

William & Lonsdale – Lives in The Law

Episode 82 Lauren Cassimatis

Voiceover: [00:00:04] 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 criminal lawyer Lauren Cassimatis, founder and principal of Gallant Law. Lauren has spent more than two decades defending people at some of the most frightening and consequential moments of their lives. For Lauren, good representation means seeing the person behind the charge and the bigger picture of their life, supporting not only them, but their family, and working to help them find a path forward. It's this philosophy that has shaped Gallant Law. When Lauren encountered another problem, the isolation and professional disconnection many women experience during maternity leave, she responded in the same way, by building something. What began as criminal law mums has become Connecting Lawyer Mums, a nationwide community supporting thousands of women as they navigate law, leadership, and family. Initially, Lauren planned to be a family lawyer, but a formative experience as a junior solicitor working with a formidable legal team that included iconic Melbourne barrister Robert Richter KC revealed the value of her patience, tenacity, and forensic attention to detail and cemented her love of criminal law.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:01:23] So I'm flicking through all these call records, and the and the police were alleging that after his remand that he'd gone on and facilitated further transactions and made further calls. So with my highlighter, I'm going through call by call by call by call, like I'm talking hundreds of pages. And I noticed that this number that he supposedly my client was using was actually making calls at that same time the police had arrested him again and reminded him. And I started to pick up on the fact there was a bit of a pattern where all these calls are being made from this number and it was just impossible. He was in the cells. And I rang Robert up and I said, I just wanna let you know that a lot of these calls that are said to be made as part of this import couldn't have been made by him. And I took him through a few and he goes, I want you to drop everything, bring this folder to my office now. And I said, okay. So I ran up the hill, Lonsdale Street and I showed him all my highlighted notes. He goes, this is brilliant. This is exactly what we need. So that was for me the moment where I went, I love criminal law. This is for me. This feels really rewarding.

Michael Green: [00:02:47] Our guest this morning in Lines in the Law is Lauren Cassimatis of Gallant Lawyers. Good morning, Lauren.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:02:54] Morning. Thanks for having me on.

Michael Green: [00:02:56] Lauren, rather than start back when you started in your school days or university or whatever, I'd like to start really more in the present or the recent past, particularly with a body called Criminal Law Mums. I'd never heard of it, but it's a body I understand that you founded in 2018. So can you tell us what it is or what it was, and why did you start it? What does it do? What's its purpose?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:03:18] Sure. So I started it in 2018. I was on mat leave with my second child, and I was feeling, I guess, disconnected from the profession in that I've always been a bit of a career woman and always loved the law, and so being on leave made me, I guess, question my identity and my sense of purpose. And there was this, I guess, guilt around it because you've got people telling you you should really cherish that moment with your baby and appreciate the time away from work. And I did, but I still didn't feel quite right. And so I had all these mixed feelings around being away from the profession. And I'd also experienced, I guess, stunts in my career while on leave, you know, certain promotional opportunities, progression had come to a stall. And talking to other female lawyers and solicitors and barristers. I was hearing all sorts of stories. For example, there was a barrister who told me while she was heavily pregnant, suddenly all the briefs stopped coming in because her her tenacity or her capacity was questioned. I just thought it wasn't good enough and it was necessary to build a network for women where their careers can continue to evolve even if they're on leave and also just feel supported and deal with those conflicting emotions. So obviously as a criminal lawyer, I thought I'll start this little network for other female criminal lawyers. And that's why I named it Criminal Law Mums. And we had about 30 women come out for drinks one night and we all bonded and it was great. Everyone was exchanging details and I could see the value in terms of, you know, enhancing those networks and supports and being able to bolster their career opportunities. And cut a long story short, I then started to have women from other areas of law reach out to me and say, can we join? I'm an employment lawyer. I'm a family lawyer.

Michael Green: [00:04:57] Sorry. But can I just, Lauren, so you had that initial night, drinks night, terrific, everybody had common experiences which they shared and they felt supported? What did you do from there to make sure it wasn't just a one off event?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:05:10] Yeah, good question. So I actually just got on Instagram, which I didn't like social media at the time. I felt it was sort of self promotion and uncomfortable, but I thought I'm just gonna share my journey, to speak, while I'm on leave. So I just kept it relatable. I was I remember one night where I was so exhausted. I was intending to put milk in the baby's bottle and pour myself a glass of red. I confused the truth. And I've looked at my wine glass full of milk and went, what have I done? And I took a photo of it and all these women were messaging me saying that they can relate and the exhaustion. And so I just captured my journey every day. And when I returned back to work, I documented what that was like, you know, doing the childcare run and trying to get to court on time and handling clients and work pressures. And so it just meant that people got a real insight into the challenges of being a working mom or a lawyer and a mom. And I was able to build that momentum and then we kept the networking nights up.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:06:07] So it went from drinks to having guest speakers come along to our events and share their stories. So our very first, I guess, panel session had Judge Gaynor there and a few other barristers. Judge Todd, who was a barrister at the time, a real mix of we had Shine Coombs as well. So we had a really good panel, a mixture of women that shared their life stories and judge Gaynor had the whole crowd in fits of laughter. We had about 70 people there, men and women actually. And they were just sharing how they got to the top, how they managed to get from, you know, solicitor to barrister to judge and also be a parent. So I kept those events going. Eventually, we had male judges as well come along and talking about how they support women and and their view on women progressing through the law. And that's when eventually it expanded and I had to rebrand it to connecting lawyer moms. Now we have 9,000 people in and

Michael Green: [00:06:53] And what more I've read that? 9,000. That must be Australia wide or or even international?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:06:57] Some international, mostly Australian. I fell off my chair when my website guy called me out and said, have you looked at your back end? How many subscribers there are? And I said, no. I thought maybe we had a few 100. And at that time, that was two years ago, there was 7,500. And I I said, no. They gotta be all bots. And he said, they're not. They're all legitimate. Yeah. So I couldn't believe it, the demand for it.

Michael Green: [00:07:17] And so it's now called connecting lawyer mums. It's not specifically crime?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:07:22] No. So we still do niche events for select practice areas. So because I think crime's important in that I feel we deal with particular traumas and pressures that are unique. We're in our own bubble at times, and it's so important to continue to support each other because we get our world. So we still have niche events and resources for different practice areas, but generally, it's open to, yeah, all legal fields.

Michael Green: [00:07:48] And one, what does Connecting Lawyer Mums do? Does it run half a dozen events a year, or is it has it got an online presence? How does it help the Lawyer Mums? And with 9,000 members, who administered it? Who manages it?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:08:02] I try to manage it. I've got an advisory board that helps me along the way, but I I do need staff. I do because I've still got my law firm and that keeps me very busy. So who manages it? Me, but I have support. In terms of what we do, we the aim is to create networks for women so they can continue to bolster those connections and therefore develop opportunities in the profession. But the other aim is to entertain. We have a lot of events that are fun. It's designed to let moms let their hair down, get away from the kids, go wild, which they love. Most of our events involve a lot of champagne these days. So it's designed to increase their networking opportunities, entertainment, well-being. So we have a lot of events around mindset. So mind, body, and soul essentially. And also we look at education. So again, we have a lot of speakers. Last year, we had a judge come all the way from New York, a Supreme Court judge that spoke about her journey in the law and what it's like now to be a mom and a judge serving in the Supreme Court there in The Bronx actually.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:09:06] So we have a variety of guest speakers that are there to keep the moms motivated, making them feel like, I guess to normalise their world but also inspire them. I introduced three years ago an awards called the Inspire Awards. I wanted to honour what various lawyer mums and allies are doing in our profession. So when I say allies, there's a category for men or non moms also in recognition of the way they support moms in the law. And we've got other categories like diversity ambassadors, community leaders, well-being champions. So that took off surprisingly really well as well. Like when I first started, thought, oh, people are gonna think it's a marketing stunt, but we had about 80 nominations the first time. And last year we had about 150 and women are really proud to win the award. We we had the ceremony in Brisbane last year. You know, seeing the women accept the award on stage and the the speeches they made, I could tell it was really important for them. It it touched them, and just seeing the value the whole concept brings is motivates me to keep going with it.

Michael Green: [00:10:01] Am I right in assuming with so many members Australia wide, most of your events are online?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:10:07] We trialed online, but it turned out most people want them in person. They love the idea of, again, escaping, having a bit of fun, and meeting people face to face. So most of them at the moment are actually in person around Australia, mostly the East Coast and Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, but I would love to take it worldwide. So next year actually, we've got a retreat planned in Greece. It's coming up, save the date September 7. And that's designed to help with well-being and business skills and leadership skills. And again, be a bit of fun. I put sort of feelers out there and we've already got a wait list, which is amazing. But yes, the aim is to go online. So we've got a website, there's a subscription there now which subscribers get access to certain resources. And when I have the time and the right staff in terms of CLM, I'm going to introduce webinars and online programs and resources that can be accessible worldwide or any time of the day.

Michael Green: [00:10:58] And to do all this, you've given up sleep. You just work twenty four hours a day.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:11:02] I think I do.

Michael Green: [00:11:03] In in Gallant Law and in connecting lawyer mamasa.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:11:06] So I work at in Gallant Law also twenty four seven, but, yeah, I set aside time in the night to focus on connecting lawyer mums. So that's how I juggle the two.

Michael Green: [00:11:16] That sounds ferocious, Lauren.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:11:17] It is too much, and that's why I need to get I've got a great team at Gallant. Now I just need to find a great team for CLM, and I need to, in myself, find the balance in that. I've always been a I think I'm a workaholic. I have to admit that. So I need to find acceptance in myself, and it's okay to step back at times and take a break, because you're right, it's not sustainable, definitely not.

Michael Green: [00:11:37] This might be a good time then, following up on that theme, you, to maintain some balance in your life, with two kids as well, you are a regular, daily meditator. Tell us about that.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:11:50] Yeah. I meditation I know some people roll their eyes and think it's woo woo. It actually isn't. It's it's designed to regulate your nervous system through the breath work and by training your mind to stop worrying about the past or the future and just settle into the now and into a state where you feel motivated and positive about the future. And and and it it just helps you collect your thoughts and helps you pace yourself. So, yes, I do do it every evening I meditate and it just helps turn off all that noise. I think especially as lawyers, we we become programmed to expect worst case. We're always prepared for a worst case scenario. Know, with I'll be in the shower thinking about what argument I'm gonna make in court even weeks ahead or the negotiations I'm have with a prosecutor or or some news I need to break to a client. We're constantly overthinking, always preparing for the worst. We overanalyze, which again is part of our skill set in terms of forensic analysis. So that seeps into, unfortunately, into our personal lives. So meditation just helps shut out all that noise and just find your rhythm and find your center. And I know it sounds corny, but I do feel it absolutely helps regulate, and I feel it reboots you to prepare you for the next day.

Michael Green: [00:13:02] It doesn't sound corny to me. I have done some meditation myself, although I don't do any now, but I have a wife who also does it every day, like you, Lauren. So it doesn't sound corny. It sounds to me to be, in fact, absolutely essential in the life that you lead, I would think.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:13:14] And I'm glad you say that. I I love to hear when there's different you know, everyone from all walks of life try it, and they do find joy and benefits in it. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:13:23] And something like meditation, which has been around, let's assume a start in India five thousand years ago, things don't last that long unless they've got value and benefit and are true. Now you have mentioned Gallant Law, which is your firm. You began that in 2019. Just give us a bit of an overview of Gallant Law. What do you do? What sort of areas of law do you focus on?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:13:48] So Gallant, we say we're a criminal law firm, but really what we do is we defend anyone that's been investigated or prosecuted by various entities. So, you know, automatically, you assume the Victorian Police Force or the Australian Federal Police bring prosecutions to court and we defend those cases and absolutely we do. However, what some people aren't aware of is that other regulators or organisations can also bring forward prosecution. So for example, if a builder is accused of a defective build that can sometimes enter the criminal justice system with it was the Victoria Building Authority, announced the I always get this wrong, but the Builders Plumbers Commission. You know, they'll prosecute or ASIC if there's, for example, insider trading or WorkSafe if a worksite's deemed unsafe, they'll then prosecute. So we also defend businesses or people that are there's there's an allegation against them by a various regulator, and so we'll defend them as well.

Michael Green: [00:14:39] And how how large is your firm? Are you a sole practitioner?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:14:42] No. We've got a team of seven in Melbourne, and we have satellite office in Geelong.

Michael Green: [00:14:47] Okay. Well, that gives us a bit of an overview of your life at the moment, but we better go back to the start. Tell us about the start. You started here in Melbourne.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:14:56] So, yes, born and raised in Melbourne. I'm a Greek Australian, so my parents are also born in Australia, so I'm third generation Greek. So that was great being raised Greek Australian. My family had assimilated into Australian culture and lifestyle. So, you know, I've got all of that. You know, the jovial laid back

Australian charm, I guess. I've experienced that in my family and my schooling, but also the Greek culture was always strong in our family and the tradition. So, you know, we value family very strongly in our culture. Food is love. We learn to be very generous and giving in terms of food and we're very big on making sure everyone's okay and looked after. We're loud by nature, we're social. So I think I've got a nice blend of the two cultures. And so I went to schools, be primary school, started off there and was always, I think, a bit of a clown at school, always a bit of a joker driven. I don't know if I was super intelligent or whether I just maybe underestimated myself or didn't prioritise schooling enough because the teachers often pulled me up on the fact that I had potential but I mucked around too much. But I was always a good debater. So I was always told you should be a lawyer one day and I used to laugh it off as if. And then I went to high school secondary college at a Catholic girls school, Marta Christie. And again, sort of very similar feedback about my, I guess my schooling or I wouldn't say work ethic because as I said, I was a go getter, but yeah, I didn't I don't think I prioritized the academic world too much at school. I prioritized parties and friends and jokes and

Michael Green: [00:16:28] You you're not an introvert, Lauren, who who stayed at home in her bedroom and studied

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:16:33] Definitely not. No. I think the the meditation's what helps me tap into my inner introvert. It's somewhere there. But I I loved art at school. Very creative and thought I'd quit at age 15 to become a fashion designer and go to Swinburne, TAFE. And so I remember catching a train then picking up some pamphlets and coming back and showing my dad and saying, okay, I wanna quit school now and I wanna get into fashion. I remember his face, he was mortified and he said, just do me a favor, please just finish VCE and then have a think about it. If it's still your passion, all right. And so I agreed and funnily enough, started legal studies in year 11 and loved it. And I then saw my dad go through the family law courts in relation to his divorce with my mother and I felt I identified a lot of weaknesses in that system as a 15 year old thinking I just felt that they didn't really treat him fairly actually. And there was there seemed to be these presumptions around parenting or fathers and relationships with their children. And I thought, ah, nah, this needs to change. So I decided, alright. I'm gonna concentrate on legal studies and be a family lawyer. That's when the driven Lauren kicked in, and I worked very hard in VCE. And I remember my friends wondering what the hell's happened to me.

Michael Green: [00:17:47] Where's the extroverted Lauren gone?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:17:48] And they call me, go, are gonna go to this party? Nope. Studying tonight, and they they didn't know me.

Michael Green: [00:17:53] And it had a happy ending.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:17:55] Did. I I got actually, funnily enough, I got top scores.

Michael Green: [00:17:59] And ducks the school board.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:18:00] Yeah. And perfect score in religious studies. And I got an award right after the party. We had an informal graduation party and there may have been a bit of alcohol there. And so the next day at the school assembly, they announced that I'd gotten a perfect score in religious studies and welcome to the stage. Looking a little worse for at a Catholic school, but but, yeah, I did.

Michael Green: [00:18:23] It seems to me, Lauren, someone with your personality and love of life is a nice way to put it, university would be the perfect fit for you.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:18:31] Yeah. I love uni

Michael Green: [00:18:32] And being in middle study, the social life.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:18:35] I was out of girls school, and all I kept thinking was, woo hoo, boys. I went to Monash, and I did arts law. Yeah. I really loved uni for the social life. You know, there were the pub crawls and the comedy nights and all sorts of fun nights. Right near Chadstone Shopping Centre, which was close to Clayton and it meant that I may have spent way too much time shopping at Chadstone, not enough time in lectures. And my friends would say to me, well, if you fail, at least you'll be the best dressed. But, again, I would just every time it was exam time, I would study all night. I'm talking, you know, 6PM till 6AM, just smashing out my studies. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:19:13] And that sort of thing?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:19:14] Yeah. It was the time of dial up Internet. So I'd sit there with a little horrible noise starting up in the middle of the night and just go through everything late at night and got through.

Michael Green: [00:19:23] And then so we're now in the year 2,004, and you do your articles with a a criminal law firm, one man firm. Good articles. Did you enjoy your articles?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:19:33] I did. I mean, I didn't know what to expect. I had actually had this desire to go to New York and practise there. I'd fallen in love with New York. I'd been there a couple of times with my dad and fell in love with it. So I was determined to just go there and sit the bar exam and live there. But an opportunity came to me through this firm and they offered me the article clerkship and I appreciated that at the time there weren't many options for post admission in terms of articles or studies. So it was a dog eat dog world at the time. Not many firms offered article clerkships or you had to get like perfect scores at uni and do the top tier firms. So I thought, you know what, I'll put the New York thing on hold now and I accepted the article role. So I was always grateful for the opportunity and gave it my all. In terms of being thrown in the deep end, yes, I remember it was my birthday and I probably had been doing my articles for maybe two months. And I got a call from the principal and they wished me happy birthday. And then they said, all right, you're off to the county court now to do a directions hearing. I said, well, what is that? And he said, you'll find out, just ask the OPP. And so I went up there a little nervous and I said to this OPP lawyer, okay, look, I don't know what I'm doing. And she said, just ask for leave. So it was chief judge Rosines. And I said to him, well, if your honor please, I seek leave to appear as an article clerk. And he said, do you need my leave? And I said, apparently. And the whole courtroom cracked up laughing, but it was a nice it broke the ice, and he was good to me ever since.

Michael Green: [00:20:56] And it wouldn't have been a nasty laugh. Everyone would have because everyone's been in that position themselves. Yeah. And I

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:21:02] It was a supportive laugh. Yeah. It would

Michael Green: [00:21:03] Have been.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:21:03] Yeah. It definitely helped calm me down. And from there on, I was doing a lot of my own appearances, which I I loved. Definitely throw in the deep end and definitely nerve racking when you're, you know, you're there kind of trying to wing it or or you're downing yourself because you don't know how skillful you are yet or if you've got it right or if this judge or magistrate is gonna think you're a fool. But definitely I think baptism by fire and it helped me. I became very self sufficient very quickly.

Michael Green: [00:21:26] But you did give New York a go?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:21:28] I did. So a year after so I finished my articles and I gave notice and said, I need to go do this. So I went to a school in New York that actually specialised in criminal practice and clinical practice. So I wanted to be a family lawyer but during my article Clerkship, I was on rotation doing a bit of everything, litigation, criminal and family and then found my true calling was criminal law. I loved it. So with the schooling in New York, I focused on this criminal law clinic program where I could actually work with real clients. So I went there very excited but I was expecting it to be sort of this Sex and the City lifestyle because I love the show and it wasn't. The short version of this is I've got homesick. I was gonna be seeing my friends. It wasn't really the lifestyle I thought it was gonna be. It's very different travel in New York than it is living in New York, and I came back with my tail between my legs and took my job back at that firm.

Michael Green: [00:22:19] Can I just ask you, you took your job back in a small criminal firm, you didn't think about coming to the bar?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:22:25] Not at that point. I felt I needed more training as a solicitor. Eventually it started to cross my mind. But what I enjoyed and I still enjoy is the client relationship side of it. I love getting to know a client's circumstances, getting to know them and being that conduit between solicitor and counsel. And I love the case strategy and the forensic analysis work, which I know the bar does as well. But as a solicitor, I think that's your main role setting up the strategy, and I I really enjoy that. Lauren, I

Michael Green: [00:22:57] Wanna do a bit of a u-turn because I was interested. You mentioned your dad and the family and how important the family is to traditional culture,

and it's something which I am interested in myself, and I think others are too. And so I'd like you to tell us a bit more about your dad, his background, you and had a very strong grandmother, a very influential grandmother. You know, people like that, they say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I mean, our stories, all of us, start with our parents, start with those influential people, and often the people we are today has got a lot to do with who those people were or are.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:23:29] Yeah. That that's actually very true. And I often the way I behave sometimes, I laugh to myself because it reminds me a lot of my late grandma, even my dad were very similar. So in terms of my dad, always been a very hard worker, a workaholic, always was proud to be a perfectionist. He believes in perfectionism, rightly or wrongly. So he he started his career at General Motors working as a not as a mechanic, but as an engineer in the mechanic space. And then evolved to management. And then he was studying at night school actually learning about, I guess, commerce and economics and business management. And so while he was working at General Motors in that sort of engineering mechanic space, he perfected the skill and eventually progressed to various management roles and then corporate roles. So he spent, I think three or four decades actually in the corporate space. So for example, he was at Amcor, Mercedes, Boralbricks, so various executive roles. So I learned a lot from him. Like, I remember asking him as a teenager, do you think I'll ever get fired in my career? And he'd say to me, it's about patience and earning your stripes and working your way up the rungs on the ladder. So don't go in too fast too soon and expect the world. You've got to prove your worth and work your way up. And I've always remembered that. And he's had a very strong work ethic and definitely instilled that in me. So it got to a point when I started the firm, he just actually left Borrell at that time. And as the firm grew quite rapidly, I said to him, you know what, I'm a good lawyer, but I don't know how good I am as a business manager yet. So how do you feel about joining the firm and guiding me? And he said, absolutely. So he's now a general manager and has been there for seven years as the GM. Definitely helps me with a lot of the business management decisions and strategies and operations because that's probably my weakness, but it's been great to have him around. And, yeah,

Michael Green: [00:25:14] He's And we work harmoniously. There's no

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:25:17] We do. As I said, he's a workaholic, and he loves to talk about work twenty four seven, and sometimes I need to remind him that I'm exhausted. And I don't wanna talk about it tonight. But, no, we we get along very well, and I know his heart's in the right place. He cares about my sister and I very much, so that I'm grateful for, and it's it's fun. It's and I think it's good to work with multiple generations. Like, I'm a Gen X, so learning from him as a baby boomer and then the Gen Zs and millennials that work with us, it's it's great. I think it's good to have that mix in the office.

Michael Green: [00:25:48] And what about your grandmother? She sounded like a influential person and really quite a exceptional might be a reasonable word for your grandmother Yeah. With her background.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:25:57] I adore and admire her and definitely inspired by her every day. Think about her every day. She migrated to Australia in 1953 when she was, I think, 18, around about that age. She had three boys and her husband, my grandfather. Even though she didn't speak English at the time, she did actually know multiple languages. So she spoke French, Italian, Arabic and Greek very fluently and then learnt English very quickly when she was here. So she actually went and found work. She was always sort of a tenacious woman and progressive woman. So she went and found work as a seamstress here at, I think, Holdproof too. So she was able to go negotiate her contracts, her work. She then ended up negotiating, purchasing a property in Surrey Hills. So the other thing with my family is that they knew the importance of assimilation and integration. So they moved away from the Greek community and moved to the Eastern Suburbs. So set up in Surrey Hills in an Australian neighbourhood. And so they bonded quite quickly with the neighbours and, you know, she obviously learnt a lot of her conversational skills as well through the friendship she formed there in the factory and in the neighbourhood. My grandfather passed away when she was in her 40s unexpectedly from a heart attack. So she raised her three boys as a single mom, as a widower. And the thing with my grandma is that she obviously possessed those traditional Greek values where family is paramount and you must do everything for the younger and older generations and always have a warm welcoming household. But she was also progressive in that she believed in women having careers and education and so did or does my dad.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:27:27] So when she ended up raising my sister and I, my dad is a single parent and so she raised us as well as her own daughter. So she always When others doubted me in my education or my attitude around school, she never doubted me. And she'd always say to me, Stop mucking around. You've got this. I see you becoming a very talented lawyer. I think you've got the skills for this. Your granddad was an engineer, was also a very talented mind and they used to always say to him, You should become a lawyer. She goes, I think this is in the genes. You need to pursue this career and I've got full faith in you. And so she gave me that confidence and she was always a very creative woman. She was a seamstress, very talented in fashion. So she always taught me about the importance of wearing quality fabrics and being dressed in perfect cuts. So I think that's what actually inspired my fashion love. And to this day, like I do take pride in I think it's important to dress the part because I think the way you present yourself tells a story. It's part of, I guess, using this word now, part of your brand, like who who you wanna present as and and what sort of message you wanna send. It often does come through not just your personality and your demeanor, but the way you dress. So I I do believe in that. It might sound shallow, but I I learned a lot through her.

Michael Green: [00:28:42] And are you passing on these values from your dad and your grandmother to your own kids?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:28:46] I am. I am. Although, you know, we're in a different world now where well-being is important, balance is important. What really drives me with my children is I want them to feel a sense of worth but be humble. I need them to know their own value, not be taken for a ride or be underestimated. So I'm always trying to boost their confidence and their sense of self worth. Also I want them to know to be kind and compassionate to others. They overhear a lot of my calls, unfortunately. As a criminal lawyer, you get calls all sorts of times of the day and on the weekends. So they often hear my conversations. So they pick up on that and they ask me questions later about, Oh, you were telling this man to focus on his rehabilitation. Why did you suggest that mom? And so I teach them about the importance in believing in people and getting them back on track. And actually that came from my grandma. Like I talk about family values but my grandma always taught me to be kind and have faith in the world but also be cautious. She used to always warn me about not being too generous. She taught me to help people and that's carried over in terms of my representation. I I think it's really

important to bring families even into the mix because in criminal law, you know, it's not just the accused person that's going through the anxiety and the fear of being dragged through the system. It's the families as well. So I think compassion is really important and knowing those family values.

Voiceover: [00:30:05] Lives in the 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: [00:30:33] Now, Lauren, we better head back to your career where you're progressing as a junior lawyer still. I like the story you told about a case you're involved in with Robert Rick de QC, as he then was, and how that created a breakthrough for you actually and sort of took you to the next level in some way. What was that case?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:30:51] So it was one of those big, I'll say, underbelly cases. It was a commercial drug importation involving some pretty big names, the mock bells of the world. So my client was alleged to have been one of the crew and it was part of a big bust or a big raid. And so we'd briefed Robert Richter as senior counsel and I was newly admitted. I'd only been practising well probably for months after my articles. And so, you know, even as a junior lawyer, again, you sometimes doubt your skills and you know, you're working with the big guns, Robert Richter, and obviously incredibly inspiring, but also can be daunting when you're thinking, am I serving this barrister? Am I doing what I need to be doing to actually advance this case? So my client had been on bail. We're awaiting trial. And one night there's a raid and the police arrest him and remind him. And he's in the cells and I'm thinking just something feels off and he wants bail. And, you know, with this huge trial hanging over his head, the seriousness of the charges and now these alleged breaches, I thought it's impossible. How are we gonna get him bailed? Anyway, I was going through call records. So this is in 2005 when everything was delivered still in paper.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:31:56] So I'm flicking through all these call records and it and the police were alleging that after his remand that he'd gone on and facilitated further

transactions and made further calls. So with my highlight, I'm going through call by call by call by call, like I'm talking hundreds of pages. And I noticed that this number that he supposedly my client was using was actually making calls at that same time the police had arrested him again and reminded him. And I started to pick up on the fact there was a bit of a pattern where all these calls are being made from this number and it was just impossible. He was in the cells. He was with police. There's no way. He didn't have a contraband phone or anything on him. And I rang Robert up and I said, I just want to let you know that a lot of these calls that are said to be made as part of this import and then again as part of this new remand couldn't have been made by him. And I took him through a few and he goes, I want you to drop everything, bring this folder to my office now. And I said, okay.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:32:49] So I ran up the hill, Lonsdale Street, and I showed him all my highlighted notes and he goes, this is brilliant. This is exactly what we need. And he goes, you've got a brilliant forensic mind. And hearing that, it was such a huge compliment and I've remembered it and I thought, you know what? I do. I think one of my skills is really picking apart the evidence. And so we got him bail instantly. He was thrilled. Robert Richter called my boss up and said, you've got a brilliant lawyer here and you need to thank her because she's just found a breakthrough for this trial and we're getting your guy bailed. So that was for me the moment where I went, I love criminal law. This is for me. This feels really rewarding. And I loved working with Robert. I remember asking him at the bar table, don't you ever get nervous? And he said, of course I do. That is the sign of a good lawyer because if you're nervous, that means you care about the law, you care about your client, you care about the case, you care about the outcome. And I've always remembered that too. So he really inspired me, but to this day I remember his advice.

Michael Green: [00:33:49] And I think what we can say, one of the things we've learned through the podcast we've done, the law's full of people like that who help other people, and I think people like you, Lauren, take that as a lesson and then you pass it on. I'm sure you help your employees the same way because it is one of the very nice things about the law is that people, for no benefit of themselves, help other people.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:34:07] That's true. I think it's very collegial, especially in criminal law. I I do feel that we we know what a stressful job it is, so it is important to

mentor officially or unofficially. And, you know, I've heard all sorts of comments being made about criminal lawyers that, you know, we work for the dark side or, you know, we must have black hearts if we represent crooks. But in fact, it's compassion. I think that's what drives most of us criminal lawyers. We're not in it for the money. Believe me, like, compared to commercial lawyers. I've seen I know the difference between the fees. We care. And I think that's why, yes, we are driven to support, I guess, younger lawyers coming through or the less experienced lawyers coming through. I noticed the true criminal lawyers have the same sense of compassion. Two days ago, actually, one of my lawyers, I'm so proud of her, we had a client that was reminded unexpectedly, the police did a raid and his dog was in the house and there was no way he was gonna get bail. It was just, you know, a very, very serious case. But my lawyer was so worried about this dog being left alone in the house for days. She spent all evening ringing around dog shelters, foster carers, until she eventually found someone who was willing to look after the dog as a foster carer. Like, that's not part of your job, but that just shows how much you care. And that's that's what I think makes a real criminal lawyer.

Michael Green: [00:35:18] That's wonderful to hear. Now in your journey, you now start to work with a real criminal lawyer, as you say, mister Tony Hanoverly.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:35:26] The one and only. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:35:27] The one and only Tony Hanoverly. In 2007, you go and you work with Tony. You were helped by, again, two people, barristers. One was Paul Darcy, who was the junior to Robert Richter in that case. The other was John Carmody, who subsequently became a county court judge. Those two people together introduced you to Tony Hanenbury, and you then worked for Tony for nine or ten years.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:35:48] That's right. So I knew that criminal law had become my passion and I wanted to work in an exclusive criminal law practice, and it was time to, I guess, move on. And I was in the trial with Paul and I told him, I think I need a change, a scene. And he said, I'm gonna connect you with my good friend, John Carmody, because I think he might know someone. So I'd never met John before. And he, again, talking about that mentor role, he invited me to his chambers for coffee and we went through my career ambitions and desires. And he said, I've got a good friend, Tony Hanbury. His son's just been poached by a big entity and he needs someone to fill

those shoes. I'll introduce you to him. And I found out that that son was Cameron Hanoverly. And so in between John Carmody and meeting Tony, I heard a lot about how brilliant Cameron was. And so, you know, I was thinking, God, how am I gonna fill these shoes? He's his son and he's brilliant. I met with Tony and he said, this is the first time I'm for a long time bringing in an employee and you're not my family. And are we gonna work? I got it. No. But we tried it and yeah. I was with him for, yeah, just over nine years and we worked really well together. He he looked after me. He mentored me too. So I think that was my real breakthrough into I felt quite isolated originally in the criminal law. Didn't really know many people and that was my first breakthrough being part of, I think, guests being welcomed into that club, and they really looked after me.

Michael Green: [00:37:09] And so, I mean, Tony is still practising and has been I reckon Tony will getting close to sixty years now in the law. Are there any specific things you can point to to say, learnt this from Tony or I learnt that from Tony?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:37:20] Tony taught me the importance of having really good networks. He said to me, you need to be known in this profession. You can't do it on your own. And I remember at the time, you know, what does that mean? Like, I've got my mates and you know, I was in my twenties when I first started with him. So And for me, again, maybe the social aspect was my priority. Remember going to bar drinks and at that time, I don't think I was mature enough or business savvy enough to know the value of making connections at these drinks. I just thought it was part of having fun. So I and I guess, yeah, again, being younger, your pro is different, but that stuck with me. And he said, it's not often it's not about what you know, it's who you know. So that yeah. That was important advice. And also just in terms of our advocacy, he really taught me how to be a great criminal lawyer in that. I remember him saying to me, you're gonna do your first county court plea today. I want you to focus on the deficits and the credits. And he just really took me through the plea structure. You know, he said, Find out who your judge is. Make sure you ring around. Get some advice from the bar around how to best present to this judge. Some like, you know, very thorough analytical debate. Others just want short, sharp and sweet. And I had Judge Chettle who turned out wanted short, sharp and sweet. So it was good to get that advice advanced and be prepared. So Tony taught me really good skills. Even his son, Justin. Justin taught me, you know, about cross examination. And so every now and then, I'd run my own communal hearings.

Michael Green: [00:38:38] At this stage, was Justin at the bar or

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:38:39] Working at bar? And so he this is before he took SILK. He told me about Leste's more in cross examination. Don't be one of those barristers that hounds a witness. Just get the pertinent evidence out of them. I've always remembered that. He also told me about polite persuasion in advocacy. Just don't anger a witness. You know, get flies with honey type thing. So I learned a lot through that the Hanbury family, actually.

Michael Green: [00:39:05] I'd like to now just take another u-turn, and this touches on your grandmother as we've just spoken about, the love of fashion never left you. Even though you were loving criminal law, you were working with Tony Hanoveri and learning a lot, and you were being exposed to some of the top people in the criminal law part of the profession, but that love of fashion still stayed with you, and you needed to scratch that itch.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:39:28] I'm a creative brain, and I feel a bit stifled when I don't have that outlet. So, yes, I decided one day, I think it was 2007, that I'm going to study fashion. And I remember saying to Tony, there's gonna be times where I work back late and then just gonna go straight to fashion school in Clowood to do night school. And I remember him looking at me like, okay. This is interesting. So I got into Melbourne School of Fashion, and I I did that and I graduated in fashion design.

Michael Green: [00:39:57] You better tell us. We're all lawyers here. What do you do at a school of fashion?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:40:02] So they actually teach you some great theory that you wouldn't know as well as the tech skills. So, obviously, you're learning how to design an outfit or a garment, but it goes Only

Michael Green: [00:40:12] For women, not for men?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:40:13] Is this just as sexist? Well, we did men as well. A lot of street wear. But fashion teaches you about history. So, you know, you learn about how fashion evolved over time and the relevance of that. And I think history is so important in law. Obviously we look at past cases and the ways certain law reforms evolved and why

we're in position we are now in relation to various laws. And I think that's really important to always do some reflection on the past and see why it's pushed something in a certain direction and why we act in a certain way today. That applies in law and it applies in fashion. So for example, we think about Coco Chanel and everyone loves the brand and it's high end and it's all in all the editorials. But what's significant with Chanel is that she was the first designer to get women out of a corset. So women were in corsets in the 1800s through the early 1900s. And it was restrictive in many ways, not just physically, but like the whole message around it was that women weren't free. And so she actually introduced sportswear for women by introducing little tennis outfits that had no corsets, the skirts were above the knees, which was a big no no as well. The shorter hair, the boyish hair, she actually paraded her outfits at the races. That's how she got attention.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:41:28] And so she transformed not only the clothing that we managed to wear, but the culture and women's freedom. So I think we can learn a lot from fashion and again, we can apply it to today. So that was huge for me. But also I can actually apply the skills in the tech skills to law in that one thing that you learn in fashion is that an outfit or a garment must be harmonious. So from head to toe, it has to make sense. The fabrics and the colors, the textures all have to add up. I feel that's the same way with a legal argument. From start to finish, it has to make sense. Your case theory has to make sense. It's gotta be harmonious. So you learn a lot of concepts that I think apply. And I think lawyers were creative. You know, when we develop a case theory, we're thinking about various options. What makes more sense? What is more plausible in court? What evidence do we have to work with? What do we not wanna use? What more evidence should we get? That's an analytical mind. That's a creative mind. So I feel that they go hand in hand. You know, I think about Lex Lasry, who's a musician. Judge Johns is a musician. You know, a lot of us have that creative outlet. I think there's something there in the brain that works well.

Michael Green: [00:42:32] Were you tempted to stop your legal career there and pursue your love of fashion?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:42:38] There was definitely a temptation, definitely. But there was always something in the back of my mind that my I think it was my grandma used to say to me, it might be my dad, is fashion really a stable career? Like, it could be

unpredictable and law is far more stable, far more reliable profession. And I went, you know what? I think they're right there. So I was tempted to go into fashion. I contemplated opening my own business but I think in terms of longevity, law one, but also I don't think I could ever break away from the law. I talked about being on mat leave and feeling disconnected and I contemplated even then maybe leaving the law and starting a fashion career, but then I'd have friends ring me from the bar and talk about a case and I felt myself get that thirst again to be back in court. So it's a creative outlet for me that's fun and something I do now to relax, but law will always be here for me and I think that's my true calling. However, I must say as part of Connected Lawyer Mums, I've been so excited in that I've had big fashion labels recognize the importance of it and they've actually hosted events for me. So last year, Valentino, like the Italian fashion house, hosted an event for us in recognition of CLM. Then Scanlon Theatre, my favorite Australian designer, did one this year. Dolce and Gabbana is gonna be doing one for us now in August. So that gets by fashion side very excited. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:43:53] Let's not kid ourselves. They're doing it because I think this is a fantastic target audience for us. Absolutely. 9,000 professional women. They'll all buy our stuff.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:44:02] Correct. And they definitely were pleased with the turnout and the purchases in the previous events. Absolutely. It's a great marketing thing for them. And

Michael Green: [00:44:11] It's a win win.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:44:12] Win win. Yeah.

Michael Green: [00:44:12] It's a win win. Yeah. For sure. Now, Lauren, after nine years with Tony Hanover, you leave to join the VLA. Now clearly, you had a great love for Tony. I'm sure you still do and still are close with him. Yep. But you decided to go to legal aid. Why did you do that?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:44:28] I wanted to get to a point in my career where I was doing more of a management role, less on the tools, more on, I guess, the policy and the, I guess, the directive side. So legal aid, I'm going to say approached me and it was the indictable crime team, which is a serious crime team, which I love. I think the

indictable crimes fascinate me the most. So I thought, you know what, this could be a good career progression opportunity. And I talked to Tony and I said that, you know, I was at a point in my career where I needed to give this a go. And you're right, we've remained very close ever since and he's remained a mentor to me. So I went to legal aid, started off as a senior lawyer there, then moved into like a deputy management role. And I also did a bit as a regional manager lawyer at the time as well. I was mainly overseeing a team of 20, able to guide them on strategy and skills, got involved in a lot of the policy meetings, invited to a lot of the executive meetings just to sort of be the person from the trenches to give them feedback on how certain There were proposals around certain law reforms and legal aid were offered buy in by the government. So they'd often invite me to these meetings to contribute to that buy in as someone that's in the trenches.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:45:31] And so I did enjoy that. It was obviously a different role for me and it helped develop my management skills absolutely. And I loved again, you know, with legal aid, you're obviously representing vulnerable members of the community that don't have the funds a lot of the time to support their case. So often we had people with significant mental impairment issues that can't sustain a job because of their health. So that meant those issues turned into very complex crimes and complex areas of law and defences that I loved being part of. But I must say that I, yes, government had its perks, but for me, I also miss, I guess private practise, there's a different edge. You're not only looking at the law and policy, you're also looking at how to best serve clients from a customer service delivery perspective. And so I miss that and thought about ways I could do criminal law differently and service clients differently. And when you're in government, you're kind of bound by certain guidelines. And I thought, okay, maybe it's time to go out there and use this leadership skill that I've developed now to open my firm but also draw in certain aspects of customer service that I thought was necessary in private practice. So I then went out on my own.

Michael Green: [00:46:42] So you start Gallant Law. There are many small criminal firms in Victoria. Did you seek to have a point of difference, to be a different sort of firm, to do things in different way?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:46:56] Yeah, definitely. One was what I noticed as a female and as a mum is that a lot of the clients loved that about me. They would often ask, are

you a parent yourself? Do you know what it's like to be torn away from your children and being accused of a crime? Or the families of an accused person will say, do know what it's like to have a child being accused of these things? We value that you're a mum so you can appreciate the importance of that bond with family. And so what I noticed in terms of point of difference is that I wanted the firm to be centred around the fact that we get what they're going through. We're not just there to win a case in court. We're there to actually understand our clients and their family circumstances and just really back them and get them back on track. As a parent, I could empathise. So that was one point of difference. The other one was that, again, going back to the whole thing about it's not just about winning a court case, it needed to be holistic. I'm kind of struggling with it at the moment because I would go above and beyond for clients, work all sorts of hours. There was one time at Legal Aid where it was Christmas Eve and a female client of mine had been accused of murder, murdering her partner and taken to Dame Phyllis and she was suicidal. And the parents rang me Christmas Eve, I remember I with my kids in the park and the parents were just hysterical and crying and saying, she's suicidal, what are we gonna do? And I spent all night case managing it, talking to Dame Phyllis against some psychiatrist with a case managing the parents, assuring them that I've got it, went back to legal aid and told them what had happened and they said, why did you do that? You know, it's Christmas Eve, you should be with your family.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:48:28] And I thought I should be, but this woman was suicidal and you know, her family were in a really bad way. And that's why I say now I think about your balance is important because sometimes I can't be neglecting my children either. But for me, it was important to start up a firm where we do go above and beyond in moments like that because it isn't just about the case. You don't just get slapped with some charge sheets and you go to court and let's call it a day. There are accused people that are suffering, you know, they're suicidal. I've had a couple of clients that have actually gone that far. You know, it's serious stuff. And families that are fretting and freaking out. And I think that as a criminal lawyer, okay, you're not a social worker, but you definitely can be a conduit and get the right supports in place for them. And that's why I thought as a point of difference to have a holistic firm where we're not just there to deliver legal services, we're there to help them get housing, help them get rehab, help them get therapy. Even like I told you, we helped with a dog being rehomed. Like you're a whole package. You're there to at least get your client connected with the

right support service to ensure life's going to get better for them or at least give them some peace of mind during this whole experience in the justice system.

Voiceover: [00:49:44] William and Lonsdale is brought to you by Greenslist, one of the leading multidisciplinary 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: [00:50:04] Lauren, I get the impression, rightly or wrongly, that your client base at Gallant Law may be wholly or mainly women. Is that correct, or have I misinterpreted?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:50:14] Not mainly women. I think it's about an even split between male and female or multiple genders, but we do represent a lot of women that are victims of domestic violence and have then resorted to crime because of that background. So I've actually represented actually several women that have been accused of murder of their partner. And that's an area that fascinates me because I've seen how that eventuates. All of them have been victims of significant emotional or physical or financial abuse and and have ended up where they've ended up. So I do represent a lot of men but I guess the women it's unique and it's given me real insight into the way they're treated in the justice system, the way they're perceived by society and the media and the reasons why they offend and also the challenges in terms of trying to reintegrate to society post court or post jail. It stands out compared to the men and their situations a lot of the time.

Michael Green: [00:51:08] And am I right in assuming that these clients, particularly women who have been subject to domestic violence and have responded to that, that may be the only crime they will commit in their life, and therefore, we need to have a system which acknowledges that and doesn't force them to be criminal by locking them away. And then when they come out, they've got no means of supporting themselves. Is that am interpreting that correctly, or am I looking at that wrongly?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:51:34] No, I think you are interpreting it correct. What I've noticed is that a lot of women just reach breaking point. Life is so bad that something snaps and the crime's committed. And I'll be I'll give some examples, but it then gets to a point where, okay, what do you do now? So when they if they've imprisoned, they

learn maladaptive behaviours or their sense of worth deteriorates more so often the children are taken away from them. Their careers are now down the drain. The relationships are over, friendships are over, housing's gone. So they step out of jail and I've talked to some of my clients or some women with lived experience, but they all share the same story that they come out of jail and all of a sudden there's a bad credit rating against their name. And one couldn't get a job as a nurse because she had a conviction and she couldn't get a working with children check approved because of her history. I want say history because of that one offence and sentence. So there went her career in that profession. She had APRA all over regulating her and not allowing her to re register as a nurse. So that's another barrier. So she's looking for suddenly a new career path. Couldn't get a house because, again, her credit rating is affected, so rentals were not an option. Couldn't get a loan. Kids trying to rebuild a relationship with them. Impossible. A lot of barriers there with child protection. So what happens to them then? They go back to crime a lot of the time.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:52:53] What can do? What can you do? So when I talk about some examples, I had a client who was a victim of severe physical abuse, and she escaped the the husband, took the kids with her, moved she was actually from New Zealand. She moved to Australia to be away from him and she was an accountant. And so she got a job here, but trying to keep a roof over three kids' heads and get them through schooling and and through as a result of all the abuse underestimated herself, doubted herself, started to, I guess, steal, I'll say like it was fraud but she was stealing from her employer and that was survival. And she felt so guilty for what she did that she had a stroke and was in hospital and left paralyzed. And the boss came to see her and she said, I need to confess something to you. I'm a terrible person. And she just admitted everything she'd been doing. And so they reported her to police and she was taken to the county court and we pleaded guilty. She was spared jail because of a disability and the judge made it very clear that had she not been disabled, she would have been jailed. She ends up going on a community corrections order and corrections were good in that they customised the community work to doing work in a shop. But to this day, she now gets counselling because she still can't live with herself having done what she did.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:54:10] She was close to being deported and her kids, you know, had set up school here and work and they were Mum was gonna suddenly be

back in New Zealand. And so there's a lot of ancillary stuff that happens as well. It's not just what goes on in court and the sentence you get there. She couldn't find job because she can't be an accountant anymore. So a lot of issues there. Another client that had murdered her husband, that was part of the old defensive homicide. So it was established or accepted that she was at breaking point and she was a victim of such abuse that she couldn't even really rationalise the behaviour. She snapped and did what she did. And then she obviously spent many years in custody. The media tried to paint her as this gold digger that was after the husband's farm, which was all untrue. The children started getting followed by the media and being portrayed as these kids had benefited from their mom's crime. So that stigma attaches and then there's ongoing reputational damage as well. So again, I go back to how can people really rebuild their lives? What we need to really look at is what causes the crime in the first place and focus on the prevention. Like it's the only way to minimise the damage or reduce crime or reoffending is to really look at what's going on for people and why they commit crimes in the first place.

Michael Green: [00:55:24] Lauren, it makes me wonder, and this may not obviously be the purpose of the organisation, but criminal law mums and then connecting lawyer mums, could they be a group, a pressure group to try to improve the system?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:55:37] Yeah. It could be. We have got women in in the organisation now that have had lived experience, and often they'll advocate at various events that they've invited me to or I've been a panellist on as well. So yes, we are doing advocacy, I guess indirectly through connecting lawyer mums. I met a wonderful woman through it. She came to one of our events. It was all about mindset and how to turn your life around after a really rough run. So she came to that and that's how I met her and it turned out that she had been through the justice system. She was also a victim of domestic violence and then resorted to drug use and then it turned into some serious drug crimes. But she now advocates a lot. So having And she's very open about her history and that she is a clear proud advocate. So she has presented herself now at Connected Women's events. So I think, yes, indirectly there's a way to educate the community, but also we're educating other lawyers about what's really going on and helping us to expand our awareness around these triggers. And the media every now and then have interviewed me now because I guess they have noticed the work that's going on through Connecting Lone Moms, and then it turns they know my passion is

advocating for reform and prevention of crime. And so therefore, yeah, Connecting Lone Moms has, I guess, helped build a profile where now the media are interested in hearing what I have to say about this issue.

Michael Green: [00:56:59] Now, Lauren, we've come to the end of what has been our most fascinating discussion. You've been in the law for twenty plus years. You've done a lot and a lot of interesting and really good things. And maybe the main mentor in your career has been Tony Hanenbury. And Tony, you've been in close to sixty years on my counting. Could you see yourself being another Tony Hanenbury and working for another thirty plus years in the law?

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:57:21] I I look at Tony turning up to Sunshine Magistrates Court in his trench coat, still running to flee, and I think, how does he do it? He's just got the stamina of an ox. I don't know if I'll have that stamina. I know I'll have that passion. Yes. But maybe my role will be different. If I remain in the law at that point, I'd like to be more of an official mentor maybe, like just bringing the younger generation through and teaching them the skills that I've been taught and the passion and the direction. I think it's criminal law is so unique. You either have it or you don't. You either love it or you don't. It's for the people that love it and you just have a sense of social justice, but also the the skills that are very unique. So I haven't thought about it, but I would say probably at that point, if I am gonna remain in criminal law, it's to educate the younger generation and also maybe continue this advocacy in the community around what really goes on in the criminal law space in the justice system and advocating for stronger rehabilitative measures, I think is where I see it. And hopefully Connectee Lawyer Mums has taken real flight worldwide and more international retreats. That could be a nice way to spend my last years working, yes.

Michael Green: [00:58:33] Lauren, thank you for a most interesting discussion this morning. You bring a completely different slant and light on a life in the law and a really worthwhile life in the law. Thank you very much.

Lauren Cassimatis: [00:58:43] Thank you so much. Thank you for hearing me out. It's been great chatting with you, and, yeah, I always loved working with you back in the day when I was at Tony's. It was great. Thank you.

Voiceover: [00:58:59] 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, We are privileged to continue that discussion here today.