. They might get some workplace prosecutions where there's death involved or some EPA environmental prosecutions. But I have... Yeah. We have up to 60 referring agencies. So roughly about one third of our work comes from the AFP, but only one third. Another third comes from the state and territory police forces combined because they're investigating a crime, and it's not like the people on the street are saying, I'm going to commit a federal offence today or I'm going to commit a state offence today. If it's organised crime, they're interested in making money, however they do that. And so state and territory police forces will investigate conduct and then ultimately it turns out that really it's a Commonwealth offence, and so they'll refer those briefs to us. And then the remaining third come from a range of other agencies that have offences on their books. We've got the ATO that people would know, the ACCC, ASIC, Border Force, Services Australia, the NDIA. There's a lot of fraud on the Commonwealth system and a lot of really small agencies. We get a lot of fisheries matters from the top end. And my personal favorite, which I talk about a lot, Gebrumpa, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. So they have offenses to deal with protecting the reef. I think they call themselves the authority, but Gabrumpa's a triumph of acronyms. So it's really amazing and interesting to get work from so many different places. At a work level, that's really interesting, but at a systemic

level, it's a challenge. I've got to have systems that speak to or can take in information coming from 60 different agencies.

Michael Green: [00:09:22] You raise an interesting point there, in that when I decide to commit a crime, I don't think I'll commit a Commonwealth crime or I'll commit a state crime, I just commit my crime, and my crime, in fact, involves both jurisdictions. Who does the prosecuting?

Raelene Sharp: [00:09:36] We have, well, a typical lawyer's answer, it depends. We have a range of arrangements with all of the directors and we actually have a really good working relationship. We meet a couple of times a year, and it's a really important meeting. Whilst the state and territory directors have responsibility for transactional crime, they're working in all the jurisdictions, and I work across them all. So it's a really important grouping. But we have arrangements where we identify who will prosecute what, and really it's the most serious or the preponderance of crimes that drives where the offence goes.

Michael Green: [00:10:10] And which courts? I mean, I'm trying to think, do I remember a criminal matter being prosecuted in the federal court?

Raelene Sharp: [00:10:15] The federal court didn't have any criminal jurisdiction when it was initially created. It's only very recently got a criminal jurisdiction, and that's in relation to certain matters in the Corporations Act. So it's a very small jurisdiction, but growing.

Michael Green: [00:10:28] And so most of your prosecuting is done in the state courts?

Raelene Sharp: [00:10:31] Most of the the vast majority of Commonwealth crime, basically, all of it apart from those those matters that are prosecuted in the federal court are prosecuted in state courts. And the judiciary act is an act I talk about a lot and a lot more than I ever did when I was in practice.

Michael Green: [00:10:44] Well, you better tell us, why do you talk a lot about the Judiciary Act?

Raelene Sharp: [00:10:48] Well, it is that combination and resolving the tension between the Commonwealth system of enforcing the criminal law and the state systems in which we operate. So sentencing is a classic example. At Federation, you have a few offenses, and the Commonwealth will have identified the maximum penalty for that offence, a term of imprisonment. Cases prosecuted in a state court, sentenced by a state judge, they look to the Commonwealth legislation for the maximum, but at that time, for all of the principles of sentencing, the factors you take into account, the things you don't take into account, they use the state factors for that. Gradually, over time, the Commonwealth has legislated more and more to set out the parameters that should be taken into account when sentencing for a particular matter. But they don't necessarily cover the field, to use a constitutional phrase in in slightly the wrong context probably. And so there will be recourse to state factors and principles in certain contexts. One classic example are community based dispositions. Whilst you might get a community based disposition as an outcome from a Commonwealth offence, the infrastructure that manages that is all state based. And so the states and territories have an interest in the filtering process about who gets access to that disposition. And the considerations for those things might at times be in conflict with the considerations the Commonwealth has set out for determining the sentence for a particular matter, and the Judiciary Act provides the mechanism by which the different systems are picked up and applied to that process.

Michael Green: [00:12:12] It's complicated.

Raelene Sharp: [00:12:13] Sorry, that was a long winded answer.

Michael Green: [00:12:14] Because it's complicated.

Raelene Sharp: [00:12:16] Yeah, it's complicated.

Michael Green: [00:12:17] The structure of the Commonwealth DPP's office, is there a DPP in each state or in each territory?

Raelene Sharp: [00:12:23] We have 10 offices nationally, so I have an office in all of the capital cities plus Cairns and Townsville, And historically, the office in Canberra was called the head office. But thanks to a really great IT system, we try and be blind to geography. We're truly a national office. Whilst the majority of our corporate services

are still located in Canberra. And I think that will always be the case simply because the bureaucracy of the Commonwealth government is largely centred in Canberra. I have people who provide corporate services all around the country. My chief information officer, the person who's in charge of all of the computers and tech is actually based in Tasmania. So I have the luxury of being able to appoint the right person for the job wherever they are in the country. But we prosecute crimes in all jurisdictions and they come from all jurisdictions, our offenses, including the external territories, Cocos Keeling Islands, for example, and Christmas Island. We have offenses from there as well.

Michael Green: [00:13:21] Raelene, you having enlightened us about the Commonwealth DPP and where it sits to a possibly superficial level because it is really complex stuff. And I guess it's rough... A reflection of our federal federal system.

Raelene Sharp: [00:13:33] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:13:33] But we better get to the start. Where did you go to school? Your family or maybe your family first, your mom and dad and your siblings, and then school and the whole. How did you... Know, do you always wanna be a lawyer? So take us back to the start and step us through the young Raelene Sharpe.

Raelene Sharp: [00:13:48] Young Raelene Sharpe grew up in Ballarat of all places. My my parents settled in Ballarat. My dad was from Ballarat. I actually went to the same primary school that my father and grandfather went to, and I went to the same high school that my dad went to. So I went to primary school and high school in Ballarat, and I probably knew from an early age I wanted to be a lawyer. I keep trying to think what

Michael Green: [00:14:08] But no lawyers in the family?

Raelene Sharp: [00:14:10] No lawyers in the family. My father's an engineer. My mom in a traditional way, that sort of era got married young and had four kids young and was very busy with four kids under eight and then another one as well. So we were five kids Managing a household and getting us all to where we needed to go was full time... Is really a full

Michael Green: [00:14:29] Time fit into the five kids?

Raelene Sharp: [00:14:31] I was the fourth. Yep. So we were four. And then when I was eight, my little brother was born. Yeah. It's good to have a big family actually now, and I'm really blessed. We're all very close and it's really great.

Michael Green: [00:14:43] But no lawyers in the family. Do you... Any idea of, you know, how you decided you wanted to be a lawyer?

Raelene Sharp: [00:14:49] Yeah. Thinking back, it it I did watch a bit of television even though we only had the ABC and one channel, BTV6. I did love LA law. I'm just not sure whether Corbin Burnson was the reason that I decided I wanted to be a lawyer, but I did enjoy that. And I did sort of know from an early age, and I can remember a careers kind of meeting at high school, maybe in year 10, where they said, what do wanna do? I said, I wanna be a lawyer. And they're like, do you know any lawyers? Are there any lawyers in your family? And I said, no. They said, well, you might think of something else to be then. And I thought, oh. I never quite managed to think what that might have been. So I just pressed on. And my dad, who was a civil engineer and worked for himself, had his own consulting sort of firm, got me work experience with local lawyer in Ballarat, which was an amazing week. The things that I remember and enjoyed from that are really silly things like even just the filing system of putting a number on each particular file. I thought, how great is this? Yeah. And we drove to, I think it was court in Ararat in his very nice Jag, which was the nicest car I had been in in my life. And that... That's really... They're the two things I remember from my work experience, but I I did enjoy it and I thought, yes, I could see myself doing this if I could ever get there.

Michael Green: [00:16:00] But when you got through high school, you didn't start law. You started with a arts degree.

Raelene Sharp: [00:16:05] Yeah. I didn't get into law. And so I got into arts. And so I went to Melbourne uni and studied arts. I... My first year, I didn't really have a plan for that. And so I just grab bagged subjects. I did German, Russian, a history subject and a and a maths.

Michael Green: [00:16:20] But mainly linguistics?

Raelene Sharp: [00:16:22] Then I got onto linguistics at the end of first year.

Michael Green: [00:16:24] Why?

Raelene Sharp: [00:16:25] Well, the real story is that there was a boy that I liked who said he was gonna study linguistics. His dear friend turns out he's gay. I studied linguistics. I loved it. He hated it. We're still really good friends, so shout out to Matthew.

Michael Green: [00:16:39] And you went on to do honors in linguistics. Now... And I... You've... Your honors thesis was the use of reflexives in Russian.

Raelene Sharp: [00:16:46] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:16:47] Number one, did you know Russian? Do you still know Russian?

Raelene Sharp: [00:16:50] Well, I had studied... I did a year of Russian in my first year of my degree, and so I learned the Cyrillic alphabet. I can still recognize sort of the letters so I could sound it out like a sort of primary school age student, but my comprehension is gone really. My functional knowledge of the language doesn't exist anymore, but I was looking at a particular function within the language.

Michael Green: [00:17:11] And what function was that?

Raelene Sharp: [00:17:12] Yeah. The reflexive verb. So in English, we say, I saw myself in the mirror or you saw yourself in the mirror or you can see yourself out. This yourself, myself, himself, that's the reflexive. It was really a study on the theory behind reflexive verbs. So there's a linguist Noam Chomsky whose main thesis was that all of the mechanisms of the world's languages are really consistent. Anyone could speak any one of the world's languages, which has to be true because it depends where you're born. You'll be able to speak your mother tongue. And so his thesis was that you could write a theory for all of the features of the world's languages that would hold. And his theory for reflexive verbs is that they had to be really close to each other within a sentence. And so I was testing whether that held for the use of reflexives in the Russian language.

Michael Green: [00:18:07] Raelene, learning that, which I mean, I find it interesting, but I might be a nerd, I guess.

Raelene Sharp: [00:18:13] Well, I found it interesting, and I am a nerd.

Michael Green: [00:18:15] I find it interesting too. Has that knowledge helped you? And we were... I'm gonna jump ahead a bit here and think now you've been an advocate. You've been on your feet on countless occasions as an advocate on behalf of various clients. That knowledge of linguistics, is it helpful to help help you in the law?

Raelene Sharp: [00:18:30] Absolutely. Because language and expression is so important in the law. Clarity of communication when you're writing a particular letter that might be a foundational document for a piece of litigation. If you are writing a piece of legislation or attempting to interpret a piece of legislation, understanding the mechanism of language is really important there. I think that's a challenge for all of us. Grammar is not taught anymore. And so people don't understand how to structure sentences in a way or why the sentence they've structured is clearer or why that particular sentence is unclear. We... You might all... We might all intuitively look at a piece of writing and say, well, I have to read that two or three times to understand why or what the meaning is, but not understanding the theory about what that is. I think if you have that theory, it helps you be a better communicator.

Michael Green: [00:19:16] As an aside, I would say, Raelene, I think you have... You and the grammarians have lost that battle with social media.

Raelene Sharp: [00:19:24] Absolutely. It's interesting, though, that we're we're almost coming full circle if you think about those people that study ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and hieroglyphics. You know, you can now have a whole conversation in emoticons. So we're really going back there.

Michael Green: [00:19:37] We better move on, I guess, to law. You did your law at Monash between 1996 and 1998. Did you enjoy the study of the law?

Raelene Sharp: [00:19:46] Yeah. I did. By the time I got to do the law degree, having finished my arts degree, I was really ready for it. And I was quite focused on my studies, so I actually enjoyed the process and really reveled in the degree.

Michael Green: [00:20:00] You mentioned a book which I'd never heard of. I wish it was in existence when I studied law called How to Study Law by a person named Creaver.

Raelene Sharp: [00:20:09] It was a great book and it was recommended by one of my first year teachers, whose name now escapes me, which I'm embarrassed to say, because I had studied linguistics and I thought, well, I know how to study at university, but I was out of my depth. And I went and saw her and I said, don't understand what's going on. And she said, have a read of this book. It will teach you about how to study law. And it did. It explained the purpose of the lectures, how they were structured and why they were structured like that, what exams were about in the law, what they were trying to test and how they tested it. And I still remember it said, you should always make a note of your summary, a note of your understanding of the key principles of a case, that highlighting a sentence in a passage in a book or in a passage in a report is no substitute for writing that note. But I did take quite some glee in highlighting that sentence in the book and not writing it down. But those are practices I've brought with me now still.

Michael Green: [00:20:58] I wonder if the if the book is still in in publication and people are still using

Raelene Sharp: [00:21:02] I think it is. A few years ago I recommended it to somebody and they were still able to get it. Yeah. It was a great resource.

Michael Green: [00:21:12] Raelene, moving on, you get your degree, you do your articles at the Victorian OPP, Office of Public Prosecutions. Was it hard to get articles at the time?

Raelene Sharp: [00:21:21] Yeah, it was a real challenge. Sort of at that time we were in the early days of mail merge and people were sending off applications for 100 different firms to get articles. I think I applied for maybe five because I wanted to practise in crime and I actually wanted to prosecute. So I really just focused on this one and I was really fortunate enough to get there. I had some great sort of support and assistance, I remember from, I think, Professor Fox who taught me criminal law. He was a referee for me and I asked him to have a look at my application and he tore my CV to shreds. He said, You're no longer in high school. This is a professional document now. You need to talk about some other things. And so that really assisted me in changing gear and saying, This is this is the next stage now.

Michael Green: [00:22:04] I find it interesting that you always wanted to prosecute. I would have thought more typically young students, young lawyers see themselves as the heroic defence counsel.

Raelene Sharp: [00:22:15] Yeah. I think that there's a lot of people who see that, and it is heroic. It's a really important part of our system, and I have a lot of respect for people who do that work because it's absolutely vital. For me, I think reflecting back on, I didn't understand why I felt like that as a young person, but I think for me, compliance is one of my values, which sounds really boring, but people need to do the right thing. That's the social contract. We all should be doing the right thing. I think what I've learned over my career is that the vast majority of people that come into contact with the criminal justice system are not there because they choose crime expressly. They are caught by that system because it's the biggest and stronger system, and they need a range of assistance and a range of services. I'm not sure the criminal justice system is the right place for them, but it's it's where they're caught.

Michael Green: [00:23:01] Three years at the OPP after articles, what sort of work did they give a young lawyer back then? So we're talking 2000 to 2003.

Raelene Sharp: [00:23:10] Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:23:11] Did you have your own files? Did you have your own matters?

Raelene Sharp: [00:23:13] They had a really great program. The articles program saw you going through four different parts of the office, but they were really conscious that it was quite a narrow program, and so they sent us out to do courses in wills and all of the other sort of more general stuff. So, we had a really broad exposure, but I was able to prepare my own cases. I was closely supported and guided by more senior lawyers in the same way that you would be if you were article in a firm. You'd write a first draft of a letter and somebody is always checking that. You're not sending off something that nobody's checked. But I did get to work on some amazing cases in my early time, and I instructed Geoff Horgan in the first Dupas murder trial as a very junior lawyer at the OPP.

Michael Green: [00:23:53] Remind us of the Dupas murder trials. What were the circumstances surrounding all that?

Raelene Sharp: [00:23:57] The first trial in time was actually the last offence he committed, and that was the murder of Nicole Patterson. And she was murdered in her home he was identified as a suspect and it was a great circumstantial case against him. So that trial ran, and then he was a suspect for a large number of other cases, which ultimately found their way through the courts, but that was the first murder trial which ran against him.

Michael Green: [00:24:19] And you were instructing on your own? You were the sole instructor with Jeff Horgan?

Raelene Sharp: [00:24:23] Yeah. Was supported by Maria Lasby back in the office. I think she would have come to court a few times as well, but, yeah, I was I was in court with

Michael Green: [00:24:30] And a senior advocate like Jeff Horgan would have been overseeing you.

Raelene Sharp: [00:24:35] Absolutely. So he was there. I was really supporting him in his preparation of the trial.

Michael Green: [00:24:42] In a linear career, boring people such as myself had, you start, do your articles, start at a firm, in this case, the firm being the OPP, you work your way up, and hopefully, you finish up one day maybe at the bar or maybe even as the DPP. But you didn't. No. Not not not for the last time, certainly. You took a step sideways. Yes. Tell us about that.

Raelene Sharp: [00:25:03] Well, the the first sort of step sideways was to do my master's, I would say. And I... Having been at the OPP for a couple of years in the way that junior practitioners do, I thought, well, I I can do this now. What's next? Of course, not realizing that what I could do was a very small part of what I needed to learn ultimately. And so I was looking around for jobs and I thought, well, I've prepared some murder trials. I've done that. That's really the pinnacle of that kind of work. What's the

next level for that? And I thought, well, war criminals seem to be the next step along that chain. So then I looked at all the jobs.

Michael Green: [00:25:36] Really? You thought... I mean, war criminals, you you Yeah. You're a girl from Ballarat.

Raelene Sharp: [00:25:40] I know.

Michael Green: [00:25:40] In the OPP in Lonsdale Street, and you think war criminals?

Raelene Sharp: [00:25:44] Well, I think, you know, what's next after murderers? Yeah. I always had a fascination with sort of the second world war and how that all played out. And and not that I had any real connection with the Nuremberg trials or had any really deep knowledge about it, but just that people can do these things. I just find immensely interesting and it's sad, but people do amazing things. And so, yeah, I looked at jobs overseas. The ICTY was really in full flight then. That's the International Criminal Tribunal into the Former Yugoslavia and the Rwandan tribunal. And I looked at what they were looking for in their staff and they sort of said, well, you need a master's. And so I thought, right, well, I'll get a master's then. So I applied a lot and I got into Leiden University to do a master's of public international law specializing in international criminal law.

Michael Green: [00:26:33] And that university is in The Netherlands?

Raelene Sharp: [00:26:35] In The Netherlands. I did decide, I thought about it, and and you could study... I could have studied international law at home, but I thought if I actually wanna study international law, I'm gonna get an Australian view of it. I wanna be international. I wanna be out of Australia to do that.

Michael Green: [00:26:48] And how long did it take you to complete your master's?

Raelene Sharp: [00:26:50] That was a really full on twelve month period, two full semesters of work and a thesis.

Michael Green: [00:26:56] So when you finished and and you've got this interest in war crimes and and the trials of people who are charged with war crimes, did you look around for a job doing that sort of thing in Europe?

Raelene Sharp: [00:27:07] Yeah. My partner at the time wanted to come back to Melbourne, so we came back to Melbourne as well in part. I looked around a bit for a job, but I wasn't quite ready, I don't think, at that point to find the right job. So we came back and I went back to the OPP for a while, which was a challenge to go from, you know, watching the Milosevic trial in in The Netherlands to coming back to... Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:27:28] And so you have only a couple of months back with the OPP here in Melbourne, and you take a job with the Australian Crime Commission.

Raelene Sharp: [00:27:35] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:27:36] So, again, I guess you've... I mean, some of these bodies, we know their names, but really don't know what they do, so I'd like you to explain what the Australian Crime Commission does. And also, I wondered about the bar. Why did you think about coming to the bar at that stage?

Raelene Sharp: [00:27:49] Yeah. The the bar was in the back of my mind, and at that point, as you'll recall, the system was you would put your name on a list and eventually you would just get to the top of the list at some point and you'd get a tap on the shoulder to come to the bar. So I got... When I got back from The Netherlands, my name was getting to the top of the list, But at the same time, I got the opportunity to go to the crime commission. And I thought, well, that's another client potentially. Like, I will only get work from the OPP. I might get defense work. But having only prosecuted, I was conscious that I didn't have the connections with the defense firms that I might have needed. So I thought if I go to the Crime Commission, I will have at least one other client potentially, and I'll get a bit of a broader exposure as well. So I deferred my position in the list to go to the bar at that point in time to go to the Crime Commission.

Michael Green: [00:28:30] What does the Crime Commission do?

Raelene Sharp: [00:28:32] Yeah. Now called the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. It was then sort of the equivalent of our FBI. So for all of the police forces

then have their commissioners, I think, still now on the board of the commission, the ACC, and they were looking at nationally significant crime. So they had a remit to look at, for example, outlawed motorcycle gangs. So criminal groups that were functioning nationally. And so they would focus on those sorts of things. It was, yeah, kind of like a national detectives in a way.

Michael Green: [00:29:05] And so what does a young lawyer do there?

Raelene Sharp: [00:29:07] So we were supporting the investigation. So helping them get warrants in the early days of their investigations, going to the ART doing that. They also have a power to compulsorily examine people in the same way that the officer chief examiner in Victoria does now still. And so there were examinations that conducted where you issued notices to people to produce documents.

Michael Green: [00:29:27] So you got advocacy experience there doing those examination?

Raelene Sharp: [00:29:30] In the inquisitorial sense, yes. Yes.

Michael Green: [00:29:33] Yeah. Did you enjoy the time there? Interesting work?

Raelene Sharp: [00:29:35] Amazingly interesting work. I learned an awful lot there. I learnt about the process of criminal investigation from inception really to the referral point, which has been immensely helpful in my career, not just in my role now, but also at the bar, understanding how and why police will think and what decisions they make on the way through an investigation helps you understand the piece of litigation at the end. And having had some experience in that end piece of litigation, I was able to assist and say, well, if you take this step now, that's how it will play out at trial. Can you consider this other step now? Because that might play out differently at trial for you. But I also was... It really broadened my horizons in terms of the law because there was a lot more administrative law there and I got to brief and get to know some amazing barristers from there. So I briefed now Chief Justice Mornima of the Federal Court, Justice Stephen Donahue of the Court of Appeal, Peter Hanks, people like this. They were doing the administrative law work.

Michael Green: [00:30:33] Yes. Yes.

Raelene Sharp: [00:30:33] So I got a connection with them, which was really really outside pure crime. Took me outside pure crime.

Michael Green: [00:30:38] And a and a really good thing to to learn and be exposed to at that stage of your career.

Raelene Sharp: [00:30:43] Definitely. Because crime is is immensely interesting and one of the most difficult parts of the law, I think. Having a full knowledge of evidence is is really something that criminal barristers have over every other type of barrister at the bar. Sorry. Everybody. But to understand administrative law as well and have that real experience has been great for me in my career, and I think it's made me better at both.

Michael Green: [00:31:07] We now come to another sideways step. After all that, Raelene, you haven't forgotten your love of war crimes, and you move sideways to the UN, working for the UN in Lebanon. I mean, it sounds really glamorous, you know, something like that of a movie. But, of course, that time, which is 2006, extremely dangerous, I would've thought.

Raelene Sharp: [00:31:31] I'm fine. I came back alive.

Michael Green: [00:31:34] But it's been a dangerous part of the world.

Raelene Sharp: [00:31:35] It's it's been a dangerous part of the world. It was a relatively... Well, I say relatively stable. My deployment was delayed for the summer war in 2006. I had friends panicking when the runway Before

Michael Green: [00:31:48] You get to that, how did you get the job?

Raelene Sharp: [00:31:51] So I had my master's and one of my colleagues at the Crime Commission had formerly worked at the ICTY. And he then went back to work at this agency in Lebanon at the UN triple IC. And so I made contact with him and I said, look, I'm really interested in this kind of work. What do I do? What do I write on my CV? How do I get these jobs? And he said, you know, gave me some advice about my CV. I send him my CV. I gave... And he gave me some advice about it and tips. And then then then really, I think the next thing that happened was that I got a call in the middle of

the night from one of his colleagues asking me if I wanted to come and work in Lebanon. That was... Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:32:27] And you said yes?

Raelene Sharp: [00:32:28] I said yes. Definitely.

Michael Green: [00:32:30] Hop on a plane. You you couldn't have flown to Lebanon?

Raelene Sharp: [00:32:33] No. At that point... So because of the summer... Because of that war in 2006, the whole agency had been relocated to Cyprus actually. And so I was deployed to Cyprus. So I got to spend a couple of months there at the outset, which was also really interesting. And then we went back to Lebanon.

Michael Green: [00:32:50] And what was your job?

Raelene Sharp: [00:32:51] So I was originally employed a badge as an investigator, but working on the investigation into the assassination of their former prime minister Rafi Kariri, was blown up in a very large car bomb. And then following that, there were a series of other political assassinations with car bombs that were also part of our remit.

Michael Green: [00:33:10] And you're investigating or you're doing over the legal part of it. To whom are you reporting?

Raelene Sharp: [00:33:16] So there was a commissioner and originally that was Serge

Michael Green: [00:33:18] Appointed by the UN.

Raelene Sharp: [00:33:19] Appointed by the UN. Yeah. It was a body set up by the Security Council and Serge Brahmetts was in charge when I arrived and he's now the prosecutor at the ICTY, Belgian lawyer. Amazing. And there was a whole office of people from across the world working on investigating, you know, getting documents from the Lebanese government and the Syrian government who'd occupied Lebanon at the time and trying to figure out what had happened and who was responsible.

Michael Green: [00:33:45] Did you get a result? I mean, at the end of it, you worked there for about three years, I think.

Raelene Sharp: [00:33:50] I was there for a bit over two years. Ultimately, there were trials held for some members of Hezbollah, and they were tried in absentia, which is something that can happen in Lebanon. So they were never arrested, but they were tried and convicted, I think. I think the appeals are ongoing.

Michael Green: [00:34:06] So that might be the best results you can get

Raelene Sharp: [00:34:08] That might be the because

Michael Green: [00:34:09] You haven't got the body.

Raelene Sharp: [00:34:10] Yeah. Or you don't have the individuals to charge. So they tried. Correct. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:34:16] That that person... When you did this work, I... Pretty banal sort of question, but where did you live? Did you live... You didn't live in Lebanon, did you?

Raelene Sharp: [00:34:23] Yes. We

Michael Green: [00:34:25] Not not the South Of Lebanon?

Raelene Sharp: [00:34:26] No. The South

Michael Green: [00:34:27] Dangerous, that part.

Raelene Sharp: [00:34:28] Yeah. We went... I did go as far south as I was allowed to go. So we lived in a hotel in sort of the outer suburbs of Beirut, and they built a whole security structure around that. So in order to get to where we were, there were about... There were three checkpoints on the roads, and the final one checkpoint was quite significant in that if we came in in a car, the car would have to go over a pit and a soldier would look at the bottom of the car to make sure nobody had attached a bomb to it. There were soldiers patrolling the perimeter. If wanted we to go into town, you would

order a taxi and they could only get to sort of the second checkpoint, so you'd have to walk to meet the taxi.

Michael Green: [00:35:04] So living in circumstances, were you living on the edge all the time? Did you feel potentially unsafe all the time?

Raelene Sharp: [00:35:10] It was actually pretty fine for the most part. Once we were in the hotel, I mean, we were very well protected at that point. For the first part of my time there, it was a lot easier and I didn't feel any sort of personal... I didn't feel at risk personally in any way. Towards the end when a few things happened, I went downtown less and less. I just thought I don't need to be doing that. I'll go to the local supermarket and buy my food and do my work, and that's fine. I don't need to be going out and exposing myself.

Michael Green: [00:35:41] In those two years, did you get breaks? I mean, did you have a two week break where you hopped on a plane and went to Europe or to get away from that environment?

Raelene Sharp: [00:35:49] Absolutely. And the the UN has... Well, we had six weeks annual leave a year, which is nice. But also because we were living in a compound, we got what was called decompression leave. And every eight weeks, you had a week's leave that they really strongly encouraged you to take because you are living in a bubble. You know? You're living in a hotel room. You meet someone in the corridor who's your colleague on the weekends. You you know, you walk to the walk to the restaurant and have breakfast with your colleagues. You have lunch with your colleagues. You have dinner with your colleagues. You go back to your hotel room. You sleep next to a colleague. Like, it... It's really quite... That part of it's a bit intense. So I was able to travel quite a bit in the region. I came back to Australia a couple of times. I spent some really good time with friends in Europe. One time I spent a week on a beach in Shamal Sheikh in Egypt just for my holiday. So, yeah, we were able to take enough breaks. It wasn't a hardship posting from that perspective.

Michael Green: [00:36:41] And being the glutton for punishment that you are, Aileen, you then accepted a position with the independent fact finding committee on Gaza. Yes. Now you came back to Australia briefly?

Raelene Sharp: [00:36:52] Yes. I came back to Australia in late two thousand and eight and started back at the Crime Commission in early two thousand and nine.

Michael Green: [00:36:58] But got a call from?

Raelene Sharp: [00:37:01] Got a call from professor Dugard who supervised my master's thesis when I was in The Netherlands studying, and I also worked for him as a research assistant. He'd been asked to do this commission of inquiry by the Arab League. And so he asked me to come and join just to provide support, hold the pen for him, and, yeah, be another member of the committee.

Michael Green: [00:37:20] And so you went back to The Middle East and worked for this independent fact finding committee on Gaza? Yes. It it was a short period of time, wasn't it? It was

Raelene Sharp: [00:37:28] A very short period of time. I think of... It was after... Immediately after what was called Operation Cast Lead, and we went into Gaza. I think we were one of the first internationals into the Gaza Strip. So we were only in Gaza for five five days, think, maybe six days. So, yeah, we went first to Cairo, had some meetings with Arab League, then drove across the Sinai and went in over the Rafah Crossing.

Michael Green: [00:37:48] And the Gaza you saw then is nothing like the Gaza we are seeing on television now and have seen for the last couple of years, which looks to us to be basically wreckage.

Raelene Sharp: [00:37:58] Yeah. There there was a significant amount of wreckage at that time.

Michael Green: [00:38:00] Even then, was that?

Raelene Sharp: [00:38:01] Even then. From that operation, yes, there was a significant amount of wreckage, but then there's constant rebuilding. But... Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:38:12] And you had an exercise routine to help you with stress or something?

Raelene Sharp: [00:38:15] Yes. People will know I do enjoy getting up in the mornings and doing something physical for me, whether that's running or swimming, but we were staying in a really nice small hotel that was right on the waterfront and there were no gyms. It's not an exercising culture. There was sort of two and a half flights of stairs. And we were meeting with people who had been quite significantly traumatized and we were exposing ourselves to a lot of traumatic content. And so I just needed to do something and get my heart rate up and get some of the cortisol out of my system. And so I started just walking up and down these stairs for sort of half an hour each morning. And the other members of the committee were sort of looking at me saying, really, is this necessary and what are you doing? But by the end of the week, I think most of us were actually on the stairs going up and down just trying to get a break from all of the things that we were we were talking about and thinking about.

Michael Green: [00:39:07] I mean, it's... To sit here now, the best part of twenty years later, it sounds intensely interesting. Yeah. Although I would have thought potentially very dangerous. But living through it, were you able to enjoy it or was it just too stressful, or did you get satisfaction

Raelene Sharp: [00:39:25] Satisfaction of doing important work is really off the charts actually, I'd have to say. And that's really, for me, one of the key motivators. People would ask me, why are you here doing this? Aren't there jobs at home for you? And said, well, yeah, there are, but there are other people who will do those jobs at home, but these are also important jobs and somebody needs to do them. I'm willing and have the capacity to do them. So I think it's important to do that and to contribute to the development of international law and international practice in any way we can, I think is really important? Parts of it I really enjoyed at the time. Certainly in Beirut, there was a lot more enjoyment than in the week in Gaza. But looking back and saying, I was able to do those things is is immensely satisfying from a personal and professional perspective.

Voiceover: [00:40:23] 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: [00:40:43] Now, Aileen, you've had this period in The Middle East of doing extremely interesting work and extremely worthwhile work. You come back, have another eighteen months with the ACC, Australian Crime Commission, but then in 2010, you signed the bar role.

Raelene Sharp: [00:40:58] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:40:58] Has it always been in the back of your mind, I'm gonna be going to the bar at some stage?

Raelene Sharp: [00:41:02] Well, it was always there certainly as an option, and I'd... As I said, I'd put it off to go to the crime commission, and I think actually my name came up again when I got the opportunity to go to Lebanon. And I thought, well, do I go to the bar or do I go and work for the UN in Lebanon? So I went to Lebanon, obviously. But by then my dear friend and one of my mentors, Mark Rochford, by 2010, when my name came up again, he said, come on, it's time now. It's time. And so despite really loving my job and seeing that I could have a career in the Commonwealth public service at that point, I thought, if I don't go to the bar now, I'll never know. And I can always go back to the Commonwealth public sector or back to the public service. So I went to the bar then in 2010, and I was really fortunate. I had two mentors, which the bar allowed me to have for a range of reasons, Stephen Donahue, now justice of appeal Donahue, and Mark Rochford, who went on to become a senior crime prosecutor who's now retired.

Michael Green: [00:41:53] And so in coming to the bar, with a very different background...

Raelene Sharp: [00:41:57] Yes.

Michael Green: [00:41:58] Apart from the OPP, you sort of can't put your finger on different organisations and say, they're likely to brief me and they're likely to brief me, I'll probably get some work from them. Was it hard to establish a practice?

Raelene Sharp: [00:42:09] I was really fortunate. I think my first day at the bar, I watched the episode from Rake that I hadn't seen the night before, but that was the only

time that I was without a brief then. I was briefed in my early days by the OPP. The crime commission briefed me to do some pieces of work.

Michael Green: [00:42:26] Is that more administrative law work?

Raelene Sharp: [00:42:28] It was more administrative law work, but it was work and it was, you know, good work to be doing. I had some defense work in my early days at the bar. And one of the key breakthroughs for me was a brief that Peter Hanks actually got me into as junior to the recently elevated now Chief Justice Nide, who'd just taken silk and it was a long running discrimination matter, so acting for some police members. And I was fortunate in that I could speak police, having worked with and for police my entire career, but I had that administrative law exposure as well. So junioring the chief justice in that case was really pivotal for me. It got me more clients in Victoria Police. It got me more instructors from Maddox. I'm still good friends with some of those instructors from those early days.

Michael Green: [00:43:14] And not not straight crime as admin as well. Yes. A racial discrimination case I made a note of here?

Raelene Sharp: [00:43:20] Yeah. It was out of the Flemington Kensington Legal Service. So the African community in Flemington Kensington alleged that they were being racially profiled by Victoria Police, and so it came about in the context of a racial discrimination case, but it had to do with police procedures and processes as well.

Michael Green: [00:43:37] And were you running many trials?

Raelene Sharp: [00:43:38] I never ran a full trial on my own. I junior did many trials. I prepared a number of trials. I ran many appeals, but I never ran a whole trial from start to finish.

Michael Green: [00:43:48] Raelene, before taking SILC in 2022, in 2021, you work as counsel assisting a special investigator who is investigating possible breaches of the laws of armed conflict, may have been committed by members of the Australian Defence Force in Afghanistan. Yes. How did that come about? How did you get a job assisting in that investigation?

Raelene Sharp: [00:44:10] I think it was finally sort of a culmination of all of my international experience historically. Now Justice Donahue was on my floor still then, and there was talk of, and he was a common solicitor general at the time when they were establishing the Office of Special Investigator, I said I'd be interested in doing that work if there was an opportunity that arose from that. And then the next thing I got a call from Marie Lizzo was then Justice Weinberg's EA saying that the judge would like to see me in his chambers. Of course, I panicked and thought, what have I done? I was like, I did appear before I was on a bail application recently and then refused that, but I don't think that's it. What have I... Like, what did I say? What have I said or done? Anyway, between the phone call and walking across Williams Street, I kind of thought, oh, maybe it's about the OSI. So then I calmed down a bit. I went and met with him in his chambers, and he asked me to work for him as one of his junior council on the brief. And he said, it's alright. You won't have to go to Afghanistan. And I said, oh, really? That's a shame. I'd be more than happy to go to Afghanistan. He's like, nobody will be going to Afghanistan. As it turns out, nobody's been able to go to Afghanistan, but that... That's how that came about.

Michael Green: [00:45:12] And you enjoyed the experience?

Raelene Sharp: [00:45:13] It was an amazing experience. The work is really important work, which is ongoing. But to work so closely with Mark Weinberg was really a privilege to learn from one of the preeminent criminal minds in the country. Criminal legal minds in the country was really fantastic. Working closely with Pat Doyle as well and Chris Moratus, who is the director general and all the investigators involved was a real privilege. And, of course, then Paul Coughlin also came on to assist as well. And so to be having conversations with Paul and Mark about legal issues in criminal matters was, you know, some... Something you would almost pay money to do.

Michael Green: [00:45:49] Raelene, were there things you learnt from working with people like mister justice Weinberg who have got great criminal law minds?

Raelene Sharp: [00:45:58] Were there

Michael Green: [00:45:59] Things you... Well, yeah, what did you learn from working with him?

Raelene Sharp: [00:46:01] I learnt an amazing amount. He has an amazing mind. He is a voracious reader, and his capacity to take in information, vast amounts of information, and analyze it very quickly, all in the context of a criminal trial and a piece of criminal litigation and and what people might or might not have done when they're committing an offense was amazing to watch. I learned I'll probably never have... I don't have that brain and I don't have that capacity, but just watching him work and how he thought through and analyzed the legal issues that we had and the factual issues that were presented to us was an amazing template for me to take on board and think, okay, that's how you might deal with that large situation or that's how you might deal with that politically sensitive situation. So it was a real privilege to be able to work so closely with him, and I and I learned a lot.

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Michael Green: [00:47:20] So that's 2021, you take Silk in 2022, then in 2023, you are appointed Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. Yeah. So, did that come about? Is that something, were you aware of the role and was it a role you thought you would like to apply for, if I'd

Raelene Sharp: [00:47:40] Certainly done a lot of work for the office and it really was a dream job of mine two or three years before, like it would have been a dream job of mine in about now in sort of my planning and thinking about my career. So it's certainly something I'd always probably aspired to do. The opportunity came up a bit early. So the previous director now, Justice McNaughton was appointed, I think in... She was appointed before I took silk. And so when the job was advertised at that point in time, it was not a job that was on my radar because I hadn't even taken silk. And then they re advertised it about eighteen months later. And I sort of thought about it, but decided that it was possibly not the right time for me, but I was encouraged by Mark actually and also Justice Hayne who was also on my floor. And really their advice was don't yourself select out of the process. There will be real people running this recruitment process and let them make the decision. But if you self select out, you don't give them the

opportunity. I said, the answer might be that it's not your time and that's okay, but it might be that you are what they're looking for. And so I applied, and ultimately, as it turned out, I was what they were looking for.

Michael Green: [00:48:49] It's interesting that good advice from very experienced and wise people helped you make that decision. And in the preparation for today, Reggie made a comment about you've never been scared to ask for advice or to ask people to help you, and how important it has been. And I thought, gee, that that does ring a bell, and I've read that somewhere else in recent times, somebody saying that. Just explain to us there your thoughts about that, about being prepared to put your hand up and say, I don't know. Could you help me, please?

Raelene Sharp: [00:49:19] Yeah. I think it's actually one thing that's got me a long way in my career and in life. We can all doctor Google a problem and find out the answer, but there are people who know things and they can help you. I don't know everything. I don't have all the answers. I'm very fortunate in that I've got great support networks in a lot of different parts of my life, professionally and personally, and I'm able to call on those. And it... It's not a case of saying, I've got this big problem. What is the answer? It's, okay. This is my situation. I've got myself to this point. My options are I can go A or B. I'm thinking A because of this and this. Am I missing anything? Is there anything else that you would think I should think about in this context or is there something else that I should or shouldn't be doing? And I found that immensely helpful because most people are willing to help each other. Know, that's part of the social contract. We're all just here trying to get through life and helping those people around us is part of that. But it's helped me avoid some significant pitfalls, think, and it's helped me make some really great decisions.

Michael Green: [00:50:19] And as a leader now of a major legal body in Australia, are you making that point, or is... Are you trying to make that a part of the culture of the DPP's office?

Raelene Sharp: [00:50:31] Yeah. We talk a lot about how we be better practitioners and about the practice of the law being a craft, not a science, and that we need to learn by doing. It's really... We need masters and apprentices. And just because you get these amazing jobs and you're the leader of this massive law firm, I'm still learning at

every turn. There are some things that I do know how to do for sure, but there are other parts that I still need help with. And so asking for help, I think, is always far better than really taking a misstep. Sometimes you've gotta back yourself. You have to make decisions, and that's fine. All of the work you've done in the past and the thinking you've done will inform those decisions. But it's actually, I think, better for everybody to get the right advice and make a more robust decision based on that.

Michael Green: [00:51:21] So, Rowling, what about the future? Do do you think about the future? Have you been a strategic person with your career as you have walked through it, run through it, or do you just take each day as it comes?

Raelene Sharp: [00:51:32] I think in terms of my career, it's probably been a bit of both. I kind of think, well, what do I want to do next? And then I'll just take the steps that get me there. And I've been fortunate that all the steps I've taken have actually got me somewhere. Sometimes it's a sideways step, sometimes it's sort of, you know, a sideways jump the other way, but I just have kept moving and finding new things to do. So I've been really fortunate in that. In terms of what comes next, it's a five year appointment and I'm just over halfway through. I think what's first on my list at the moment is to take a break. Previous directors have been reappointed. That'll be a matter for the government, the governor general. But just assuming that my five year appointment is not extended, I would actually come back to the bar. I quite love the bar. But having said that, it really is a privilege to lead the CDPP. It's, you know, one of the best legal jobs in the country and I think one of the greatest places to work. You know, the the staff of the CDPP are punching above their weight. They deliver to the Australian community so much more than probably is really appreciated. And I get that more. I have a fuller understanding of that now when I talk to people like you about their understanding about what our office does. And that's a challenge for me to make sure that people really understand the value of the work of the office. So it's been... It is a great job for me.

Michael Green: [00:52:44] Raelene, you may have had the most interesting life in the law of any guest we've ever had. Well, not many people have gone to The Middle East and worked in The Middle East at a time of warfare over there. And for you to have done that, I find it extremely interesting and something for us to all to ponder on. So thank you very much for giving us your time this morning and coming in and talking to

us. And I've got no doubt whatever the future brings for you or whatever you bring for yourself in the future, it'll go well.

Raelene Sharp: [00:53:11] Well, thank you, Michael, so much for talking to me.

Voiceover: [00:53:19] 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 Koolant 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.