



Take on Board

Transcript – Conor Costello

Helga Svendsen 0:00

Take on Board people, as you would have heard me announce earlier in the year, we're doing some more on air strategy sessions this year. And today is one of those sessions. So in a moment, I'm going to get the fabulous Conor Costello to introduce herself to us. And tell us a bit about what it is we'll be discussing. Just know that you might hear some adorable little gurgles in the background because she has her four month old there's one right on cue, how adorable. We have four month old Sebastian joining us for this conversation. We are starting on board thinking and critical thinking very early on just so he can be his best in the boardroom. Oh, hello. In years to come. I'm so caught up. Welcome.

Conor Costello 0:42

Thank you very much. Thanks for having me.

Helga Svendsen 0:44

Absolute pleasure. So Conor of firstly, tell us what your role is in the organisation. And then maybe what it is we're going to have a chat about today. Sure.

Conor Costello 0:53

So I'm the president of the board at Environment Victoria (EV). EV is an independent nonprofit campaigning organisation working for safe climate and nature conservation. So healthy rivers, sustainable planet sustainable life, essentially. So I've been around in Victoria with strong presence for a long time. And when a really exciting point in the organisation's cycle, I guess we're we're at the cusp of a new five year strategy. Over the next six months, we'll be renewing our strategy and we work in the five year chunks. At the same time, we're looking at fairly significant board renewal with a number of board members up to 50%, who have come to the end of their maximum terms. And so we'll be needing to step off the board. So we've got an opportunity and a need to sort of face into that renewal at the same time as then a strategic renewal for the organisation.

Helga Svendsen 1:48

Interesting times for the organisation, then and for you as chair, what's the best use of our time here? What is it we need to net out, as we know,

Conor Costello 1:56

there's a difference between an ideal world and the world that we face. And you know, I can look at it with to the external knowledge you have and say, Well, you set strategy, and then you you know, look at that strategy and figure out what the requirements are of the organisation to service and deliver the strategy both at a kind of organisational culture, and certainly the governance level, and then you kind of use that as the basis of your renewal, we don't have the time for that perfect sequencing of events, were needing to do the renewal and the strategy in parallel. So we've got, I think, a pretty good process outline for our strategy development, which I think is thorough, but also feasible within the scope of resources that the organisation has. But we need to look at the board piece at the same time. We need to do that in the context that you know, a lot of board time or the time that board members have in regular business, but also in out of session workshops, for example, is already going to be taken up looking at the strategy. So I'm kind of trying to I'm interested in figuring out the best approach to the board renewal, given the givens of the sequencing, the timing the resources available. And I'm really keen. So the organisation has previously had like annual board reviews where members have been asked about their skills and experience. And that's kind of been looked at on a yearly basis. But it's never been developed into a kind of a more systematic matrix, I guess, with you know, which is worked up with an understanding of what's essential or desirable. So I'm interested in for premising and recruitment, the renewal on developing that piece,

Helga Svendsen 3:35

Ah, interesting

Conor Costello 3:40

That's what we are looking at.

Helga Svendsen 3:41

That is super useful. In the ideal world, what I would say is develop your strategy first, because that will give you really good guidance about what you need in the boardroom. And then in the ideal world, so my steps generally would be develop your strategy, then develop your skills matrix, and I would generally say to organisations, don't start with your current skills matrix. If you don't have one that's easy to do. Start with a blank sheet of paper. Because if you start with your current skills matrix, that's inevitably where you end up. So strategic direction, with that strategic direction front of mind, what a blank sheet of paper, what are the skills and attributes that we need in the

boardroom? So what are the hard skills? And also what are the sorts of people we want? Then from that list, determine what are your must haves and what are your nice to haves? And from that list determine what is everybody need to have, versus what to some people need to have and generally what happens is, you know, often finance skills are one of the skills that boards need and also we definitely need it's a must have we must have some finance skills, but but we don't need everybody to have those finance skills. Whereas critical thinking as one of the attributes, it is also a must have we must have it in the boardroom in every Nobody needs to have that capacity for critical thinking, for example, then and only then would I then say, assess, I was going to say your current board, but for you, it would be the board members that are going forward. Because if you've got a number of board members coming off, do the assessment. What are people have? What do you have what you don't have, and then that gives you the guidance for recruitment into the future. So that would be the ideal way of doing it. But never let reality get in the way. So you want to kind of do both your strategic thinking and a kind of maybe a bit of an abbreviated version of that. So that the focus of the board when they come together has to be the strategic thinking rather than spending lots of time on this stuff. Yeah.

Conor Costello 5:42

Right. That's right. And, you know, we certainly I'd say, we'd be looking to say next year, spend really a good chunk of time potentially bringing someone in and do some really critical thinking and quality time thinking about being an effective board and what component parts we have and how we work as a team. So I think we'll bring together the new team, as it were with that time. But it's not time we've got to dedicate to it this year, that's going to have to be on the other side of the renewal rather than as part of really interrogating what our matrix should be. Yeah.

Helga Svendsen 6:14

So then tell me how many are on the board? And how many are coming off the board? And do you have a minimum or a maximum on your board? Because I'm wondering whether you can do a kind of stop gap this year, and then continue that thinking next year? So tell me about that.

Conor Costello 6:31

We've currently got a maximum of 10. And we're currently at nine, there are four members who will be coming off the board with the potential for a fifth and we're, you know, waiting to get a final decision on that. So there's sort of four to five potential places, which which means that there's a maximum of six spots on the board, if we wanted to recruit back up to our maximum, my personal view, to be honest, is, you know, I think they're not necessarily a fan of over heavy boards relative to organisation size. So I'm not really intending to recruit back up to the maximum number. So I also think there's also real value in keeping some casual vacancies open for particular expertise that, you know, in the life of an organisation and aboard so yeah, I guess in some way, probably looking to recruit for new members to the board. Yeah.

Helga Svendsen 7:21

And do you have a minimum number if 10's, your maximum? What's your minimum is,

Conor Costello 7:25

And I'm reaching for it and not necessary? I think it's six, right? Like six? i To be honest, I can't grab the number. But it's six. Yeah.

Helga Svendsen 7:36

I'm now just asking about that kind of timing, I guess. So that and who's coming up? So this year, you've got a whole swag coming off next year? Do you have a swag coming off as well? Because I'm wondering whether you might be able to do say two this year, so you would have a board of like seven, and then you build it up again next year. But that depends on people not coming off next year?

Conor Costello 7:54

Yeah, that's a great thought, which to be honest, hadn't occurred to me, funnily enough. And now I'm wondering why. I think there's there's one member who's due to reach their maximum term next year. So we're looking at quite a different picture. Yeah, it's a really interesting thought, I guess. This then loops back to the matrix, where you figure out what your centers are, what you're going to lose with those coming off. And and yes, then you kind of are a bit fluid with who or how many people it might take to recruit those mandatory skills and competencies. This is the sort of the direction of thinking.

Helga Svendsen 8:25

Yeah, potentially, yeah, potentially, like, you're absolutely right. It depends on the gap. So So let's come back to your skills matrix, then I think I heard you say earlier, you don't have A skills matrix. At the moment.

Conor Costello 8:35

There isn't a matrix. Now there have been a standard set of questions of skills and experiences been asked on review and looked at on a year to year basis, but never ongoing. Yes or no is the short answer.

Helga Svendsen 8:46

As I say, in an ideal world, what I would say is get the board together to discuss that. But your boards tied up in strategic thinking, which is great. Is there a nominations committee or a governance committee? Or is there a subcommittee of the board where this work sits?

Conor Costello 9:01

There is it's the Governance Committee, and it previously been mainly governance focus, there was some provision around nominations, but we have just bolstered that. So it is now a governance and nominations committee, which with a much stronger remit for the nominations piece, including then holding this, the skills matrix assessment and review

Helga Svendsen 9:20

Time of the board will be invested predominantly in this strategic work is their capacity for that nominations committee to do some of the extra legwork in this skills, matrix development and so on.

Conor Costello 9:33

There is yeah, my my kind of thinking was that the committee would draft would make a proposal to the board. And then would also actually this is one of the things I'd love to pick your brain on in particular that would then have a kind of a view to consistency of content. So you know in the past those questions around experience and capability have been self reported or have been answered by individual members. My understanding You know, I will admit to being very introductory or remedial on skills matrices is that an important part of that is it's not just about self assessment, I'd really love to understand more. What's that next step? And yes, do we that sits at a committee level? And how do you kind of work with the some of the human dynamics, perhaps, of that? And review?

Helga Svendsen 10:21

Absolutely. So if your nominations committee can spend some time with that blank sheet, and even predicting maybe a little bit about where that strategy is going? So from the strategy, what do we think might be needed in the boardroom? And start with the blank sheet, develop up that list the shopping list for want of a better word? And then do the thinking about what does everyone need to have? What are some people need to have? What is must have what is nice to have? So if your nominations committee can do that process? You are absolutely right, the next step is then what do we already have? And I would encourage the nominations committee in doing it with the blank sheet, as I say, a not using a previous one, which is easy for you, because you don't have one. But

also, as much as you can don't think about the people that are currently in the boardroom, Bob's moving off the board this year. And here's the finance person, so we need to replace that. Now. You might need to do that. But try as much as possible not to think about those skills. Think about those people think about what you need. And then yes, so if your noms committee can do that work, and the board can approve it, you are absolutely right. The next step is assessment. Couple of things I would say about that. Firstly, I would say don't do it just as a yes, no. Yes, I've got that skill. No, I don't. Because there are shades of gray. So I would suggest either a three level or even a five level rating for want of a better word. You know, if it's three level, I don't know that at all. I know it a bit, I know it a lot. Or if it's five level, you know, you can work out in between now that I think about it, you might want a four level because as soon as you put a five level everyone puts three for everything. Yeah. So might be I know nothing. I know a little, I know a lot. I'm expert, so that people can't just say, Yeah, I'm in the middle. So that's another thing to think about. And then getting feedback from others. So one of the things that I've done with organisations when we do their board review, it's not just asking them questions about the board dynamics, or the way the board works, or do you spend enough time on your risk matrix or all of those sorts of things, all of those questions that you often asked boards in a board review, you know about are they operating effectively. One thing I often do is also get feedback from individual board members about other individuals skills. So let's say for your board was strategic skills and finance skills and legal skills and environmental skills and so on. Every other board member would get to say, Connor has a high degree of knowledge and experience in this kind of has a low degree kind of has a middle. And then from that, we get to see how people are showcasing their skills in the boardroom. So it's, it's it's a 360 Essentially, what can be useful there is it can be a little bit daunting, I must say doing that. But what's interesting there is that, you know, I did a did a board review recently with an organisation and one of the board members had quite a bit of expertise in a particular area, but the rest of the board weren't seeing it. So for her and I, when we had that conversation afterwards, it's like, essentially, you're hiding your light under a bushel, you've got this amazing skill, but you are not showcasing it and you need to showcase it more in the boardroom. And you need to share that a bit more with the rest of the board so that they get the benefit of your expertise.

Conor Costello 13:40

Just on that, I think and this is something I'm keen for, like next year when we when we have the space for sort of reflection and time, right. And certainly not to invest too much as a board in being navel gazing, right. But this is important foundations to an effective board. But so I can see how that works in that kind of setting where you've got someone coming in and you're doing effectively a kind of a 360 kind of situation in this environment where were looking to shortcut some of that, I guess, and we've got individuals self assessing, and then we want to do a bit of calibration on of that. And it's a committee doing it rather than bringing together the results of each member 316 other members, that feels quite different to me in terms of how to approach it well, or some of the pitfalls perhaps that might lie very, you know,

Helga Svendsen 14:33

You would expect me to say this, because I'm an external person that often either facilitates the conversation or does the reviews but I think there is real value if possible and getting an external person because they don't know the personalities and the politics and all of that sort of stuff. Again, let's talk about the realities. Your organisation doesn't have the luxury of being able to do that at the moment because you've got all of the other stuff happening. Are you the chair of the governance and nominations committee as well or is that somebody else? The Vice President, okay, so And you're probably just, you know, you want to think about some of the personalities in there as well. And only you can make the call on that. It could be you, it could be the chair of the governance and norms Committee. It could be the norms committee as a whole, it could be somebody else who's on the noms committee that leads it, it could be somebody that you bring in to temporarily join the nominations committee as well, you could have external people on those committees. So it might be somebody that you're temporarily bringing, yeah, that's a possibility in all of that, and, you know, essentially you will be doing if I've, if I recall the structure of it, right, you'll, you'll be doing an assessment of five, four or five people that will be left, of which you are one, the chair of the noms committee is one and how many, is there one other person on your nominations committee or to one other? So it's really only two people who are not. So it's just making a bit of an assessment of the expertise and people in that room and whether you need to bring in some additional expertise for that. But you're absolutely right, there is often equalizing to be done. Again, I did do this with a different organisation recently. And when it's just a self assessment, you know, I looked across some of the responses. And there's some people, you know, there was a woman in that group who gave herself a very low score for a number of skills, that she had much greater skills than she was reporting on. So when you get that feedback from others that can help to equalize it in there as well. So I think getting that

Conor Costello 16:24

For our board. Look, I don't think it's an I don't think there's an as it were an issue with what they but but I really couldn't see the value of that as a an approach and effective approach. So I guess I'm looking to kind of have a go at that calibration review. Because it seems like the right thing to do, right? I don't think we're looking at issues of people wildly under selling or overselling themselves. But I think it's a really important part of having a really solid governance matrix, right skills matrix. So that I guess that's my interest here is how it should work rather than, you know, looking to head off choppy waters.

Helga Svendsen 17:04

And then if it comes back to the through the noms committee through to the board. I mean, like any conversation, if it is approached, with a error of curiosity and lack of judgment, like any good conversation in the boardroom is, it's just what are people noticing here? What do you see that that's what I would do as an external person? It's exactly the same questions that you guys can do internally. Here's the results. What do you notice? You know, is there any way we should be focusing our attention? You know, is there any surprises in there? What did you expect to see? What did you not expect to see those sorts of curious questions will mean that people will engage in it in a way

that will get you all to the place you need to be in it, I think, and you can easily lead that conversation, either from the chair of the board, or the chair of the nominations committee, or whoever it may be.

Conor Costello 17:55

Yeah, great. Can I was gonna just to jump to another question on the matrices. Generally, one thing that we've had a recent conversation about is wanting to challenge ourselves to have get the board we need and could have for the organisation and the board that is most likely right. So this is going to be unusual suspects to kind of use a increasingly tired phrase, but you know, I think so I have heard and, you know, understand the point around starting from a blank sheet and really challenging yourself on the based on the strategy, what do we need at a governance level to support the delivery of that? But even despite that, I guess I'm interested in how you avoid being path dependent with the things you think you need. Yeah, in the matrix. And so how you end up with a matrix that is forward looking that is challenging, I think that might lead you to a different place with who, who you end up looking for?

Helga Svendsen 18:55

And then and then bringing on, you're even asking that question says to me that the nominations committee is likely to have that front of mind, which is great. So test yourself, what is it we need in the boardroom? What are the skills? You know, with what we know about our future strategy? We haven't settled yet, but with what we know about our future strategy. What are the skills and attributes we need in the boardroom? Do some brainstorming around that and then test yourselves at the end as well? Is this future focused? Is this is this business as usual or future focused? Have we given enough emphasis to some of that future focus? Is there a right balance in it? Maybe allocate somebody to be the devil's advocate in the conversation? Do we really need that? Is that really what we need is that is that future focus, so just test yourselves in that again, curious non judgmental way about whether you've got the balance right? And possibly when you then present it from the nominations committee to the board, maybe give them some prompting questions as well. So board when we developed this, what we really They want to have in mind is a obviously, is this the right skills matrix for us? Does it have the right balance of, you know, you can find the question in whatever way works for you. But something like, is this sufficiently future focused for us? Does this capture the skills and attributes that we will need? From what we know of our future strategy? Is there anything on here that we don't need, you know, test us, so test yourselves in it, and then ask the board to test you as well in your thinking, huh?

Conor Costello 20:29

Yep. Beautiful. Thank you. That's, it seems obvious names that are, but it's Yeah, that's great. So often, I think you kind of do there's a risk that you do this process? Yeah. Oh, yes. You know, hey, we

have arrived at the point that we expected to and we understand the words that are on the page, and we recognize them, and we're very comfortable. And now let's proceed.

Helga Svendsen 20:46

Yes. Yeah. I mean, often papers for boards, you know, is it a tick off? Or is it a discussion? I think what I'm hearing is you want the board to have a conversation about it. So here's the paper. And here's what we want you to discuss. And then fortunately, you're in the chair. So you get to lead that conversation and make sure it happens. Because sometimes what happens is the nominations committee or some people on the board want to have the conversation in the boardroom, and the board chair just wants to move things along. Fortunately, you've got the ability to influence that.

Conor Costello 21:17

Yeah, and I think, you know, albeit we are focused on the strategy. And that needs to be where the chunk of time is, I'm hoping to kind of bolt on. So we have a first workshop coming up next month, which will be about essentially setting the context and foundations of that strategy. So what are the streams or pillars, or what have you want to turn them of the strategy, and I'm hoping at the end of that session, so while we're still potentially face to face, or you know, virtually face to face, perhaps, to have a look at the draft. So at least, we won't have a strategy, but at least it'll be kind of swimming in the, in the murk of the direction that were identified. So I'm hoping that we will have some time to toss it around as a full board and really interrogate it. So those are great questions to support that conversation,

Helga Svendsen 22:04

and great time to do it. Because the board will already be in that strategy. It's like, Alright, we've had this conversation. Now let's look at the draft of what we've come up with and look at it with really critical eyes. And in fact, I love that you're doing it in a workshop format, rather than the board format, because then it really does invite again, more of that actual discussion about it, rather than prove, discuss note, feeling that often comes in boards, which needs to, you know, you need to get through the business of the board as well. And you can't fully explore everything in a board meeting. But some things you do want to fully explore and having a workshop format for that can be really helpful.

Conor Costello 22:38

Yeah, I guess I'm interested in the idea that you've put forward before about, you know, holding places for next year, we're thinking of like, an A B team, if you like or, or, you know, I can't remember the name for it now, but identifying cycles, board members, so in the years that we do

have a number of recruitments, then in, in forward, we don't end up with the same number of treatments as all those people, the terms finish?

Helga Svendsen 23:05

Absolutely. So you might want to stagger the terms, put some on your terms, two years, three years, four years,

Conor Costello 23:11

Two years with a maximum of three terms. So we're looking at a maximum of six years, yeah,

Helga Svendsen 23:16

If they're only two year terms, it's a bit harder to do. Sometimes, if there's a three or four year term, you can put some directors on for two years, some for three, some for four, so it staggers it, over the years to come.

Conor Costello 23:25

My initial thinking is, again, either physically or virtually, A B, A, B and a hat and just get people to pick out and then you've got the random selection of A's and B's and A's will have been expiring in one year, and then, you know, doing it like that. So we're planning on that anyway. So I think the risk of creating this giving ourselves this challenge, again, in future years is reduced or somewhat mitigated, but I'm interested in any thoughts you've got about. So obviously, you know, if we chose to say recruit too polite places rather than for, we know that the mandatory things are the essential things that we've said, we need to bring in with a matter of urgency I'm interested in with a board our size, though, we might end up in a position of saying, Okay, well, if we brought these two people in that would give us X and Y, understanding that this other competency, which we've said is highly desirable, perhaps essential. We're not going to have this year, we're going to hold that over to the next recruitment. What are some of the key questions to be asking yourself there is we're making pragmatic decisions now. Yeah, let's focus our recruitment, if you like,

Helga Svendsen 24:30

Yeah. And I think it's back to your questions you're asking, you're asking yourself before, you know, is this future focused? Is this what we really need right now to achieve our as yet not quite finalized. But, you know, what do we need right now to achieve this strategy? What do we need to support the organisation to achieve this strategy? Is that what we have right now? You know, you might choose to recruit all four of them this year, so it's only if that staggering works. So you might choose

to do that because you need all of them. But if for whatever reason you choose to stagger them, there might be other ways you can bring those skills in. You know, we just spoke a moment ago about having an additional person on your nominations committee, for example, what are the other subcommittees of your board?

Conor Costello 25:10

So we've got fundraising, communications Engagement Committee, and the finance audit. And Risk Committee also oversees our public funds. So there are three subcommittees each of them have a co opted at least one co opted member, currently, right. All right, let's have them have to actually. So you know, because I think that's a really, really important way of bringing in perspective and particular skills and experience to a board, as well as then thinking about building out the governance community when organisation right, and succession planning and things like that, like it's got practice lots of different kinds of practical value.

Helga Svendsen 25:46

That's great. I mean, that's awesome. If you've already got that in place, that's fantastic. Some might think it's not a great idea. And Sebastian might not agree. But I think it's a great idea. So maybe that was Sebastian nominating himself for the finance audit and risk committee, I'm not sure

Conor Costello 26:01

Challenges his challenge about where to go. So it's just there. No, I want to do everything.

Helga Svendsen 26:06

So if you've got people involved in committees, that's great. I mean, there are other ways of also bringing in some of that different views. One of the boards that I'm on this year, for example, is participating in the board observership program. And that can bring some different skills in we specifically sought somebody in our board observer that had tech skills, because we've got some really big tech projects. So he's not a member of the board. But he will be joining our risk audit and finance committee, and specifically, he has some of those skills. So that can be another way of bringing in some different skills. But if they really are essential, like if you really need them, then recruit all recruit three of them, that you need them. That's it. Yeah, exactly. But I would just say test yourself consciously test yourself on those things. What do we really need right now? What is the map that fits us best in terms of succession planning, so staggering, people coming on and off the skills you need to effectively govern the organisation now and into the future? If you're consciously asking yourself those questions that the nominations committee and at the board level, you're going to make

Conor Costello 27:09

The right call? Yeah. Okay.

Helga Svendsen 27:15

No, I am loving it. Actually, like I say, this is this is the modern face of boards. It's fabulous.

Conor Costello 27:23

I'm about to do. Sorry, side note, but Diploma of Governance, I'm about to start one. So I'm kind of this is gonna be the modern face of education.

Helga Svendsen 27:32

I recall on my first board was YWCA Victoria and the chair of our board got pregnant during her term. And I remember her chairing one of our board meetings from the floor, she was quite uncomfortable. So she laid out on the floor and chaired it from the floor very effectively, it must be said, incredibly, and there was regularly kids running around in the background. If we're on the phone, you would hear regularly, little gurgles and so on. It's why can't boards and governance have children running around? It's a it's an awesome thing, I think,

Conor Costello 28:05

Yeah, it's good. This one is more chatty. So he's cool with,

Helga Svendsen 28:10

Again, great skills for the boardroom of the future.

Conor Costello 28:14

Right? You know, he is a guy, so he just needs to know when to step back.

Helga Svendsen 28:21

I have no doubt Conor, that you will be giving him excellent role modeling about these things.

Conor Costello 28:28

It's gonna be fun.

Helga Svendsen 28:30

All right, well, then I'm wondering on this, so we've, we've kind of explored the process for your board and board renewal and board skills matrix and fitting that in to the reality of where you're at with the strategy. So from the conversation that we've had today, what what's your fresh thinking?

Conor Costello 28:47

Gosh, what isn't it look at the, you know, I've wondered about this succession planning question, actually vote has been bolstered the terms of reference for that governance and nominations committee, you know, there is a point in there around succession planning and that kind of piece. And for me, they've felt like sort of somewhat separate blocks of work, you know, there's kind of how do we do that succession piece and the CO opted members, I'm not the reason to have the cult members on subcommittee, but it certainly contributes, you know, there's the skills matrix, that we've got a consistent, systematic, regularly reviewed approach to understanding, you know, what we're working with and who we have what we need. And then there's the recruitment piece, and, you know, and there felt a little bit separate, or like different bullet points on a page, perhaps, I guess this conversation is helping me to see them, see it as a as an environment and as a sort of a dynamic that that works together. And I guess, you know, that question of being a bit more strategic and thinking about who wouldn't have how many we recruit this year and what that might look like next year and how that plays into thinking about it as an environment where there are different cogs and some Legos cogs are about number of recruitments. Some of those cogs are about your mandatory and desirable skills, and then the life of an organisation in its strategy, where it is in its strategy. So I guess it's helping me to see it as Yeah, as an environment and as as a dynamic part of the board's life rather than let's do a matrix and then let's do it recruitment. And let's, you know,

Helga Svendsen 30:22

You know, I'm a fan of board calendars, you know, that that's one of my things. Do you also have your governance and nominations committee? Does it have a calendar of work for the year?

Conor Costello 30:30

We do? Yeah, I think there's probably room to look back at that baking, not as the chair, you know, I think we can now that we have what we need to in any case, right, we've updated to recently which

shift body of work that the committee should be looking at. And so I think, yeah, we do need to go back and have a look at that cycle. For the committee. Yeah.

Helga Svendsen 30:51

Because, I mean, you don't want it to be as you've just said, I love the way you've reflected looking at it as an environment rather than tic tic tic. Having the tic tic tic and your governance calendar also helps to make sure all of the the jigsaw puzzle or the pieces of Lego are all in place as you bring that whole environment together.

Conor Costello 31:08

Yeah. And also having having an ongoing piece, which is the matrix and is that that understanding about what we have and what we need, so that you're not in a meeting, just now we're going to do succession planning. Now we're going to look at, you know, it's a bit more of a rolling sense that I guess allows a board to be more daresay agile and reactive, like, you know, if we have an emerging situation, we can we know that there's the matrix, we understand that we've got, we know what we might need to bring in quickly. And to do that with a bit more with a bit more behind you than just a gut reaction to a particular moment, right, because you've invested more time and work in previously.

Helga Svendsen 31:48

Yeah, absolutely. You know, I can hear everything, you're saying that there is a thoughtful approach and a kind of an exploratory approach that, like I said, before, curious, non judgmental exploratory approach to it. And if you apply that to anything, whether it's your succession planning your future strategy, where you should be focusing in terms of campaigning or whatever it may be, then it's likely that the board and the organisation are likely to be making well thought out decisions and the right decisions

Conor Costello 32:16

Are so it's, it's really, it's daunting, having these big chunks happening at the same time. But I think it's, we're in particularly in the context of where we are and facing the climate crisis and kind of near term action that needs to happen and the realities of biodiversity loss and what have you, but you know, so the challenges are really big, but, and it's daunting to have these things happening at the same time. But it's also a great opportunity, if we can take that thoughtful approach, curious approach to it to set the organisation up really well to put the Victorian community in addressing those things. So yes, good, good challenge to have.

Helga Svendsen 32:50

Environment Victoria does incredible work. So it's great to hear that the Thorfinn was going in on the governance side, because, you know, your organisation does amazing work in terms of I was gonna say protecting the environment, but it's so much more than that. It's the future environment, protecting our future, really, and building our future. So thank you for all that you do in that regard as well.

Conor Costello 33:11

It's good time. Thanks so much recommendation.

Helga Svendsen 33:15

It's been incredibly helpful. So Connor, I would love it. If you came back to us in I don't know, three months time, six months time, maybe just after your AGM and let us know where all of this landed. It would be great to get a bit of an update as well.

Conor Costello 33:27

I would love to I'll see you in November.

Helga Svendsen 33:30

Fabulous.