

THE WISDOM PROJECT

Vincent Fairfax Fellowship
Group One – what
happened next



**The Wisdom Project:
Vincent Fairfax Fellowship Group One – what happened next**

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Our Community
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North Melbourne 3051
Victoria, Australia

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Picture credits:

Most photographs of fellows by John Landmark (some contributed by fellows).

The image on the front page is a dove motif designed by Sydney artist Meza Rijdsdijk, who described the design elements of the glass award, given to each of the fellows, thus:

***Horizontal, rather than vertical:** This was chosen to give leadership a sense of being part of the community rather than above it.*

***Movement and direction:** Leadership is something dynamic rather than static. This is reflected in the curved nature of the glass as well as in the feel of the image.*

***Formation:** Individual elements form a group with leadership and direction. The leaders are integral to the group.*

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FOREWORD

It is with deep gratitude that I thank John Landmark for championing this project, along with each individual contributor for sharing their story for the greater purpose of creating a reflection in aggregate.

Drawing on the balance of time and experience, these stories provide a rich and candid impetus for action.

As the pioneer cohort of the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship (VFF) more than 20 years ago, this deliberately eclectic group, selected for their leadership, humility, compassion and potential for moral courage, came together to explore ethics in leadership through this unique programme, named in honour of my grandfather, Sir Vincent Fairfax.

As a person of great moral fortitude with a high sense of duty and purpose, Grandad was intently interested in quality leadership in Australia. Established in 1994, a year after his death, and developed through St James Ethics Centre under Simon Longstaff, the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship challenged participants to become more potent ethical leaders in their sphere, contributing to the greater fabric of Australian society.

In the intervening years, with graduating fellows across 20 cohorts and approaching 300 participants, the Fairfax family, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) and Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Foundation (VFELF) boards have keenly followed the progress and impact of those who have taken part, and the community benefit that has resulted. Those of you whose stories appear in this book understand this first-hand through your connection to my father, Geoffrey White, a dedicated advocate of the fellowship from the nascent years.

In recent years, the fellowship has been run by the Centre for Ethical Leadership, situated within Ormond College in Melbourne, targeting established leaders around the country in a more condensed programme. It continues to thrive. We value the ongoing involvement of alumni and encourage your engagement at events, and with the wider fellowship network.

It all started with the group featured in this publication. I congratulate John Landmark, with the support of his wife, Vicky, for this insightful undertaking, which is so invaluable for us all.

It is one thing to grasp ethics in deciding the right thing to do; however, it takes moral courage, good communication and determination to actually act and succeed. This is exemplified throughout this book, one good example being the account of Sara Blunt's work as Chief Health Officer in a small community.

Finally, I'd also like to express my thanks to Denis Moriarty and Our Community for generously publishing *The Wisdom Project*.

Angus White

Chairman, Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Foundation
Director, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

A MESSAGE TO MY FELLOW INAUGURAL VINCENT FAIRFAX FELLOWS

Twenty-one years ago the 15 people whose stories feature in this book were given a wonderful gift – one that might well take a lifetime to fully appreciate. We were selected to participate in the inaugural Vincent Fairfax Fellowship (VFF) programme. I recall being in awe of the fellows selected in our cohort. Over the years that followed, as each new intake was introduced to us, I continued to be grateful that I had snuck in as part of the first cohort, as I was sure the bar had been raised each year!

This book has been eight months in the making. Faced with an enforced sabbatical in late 2015, I had elected to do the quintessential Aussie thing, go on a road trip, and in doing so take the opportunity to reconnect with as many of the original 15 Vincent Fairfax Fellows as I could. The idea to try to capture the “what next” stories of the group was dreamt up over a bottle of Cloudy Bay shared with my fellow VFF graduate Denis Moriarty and his partner Brendan. With further encouragement from The Ethics Centre’s chief, Simon Longstaff, I was committed. The Wisdom Project emerged, and each one of you has become a part of it.

As the project evolved, I was no longer able to stick with my original dream of a 10,000km road trip in a camper, with many outback nights under the stars; however, I did manage to cover the country. Using my healthy accumulation of frequent flyer points, I got to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, while phones and the internet helped with links to Switzerland and Washington.

My goal was to document the paths that had been taken by my VFF colleagues over the 21 years since that inaugural programme concluded, and capture both your memories of the programme and your collected wisdom. I sought to do the same of our ethical leaders over that period, programme founder Simon Longstaff, administrator Kerrie Henderson, and Fairfax family representative Geoffrey White.

As I look back at the shared conversations in coffee bars, offices and boardrooms, out the back of a factory, in your homes, or simply over the phone or via a Skype chat, as I play back the recordings, I'm presented with a rich tapestry. I'm boggled by what we have all done and achieved in the last 21 years. In fact, I think we can happily say we have come of age!

The themes that emerged from this journey are inspiring and heart warming. There are stories of moral courage, of coming to terms with the challenges of ageing parents. There are insights about connections and community, learning to accept our failings, and seeing life as a series of seemingly unconnected chapters at times. I hope you will enjoy reading these personal stories through a gentle and humorous lens.

Particular parts of the Group One experience stand out in the recollections I collected along the way – the “solo” component of the outward bound program, which saw fellows separated into individual spaces, was cited by many as particularly memorable.

In preparing for the meetings with fellows, some 21 years after the program concluded, I thought it important that you all receive a unique gift that would remind us of our shared experience back in the mid-1990s. I asked a neighbour, metal artist Barry Smith, to create something I could pass on to you as I travelled and reconnected with VFF Group One.

Barry explains the piece (pictured back cover):

“I am drawn to the art of renewal: transforming objects by hammer and heat. I like textured and three dimensional artwork that has layers and embeds history and messages in and on the material; artwork that takes used, forgotten and discarded materials and objects and gives them new life, new forms, new meanings. My hope is that the viewer will not only be uplifted by an appealing or quirky form; but they also look for messages and personal meanings in my work. Much of my work reflects themes of peace, meditation, nature and our journey through life and the environment. Leaves are particularly special to me – they signify life, renewal and coexistence. Picking these as a token for the Vincent Fairfax Fellows in Group One seemed particularly appropriate.”

For the record, the full list of words stamped into the leaves was: *seek peace, authentic, connect, respect, simplicity, wonder, serenity, shine, balance, lead, dream, strength, peace, reflect, love, joy, believe and hope*. Each of you holds one of these. While they are powerful when viewed apart, together they make up a fuller picture of life and leadership.

To complete a project like this is never a solo effort. Whilst acknowledging the constant encouragement and interest of many friends and family, I would particularly like to express my gratitude to two stalwart supporters. Vicky Landmark, my closest friend and wife, ensured the write-ups were relevant and remained interesting to a broader audience; and Kathy Richardson at Our Community took on the tireless task of editing these stories and with her special gift with words has helped bring this book to life.

I hope the Wisdom Project re-awakens thoughts and dreams that might have lain dormant for many years, and I trust we will stay in touch and continue to lead and challenge.

Thank you for being so generous with your time and insights, and sharing your Wisdom.

John Landmark
Maleny, May 2016

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The Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Award

Group 1 – 1995/96 recipients

(on completing the Outward Bound course,
Broken Bay, NSW, January 1995)

Standing (left to right): David Wray,
Alexandra de Blas

Middle: Simon Thornton, Colin Stonehouse,
Denis Moriarty, Robin Bailey, Nicole Walker
(nee Cantle), Cynthia Mitchell, Barry Sterland

Front (seated): Dom Hannelly (OB Instructor),
John Landmark, Deborah Kearns, Fiona Campbell,
John McDonald, Angus Graham, Sara Blunt
(nee Mill)

ROBIN BAILEY

Brisbane, Queensland,
29 September 2015



Robin sits at the bar with a beaming smile; it's engaging. It feels like it was just a few weeks ago that we first met. As a recently retired army captain, he had been about to embark on a career in the construction industry, with a first posting to Indonesia with Thiess. In reality, that was now 20 years past, and his life since had contained a series of adventures and rich experiences. Always keen to learn, Robin had thrown himself into several challenges, with more certain to come.

Shortly after he moved to Jakarta in the late 1990s, Robin was joined by Tracey, where they had four years and ringside seats to one of the most turbulent periods in Indonesia's history. During this *"amazing time"* Robin and Tracey watched the demise of Suharto's 30-year rule over Indonesia, including having close-up encounters with mass protests and tyre burning, seeing tanks on their street, and witnessing para-military troops exercising crowd-control with water cannons. At one point they were evacuated by bus from Jakarta at midnight, whisked out to the airport under military escort and flown to Singapore in a turboprop aircraft.

At the same time, they began to see the effects of the Asian economic crisis. With the region's economies in shreds, it was time for Robin and Tracey to come back to Australia. Robin moved into the heady, stressful world of construction bids with Leighton and Thiess. With major infrastructure tenders coming up in Victoria and Queensland, Robin was immersed in the all-encompassing process of coordinating and managing bids. This involved *"a full-time team of up to 150 people assembled for 18 months, some 800 people cycling through the bid-room, more than \$20 million spent in the process as a consortium came together to lodge their bid, investment bankers asking the impossible as they tried squeezing the financials a week before the deadline, and finally thousands of documents delivered by a truck on the closing day of the bid – all for the big prize, to land the build!"*

Robin describes the process as *"like an Olympic bid; the stress and anxiety that goes with this process is huge."*

Meanwhile, Tracey was in the process of realising her long-held dream to establish a sustainable retail business focused on allowing people to express their values through their purchasing power. The idea for her project, Biome, had been hatched in Jakarta following an encounter with orangutans deep in the Kalimantan jungle. What started out as an idea is now three retail stores in Brisbane and an online outlet. Go to their website – www.biome.com.au – it's inspiring.

As Robin says of Biome, *"At times life has been crazy, but the thing about a small business is that once you start, it's hard to stop. Really, it's part of Tracey's identity and in its own way has become a social enterprise, supporting some 20 employees."*

Daughters Georgia (14) and Gabrielle (12) add to the richness of their lives.

Robin had always wanted to dive into the action of actually running a company. He took up a spot in executive management of the construction arm of WDS, a company with some 700 employees that was engaged in constructing concrete and steel pipelines.

"It was like managing a battalion in the army," Robin says, "Clear roles and accountabilities, with various sections working to support the enterprise. I thrived in this environment, although sadly was not as adept at the boardroom politics, and four bosses in three years was too much. At the right time for me and the family, the consulting world beckoned."

That's where we find Robin, who has spent the past four years working with a group of independent engineering consultants based in Spring Hill, Brisbane. It's a lot less stressful, and he's enjoying being part of his daughters' lives and playing an active role in their upbringing.

It's doubtful that this will be last chapter in Robin's career. However, for the moment he is content being a co-director of Biome, while serving on the board of a Gold Coast-based not-for-profit, running his own consulting business, and spending quality time with his family. He says at this point he's not giving much serious thought to what's next.

Robin's VFF reflections and wisdom

"Solo was magic, I thought lots at first – even doing home mortgage calculations in my head – but then suddenly my head was empty, and it was therapeutic, it was like meditation. I vowed to do this more often."

We should also remember it was Robin who took Hemingway's quote and reminded us: *"It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end."*

"The whole programme challenged me," Robin says. "You must remember I had gone straight from school to 10 years in the army. VFF exposed me to so many issues, and the way we were able to take time to discuss these in detail, and not simply superficially glide across them, was the best way for me to put myself in the feet of others. I might not have agreed with their view, but I certainly understood and respected where they were coming from."

"In fact, it would be the single biggest learning I have taken with me, that of taking extra time to really gain the perspectives of others, and to appreciate the validity of their view."

"I also see that we are all so busy leading our lives, and yet stressing ourselves to maintain our connections, but I now know I could pick up with any VFF as though it were yesterday, and still feel a strong sense of community and connectedness with them."

A final reflection

"Never give your partner idle time! You never know what it might lead to."

And then Robin breaks out with his broad grin once more, and says this probably shouldn't be printed...

SARA BLUNT

Adelaide, South Australia,
6 November 2015



Sara sits in control at her desk, watched over by the compassionate stare of Dr Otto Nichterlein, artfully captured by the well-known South Australian and five-time Archibald winner, Sir Ivor Hele. Just as Otto dedicated his medical life in a post-war period to the care and dignity of his patients, so too has Sara made her professional life's mission revolve around *"what's right for the patient"*.

Never one to back away from an injustice (you have to remember she is a direct descendant of the English philosopher and non-conformist, John Stuart Mill), Sara has built her nursing career over 30 years and across four continents. These days she is the CEO of the James Brown Memorial Trust, a hidden gem in aged care tucked away in the Adelaide Hills at Kalyra Belair. Sara feels very privileged to be custodian to this remarkable 123-year trust, a \$60 million enterprise, which supports 879 residents.

Hang on, let's back up – how did you get here?

After completing a nursing diploma in Adelaide in the early 1980s, Sara headed for Europe and the Middle East. Some of her earliest aged care ethical dilemmas presented themselves at this time. As a private nurse to Sheik Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the octogenarian Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Emîr of Dubai, one of Sara's duties involved ensuring his beard and moustache were still coloured black. As she muses, *"In the world of consumer-directed care, where we are now moving, we need to be prepared for these things!"*

Over a five-year period, Sara worked at St Thomas Hospital, London, trained in Dorset and Scotland, and spent time on an Israeli Kibbutz. On returning to Australia, and after completing a business degree

to complement her nursing, she enlisted with the Royal Australian Navy. After two years serving in a naval hospital in Sydney, Sara was shipped out to Somalia during the first of the Gulf War conflicts, where Australia was part of the peace-keeping coalition. She worked in a Swedish field hospital outside Mogadishu.

After a family health scare, Sara decided she needed to spend more time close to her parents in Adelaide. She maintained her naval service connections by transferring to the Reserves and becoming an honorary aide-de-camp to the South Australian Governor, Dame Roma Mitchell, a role she kept up for seven years. During this time she also worked at Ashford Community Hospital, then joined the Nurses Board of South Australia as the Manager of Professional Practice and Conduct, where she also worked closely with the Crown Solicitor's Office.

Kangaroo Island and the move to aged care

In 2002, Sara and her family moved across to Kingscote on Kangaroo Island, where she took on the role of Chief Health Officer. She had her work cut out covering general nursing management of the hospital (including accident and emergency services), as well as aged care, maternity services, and community health issues for the island's 4600-strong population.

The five years spent on Kangaroo Island had its challenges, though Sara says that on reflection it was a great learning experience.

"It's very challenging in a small isolated community for people in an enforcement role to continue making the right choices," Sara says. "It's wearing and often has repercussions on your family and personal life. It takes enormous effort to do what's right, because you are going against the prevailing views."

Sara's greatest accolade on leaving Kangaroo Island was a comment from a local nurse, who said, *"There are some things we will never have to*

put up with again, since you've shown us we don't have to."

Following this assignment, Sara decided to look outside of the government health system. Aged care was attractive because of its holistic nature, and also because it did not require having to deal with the medical profession in quite the same way. She was also drawn to work that allowed people to *"live with dignity"*. Sara took on a management role with Elder Care for seven years, and then in 2015 joined the James Brown Memorial Trust as CEO.

On the family front

About the time of the VFF programme, Jack Blunt came into the picture. Sara had met him in her navy days, but they managed to meet up again whilst in Canberra in 1995. They were married in 1997, with Katherine (now 18) and Arthur (16) completing the family. Jack has been the home husband, raising the children, and more recently volunteering with the refugee resettlement program. Katherine has just completed year 12 and is off to study health sciences at the University of Adelaide.

Sara claims to be an introvert at heart, but anyone who knows her will vouch for her never being one to sit on the sidelines – allegorically and practically. A case in point: Tired of being a spectator at Katherine and Arthur's athletic training, Sara decided to take it up herself. *"Why sit on the bench, when I could be moving and learning something new?"* she says. *"Other mums have taken up the challenge to do the same because I'm so bad at it and they think they can do better. But that's okay – it's a form of inspiring people!"* Sara now competes in the over-50s group and recently gained a silver medal at a state hammer throwing event (though she is not drawn to comment on how many others competed).

"Everyone has to find their balance in life," she says. *"With ageing, it's important not to deny where you are, and to accept it, but at the same time not collapse in a heap and say it's all over."*

Too much denial of where you are means you don't do things that enhance your health and wellbeing; there's a vicious cycle in it. All my experience tells me you need to accept where you are, and then make the best of it."

Sara underscores this comment by talking of the strategies her mother has constructed to manage Alzheimer's and retain some of her independence.

VFF reflections and wisdom

"I recall the travel around Vietnam looking at health issues, often intersecting with Robin, Colin, Simon and Debbie. Also, the times we could engage with people and see the country outside of the mine site at Mt Morgan's was special.

"In general, my favourite elements were the challenges put in front of us and the discussions which really tested our thinking. And of course, establishing a unique network of colleagues. If I could, I'd give everyone from Group One a big hug now!

"As for wisdom, well I really believe that as managers we should never overload good people, because that makes it hard for them to do what's right and do it well. In an age of constant cost-cutting and efficiency drives, people should never be left without capacity to do their jobs properly.

"Drawing from my mother's journey with dementia, I can see how it really brings our humanness to the fore. You get an intellectual cognitive crumbling, and yet my mother is still a fount of wisdom and knowledge. I have now learned that none of the details in how we each see things is that important, what matters are the themes that are common between us.

"I've also learned that we as humans can easily be influenced, we are a herd, and at times twitch like a herd. We need to recognise our humanness, and our human failings, and forgive ourselves and others for being human."

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ALEXANDRA DE BLAS

Melbourne, Victoria,
12 November 2015

Ali's first love has always been environmental/science journalism. Since high school days, when she took herself off to the ABC head office to ask the Tasmanian state manager whether she should study arts or science at university, she has known this was what she wanted to do.

Growing up on a hop and sheep farm in the Derwent Valley, Ali was exposed to the vicissitudes of agriculture, while at the same time surrounded by some of the most pristine environments that Australia had to offer. A canoe outing on the Mekong river in Laos, undertaken as part of the VFF programme, was the seminal moment when Ali decided to abandon an academic career, stop pursuing her PhD, and go back to journalism.

"I went to Laos to look at the ethical dilemmas surrounding a Tasmanian company wanting to develop hydro-electric facilities on the Mekong river," Ali says. "I joined an independent Canadian



researcher who was travelling by boat to fishing communities along the river, recording fish species and habitat observations that were new to science. These dams were being built with no knowledge of the fish species or sufficient appreciation of the impact the construction might have on river fauna and people. Whilst meeting locals and interviewing fishermen – remember, it's a one-party socialist republic, and people didn't travel around the country very much then – I just realised this is what I'm good at and really need to be doing."

Leading up to the VFF Programme

After university Ali had five years with the ABC in outback Queensland and Tasmania. She developed an interest in environmental work, but felt she needed to know more and gain insight into her own biases, so she headed back to university to complete a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Studies. She graduated with honours and was dux of her year. More importantly, she had investigated the environmental effects of the highly polluting Mt Lyell Copper Mine on Macquarie Harbour and the community of Strahan, finding high levels of heavy metals like mercury and copper in the fish.

As Ali went on to do a PhD, the mining company threatened to sue her for defamation over her honours thesis and the publication of her findings was suppressed by the University of Tasmania for 18 months. She was eventually able to publish by going through the University of Technology Sydney, with the support of famous journalist and academic Associate Professor Wendy Bacon. The SBS program Dateline got wind of the story and aired a 40-minute documentary on Ali, her research and the ensuing tussle. The programme won a Walkley Award and Eureka Prize for environmental journalism.

As for the legal battle, Mt Lyell withdrew, the University of Tasmania Vice Chancellor offered Ali a written apology and paid her legal

expenses, and the mine manager bought Ali a beer in the Strahan pub, admitting personally that he was glad her work was finally published.

Ali's recollection of the VFF Programme

"All the legal battles had happened as I was selected to participate in the inaugural programme," Ali says. "I was really quite seared by the Honours thesis experience, and was feeling pretty knocked about. In fact, the Programme and my interaction with Group One was an important part of my recovery."

Few of us in that inaugural group picked this up; most of us remember Ali more for her engaging manner, evocative descriptions of the salmon gum trees after coming off Solo, and the fascinating accounts of the trials she and her then-partner, Duncan, were going through establishing a viable French black truffle industry in Tasmania. She recalls going to Weipa with Barry Sterland and Simon Thornton, and being tormented by having to write a dissenting report to accompany the group feedback report to the host mining company. She knew it was the right thing to do, but found herself once more in a position where she was taking on a mining company's management. As it turned out, they were very happy to get the feedback.

"On our week in Sydney I had a truly illuminating moment," Ali recalls. "I was listening to the various presentations Group One had prepared and was struck by the fact that our minds are so very different. Our approach to a question could be universes apart. It gave me a great insight into how much we are able to learn from each other."

"It seems such a basic thing to say; as a journalist I talk to people with different perspectives all the time, but this was a realisation at a deep emotional level. I think that was the power of the VFF award, we were challenged at a physical and personal level. It was almost as though the learnings we gained through that process were absorbed into our DNA."

"I think the programme design was excellent, and Simon Longstaff nailed it. I look at what amazing things Fairfax Fellows have gone on to do; it touched us at a deep core level."

Life since the VFF Programme

"I realised that while my honours had been a great but testing experience, my PhD just wasn't right," Ali says. "It was going into a sociology realm, and I was keen to remain in the science and environmental space."

"I left my PhD and partner, moved to Melbourne, re-joined the ABC and presented The Country Hour for a few months. I then moved to Shepparton, in the heart of the Goulbourn Valley, to do a rural radio gig. After that, I had another lucky break, and got the job I had always wanted. I moved to Sydney to present Earthbeat – the ABC's national environment show. This lasted for eight years."

"In 2005, an ABC restructure shut the environment programme down and I left to join Bush Heritage Australia in Melbourne for the next couple of years. Then, some eight years ago I ventured out on my own, establishing de Blas Communications (<http://deblas.com.au>). I cover a range of topics – environment, agriculture, social enterprise, art, mental health. My true love is making films, but I am passionate about what I do. I provide communications, strategy and public relations support to organisations committed to restoring, imagining, and building a sustainable future. I write and produce works for radio, print and screen."

Recently Ali produced a film, *The Human Cost of Power*, which looked at the deeply concerning health impacts of the coal and gas industry (see https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=y5DIDUB_RyA). It was screened at the Paris Climate Change Conference last year, and has had many other screenings at meetings in Europe, Asia and Australia.

What's your wisdom?

"That's a good question, let me think about that."

Ali sits back at her worn Huon pine dining-room table, nibbling thoughtfully on a piece of dark chocolate. The table and nearby dresser are family pieces, her great-grandmother bore two children on that table when it sat in the kitchen on the farm where Ali grew up. Both pieces of furniture provide a warmth to her South Yarra apartment.

"Well, you might not be aware, but I've had chronic fatigue syndrome for a number of years now. I had learnt how to manage it really well until the last six months when it took a turn for the worse and my previous strategies stopped working. It has been really challenging. I have great support from my friends, family, and partner, Daryl. Being embedded in a community is important. But you do have to be alive to your vulnerabilities."

"As for work, I know I have talent for making movies and science communication. When I am well the business powers along but when my health is tricky I might need to live on the smell of an oily rag. But something in me keeps rising up. There has to be a people element in what I do, and there has to be a level of meaning."

"The Vincent Fairfax Fellowship gave me the courage to go with my instincts and make changes. I spoke about this at the 10th anniversary dinner. It refocused me. There is a responsibility that goes with participating in the award, and every day thereafter you will be faced with choices, you can no longer retreat to the chair of comfort. Poetry has been very helpful in my healing; I'd like to read this one to you by David Whyte:

Mameen

Be infinitesimal under that sky,
a creature even the sailing hawk misses,
a wraith among the rocks where the mist
parts slowly.

Recall the way mere mortals are overwhelmed
by circumstance, how great reputations

dissolve with infirmity and how you, in particular, live a hairsbreadth from losing everyone you hold dear.

Then, look back down the path as if seeing your past and then south over the hazy blue coast as if present to a wide future.

Remember the way you are all possibilities you can see and how you live best as an appreciator of horizons, whether you reach them or not.

Admit that once you have got up from your chair and opened the door, once you have walked out into the clean air toward that edge and taken the path up high beyond the ordinary, you have become the privileged and the pilgrim, the one who will tell the story and the one, coming back from the mountain, who helped to make it."

Shortly after we met, Ali attacked her chronic fatigue with renewed vigour. She tapped into some newly published books on the illness, found a specialist open to alternative new strategies and has made great progress – so much so that she was able to co-facilitate a two-day media training workshop in March.

"I am so much better now," she tells me. "There is a little way to go yet before I am fully strong again, but I think 2016 will be a very good year!"

**I THINK THE
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DESIGN WAS
EXCELLENT, AND
SIMON LONGSTAFF
NAILED IT. I LOOK
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DEEP CORE LEVEL.**

FIONA CAMPBELL

Sunshine Coast, Queensland,
15 September 2015

Catching up with Fiona is exhausting, but in a truly delightful way. Her joie de vivre and animated conversation take us from a side-splitting recollection of some incident on the Fairfax programme to the serious considerations facing Australia as an ageing population, to a description of how some 200 spinner dolphins cavorted and dived around her outrigger canoe on a recent regatta in Hawaii. All this in 20 minutes. Fiona doesn't stay still for long; with her zest for life she never has. In her own description, "*staggering*" seems a great way to sum up her insights over the past 20 years.

Back in 1996, Fiona had a legal practice in Mooloolaba, then the only female-owned law firm on the Sunshine Coast. She had recently taken up outrigger paddling as a sport, and life must have seemed well balanced. She was in an active



role in the development of Queensland's first new university in 25 years, the University of the Sunshine Coast, as a ministerial appointee to the first council, and subsequently served on the foundation board for six years, along with Tim Fairfax. However, like most of the Fairfax Fellows, the programme challenged her and made her realise that there was much more to come.

Observing a changing trend in the way legal practices were operating, Fiona decided to sell up and move on. Opportunities as a locum or on long-term placements in Cairns, Gympie, Yeppoon and other places over the next two years made her aware how versatile being a lawyer can be, and she coped as an employee. Later appointments as in-house counsel with a top-five private company then led to a role as general manager with property development companies, overseeing retirement living, some co-located with aged care facility construction and management. During this time, she also completed an MBA.

Fiona has a funny reflection of how during the early 1990s three separate political parties invited her to consider joining them and stand for election, despite the fact that she was not politically active. The irony is that none had asked her what party she voted for!

In her personal life, a friend's urging to give online dating a go led to a happy meeting with Barry Smith, the start of what is now an eight-year partnership. Following Fiona's recovery from a serious road accident in 2009, the couple took a year out in a second-hand van called "Mithbell" (go on, work that one out) and set off around Australia. Passing through drought-ravaged communities, they met outback characters, got caught in dramatic storms, took on short-term jobs, paddled the Murray River in stages, reconnected with VFF colleagues where they could, and attempted to get to every national park in Australia. All of this left them with a deep affection for the country and a desire to see more.

"Mithbell sadly went on to car-wrecker's heaven," Fiona says, "but our wanderlust is still very much alive. I think the Fairfax programme really gave

me the confidence to embrace change, take more of a risk, and to look at things with a broader perspective before making a decision. Since the road trip Barry and I have taken on a powder coating business (www.powdercoatppc.com.au), and we will no doubt find some other venture to move on to. I have updated my mediation skills, and that's an area I hope to do more work in".

The sea and surf have been a large part of Fiona's life for the past 22 years. As active members of Dicky Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Fiona and Barry both do voluntary patrols, conduct training sessions, coach, and take on active committee roles. Then there's the constant training on the outrigger canoes, with a spread of events around the Pacific (Hawaii, Fiji, New Zealand, Hamilton Island) to tempt them. Getting up at 4am to greet the sun each day out on the ocean is very much part of their lives.

More recently they have become involved with "adaptive" paddlers (paddlers with some disability), helping them to access the world of outrigger canoeing and kayaking. Fiona says adaptive paddling has become increasingly popular in the disabled community in recent years. Whilst relatively affordable, it provides participants with an opportunity to experience nature and take in sport in a way that previously wasn't available to many of them. Fiona talks of a fellow paddler in her outrigger canoe team of six who is deaf and blind, and an inspiration to all.

Between all this Fiona and Barry have committed to extended bouts of caring for Dominic, Fiona's teenage nephew, whom she is proud to say is *"now hooked on paddling"*.

VFF reflections and wisdom

"I really enjoyed all aspects of the programme but highlights for me would be Solo and tackling the project in the Philippines," Fiona says.

"I think our regrouping after the Asian leg was seminal in terms of us developing as a strong

cohort. The range of speakers we were exposed to and issues we covered provided a wonderful opportunity to learn, one I am very grateful for. And I maintained contact with my mentor, John Bevans, for a long time after the Programme.

*"As for the word – **staggering** – well, I think we live in a staggeringly beautiful country with magnificent landscapes, we have a staggeringly vast array of opportunities.*

"And perhaps in life's journey we stagger from point to point, it's not a straight journey, and Fairfax gave us the confidence to move along that path. Often it's not the easiest or expected path, and we deliberately take a choice to follow the harder route."

In closing, with her ebullient charm, Fiona reminds me to "stay healthy and keep paddling!"

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ANGUS GRAHAM

Chardonne, Switzerland (via phone),
21 December 2015

Any conversation with Angus will inevitably have some reference to numbers. He might not be conscious of this, but we all remember him coming off Solo to inform us there were 287 baked beans in his can. We also know that he is the 22nd Angus Graham in a direct Scottish family lineage (his grandson Angus William is now the 24th); and during my conversation with him in December 2015 I learned that he only had 553 sleeps until he returned to Australia from his current home in a Swiss village on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Numbers must surely provide some anchor of comprehension for Angus as he deals with an increasingly complex world of security. A career that began in his early policing days with providing physical security later morphed into provision of business continuity, and Angus now operates within a complex world of information technology and cyber-security, with data measured in terabytes rather than megabytes. Living in the heart of Europe, Angus is witnessing enormous social disruption, with millions of people moving across the continent in search of refuge, and home-grown terrorism increasingly presenting another security dimension.

"My role in Nestle as the Group Information Security Manager gets bigger and more complex," he says. "It requires global travel and has been absolutely fascinating. I came here to a team of three some four years ago; today there are over 75 in my team. The company is the world's largest food and beverage business, with over 339,000 employees, and has 442 factories in 86 countries."



The Bondi policeman and the VFF Programme

Policing and Bondi are part of Angus's family DNA. His father was a deputy-commissioner, as was his uncle. His brother and sister were both in the NSW Police Force. Angus signed up as a police cadet at 15.

Today, all four of Angus's children are married and live in Sydney's eastern suburbs. They have made him a grandfather six times over. Daughters Cara and Elise are paramedics, younger son, Angus, has his own business, and his elder son, Ross, joined the police force five years ago.

When we first met him back in 1995, at the start of the VFF Programme, Angus was a life member of the Bondi Icebergs Club, an iconic group that has proudly sustained winter ocean swimming since 1929. Angus admits he has not maintained the tradition whilst in Switzerland. As he notes, *"The weather is a little different here! But we do have kayaks and get out on the water frequently."*

Angus was a programme stalwart, appointing himself *"tail-end Charlie"* on the Outward Bound route-march, the moderate voice of reason in any discussion, and the person you could rely on to provide up-to-date cricket scores during the 1995/96 Ashes test series. He recalls his Solo period: *"I am a news freak, usually surrounded by radio, TV and newspapers. It took me 20 hours to just get used to the experience of no news. Then the sights and sounds of the bush took over. I started to observe ants and birds. I wished I had another day to enjoy the solitude."*

For the Asian study tour, Angus chose to go to Thailand, investigating the ethical issues that surround the child-prostitution industry. Coming to terms with this confronting topic and seeing abject poverty in the streets of Bangkok each day was very challenging for him. Angus and another fellow, David Wray, would meet up each evening back at their hotel base, drawing on one another as they debriefed and tried making sense of the information they had gathered.

Towards the end of the programme, Angus came under increasing stress. He credits the VFF with giving him greater focus and understanding during this testing period. *"The real situation came down to me being offered a significant promotion,"* he says. *"Unfortunately, some individuals used this as an opportunity to discredit me, for their own gain. I was still offered a promotion, but not the same role as initially proposed. It was a political move aimed at pacification. What I learned through the VFF helped me realise that if I compromised, then it would mean I would do the same again in the future. I decided to leave the police force; it shocked many people, but I stuck by what I believed was right."*

Moving on – the road to Nestle

In 1996 Angus left the NSW Police Force, having completed 26 years of service, to the day. Over the next nine years he worked as a consultant, specialising in negotiation strategies and business continuity. His first engagement with Nestle was a two-year assignment, some 11 years ago. This kept being extended, with the brief expanding to cover information management security in Asia, Oceania and Africa.

"Originally it was a nice simple job, which was both interesting and challenging," Angus says. *"Over the years so many different dimensions were added, and as a result I spent much of my time travelling. It gave me the opportunity to see many different countries. I enjoyed this, staying there for prolonged periods and working with the locals, taking in their culture and foods."*

"As time progressed I started to spend a lot of time in the Middle East – particularly Turkey and Egypt. On the downside, I seemed to be either sitting on a plane, sitting at an airport waiting for a plane or continuously joining a queue to get a ticket, get through customs or go through innumerable security checks."

Around 2000 Angus reconnected with a long-time friend, Sharon; they married in 2012, with Sharon's young son Jeremy joining the family unit. Pressure

was put on Angus to relocate to Switzerland, which he did four years ago. Angus, Sharon and Jeremy currently live in a small traditional village, Chardonne, in Vaud canton. Living amongst buildings dating back to the 1600s, narrow cobbled streets, and a conservative culture, Angus sometimes feels like he has stepped back in time. He reports to work at the Head Office in Vevey, home to the company ever since 1856, when founder, Henri Nestle, first manufactured a baby food product for mothers unable to breastfeed.

Switzerland and Europe

"It's a beautiful country, about the size of Tasmania, with a population of 8 million," Angus tells me. "I live in the French-speaking part of the country, and no, I'm not fluent. I can get by in a restaurant, but my newspaper reading is still restricted to looking at pictures and recognising the odd word."

"A surprising thing about Switzerland is the amount of wine they produce. Introduced by the Romans when they ruled most of Europe, grapes produced here go into making wine, which is almost all consumed locally. The Swiss are very self sufficient, and they only export cheese because they produce so much of the stuff."

"It's fascinating seeing the complexity of Europe up close; it's a study of how humanity works. There are countries going through severe austerity programmes; the mechanisms holding the EU together intrigue me; the complex issues that arise when physical borders are removed is staggering; the current refugee crisis, with people leaving Syria desperate to get into Europe, makes me realise that Australian refugee problems are nothing compared to what's happening here in Europe."

Reflections and wisdom

Angus comments on the fast pace of change in the IT space, and how it's both alarming and exciting. He explains that the sheer amount of data is growing exponentially. *"For example, Nestle now has over 3000 internal websites. And I think cloud computing will change the way we do business completely."*

Looking back on his decision to leave the police, Angus comments, *"It was really a blessing in disguise. Many of my former colleagues have struggled in the environment I left. My move allowed me to become part of the bigger world. It is so refreshing to be part of an organisation where trust is a given, and people are expected to do the right thing."*

Angus says the fellowship programmed had a marked impact on him. *"What grew in me was really understanding what 'Doing the right thing by people' meant, and appreciating that things should not be done solely for the benefit of myself. Twenty-one years ago a seed was planted, and it has continued to be nurtured and has grown. I am now in a fortunate position of influence in Nestle, and I have been able to spread those seeds to other people, to continue the challenging conversations."*

"Do we ever know if we get the right answer? Possibly not. But without discussion, without thought and having some vision, you won't move forward."

DEBBIE KEARNS

Sydney, New South Wales,
26 October, 2015

There's something special about meeting up with someone you haven't been in touch with for well over 15 years only to discover that there is so much you both want to talk with each other about. A pub in Marrickville was the perfect setting to download Debbie's history, and hear more about her recent diving exploits off the coast of West Papua.

Early on in our discussion, Debbie claimed that *"work doesn't really suit me"*. She was quite dismissive of the concept of career plan or path. Those who know Debbie would say that's true to a point, but would also refer to the broad spectrum of sectors and businesses she has engaged in and contributed enormously to. Debbie has devoted most of her working life to public sector and not-for-profit roles that span women's health, housing, education, youth, ethics, and most recently, intellectual disabilities. Willing to take on any



challenge, she even tried out the financial services sector. In addition, there are the volunteering and board positions she has held.

There's little merit in trying to plot a path from all of this; Debbie, herself, doesn't see one. To her, progression through a formal career would have required her *"playing a game and stroking other people's egos"*, something she was never going to engage in. What is common through all her roles is a unique leadership style, which involves engaging immediately in the vision of any enterprise, bringing a very respected wisdom to the role, a passion to develop the staff working with her, and a willingness to continuously challenge managers and employees to do the right thing.

For the record

Debbie came through Sydney University (program administrator Kerrie Henderson was a classmate) and then went on to complete an MBA at the University of Technology Sydney. Early roles in women's health with the NSW government led to the management role she was engaged in at the time of the VFF programme. Following this was a four-year role as CEO of YHA, whilst she concurrently completed a graduate diploma in corporate governance. The YHA role was particularly fulfilling, with Debbie embracing the chance to develop staff, and be freed from some of the constraints of public-sector working environments.

Debbie went on to join financial services firm Zurich as a team leader in a trial enterprise, which unfortunately folded before really taking off. A dispute over severance conditions and a short-lived court case reinforced her mostly negative assumptions of "big business".

Around that time saw the emergence of Primary Ethics in NSW, a state-backed initiative to develop and deliver philosophical ethics education for children who did not attend scripture classes in urban, regional and rural schools. There was an enormous demand for volunteers to participate

in the initial trial and subsequent roll-out. This programme spoke to many of Debbie's interests and she took a role managing the volunteer cohort, at that time an enormous group of 2000 volunteers managed by six staff.

More recently, Debbie has taken on the role of CEO for the NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities. As she comments, *"I'm now busy in a good way, these are really interesting times. I work for a tiny organisation with a significant budget – we recently got a grant for \$3 million from the NSW government. With a board that has more than 50% of its members with intellectual disabilities, that presents its own governance dilemmas. With the National Disability Insurance Scheme about to role out, we have grown in prominence. One of my challenges is to establish processes and tackle business development so that we are a sustainable organisation."*

Experience working in the public housing sector has also seen Debbie join the board of a not-for-profit housing company specialising in providing housing for mothers and their children.

On the home front

Along with an increasing number of the VFF Group One cohort, Debbie and her two sisters, Jen and Sue, helped care for ageing parents before sadly losing them both in recent years. Debbie misses her parents greatly and in a poignant and practical way says, *"I had no one to send postcards to on my recent dive trip to Indonesia."* Her partner, Ron, whom she describes as *"interesting"*, keeps Debbie grounded. They met some 12 years ago through an online dating service. Debbie provocatively introduces Ron as a former prison guard and now baggage handler at Sydney Airport; then waits for a reaction before going on to mention his part-time MBA, human resources background, day-trading role, and current interest in learning to speak Thai.

Ron and Debbie share a passion for skiing, and a fondness for the Canadian resorts in Banff and

Whistler. New Zealand has been bad news for Debbie, with serious anterior cruciate ligament injuries resulting from two trips there.

Several years ago Debbie was completing a six-week volunteer assignment in Papua New Guinea, and had the chance to dive in West New Britain; she had done an earlier dive course on Lord Howe Island. This interest has stayed with her, and most recently she went diving at Raja Ampat, in West Papua, famous for its stunning diversity of coral and sheer numbers of fish.

VFF memories and insights

"This was a programme that really took me out of my comfort zone," Debbie says. "The mix of participants was great, and to be honest some of them stretched the boundaries of my assumptions. I didn't appreciate quite how differently people think; I had probably never really met an engineer before, for example.

"There were some things that infuriated back then, such as the assumption built into the suggestion of 'partners' participating in some events. But at the same time I hugely valued the unique way we could pick up with each other, and we had such a total trust in each other."

Debbie is a fan of Facebook, and has stayed in touch with a number of Fairfax Fellows through this medium. She has also been one of the few in the Group One cohort to attend Ethics Centre functions, and network across the more recent groups of Vincent Fairfax Fellows.

"I've never had a strong sense of what it is that I'm meant to be doing; but I have always been vocal and strong in my stand against unfair work or conditions, and I speak up when I can see a code of conduct is not being followed," she says. "A key take-away for me is that there is a grounding or reason why we are what we are. For me, finding the common ground is now more easily done. I believe I listen first, and seek to understand where people are coming from."

Where to next?

Debbie would be the only person I can recall saying they want to visit Uzbekistan. The country holds a fascination for her, and at a time when she has the chance to travel, this is right up there on her wish-list. She says, *"Travel provides me with glimpses into different cultures and ways. That's almost how I see my career – having the chance to glimpse so many different activities and sectors."*

Debbie was never going to be someone tied to convention. Her views might be strident and uncomfortable at times, but it's so refreshing to spend an afternoon in a pub listening to original and well-informed views on the migrant crisis, national disability schemes, foreign aid and Sydney radio "shock-jocks".

JOHN LANDMARK

Maleny, Queensland,
1 March 2016

An inveterate wayfarer, John has embraced adventure and change as a way of life. Drawn to wild and natural places, he delights in sharing his journeys with those who trust in his planning. Vicky, his wife, can attest to this! As an exploration geologist he has always had a “glass half full” outlook on life, and embraces opportunities and challenges as a way to progress through his career.

Growing up in Swaziland and South Africa, John completed a geology degree at Wits University in Johannesburg. There he met Vicky, also studying geology, and after graduation and marriage, they headed off to the Namibian desert, both running gold and base metals exploration programmes. An extended holiday trip to Australia in 1988 gave the couple a hankering to head east. After completing two years on a deep-level South African gold mine, John immigrated to Australia in 1991 with Vicky and 16 month-old Joanne in tow. They headed to Mt Isa in north-west Queensland; daughter Shannon was to arrive four months later.

“That all seems a lifetime ago. Joanne is now 26 and a physiotherapist in Brisbane, whilst Shannon (24) is completing her 5th year of veterinary studies at Sydney University.



"Mt Isa was a fantastic way to start life in Australia. It provided us with many of our closest friends and infused us with a healthy dose of outback lifestyle and cultural values. Whilst there, I spotted an advert in the Weekend Australian for an Ethics in Leadership course. I had become an Australian citizen a year earlier, and was delighted I met the selection criteria. I saw this as an amazing opportunity to really learn more, gain a diverse group of colleagues and embrace my new country."

Highlights of the VFF programme

"After the initial surprise of actually making the final cut, I stopped pinching myself and got involved in all aspects of the programme. The volunteering element saw me join St Vincent de Paul, and serve meals to homeless men in Mt Isa on Sunday evenings.

"The mentoring experience was particularly formative. Meredith Hellicar was my mentor; we struck up a good friendship which continues today.

"The physical challenges were a lot of fun; however, some of the cultural encounters tested me. The visit to the Holocaust Museum in Sydney left me choking with grief when I shook hands with the 75-year-old survivor who had led us through the galleries.

"I was a compulsive diarist and filled two large volumes with notes from the programme. Re-reading these 21 years later, two aspects of the programme really stand out for me.

"Firstly, the Asian study tour was an incredible learning experience. I went across to the island of Borneo, the remote jungles of central Kalimantan, to look at the ethical issues surrounding 'illegal' gold mining, or 'people's' mining if you had a different perspective. I travelled with an

interpreter, Bambang, up the Kapuas River by boat, way beyond the last roads. Hiking up a mountain we came into an informal mining settlement with over 1000 residents working on a recently uncovered gold-bearing quartz vein in the jungle. It was staggering to see this first-hand. The visit offered me perspectives no book or article was ever going to provide. Amazingly, with LinkedIn and the emergence of the internet, I am once more in touch with Bambang after all these years.

"My second major reflection would be the remarkable friendships I have made with all the other VFF participants, not only in our Group One, but many from subsequent cohorts. The striking thing for me is that several of my best friendships have been formed with those who undoubtedly challenged my thinking the greatest when we first met. They would know who they are!"

Life since the Programme

In 1996 the Landmarks left Mt Isa to head west to Perth, with John initially taking on a chief geologist role at a West Australian gold mine. Shortly after that he re-joined Anglo American, to establish their initial office in Australia, and start their exploration programmes for zinc and nickel. Some four years later, in 2001, John was transferred to the company's London head office. He took on a human resources role, and got very involved with non-government organisations in the sustainability sector, promoting the concept of "social licence to operate" within the exploration group.

With their daughters growing up and future university education on the horizon, it was time to return to Australia, this time to Brisbane. John took on a transformation advisory role on a major coal mine, and two years later moved into a global safety risk role. Working with eight universities around the world, he led a team which was to establish a risk management training programme that was run out globally across the company.

"It was a fascinating challenge taking on that role, as I had no formal background in safety or risk management. It was a wonderful chance to be leading a transformational initiative that really did make a difference to the lives of many. This initiative contributed to a 50% reduction in safety incidents across the organisation over a four-year period. The programme continues today under the G-MIRM banner through Queensland University, and is available globally through the network of universities we put together."

With organisational change sweeping through the company, John returned to London briefly, and then took on a regional role in Brazil, leading the exploration programmes there. Vicky and he grappled with the challenge of learning Portuguese, and thrived in a dynamic and exciting country. They lived in Belo Horizonte, a city of some six million people, and grabbed the chance to travel to the Amazon and Pantanal.

Recalled to Australia once more, and moving back to Maleny, Queensland, John led the company's early stage exploration and transformation of the Asia-Australia region. This included establishing a number of projects in Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. He was also part of an initial business mission to Myanmar.

Further company restructuring and a plunging global commodity market meant that John's role was made redundant. Opting to move on, he is currently on an enforced sabbatical whilst looking for the next role. Talking with Vicky, you appreciate that this break is not all bad. *"His cooking is getting better, and the window cleaning has improved. However, he does still mix whites and coloureds in the wash, so he had better find himself another job soon!"*

Away from work

"Well, the knees remind me that all those ultra-marathons and 24-hour orienteering events might not be possible any longer. My activities have scaled down to hiking and sea kayaking."

"Vicky and I try getting to special places whilst we still can – several years ago it was sea kayaking in Antarctica, last year we had the privilege of getting close to the mountain gorillas in Rwanda, an incredibly moving experience. To celebrate my 50th I climbed Kilimanjaro with the girls, that was special."

Those that know John live in dread of being invited to join him on yet another "micro adventure"! Over the past two years, a novel idea of sleeping out under the stars once a month, as part of a self-directed mindfulness drive, has led to some hilarious encounters with mozzies, snakes and being drenched in rain. *"It's all good, really. I love the idea of reminding myself how little we can get by on, and there's nothing quite like the rustle of a bush at night just beyond your torch beam to focus the mind."*

A parting word

"Well, you would think that after travelling around the country engaging with all the members of VFF Group One, I might have some very deep and meaningful insights. In reality, I don't. My favourite pieces of wisdom are:

Keep things simple – live in the moment.

Grab opportunities with both hands – you don't know where they might take you.

Love your tribe – both family and friends.

Seek out the wild places in nature – they will inspire you and touch your soul.

Grow vegetables for your own table – it's never economic but it's great fun.

Move to the edge – that's where life is most interesting."

JOHN MCDONALD

Sydney, New South Wales,
22 October 2015

John sums up his entire career motivation in one sentence: *"Our challenge is about how to bring us together."* He then elaborates: *"It's all about working together and agreeing on a way we will engage with each other when we get pissed off. It's a powerful and simple notion that lets someone know when you are upset, but also addresses how you should behave if you upset them."*

Recapping

The journey that John took to get to his current role of CEO of ProActive Resolutions is fascinating, opportunistic, and largely reflects John's philosophy of living in the moment, and being present. Back in the 1980s John started out as a school teacher in Sydney's south-western suburbs, working in



Chester Hill and Cabramatta. He engaged with a diverse mix of Vietnamese, East Timorese, Laotian, Middle Eastern, Chilean and Cambodian migrants in his role chairing the Cabramatta Community Centre.

“Back then you have to remember that the ‘boat people thing’ was happening, rival gangs existed in the community and youth-crime was rife,” he says. “It was a tough environment for those kids to learn in, and there was also a lot of community anger towards the police. I asked ‘who’s talking to the cops?’ No-one was – the cops were the enemy. So I trotted around the corner to the police station, introduced myself and met the most wonderful police commander there who was completely under siege. Ignored by his own department, in a violent neighbourhood, he was under-resourced, and had no support.”

John and the commander set up a consultative committee to link the police and the community. Complaints against the police plummeted. This came to the notice of the Police Commissioner, who offered John a substantial pay-hike from his teacher’s salary to join the police. For the next 10 years, John worked in the NSW Police. He was responsible for policy on young offenders (<24 years old), and loved the work at a time when he believed there were some visionary leaders in the force (though it was also challenged by some serious pockets of corruption). John’s first five years in this role were a struggle; he grappled with what to do to change the system.

“You have to appreciate that a lot of stuff in criminal justice suits the system, but not the people that get sucked into it,” he says. “It makes the fundamental error in assuming it’s all about two people – a victim and an offender. It doesn’t cater for the whole network of relationships on both sides that are completely messed up when something happens. One side was probably already messed up before the event happened. There’s a whole journey to get there, and then the system isolates one person and throws the book at them.”

The Restorative Justice model

Following a broad study tour, which included time in New Zealand, John and a team produced a paper pushing for the idea of “*conferencing*”. By allowing victims, offenders and their respective communities who cared for them to come together to deal with the crime, they sought to keep the state away from the issue. For the next five years John worked tirelessly to get the idea established – it was “*fantastic fun, stimulating, challenging and exhausting*,” he says. Once the concept had a reasonable foothold, John moved across to work with the Australian Federal Police and the Australian National University on a research-based, randomised control trial in the criminal justice system testing this Restorative Justice model.

“It just took off, there are people around the world now using the model. It’s been legislated across the country in juvenile and adult jurisdictions; in fact, it is common right across America, Europe and parts of Africa. Generally, the Restorative Justice model has been for the better. I have always been interested in the facilitated conferencing part of the model.”

And that brings us to the time of the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship. Around that time, John left the NSW Police, cashed in on some long service leave and established Transformative Justice Australia (TJA). Looking back, John admits he was juggling a lot of things, and it was tough waiting for the jobs to role in and build up a client base. “*Anyone who has started and run their own business would know that it is high risk, but it turned out OK.*”

Along the way, whilst working in North America, John ran across Stephen and Richard Hart and their sister Judy Brooks. They joined forces and launched ProActive Resolutions (<http://proactive-resolutions.com>), a company that “*works with organisations to build respectful workplaces*” and provide products that “*help to prevent conflict, repair relationships that have been harmed by conflict, and protect people whose health and safety is threatened by conflict.*” Clients range

from international corporates to local schools, government agencies such as the FBI, to health care providers. John puts it quite simply: *"All our work is around behaviour and engagement."*

John's work came to the attention of playwright David Williamson, who ended up producing the *Jack Manning Trilogy* after sitting in on several of John's facilitated conferences. One of the plays, *Face to Face*, which celebrates the strength of community over a rigid and often seemingly unfair court system, was made into a movie by Michael Rymer in 2011, with Mathew Newton cast as Jack Manning, the character based on John. Anyone wanting to see this engaging movie should contact John to get access to the Vimeo link.

Family and Bondi BRATS

John, now 61, is married to Genevieve and they have five children, Jade, Yanni, Pascale, Etienne and Gabrielle, and one grandson, Lenny, who lives with his mum, Jade, and his dad, Bala, in London. Sadly, and unexpectedly, Gabrielle died when she was seven, shortly after John completed the VFF programme. This left him more determined to live in the moment and enjoy what he was doing.

By his own admission, John is a pathological optimist, and he radiates a healthy active lifestyle. As he says, *"I swim, cycle, surf and do my best to run, though I'm held back by a dud right leg that's held together by metal clamps after an operation to keep me mobile as I gracefully age. I'm a member of the BRATS club in Bondi (the Bondi Running and Triathlon Club), though I rarely turn up to anything as I get out very early and have been doing a lot of travel for work. I'm trying to change that and get along to some of their events."*

(It's worth mentioning that John had completed a 3km ocean swim, cycled 25km and run 6km before our morning meeting. He completed his second Iron Man in Busselton WA in December 2015.)

VFF reflections and wisdom

John remembers the VFF Group One crew as a motley bunch, and good-humouredly recalls getting a chance to catch up on sleep deprivation on Solo.

"I loved the whole experience," he says. *"It gives you time to reflect and observe, I wasn't doing much of that then. It was a good time for me, even though it was the wrong time. It really set me up for thinking about things more."*

"In my work, I look at the issue of engagement. How do we get the other person and ourselves to slow down so we start to listen to what's being said, or felt or being experienced, such that we can have some empathy and understanding?"

"I am quite fatalistic each time I go into a facilitated discussion. I remind myself I am responsible for the process, but not for the way people choose to act. It takes people a huge leap of faith to go through this process. Often we are all too anxious about how we might make other people feel. I have three simple questions I use in leading a facilitated discussion:

- *What do you think happened?*
- *How have people been affected?*
- *How can we learn so it doesn't happen again?*

"Often events are complex, with multiple interacting parts."

John pauses in thought and then sums up the discussion and his own philosophy:

"If we are kept apart we are capable of this unbelievable treachery on each other; if we are brought together we are capable of this most amazing generosity – worldwide!"

CYNTHIA MITCHELL

Sydney, New South Wales,
21 October 2015

It is evident Cynthia is eager to chat. She wears an enormous, infectious grin reserved for her good friends. She has much to share and catch up on. When you hear her story unfold it's hard to credit her with the *"lack of self-confidence"* she claims to have. There is no doubt her experiences in completing the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship have had a huge impact on her, in her personal life, the way she has progressed her career through some seven universities in Australia and Europe, and how she has established her global professional credibility.

When the Group One fellows re-grouped for a final de-brief after returning from their Asian study tours, Cynthia – who had travelled to Nepal – profoundly suggested to us that there was only one universal value, *"A respect for the dignity of others"*. In talking to her now it is clear her other enduring tenet is that "Context matters, enormously" (more on that shortly).



Filling the gaps

In 1994, when applying for the VFF, Cynthia was a lecturer at QUT in Brisbane, immersed in the worlds of science and engineering. She moved to the University of Queensland just as the VFF programme commenced. Whilst there, her study of the experiences of first-year engineering students led to the establishment of the Centre for Women in Engineering, with Cynthia its inaugural head. Coming away from the VFF programme, Cynthia felt challenged to continue growing, learning and shifting. This had an impact on her personal life too, with she and then-partner Ian agreeing to go their separate ways.

In 1997, Cynthia chose to take a sabbatical in Europe and the UK. She recalls, *"I worked in three separate organisations doing cool stuff around education in engineering and sustainability, which was just emerging as a term back then."*

Faced with a number of attractive positions overseas, Cynthia instead decided to return to Australia, this time to Sydney University. Whilst running a workshop for women in non-traditional roles, she met Lizzie. That was 18 years ago. Today they are thriving together, renovating houses, spoiling their cats, and both working crazy hours in their respective university research roles.

About 15 years ago, Cynthia started to look around for further challenges, and was drawn to the newly emergent Institute for Sustainable Futures at University of Technology Sydney. Leaving Sydney University wasn't an easy choice and flew in the face of advice from virtually all her peers. To arrive at a reasoned decision as to whether or not to move, she bravely decided to go through a Quaker Clearness Committee process. Inviting several associates and her then Head of School to facilitate, Cynthia addressed the question – *"What would engineering practice look like if sustainability mattered?"* The Clearness process draws deeply from the wisdom that lies within all of us, and by having close colleagues ask open and reflective questions, layers of doubt or prejudice can be removed, so that the inner voice might be heard.

The outcome? Cynthia moved to the University of Technology Sydney, and has been there since 2001. She is now Deputy Director and Professor at the Institute; it has grown from an initial staff of 10 to more than 50, with an additional 25 post-graduate researchers. Cynthia leads the newly emerging research area of Restorative Infrastructure Development. She explains: *"We are seeking not only to minimise negative aspects of development, but to use development to drive net positive economic, environmental and social sustainable outcomes."* Her areas of skill lie in water, sanitation, big cities with big footprints, and in learning how to adapt. She also professes an interest in *"funny dunnies"*!

During her sabbatical, Cynthia fell in love with Scandinavia; years later that was to be reinforced when she returned to get an Honorary Doctorate from Chalmers University in Gothenburg, Sweden.

More recently she made the 2015 nominee list for the AFR and Westpac 100 Women of Influence listing in Australia, her citation noting her *"collaborative approach across a spectrum of stakeholders ... leading more than 80 highly successful and innovative projects with government and industry over the last 20 years, producing thought leadership and behavioural changes."*

"Context matters, enormously"

Asked about her reflections on the VFF programme, Cynthia recalls the Outward Bound hike, which she says provided a powerful lesson in human behaviour and leadership, helping form us into a more cohesive group. She talks of the important relationships she developed then, such as the one that formed when she and Melbourne-based fellow Denis Moriarty were at Nhulunbuy together, and recalls the significance of our research projects and the Asian meeting in Penang.

"The single biggest lesson came in that week in Sydney where we had been asked to address a

topic given to us by Simon Longstaff,” Cynthia recalls. “I think my question was so beautifully chosen for me – to comment on ‘whether the end ever justifies the means?’

“Do you remember? We were given this brick of reading before that week. In researching the topic, I came to the profound realisation, that still stays with me, which was simply that ‘context matters, enormously’. The idea that I might be able to make a judgement about other people’s ‘means’ and ‘ends’, and yet know nothing about what was going on for them as individuals, really challenged me. For example, I was suddenly not so clear on judging the actions of a soldier in a war zone. I came from an engineering and science background, my father was a magistrate, I was used to making judgements. It was seminal for me; to see for the first time the scale of grey shades was profound!

“Over the years this has helped me consciously choose to sit besides people rather than in front of them, in a figurative sense. I now see my career as being about trying to sit alongside people, seeing the view from their perspective, asking questions about how else that view might look, and then examine how, together, we could shift to see something new.”

Other thoughts?

Cynthia explains her grin: “As Group One, we used to laugh a lot when we got together – we probably drank a bit too much and we said some silly things. It was a wonderful experience, very serious, challenging and provoking – in fact, life-changing for many of us – but we also could laugh.

“In thinking back, I reflect on the balance we had, and I draw on Khalil Gibran here. He has this notion of opposites – that the scale of the joy you come to experience is determined by the scale of the sorrow that you are willing to engage with. Maybe there’s something about that for the VFF programme. We were profoundly challenged in lots of ways, but we had this delightful silliness and fun on the other side as well.”

Cynthia closes by imparting her wisdom around learning and stories:

“We learn by our experiences and the stories we hear from people that we have a meaningful connection with, whether positive or negative. Stories matter immensely. If you don’t keep stories alive, you lose something incredibly powerful.”

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DENIS MORIARTY

Melbourne, Victoria,
12 November 2015

Denis will never be defined by one thing alone. But he has one agenda – he is going to make the world a better place. He is many things to many people, a former highly successful public servant, an art aficionado, a social entrepreneur, a global traveller, a skilled boardroom member, a very dear friend to many, and an agent of enormous social change. His story is both fascinating and inspiring, a great example of how life is defined by the paths you choose to take, and how you respond to adversity and opportunity.

Life before the VFF

Growing up in the inner-west of Melbourne, Denis chose to select his own way from a young age. He left school at 16 to take up a printing apprenticeship with the Victorian Government Printing Office – anything to escape the Christian



Brothers (to this day he still recalls the vivid madness and psychological cruelty of a particular teacher, and believes it taught him to be a rebel and question injustice from a very early age).

Denis worked hard and loved work and was chosen to enter a graduate recruitment program for the public service. Meanwhile, he had gone to university part-time and finished a business degree.

In his early days in government, Denis worked on a cabinet submission to improve government information services. This led to him being appointed head of the State Government's centralised information service, a position he held for three years. He was later head-hunted to move across to the Department of Tourism, and served for four years as the youngest ever deputy secretary of a government agency, working closely with Labor Premier Joan Kirner, who became a close friend and mentor.

"I had worked for the public service for 20 years, given all that I could," Denis recalls. "My dream was to become the youngest ever head of a government department, my performance was 100% – I achieved all of my targets, including significant head-count reductions and privatisation of some of the first assets sold under a Labor government – we were the good right of the Labor Party.

"In October 1992, Jeff Kennett won the state election and, along with 30,000 other state employees, I was sacked – except I got sacked on the second day the government came to power. I was devastated! It was a life-changing moment. It happens so often in life; you think you are on a linear path, an event happens, and suddenly you get a wake-up call.

"I vowed I'd never be caught like that again. Along with many other former public servants, I re-invented myself as a consultant. It was interesting for a while, suddenly the world saw me as an expert, but it wasn't what I really wanted to do, although I stuck with it for seven years, consulting back to government (after they had paid

off my house to get rid of me) – one of the great things Jeff Kennett did for me.

"For many years I had volunteered as a Lifeline counsellor; some 90% of our calls were around people feeling lonely. The despair I heard in their voices stayed with me constantly, and I really appreciated my own life. One day I saw this advert in the Financial Review for an Ethics in Leadership Programme. I had done a Williamson Programme in the dying days of the Labor Government, but this notion of ethics was so different to what I had understood leadership to be, it attracted me to the VFF. I was running my own business and could take the time off, so applied."

VFF reflections

Two aspects of the programme really stand out for Denis. Firstly, the underpinning philosophical approach of drilling down on each question, and secondly, the strong bonds created between the participants.

"Simon Longstaff got us to think beyond the theoretical view, he made us open up and say what we really would believe in," Denis says. "One of the best examples was when we met [murdered Sydney nurse] Anita Cobby's mother, Grace Lynch, who was trying to reinstate the death penalty in Australia, following the brutal rape and murder of her daughter.

"Participants gave openly of themselves and their experiences, and we shared some deep emotional or sensitive experiences from our lives. I think this brought us powerfully together. I still value many of those connections 21 years later, and am delighted to see where our group have progressed to.

"The mentoring aspect of the Programme was also important and a rewarding experience for me. My mentor John Fairfax and I still stay in touch; he has given me a valuable perspective over many years.

"In the middle of the VFF programme I had a germ of an idea. I started to ask myself what value I placed on myself and society, and what could I do in terms of creating a more exciting business. I had decided that consulting was not my future. However, I did have a good insight into 'community': I'd sat on many boards, I'm passionate about technology, and I was certain I could do something to improve the capacity for many community groups. I had watched my mother in her later years derive so much benefit and happiness from the Maribyrnong Elderly Citizens Club, really a forgotten struggling entity. These groups, no matter what scale or cause, change people's lives and are the social fabric of our nation. They provide us with connections, and make for a better life for all their members. I truly believe that the stronger they are, the stronger our nation will become.

"After some investigation I realised there were over 600,000 not-for-profits in Australia. Washing around in this sector was \$110 billion, if you aggregated all the money. The banks and consultants were already doing very well in this space. So this was a massive business opportunity in itself.

"This wasn't to be philanthropy, it would be a business with returns, but you could do good at the same time."

The emergence and growth of Our Community

This idea was put into action in 1999, with the establishment of Our Community. Denis was determined to be different and created a unique workplace. He sought out a female Chair – a strategy largely unheard of then. Prominent businesswoman Carol Schwartz has filled that role since inception and is Our Community's lead social investor. Indigenous academic Mick Dodson was on the board in the first few years, and Ethics Centre Executive Director Simon Longstaff has been a valued board member from the beginning

and continues to be an outstanding and active player.

As a company, Our Community invests in technology, recruits the best staff, and is characterised by a mix of agility and stability. Employees are guided by an Office Manifesto that reminds them it's good to laugh and make friends at work, and stresses why they are there – helping not-for-profits.

Our Community has grown in 16 years from a warehouse in Fitzroy with four employees to its present location in West Melbourne with 45 employees in a large open plan office. The office is decked out in striking modern art, has an energetic atmosphere of collaboration and people engaged in what they love doing. Standing near the front door is a bold pink surfboard, the Cool Company Award trophy that was awarded to Our Community in 2007 in the Social Capitalist category. Denis is certainly proud of the award: *"I love the notion that you can be a capitalist, and you can also do social good. Business generally gets it wrong, the 'community' bit should be pervasive throughout the organisation. That's the beauty here, it's in our DNA."*

A guided tour of Our Community's website (www.ourcommunity.com.au) is staggering – a complex system of interlinking elements all designed to help not-for-profits. The spread of material and topics ranges from governance to advocacy, grants management to fundraising, volunteering to leadership; there's myriad resources available to anyone seeking a one-stop-shop in this sector. Our Community is constructed around a number of broad platforms.

- **SmartyGrants** – an end-to-end software solution for managing and distributing grants or awards.
- **GiveNow** – allows community groups to fundraise through online donations at no cost. It levels the playing field for smaller groups trying to compete with the established groups. As Denis says, "If you want to make a difference in the world, this is the site to come to. You can give money, time and

material goods. Alternatively, if you are a fundraiser, then come to this site to register your group. We want people to give smarter, give more, and give now!”

- **Giving Hub** – a more recent development pioneered with a top four bank, this platform will help corporates aggregate their giving statistics, and link to matched-giving by employees. In essence it becomes a smart way to track data that sits in a number of separate sites at present.
- **Institute of Community Directors Australia** – offers Australia’s only formal diploma in governance, and provides accredited training courses around the country.
- **Policy Bank** – sitting under ICDA’s resources section are dozens of template policies that can be downloaded. Written in plain English and reviewed by law firm Moores, the policies provide a superb suite of materials that any not-for-profit can access.
- **Communities in Control Conference** – since 2003 Our Community has hosted this flagship event. It has grown rapidly, is now recognised as Australia’s gala conference for thought leadership in the not-for-profit sector, and attracts significant national and international speakers and delegates. Go to the website (www.communitiesincontrol.com.au), download the podcasts from previous years and give some consideration to attending; you won’t be disappointed.

family. Surrounded by art from all over the world, and looking across a stunning Melbourne cityscape, Denis and Brendan have hosted numerous events, or “festas” as they like to call them. The welcome is always warm, laughter infectious, and stories become more exaggerated as an evening progresses.

Pressed to provide his wisdom, Denis ponders deeply and then articulates three key insights.

“Ready – Fire – Aim! There’s never one way to do things, so don’t try to perfect things from the start. Get stuck in and adapt as you progress and learn. Be a risk taker – be agile and adventurous. The ‘correct path’ is usually only defined after you have done something.

“The thin thread we live by can change in an instant. I am hugely grateful for what I have, and know that it can all change quickly. As we grow older, our experiences, battles and successes all help to broaden our inner-self and our options. Don’t dwell on things for too long, make a decision and move on.

“Always push boundaries. Once you start doing so, you will realise they weren’t really a limit. They were constructions of your mind or obstructions put up by others out of convention, protocol or cultural habit. Joan Kirner instilled in me a strong sense of social justice. Two areas I will continue to challenge are poverty and injustice. Today this gap is growing – that’s wrong.”

Life away from work and your wisdom

Denis devotes a lot of his time to family and close friends. He and his partner Brendan, a deputy principal and passionate primary school transformer, have an apartment in Maribyrnong that has been a second home to many in the ethics

BARRY STERLAND

Washington DC, USA (via Skype),
3 February, 2016

Listening to Barry describe a day in the office at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington seems surreal at first. It's staggering to even start to try and comprehend the scale of deliberations he deals with as an Executive Director of the 24-member board, under the Executive Chairmanship of Christine Lagarde. However, once reminded of his career progression from Treasury in Canberra, where he was an economic policy advisor, through to the Prime Minister's office and the Climate Change work he did, you quickly realise it's all part of a steady succession of roles. You know he will tackle the next big role in his usual calm and measured way.

Barry represents Australia and 15 other Asia-Pacific nations at the IMF. He is 15 months into a two-year posting, and will be replaced by a South Korean representative in October 2016. Asked to describe the role, Barry says: *"This is a different type of job, with big decisions being made around the world."*



For example, we were recently discussing the reconstruction of Ukraine and the loans required to assist there. The IMF is primarily concerned with supporting countries to help prevent them facing a balance of payments crisis, whereas the World Bank, who have the same shareholders, are more focused on development funding. The subject matter we consider is vast and interesting, and Australia is very well respected in this forum for their objective views and strong economic performance.”

A servant-leader

Barry talks through his progression from the distant Treasury days in the mid-’90s, when we met him on the inaugural VFF. He remembers meeting fellow travellers who were struggling in their own ways with the issues their work, vocation and life in general were throwing up. He also recalls that foundational question, *“What ought one to do?”* Barry’s fellowship with many Group One participants, then and in later years, has touched his life and refreshed it.

Barry believes the VFF was an important contributor to his career. He comments, *“The Vincent Fairfax Fellowship provided one of those breaks in life that invested in me and built me. It was the stepping stone to me winning a Fulbright Scholarship and attending Princeton in 1998/99, where I did a Masters of Public Policy, majoring in Economics and Psychology.*

“The experiences set me up for the next 10 years of senior public service roles. I returned to work in the Prime Minister’s Department running budgets and working on the macro-economic side. About then, following the release of the Stern Report, the Climate Change debate grew more strident. It was clear Prime Minister John Howard was only ever going to approach the issue with an economic lens, not an activist one. I was taken on to work on an Emissions Trading Scheme, which in time became known as the carbon price.”

As a values-driven person, Barry has always enjoyed working on things he cares about. Climate change work was one of those peaks in his career. He devoted five years of his professional life to this work, at a fair emotional cost. *“Losing the carbon pricing in 2010 was one of those searing experiences I am determined to learn from. I cared very deeply about it as a professional and as a citizen. If we ever get another shot at it, I will make sure we get it through. My colleagues and I have spent a lot of time reflecting on it. We didn’t lose it, as such, based on technical or design issues, it was a political failure. What we learned is that as senior public servants you have to fashion advice to help the politicians (of both sides) win their policy arguments – we have to be co-creators with them.”*

Pulled back from climate change work, Barry switched to conducting a review of the decision-making processes of government. This coincided with the change in leadership from Kevin Rudd to Julia Gillard. One of the first actions of the new Gillard government was to progress Barry’s recommendations for reforming Cabinet processes. A role later opened up as Deputy Secretary back in Treasury, and for the past four years Barry has worked in international economics.

A few years ago, Barry completed a leadership programme with senior public servants across all the Westminster democracies. He reflects on this and his other leadership programmes, which includes, in essence, his IMF secondment.

“I am driven by being active and getting things done, but my leadership style is reflective and I care deeply about bringing knowledge to bear in my decision making,” Barry says. *“My Christian faith has instilled in me the concept of ‘servant-leader’, and it matters enormously to me to see things from a position of the most vulnerable in society, too. The various development programmes I have undertaken are all experiences that have deepened that pool of knowledge.”*

On the home front

"My two daughters Tess (now 22, and just out of university) and Chloe (19) still ring me all the time, and not only for money," Barry says. "They are based in Australia, to where I'm likely to return in October at the end of my secondment."

Sadly, after seven years of marriage, Barry and Harinder are separating. Harinder has recently been appointed as Australia's High Commissioner to India.

Barry still keeps in contact with several of his mates from his school days in Freshwater, Sydney. He has taken a very different life path from these friends and staying in touch with them keeps him grounded.

VFF reflections

"'What ought we to do?' is never far from my mind," Barry says. "How to handle Greece? How to handle climate change? How to engage in down-sizing in an ethical way? How to promote gender diversity on the IMF Board? I care about these issues, and try just as much to think deeply about the way we do things, as well as be concerned with what we do."

"VFF was intense and real on several levels. It helped reinforce my views on leadership which I had derived from a Christian tradition. The programme was an extension for me rather than a revolution; it was like the second big booster on a rocket getting me out of the atmosphere (I have just visited NASA in Houston!). I was already trying to move against gravity, but this programme came at the right point for me."

"I recall being challenged by the diversity of the group, and gaining perspectives in subjects I had no experience in."

Your wisdom?

"Right now I have a ringside seat watching one of the world's great leaders in action," Barry says. "Christine Lagarde is phenomenal – the way she deals with countries and with social issues, the way she communicates, and the way she is a canny politician. She maintains a level of humanity at times of tremendous stress. Watching her gives me a great chance to examine my own leadership style."

"I recall one of our readings from the VFF Programme – it was Michael Waltzer in 'The Problem of Dirty hands', talking about torture and whether it was ever justified. He made the point that you can't pretend to be doing something good just by choosing the lesser of two evils."

"I'm a pragmatic guy, I enjoy being around activists who give me a clarion call, but the calling I have is to be there at that end which owns the choices that the government has to make."

"My world is all grey. Everything we do has costs and benefits, and different ethical dimensions. My wisdom would be that you have to make tough choices in leadership and you just have to embrace that greyness, but not by pretending there are no downsides. You have to face up to your decision, knowing that it might have problems and even hurt people, but that you have carefully thought through the positive impacts and are sure about those."

COLIN STONEHOUSE

Perth, Western Australia (via Skype),
20 January 2016



Could you conceivably link high-voltage transmission, a bicycle shop, a farm in Western Australia and power generation efficiency designs all in one conversation? You wouldn't think so, however spend an hour with Colin and it all makes perfect sense. Colin has developed a rare ability to combine sound business sense with big-picture thinking and execution. Get him talking about his key projects and he becomes animated, talking enthusiastically of the benefits that will flow should any one of them really take off.

A recap of the early years

Group One of the VFF got to know Colin as a contract engineer working in a strategic advisory capacity for Western Mining. From an initial engineering cadetship, Colin had come through an electrical engineering university degree, then started off his career working in the mining sector. Crossing over into the power industry, as part of a consulting group, Colin continued to work on the technical side until 2000. He then took a leap into something new.

"I've always been keen to take on new things," he explains. "So I decided to venture into bicycle shops. I was keen to have a go at running a small business, and I figured I may as well choose one that's fun. Well, that was my first learning! The bike industry is not a good business venture for anything other than lifestyle. It's pretty hard building a sustainable commercial business in a lifestyle sector, because your competitors can push their prices down to the point that they are just putting food on the table, nothing more. You only need 10% of the sector to be like this, and it drives the prices down across the board. I stuck with it for two years, it was a great learning opportunity, but it wasn't the pathway I was going to follow."

After a tap on the shoulder from some old colleagues, Colin was off on his next venture, this time as the commercial manager with Alinta, the power generation and distribution facility in Western Australia. It was a significant jump taking on a commercial manager role. As Colin,

half jokingly, comments: *"This is really my modus operandi. I'm not inclined to embark on anything unless I've never done it before! The power sector had undergone change from state-owned utilities to corporatised entities with private assets. There was a need for commercial experience to come into a space where it hadn't existed beforehand."*

"The time at Alinta was formative for me; I was part of a value-driven dynamic leadership team, we were a go-ahead company. For example, we built and commissioned over 1000 MW of clean power plants in a three-year period. That was a huge achievement."

Asking questions and taking a break

"One of the most significant outcomes from the VFF Programme was instilling in me a continuous drive to question," Colin says. "It was a mindset that was created and reinforced on the Programme and stays with me. It comes back to always asking: 'Is this right? Is it best? Is this going to have a bigger impact than I can imagine?'"

"In late 2008, with the global financial crisis having hit, and the company changing its course, I elected to move on. That's when the farm in Denmark (WA) came into the picture."

Colin and his wife, Amanda, packed up in Perth, and headed to the town of Denmark with their two daughters, Caitlin and Isabelle. The girls left their private school life to embrace the experience of being part of a small regional centre, going to a state school, and living on a farm with cattle and a small-scale vineyard. Looking back now, Colin says it was just the break they all needed. For him it was like a sabbatical, and the girls embraced the change. A year later, they decided to keep the farm as a weekend retreat and settle back in East Fremantle, although Colin still talks to the cows when he gets the chance.

Caitlin (now 18) has recently completed a TAFE Cert III in commercial cookery, and Isabelle (17) is in her final year at Iona College.

Ames Assoc

In 2012, Colin established his own consultancy, specialising in power sector advisory work. Typically, this covers due diligence studies for investment banks, feasibility studies, concept-level designs, and regional strategic studies. Recently, Colin led a power study for a major mining company, providing them with a 25-year master plan. He has worked himself into a unique position of being at the overlap of the areas of engineering/technical, regulatory/legal and commercial/finance. His work with administrators and receivers has provided a powerful learning experience, and he is now moving to a more selective workload, having taken a strategic stake in three ventures:

- Great Northern Power, which is looking to inter-connect two grids across WA (www.greatnorthernpower.com.au);
- A power efficiency project looking at getting an extra 15% power from the heat dissipated up the exhaust stacks of power plants (www.enerji.com.au); and
- Forming a joint venture with a service delivery company, and specialising in providing power solutions to Indigenous communities.

"What's exciting for me is that all three projects are sustainable," Colin says. "I am coming at it from a commercial angle, but importantly, I believe they are good projects and they are the right thing to be doing."

VFF reflections and wisdom

Colin says he has maintained contact with a couple of VF fellows, Simon Thornton in particular. *"I have attended a couple of events held through the Centre for Ethical Leadership in Melbourne and met several of the more recent recipients,"* he says. *"However, being in WA is a challenge. I think we need to look at utilising*

more technology to link us, whether it be through webinars, or Skype dial-ins. I don't think that it needs to be difficult.

"The VFF Programme was a pivotal event in my life. A major part of that was the engagement with the other participants. I am still struck by the fearless way people threw themselves into the course with full commitment. I think our connection at such a deep level would take years to develop in other environments. I'd like everyone involved to know that I think of them often, remember their contributions, and am thankful.

"As for specific wisdom, I believe that I'm largely an opportunist in a constructive sense, throwing myself into things as they come along, and have lived happily following the maxim: 95% of succeeding or winning is in the entering! Over time these little wins, just by giving something a go, start to add up and become empowering. It's the concept called 'accumulated advantage'. I talk to my girls about this, and I think it's something for everyone."

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SIMON THORNTON

Melbourne, Victoria,
11 November 2015

Simon and I survey the warehouse floor from an upstairs boardroom balcony. Below are hundreds of automated rapid-rolling conveyors, linking loading bays and stacks of parcels and packages, spread across some 20 hectares of a cavernous structure.

Simon explains the layout of this brand new \$70 million Toll IPEC facility at Melbourne Airport; the parcels we observe swishing along the humming conveyor tentacles are actually computerised test runs. The system will go live in another two weeks. It's a major step forward in this business to which Simon has recently been appointed Executive General Manager.

Second only to Australia Post in terms of parcel delivery volumes, the business has some 5000 employees across Australia. This all seems a long way from the 24-year-old business graduate working for Caterpillar in Perth whom we met in 1995 at the commencement of the inaugural Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Programme.



Simon's career progression is testament to his broad plan, his strong capacity for learning, and his clear ambition to be regarded as one of Australia's eminent business leaders.

The 1990s and VFF

"It was a fascinating time for me," Simon says. "I was learning all that I could about all sorts of things. I had gone through Melbourne University and then moved to Perth with Caterpillar. The VFF provided me with many challenges and encounters; it was really inspiring, from Simon Longstaff, with his clear thinking and teaching of ethics and philosophy, through to the comments and contributions from the other Fairfax Fellows in our group."

"I recall well my time at Weipa engaging with Aboriginal Elder Silver Blanco, and the insight he offered in terms of Indigenous people and the issues they face. What really sticks with me is the Solo exercise and our mentoring programme."

Solo was a particularly special experience for Simon. He recalls having this enforced period of nothingness, a chance to relax, think and take stock. In this period of heightened mindfulness, he was struck by two clear thoughts; that he wanted to study at one of the great universities of the world, and to conduct one of the great orchestras of the world. Well, he has achieved one of those, going off to Cambridge to complete an MBA in 1997. The other aim will no doubt be realised in good time. Periodically, Simon still takes himself off for Solo stints to tap into a self-focused appraisal.

Returning to the mentoring programme, Simon had Peter Joseph as his mentor. As Chairman of the Ethics Centre and an eminent Australian businessman, Peter was a valuable role model for Simon. *"Seeing Peter's world I could see a vision of how I might like to steer my career,"* he says. Twenty years on, Simon still meets regularly with Peter.

Through his work with Caterpillar, Simon was posted to Geneva, and following his MBA programme, returned to that city for a couple more years, this time with partner Lynne, whom he had met at Cambridge. The couple then moved to England where Simon had a number of business roles over 11 years.

Moving back to Australia

The family unit grew, with twin boys, Conrad and Hugo (now 11 years old) and Julian (seven) keeping Simon and Lynne busy. After a long stint in Europe, a role in an Australian business beckoned, and Simon joined McColl's Transport as its Managing Director and KordaMentha as a partner.

"Logistics is another world," Simon says. "It has its own challenges, and I was exposed to issues I had never encountered first-hand – drugs in the workplace, flagrant safety breaches, the challenge of managing a business turnaround."

With a longer-term focus to get some serious strategy experience, Simon went on to join McKinsey & Co as a partner. He took on a high-intensity role there for two years, before leaving the firm in 2015 to take on the current role with Toll IPEC. As a business unit within the broader Toll Group, and owned by parent company Japan Post, this capital-intensive entity is undergoing rapid growth. Simon explains, *"In the parcel delivery business, no one has yet worked out the magic of the last mile, of how to ensure the client is home to receive the package. Cracking that is our challenge. My own challenge is learning how to come into this organisation and have a positive impact as quickly as possible."*

Life away from work

"At home we have a busy family life, we are very happy," Simon says. "Lynne works as a fund manager specialising in equities and venture

capital. The boys are a delight – wrestling each other, playing football, sailing, learning the piano and chess. I try to stay in shape running each day. When I turned 40 I challenged myself to learn something new, so I took up kite surfing. For the past five years I've put myself through the painful process of learning a new skill in hand-eye coordination, but now that it's sorted, it's a real thrill, it's exhilarating."

At Ormond College, Simon was in the choir, and that gave him a chance to sing with the Kings College Choir at Cambridge. Now, however, his singing is probably only in the shower or in the car on the way to work. He still retains a great fondness for listening to Chopin, one of his favourite composers. So that second life ambition is never far away ...

Any wisdom for Group One?

Simon thinks deeply and offers some sound advice to those between roles, those out searching for another job: *"Treat yourself to some quality time off, think and enjoy, take time to become more centred and balanced. The right role will come along to you."*

After further thought, he adds: *"Participating in the VFF programme was a fantastic privilege to go through. I learned so much from others in our group. I still recall David Wray suggesting to us all that 'alcohol was our drug of choice' – at the time that didn't really resonate with me, but as I have grown older and more experienced, I appreciate how profound that comment was. I would like the group to know how much I appreciate what I learned from them."*

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NICOLE WALKER

Brisbane, Queensland,
8 October 2015

Nicole has an uncanny knack of knowing how to disarm any interrogator with her self-effacing comments, a skill that may have been developed during her years as a school teacher dealing with boisterous students and overly anxious and intrusive parents.

"Well, I'll have to invent some exciting things I've done in my life," is her opening remark on hearing of *The Wisdom Project*.

The truth is that this remarkable woman has forged a career as an educator, completed a Masters in Leadership and Management in schools, married Lyndon after meeting him through mutual friends, moved to Mackay and helped set up his orthodontic practice, had three children, manages a home as essentially a single mum in Brisbane through the week, is active in the Baptist church, runs a Connemara pony stud, and spends idle time toying with the idea of completing a PhD. Don't let anyone under-estimate her capacity to achieve!

"Teacher, faith and horses" described Nicole during the Fairfax Fellowship. Today *"teacher"* is replaced by *"parent"*. She and Lyndon have Lachlan (12),

Mitchell (10) and Erin (8), all three of whom are now at Moreton Bay School in Brisbane's bayside. After Nicole's mother's death, family became very important to her. Later, ensuring her children could be embedded in an extended family network and live on a bit of acreage became a paramount consideration. Nicole fondly recalls her free-spirited upbringing in Gympie and Bundaberg, where family, outdoors and horses all kept her active; she would like to see her kids have a similar childhood.

This has meant that after five years living in Mackay, through the best and mad-paced days of the coal mining boom, Nicole and Lyndon made the tough choice to adopt a "fly in, fly out" (FIFO) lifestyle, which now sees Lyndon commute each week to Mackay to run the practice. The children have adapted, using FaceTime to chat with Dad each day, and Nicole still manages the practice's books, rosters and marketing from their home in Gumdale.

"FIFO has its challenges, but at the moment we can face them, and it has worked for us for the past three years," Nicole says.

A favourite family activity is taking off on extended holidays to Europe. Several years ago they spent a period of time in France in a hired home while Lyndon was recovering from a domestic accident. Timing couldn't have been better – it was during the Tour de France, and Lyndon could follow his passion close up. Nicole explains: *"These are fabulous holidays, they are great as a family, the children are very adaptive in these environments."*

Nicole, assisted by her constant companion and estate manager Porridge (pup to a rescue dog), runs a Connemara stud on their 2.5-acre property. She breeds several foals each year.

"They are an Irish breed, and in fact are the largest pony type in the world – by definition a pony is under 14 hands 2 inches, and these are big enough for adults to ride, they are good jumpers, and have an excellent temperament for children, so are a very popular horse breed. If you ask Lyndon, he would say you never make money in horse breeding."

Nicole has been around horses all her life and wouldn't have it any other way.

The future

Nicole confesses to being itchy about her level of contribution outside the home and business. *"Essentially I'm a single mum and taxi most of the week," she says. "For years I have been tossing around wanting to do a PhD, but just don't know how I could right now when family management demands most of my time, and Lyndon's work is intense and also requires my support."*

When drawn on the topic she might tackle, Nicole animatedly points to the intersection of popular culture and technology and what that means to younger people today – the impact it will have on their social structures, their understanding of the world, their access to ideas, and the level of power or powerlessness that it might offer them.

"As a parent, there is an overwhelming pressure to navigate these waters," she says. "I feel the pressure of it all the time. Take Mitchell in grade four – all his work is done on an iPad, he completes in a few hours what my classes might have once done in a term. It's a rush of information; what's it going to mean? It's so easy to get left behind when it comes to technology."

"The childhood I had, an idyllic country upbringing, is so vastly different to what my children have access to. And how do the values we learned, and now hold, get passed onto our children? How do we preserve the fabric of families whilst still handling the intrusion of technology?"

VFF reflections and wisdom

"I have some very fond memories of the programme," Nicole says: "The Outward Bound course and jumping off the ship's mast hanging onto that flying fox, sleeping for a full 20 hours on

Solo. "A photo is dragged out to remind Nicole of the dislocated knee she endured in good spirits on the last day of that course.

"Kakadu with Angus and Fiona was very special – I regret not being in more regular contact with them. I also think back to the Vanuatu trip where I looked at the impact of development and technology on a traditional community, and how they preserve their values in the face of this change. This certainly forced me out of my comfort zone, but helped me gain confidence to do so more often in the future."

"What was special about the programme was our discussions, and the freedom we gave one another to speak from the heart, that we built a level of trust in being able to ask each other tough questions, and feel safe in having candid and honest conversations."

"Fairfax helped us distil a topic, strip out the rubbish and focus on the core. It stays with me to this day, where I know I have a strong desire to cut to the chase. I might not be the most diplomatic committee member! I suspect I am a guerrilla parent at times, and a teacher's nightmare."

"I would urge all to be brave, and 'go for it'! Sometimes we out-think what people are wanting and hesitate too much. We have got to an age or point in our lives where we must simply give something a go. If you don't do it now, when is it going to happen?"

A parting word

"My greatest hope for VFF Group One is that they are all personally in a good spot, regardless of what they are doing career-wise, and that they are living a life of hope and promise!"

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DAVID WRAY

Perth, Western Australia,
28 August 2015

David has always been the listener rather than the talker. Cerebral rather than physical in his pursuits and hobbies, he is a deep thinker and it's only when you slow down and actually listen to what he is saying that you can really appreciate his insights.

David almost stumbled by accident into community services. With a childhood dream of becoming a marine biologist, he discovered that physical science wasn't his thing and opted for the broad range of topics offered through humanities. Some four years later he found he was a qualified social worker!

David's early career in Bunbury and later in Perth was mostly in the government sector, with roles ranging from community development, professional education and training and counselling through to service management and senior policy, planning



and strategy. With roles in the Drug and Alcohol Office, Department of Health, Premier and Cabinet, Workcover, the Office of Crime Prevention, and the Office of Seniors and Volunteering, David played a key role in developing many of Western Australia's overarching social policies over the past two decades.

However, eventually frustrated with the political manipulation of his work to earn more votes for his bosses and the "chaos" of government (derived from its inability to make decisions or plan properly), David opted to fight for his own redundancy. Looking back now, he sees that continuing down the public service track presented a real ethical dilemma for him, one that was overcome only by the ultimate decision to leave. Against his own advice to treat his immediate post-public service period as a time to take stock and slow down, he suffered immediate "redundancy anxiety" and quickly stepped onto the treadmill of consulting, juggling assignments with self-marketing and securing future work. Whilst this nine-month stint was exciting and reinvigorated David's approach to work, it was not the balance he was after.

"I had this naïve idea that people would recognise me for my brilliance and just throw work at me; it doesn't work that way!" he notes.

Returning to the not-for-profit sector, David has recently taken on a leadership role with headspace as their Western Australian director. He talks excitedly about the headspace model – a self-referred early intervention mental health service for youth (12-25 year olds) that is both accessible and holistic; and hugely oversubscribed. With 100 centres across the country, the organisation is playing a big part in encouraging youth across Australia to seek help, and has done a lot to help remove the stigma attached to mental health issues.

On "ice"

David makes it clear that the so-called ice drug epidemic is due to the challenge posed by the increased purity of meta-amphetamines, rather than any increased consumption by the public. He says that consumption now is the lowest it's been in 20 years.

The tragedy is that by "*borrowing out of the happiness bucket*" to enjoy extreme sensory satisfaction, drug takers then find themselves having to plumb the depths of dysphoria for months as their bodies strive for homeostasis. The purity of ice is amplifying those peaks and troughs.

A family update

Corinne and David have survived the "muddle years," with 23-year-old daughter Eleni currently studying a post-graduate diploma in teaching. Tom, 20, who was born during the Fairfax Fellowship, achieved significant success in archery, rising to a top-10 national ranking and winning the 2012 New Zealand Open. Volunteering for archery became a major part of David's life, with involvement in club, state and national bodies. However, this has now stopped and David and Corinne have recently taken up walking stretches of the Bibbulmun Track in WA. They are looking forward to some serious trekking in Umbria, Italy, next year. *"I'm looking for a new hobby – perhaps I will take up planting trees!"* he says.

David muses about his past life sailing and diving (he was a diving instructor and once took time to sail around Australia, where he enjoyed amazing encounters with sea life and nature). It's a theme that takes him to social work and the VFF programme, highlighting the active decision he took to choose service to people over the wonders of the sea.

VFF reflections

The 24-hour Solo period as part of the Outward Bound component of the VFF programme stands out as a highlight for David, along with the time he spent at Groote Eylant with fellows Debbie Kearns and John McDonald.

"We went diving with this Aboriginal guy; he didn't worry about the crocs, and we came across this wall of tube-worms under the water," he says. "As you waved your hand in front of them, they retreated – you could almost write your name on the wall."

David enjoyed the broad content of the course but rues that so few from the community services sector have been on the programme over subsequent years. He says he has come across many exceptional people in this sector that would have benefitted from the experience. He thinks back to the question he tackled in Thailand – that of the Thai government's response to heroin and AIDS, and their response to alcohol in comparison to drugs. Angus Graham was in Thailand at the same time looking into child prostitution, and he and David drew on each other during their daily retreat and de-brief back at their Bangkok hotel.

Inspired by the programme, David developed a digital counselling-communication training course which he still has on a Facebook website; the CD ROMs are now difficult to access.

And his wisdom?

"Well, I've never been good at talking over people. In many ways it's a strength but also a weakness, as I'm not sure people ever get to hear what I have to say."

Much of David's life has been about service, and he subscribes to a simple philosophy of *"leadership through service."*

David offers advice to our ageing cohort to look at the "half-time" website (www.halftimeinstitute.org) – he explains that there is a growing movement aimed at people around the 45- to 60-year mark (David hasn't yet hit the big 5-oh!). At this time in life, the focus tends to shift from work being the means of our existence to it being the means of fulfilment.

David reflects that social work has provided a rich exposure to life; it's all about learning. He muses that if community service is about head, heart and hand, then true leadership comes mostly from the heart; we have to love it and truly own it.

A simple reflection: *"Whatever you do, do it thoroughly, do it well, and enjoy it!"*

**WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT THOROUGHLY,
DO IT WELL, AND ENJOY IT!**

OUR YEAR ONE ETHICAL LEADERS

Many people should be acknowledged for their contributions and dedication to making the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship come into being. These include the initial visionaries and philanthropists who supported the idea, to the many people who helped shape and deliver the programme – the interview panels, referees, mentors, and partners – and of course the successive participants who together have built it into the world-class Ethics in Leadership course it is now recognised as being.

To single out any one contributor is always risky, but in my mind enormous credit must go to the following three individuals, without whose efforts and resolve this programme might never have happened.

Geoffrey White has the distinction of having sat on the interview panels for 11 successive years, and was the first person to engage with the St James Ethics Centre to consider an Ethics in Leadership programme.

Simon Longstaff conceived and drew up the programme, drawing on many of his own life experiences, and led and set the VFF on course.

And Kerrie Henderson had the unenviable task of translating “two pages of scribbled notes” into action as the first programme administrator.

Here are their stories.

KERRIE HENDERSON

Sydney, New South Wales,
16 October 2015

Kerrie's life has been lived in roughly five-year cycles, a pattern that emerges as she details the timing of jobs, projects and having children. The constant in all of this is her link to her home town, Sydney, and the support of her partner Richard, a barrister.

Back in early 1994, armed with two pages of notes from Simon Longstaff, a desk and budget, Kerrie was taken on by the then St James Ethics Centre to get the Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Programme out of the starting blocks. With the inaugural cohort (VFF Group One) due to commence the fellowship in six months, her instructions were simple: *"Make the programme happen!"*

Kerrie had recently given up a legal career to take maternity leave and have Tess (almost five years later she was to leave the Ethics Centre for the birth of Genevieve). For the latter part of her time at the Ethics Centre, and for several years after leaving the organisation, Kerrie was also a



part-time member of the Australian Broadcasting Authority (which was later folded into what is now the Australian Communications and Media Authority). She was often the only female in what was then a “boys’ club” charged with regulating media across TV broadcasting and radio. A memorable period for Kerrie was being at the heart of the infamous “cash for comments” hearings.

Following this (again, after just over five years), Kerrie joined forces with former Ethics Centre board member Jane Walton to form Henderson Walton Consulting, specialising in governance, compliance and ethics. One of their assignments was to provide corruption prevention training in East Timor during the early days of that country’s transition to independence.

Leaving Jane to continue the business, Kerrie then moved to the NSW Legal Services Commissioner’s office, investigating complaints and “prosecuting dodgy lawyers,” as she succinctly explains (while professionally choosing to make no further comment). Five years later, she moved to her current role, as University Policy Manager in the General Counsel Office at Sydney University. As the manager of the policy register, taking responsibility for maintaining its framework, Kerrie has a chance to “play in every pond” of this vast entity, which has a collective total of 70,000 students and staff across several campuses.

Indonesia has been a significant part of Kerrie’s life, and she mentions that Ratih Hardjono, a Jakarta-based journalist who was part of the panel VFF Group One all met in Penang in our week-long Asian deliberations, became godmother to her younger daughter, Gen. Kerrie comments on the staggering changes in press liberty in Indonesia in the past 20 years, leading to her reflections on the VFF Programme.

VFF reflections

“It was very special giving people the chance to do something different, for example setting up the individual study tours into Asia,” Kerrie says.

“We learned a lot as we went along as a team at the Ethics Centre. The gathering in Penang was crisis management in action! We had originally thought we would be doing something with Stephen FitzGerald (former Australian Ambassador to China, then lecturer at UNSW) but the timing didn’t work and we had to suddenly manufacture a conference. We had to hit the phones and call in contacts that Stephen, Simon and I all had.

“Communications were a nightmare in the early days; remember, we only had (snail mail) and phones then – not much email, internet or laptops. Some people would not respond to the written word, and we’d have to chase them with phone calls. Also the dynamics and identity of each group posed its own challenges, although with (fellow program specialist) Suzie Ross on board that really did help us, that was an area she was good at.”

And your wisdom?

“Well, from a feminist perspective I have to say that the major political parties and large corporations remain ‘boys’ clubs’, and I suspect this isn’t going to change fast.

“But as for any specific wisdom I have from my experience – well, watch the dynamics in the room. Realise that to move an issue, you need to master the dynamics of the room as much as managing the merits of the issue you want to move. This means listening, observing, using all your senses. I have learned this from watching, sometimes playing, and also getting burnt.”

Another thought: *“Realise that the leap into the dark is very empowering! There were many times I got to the point where I wasn’t sure where I was going, except that I knew I need not be here. You don’t know unless you try.”*

Kerrie finishes by sending huge regards to all of Group One. But watch this space, her five years at Sydney University is up – where to next ... ?

SIMON LONGSTAFF

Sydney, New South Wales,
21 October 2015

Meeting with Simon in his office in downtown Sydney is like going through a session with your university tutor – it's engaging, challenging, inspiring and leaves you with a sense of awe, wondering "how does he know all this stuff?"

With a touch of self-deprecation, Simon refers to being in the same job for 25 years. However, the vast range of projects, initiatives and programmes that have been tackled whilst he's been at the helm of the Ethics Centre since 1991 refutes any suggestion of complacency.

With wife Suzie, two teenage children, and an independently minded seal-point Birman, Bella, at home to keep him grounded, Simon has travelled globally, and is as comfortable sitting with elders in Kakadu as he is stirring debates amongst the world's elite at Davos.



The origins of the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship

Following a conversation about scholarship programmes with Geoffrey White, who was at that time Executive Director of the Vincent Fairfax Family Trust, Simon saw a lack of opportunities for people who hadn't gone to university or alternatively had started to bloom in their career later in life. What emerged was a programme that was meant to expose participants to *"life in its raw form and the opportunity to come to grips with the things that mattered"*. In many ways, the programme mirrored Simon's own autobiographical story.

Simon had worked in a Northern Territory mine in his late teenage years, undertaking formal education later in Tasmania and Cambridge. This led him to appreciate the value of stepping outside your comfort zone.

"I came to the view that there was great untapped potential in people which could only be released by putting them into experiences that took them beyond what they knew and accepted as normal, and that this would never be achieved in a classroom," he says.

"A unique benefit of the Fairfax Fellowship was that it allowed people to participate in the programme with no immediate expectations; it was backed by hope that people might say, 'I will make from this something greater than I might otherwise have done,' but there was no obligation. Another special feature was the recognition that the different sized ponds people came from all mattered, and that participants would make a larger than usual splash or ripple in their ponds."

"Sir Vincent Fairfax signed off on the programme shortly before his death, and the support of his family was led by his wife Lady Nancy, who loved the programme and the people involved."

Filling in the gaps since Group One

The programme didn't change greatly over the next 15 years, though the Outward Bound component completed by Group One was replaced with a trek led by Terry Hewitt, *"an extraordinary man, ex-SAS, who was able to structure an extra dimension into the programme, where team members learned very quickly about the consequences of their decision making."*

Simon explains that the VFF Programme has now moved out of the Ethics Centre, becoming part of the Centre for Ethical Leadership at Melbourne Business School, under the leadership of Robert Wood. As a fee-paying course run in three modules over a year, the programme now has a different structure from the original, with greater participation from senior corporate leaders.

"There is still a hole in the Ethics Centre with the VFF moving to Melbourne," Simon says, *"However, a number of years ago we developed the David Williams Fellowship with Bankers Trust, run as a corporate programme with three or four participants each year."*

The Ethics Centre itself is thriving. Being not-for-profit, having access to limited funding and no capital to draw on, it is still run as a charity dependent on luck and goodwill. Despite this, Simon talks of how the Ethics Centre is now on the global map, running the IQ2 (Intelligence Squared) debates in Sydney annually. Started by John Gordon in the UK in 2002, IQ2 (www.intelligencesquared.com) stakes the claim as the world's premier forum for debate and intelligent discussion. It is now active in at least six countries.

In addition, Simon teamed up with Sydney Opera House CEO Richard Evans to come up with the Festival of Dangerous Ideas. Now in its 6th year as an annual event presented jointly by Sydney Opera House and the Ethics Centre, the festival *"brings leading thinkers and culture creators from around*

Australia and the world to discuss and debate some of the most important issues of our time.”

The Ethics Centre has also worked with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) over the past two decades, helping prepare soldiers to go to the front, and organising regional military leadership conferences discussing issues such as torture or the use of performance-enhancing drugs in combat. It's also had a hand in helping the ADF define its Leadership Doctrine.

“Leadership is defined by the exercise of influence over others to bring about their willing consent in the ethical pursuit of missions,” Simon says. “Now of course we can use that in a civilian context, too. Ethics isn’t something you inject into a thing called leadership, but that leadership is quintessentially an ethical practice. There is no leadership without this ethical component, particularly in a world where you need to try and build common intent amongst people, who, no matter what level they are in an organisation, can cause strategic effects.

“Part of our problem was people would be saying to us, ‘Do you really need to put ethics into leadership?’ as if they were quite separate, and you could inject a bit here or there as you needed it. Being able to show people how the ADF defines leadership helped many to ‘get it’.”

What's next?

“There are couple of things the Ethics Centre is tackling,” Simon says. “Firstly, to expand its reach both in terms of accessibility and demographics, looking at putting more content and counselling online so people can access it by phone, voice, video or text.

“Secondly, to increase our capacity to contribute to public debate and to provide a platform where people can come in and encounter ideas and engage and think about them. So, we are looking at the creation of what would be, essentially, an

Ethics Channel, a place where you might think about the ethical angle of things on the news, or around technology, business, sport, politics, etc. It would be supported by text, audio and video.

“We are also pulling together all our thinking and events. Our new website (www.ethics.org.au) has lots more content and blogs, and we have refined our capacity to respond to questions of the day. Really, there is no shortage of projects we could tackle.

“As for me? I don’t know; I’ve been doing this for 25 years – it’s a long time to be doing one job, no matter how intensely interesting it can be because of its diversity. We now have a fantastic mix of people in the Ethics Centre; we are future-proofed to some degree. I’m writing a children’s book coming out in 2016, and working on another ethics book. I still feel I have a contribution to make.”

Any final message for Group One?

“Firstly, I need to explain why Socrates’ quote – ‘The unexamined life is not worth living’ – is so important to me. People need to understand that it is about our form of being – human being (as opposed to ‘frog being’ or ‘ant being’). We have a capacity (unique, at least as far as we know) to transcend instinct and desire, and to make conscious ethical choices; we have this capability to examine and question life. To say that you will live by blind habit alone is to deny your human being. That’s why I have stuck with this quote for so long; it reminds us of what makes us human.

“As for Group One, I would hope that you have the courage to decide on a course of action even when you can’t know the outcome; that you recognise that life, with its dilemmas and uncertainty, is charged with the seductive alternatives of either fundamentalism (political or religious) or hedonistic escape, but I think there is something courageous in continuing to stay present with the choice you make, even in conditions of uncertainty, and in

never giving up on the possibility that, by doing so, you will make a difference.

"We think that the world is only changed by those that make the grand gesture: hoisting the flag over the fallen capital, or leading the march. I think the world changes by people falling just the right side of each question, time and again, and that even in the smallest of choices, to fall on the right side of the question matters.

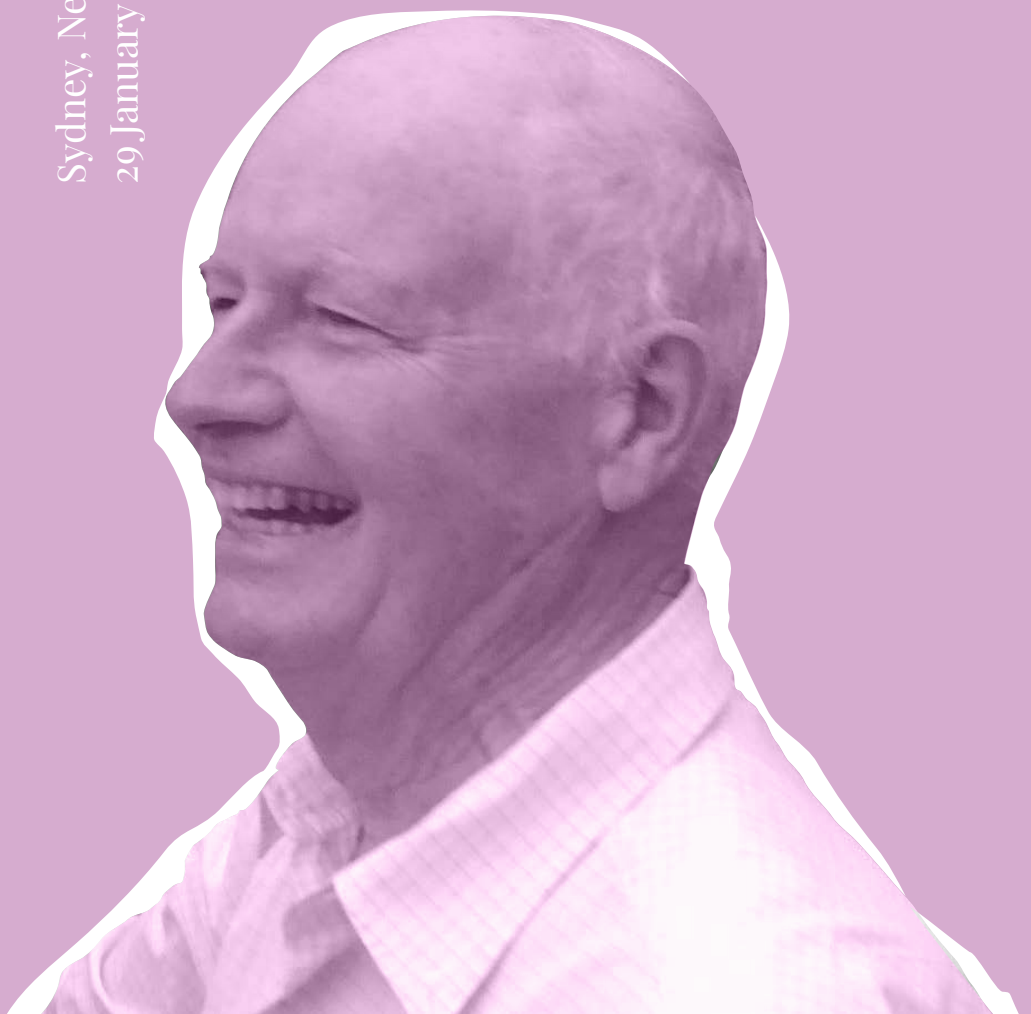
"It's so easy to say 'it doesn't matter,' but it does!"

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GEOFFREY WHITE

Sydney, New South Wales,
29 January 2016

Updating Geoffrey on the whereabouts and progress of VFF Group One is both unnerving and exhilarating. The former because his questions are as probing and insightful as they were during the interview process 21 years ago; the latter because it's evident he has a keen personal interest in every one of the Vincent Fairfax Fellows. He remembers each of us very well, and makes a comment or jots notes on his writing pad as he hears the anecdotes. Don't be surprised if you get a call out of the blue: Geoffrey will happily track you down. He has built his life on being an exceptional networker, putting people in contact with each other. He did it professionally for many years as a career diplomat in the Australian Foreign Affairs Department, with postings to Ottawa, Singapore, Saigon, Geneva and Nairobi.



After several years in Canberra, Geoffrey served for 16 years as the Executive Director of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. The Ethics in Leadership Programme was particularly momentous in his life. After working with Simon Longstaff to design the programme in the early 1990s, he served as a member of the selection panel for the next 11 years. Geoffrey and partner Sally derive great joy from learning about the impact the programme has had on participants, the successes it has generated, and how the benefits have flowed on into the wider community.

Philanthropy and service

Geoffrey, a son-in-law to Sir Vincent Fairfax, has continued a long tradition of family philanthropy built on the servant-leader model best captured in Luke 12:48: *“When a man has been given much, much will be expected of him; and the more a man has entrusted to him, the more he will be required to repay.”*

Sir Vincent’s great-grandfather was one of the founders of the Sydney City Mission (now Mission Australia) and his grandfather founded the Boys Brigade in 1882. In 1962, Sir Vincent established a family trust, now the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF), which had at its core children and young people, rural projects, Christianity and community. In the past decade this has been extended to include the environment and Indigenous projects. Driven initially by Sir Vincent, the VFFF was later chaired by Lady Nancy in the 1990s. She served as a Trustee for more than 40 years until her death in 2007. Geoffrey was the first staff appointment back in 1991, and continued to see it blossom into a major Australian family foundation. Over the past 54 years, the VFFF has distributed more than \$120 million across Australia.

Geoffrey and Sally have set up two philanthropic initiatives in their own right, The Mundango Charitable Trust and Mundango Abroad. The Mundango Charitable Trust mainly

focusses on the Canberra region; Mundango Abroad concentrates on Papua New Guinea. The idea behind the two initiatives is to reflect Geoffrey and Sally’s interest in regional and rural Australia as well as their careers in the foreign service and concern for developing countries. One of their sons, Angus, chairs the first and daughter, Annabel, the second. As you will conclude, Geoffrey and Sally are conscious of the need for succession planning.

Another side to Geoffrey is his continuing support of his local parish church. In Canberra, he was Chair of the Friends of St John’s, the city’s oldest church, dating back to the 1840s. One of his tasks was to find prominent speakers to address the congregation, something Simon Longstaff did on one occasion. Since leaving Canberra, Geoffrey has been the Patron of the Friends, and in Sydney he has been involved in the Parish Council of St Marks.

Establishing the Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Programme

Geoffrey elaborates on the early days of the VFF Programme design: *“Vincent Fairfax, in his declining years, wanted a big project, but not a bricks and mortar construction. He was concerned, at the time, in the quality of leadership at all levels across Australia. He wanted to see something that would develop people who were going to make a contribution to a community – not necessarily change the world, but they were going to do something in life.*

“I went round to a lot of organisations and checked them out. I stumbled across the St James Ethics Centre, at that point a fledgling organisation. It appealed; it was not too big and had emerged out of the Judaeo-Christian environment of the St James Church in King St, an old and famous institution. Simon, as their Director, had recently returned from Cambridge.

"We were dealing with an organisation that was not huge, but it was aiming to do something impressive, dealing with ethical issues throughout society. Simon really designed the Programme, and we liked the way it was constructed. We wanted this to be a flagship project for the VFFF; it was a brave experiment."

"The Governor of New South Wales at the time, Sir Peter Sinclair, launched the Programme in 1994, commenting that it was a fine initiative in memory of Sir Vincent Fairfax. Then, of course, recruitment started. I was involved with the selection process for 11 years, and we kept the same broad criteria through that time: common sense, drive, enthusiasm, moral courage, intelligence, sense of humour, hard working, integrity, demonstrated performance, potential achievers and ethical reflection."

Reflections of 21 years of VFF

"There's been a wonderful cross-section of people through the programme, and it's been a great privilege for me to be part of it," Geoffrey says. "I have kept in contact with some of the fellows over the years. However, I am disappointed that a lot of them disappear and don't turn up at functions, such as the graduation of Group 20 last year, when we had Peter Greste speaking. This is something that also worries Angus, my son, who is now Chairman of the Vincent Fairfax Ethics in Leadership Foundation. Also, it seems that few seem to disclose they are Vincent Fairfax Fellows, or at least the press choose to omit that whenever we see a write-up on them."

"We had two major reviews of the programme. Emerging from these, one of our concerns was not seeing enough participation from people out of private enterprise. As you know, for the past six years the programme has been run out of the Centre for Ethical Leadership at Melbourne University under Prof. Robert Wood. I would say that in moving we have lost something, but also gained something. The participants now tend to

be existing leaders, rather than the emergent leaders selected in the earlier programmes."

"I am thrilled to hear of how Group One has reconnected and I send my warmest regards to all. I would like to see all Vincent Fairfax Fellows linked up in a way that leverages the investment the VFFF put into the programme, but it has to be a grassroots growth that cuts across all the alumni in every year."

The future, and wisdom

Geoffrey is now an Emeritus Trustee of the VFFF; the CEO role has been passed onto Jenny Wheatley. He claims to have slowed down a little and prefers to step back from the limelight, spending more time with his four children and 15 grandchildren. He remains well-read on many topics and continues to write on and research a variety of subjects. Recently he produced a book recording the story of Mundango, the Braidwood family property he and Sally managed for many years. With attention to its history, and a vision to the future of farming, Geoffrey has produced a very readable account of how this sheep and cattle property has progressed. He records in detail the work done to promote the soils and vegetation of the property, and how some 50,000 tree saplings have been planted in clusters around the property in recent years.

Dismissive of the pervasive celebrity culture of today, Geoffrey comments: *"Once you get too much razzmatazz in your life, it drowns you. One of the things that kept me going in life was **simplicity**, and I think it's very important. I grew up in Sydney during World War Two. Our diet was basic, we were on rations, there were few cars about, we lived simply."*

"Sally used to say to me in my Foreign Affairs days that I didn't see anything! Now when I look back, my happiest moments were the days on the property. There's something wonderful when you get involved with plants and trees, I think it's important to have that simple approach to life."

In an interview with *Generosity* magazine, when asked about philanthropy, Geoffrey commented, *"Being involved in this field means you learn so much about society. You are constantly reminded about the community we live in and its many nooks and crannies."*

Reflecting on his eight decades of life, as a man who has never been constrained to one group or country, Geoffrey believes the world has been his silo. With a career built around service to others, he should be regarded as a man for all seasons (literally too, as he breaks off the conversation to quickly retrieve sheets off the washing line beating the advance of a Sydney summer storm).

With characteristic humility, Geoffrey closes by commenting:

"I'm not going to change the world, but I do try to do my little bit."

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