



## Take on Board

# Transcript – Julie Green

### Helga Svendsen 0:00

Today on the take on board podcast, I'm speaking with Julie Green about getting on a board and building a board portfolio around your areas of influence and passion. This alignment of your skills to a board role is key so I'm really forward to exploring how to highlight your own points of difference in this conversation with Julie.

Julie is a board member of the RACV which is the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, RACV Finance, Bendigo Health, Malden Hospital, Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery, Greening Australia and Redgrid advisory board.

Julie is a passionate portfolio director adding value through commerciality performance measurement and connecting to community. She's experienced in change management in both the public and private sectors across diverse industries including professional services, healthcare, transport, and infrastructure. Her portfolio career builds on her many years as a senior executive reporting to boards, including as a business advisor with chartered firms in the UK and Australia, including Ernst & Young. Welcome to the take on board podcast. Julie.

### Julie Green 1:15

It's lovely to be here.

### Helga Svendsen 1:16

It's so good to have you. So, Julie, before we talk about getting on a board and your value, add and all of those sorts of things, we would just love to hear a little bit more about you. So can you tell us a bit about your upbringing and what lessons you learned and what you're up to and your influences?

### Julie Green 1:34

You can probably tell by my accent, Oh, actually come from the UK, England. And we decided my husband and I to immigrate in 1987. So a long, long time ago. Back there, I trained as a chartered accountant in the City of London. And I became a manager, an audit manager at a very young age, I was only about 23 and shortly thereafter. We decided to emigrate. We were only supposed to do

that for two years, and go back again. But obviously, we had a great life here. And we stayed back there. My influences was, I think my mother who said that basically, you can do whatever you want to do, Julie. And that gave me a lot of inspiration just to follow my dreams.

#### **Helga Svendsen 2:24**

Now, we love it the the influence of strong women in our lives to build or encourage or motivate the next generation of strong women as well. Fantastic. Now, I know you're an alumna of the Williamson community leadership program run by Leadership Victoria, which I'm an alumna as well. So can you tell us about the program and how this was your moment of change?

#### **Julie Green 2:48**

Yes, look, it was in 2001. So an awful long time ago now. And I remember I was in the water industry at the time. And there's been a lot of people in the water sector that have gone through the program. And the person I was working with encouraged me to apply which I did and was successful because it is a competitive process. It is a year in length, so a calendar year. And in that time you have the great opportunity to talk to about hundred and 50 different leaders in all different areas of the community. And I was part of a group of about 33 people, also very diverse, so from not for profit sectors from the financial sector, all across community. And I suppose I was quite different in that I lived regionally to Melbourne as well. So I lived in Brisbane at the time and the water industry that I was a general manager for that was also a regional water business outside of Melbourne. So it was life changing because you actually get out of your comfort zone. You're not in your professional stream of accounting. You're not in your industry stream of water as it was at the time. And you're just exposed to so many things that you didn't even know you had an opinion about. It's an alumni now, which is crower. And I don't even know the numbers. It's 1000 Plus, definitely across Victoria. And when you meet people now, you come across to the Yes, they've done it, and you have an affinity. So it's a fantastic network. I think part of your network from that year is the fabulous Corinne Arma. Who was on the podcast last week. Yes, very good friend of mine. We were together actually. 911 I remember it clearly is yesterday. Wow. And I was staying with her overnight and she said you got to come and see the Twin Towers. They're gone. You know. So yes, I remember Korean. Very well, and she's still a very good friend.

#### **Helga Svendsen 4:58**

So thank you. about your journey to the boardroom. And today we're going to talk about, as I said, getting on a board, building a portfolio around influence and passion highlighting your own point of difference. So maybe to start us off, can you tell us about your journey to the boardroom and maybe your journey to the rse v boardroom?

**Julie Green 5:19**

Yes, of course, back in, what was it 2013 I'd had an executive career which covered quite a few industries, transport, infrastructure, and healthcare. And back then I wanted to transition to a board. But I was living regionally in Kyabram. And so it made networking quite difficult. I was made redundant of trends filled partly because they said do you want to go to Perth, or the America and I said, neither my daughter's doing year 12. So I took the package and became a consultant for a little while with the likes of UGL, who's a big, big public company and Lendlease, but that wasn't really filling my passions. So I asked myself what board would I'd like to go on if I had a choice given my skill sets, which was very strong commercial, clearly, with being a chartered accountant, but also having those industry disciplines of transport, water healthcare. And so I did a lot of research. And I did come across the RACV in that research, and then investigated water. What is this organisation about? I know that they have roadside assist. So I actually approached five directors within a very short space of time, who I just knew from my networks, and just had a conversation with them about what does it mean and how does it work and that included the chair at the time actually. And then I learned that it's a membership organisation is now 2.3 million members very large touches every Victorian across the state and interstate as well involved in many different businesses, financial services, tourism, as well as the clamp and roadside assist, which everyone knows it for. So I understood then the process, which was a pretty rigorous process of basically putting yourself up, going through a verification of your credentials. So that was an independently audited process. And then eventually, it's an open election, which involves the members. So now the process is a lot more rigorous in that it's very skills orientated and we have a matrix that we use, and we go to the market to say, Well, this is actually what we're looking for. We have an interview process. That's changed a lot in the last six years, which has become a little more rigorous. But you know, the good thing for me is that in that process, I got the most votes. And gratefully was elected to the board, which I've enjoyed thoroughly in the last six years. And I guess being a community, sort of person, it resonates very well with my values, because we are there for members and the community.

**Helga Svendsen 8:32**

So there's two things I want to pick up on there. Firstly, you said you identified the RACV and then I think you lightly said, you went to five directors who I just knew through my network, can you tell us a bit more about that? Because that's an amazing way of finding out about an organisation. How did you approach them like, tell us some of the nuts and bolts of that because it's often something I advise people to do when they don't know where to start? Tell us how you did it.

**Julie Green 8:58**

It's very open information in that, you know, in any company, really, if you can google apart from private companies where it's a bit more tricky, and you have to do a bit more research, but it's quite open with internet searching to know who is on the board. And therefore, you can see whether you actually know those people in your network. If you don't know them directly. There's always other ways perhaps, you know, people that know those directors. So you might ask for introduction, which

is what happened actually with the chair at the time. So I didn't know the chair directly, but I knew someone who knew the chair and just wanted to know whether it was okay to have an informal meeting. And really, all I was doing is exploring. I didn't know quite what I was going to do, but it was just gathering information, which is really what you do when you look at any company of interest to you is you research you find out what they're about, and is the skills match? Is there something in a strategy that you could contribute to, that that governance level. So that's the same for anybody listening to this podcast, it's about your skills and your value proposition against your companies that you think you might be able to add value to.

#### **Helga Svendsen 10:19**

The other thing I really wanted to explore about that was your value proposition. So I know one of the key things that you've mentioned and that others have also mentioned, is to understand your value proposition. So can you tell us how did you hone your value proposition? And how did you use that to target board roles, whether it's RACV or other ones?

#### **Julie Green 10:41**

What I had for many, many years as an executive as a core purpose that stayed with me throughout that time. And it's basically to use my financial acumen to build healthier communities. So if you look at the roles that I've done, I was directly in the water sector. I was in transport. It's all very community orientated. Some of it is private, some of it's public, not necessarily the not for profit. That's probably been more in my board directorships, the not for profit space. But it's all been fairly consistent about using my skills, which are principally because of my background financial, but of course, more than that was about affecting communities and for the good. So with that, when you sort of know that and you then look to the board space, it helps align with what companies that you interested in, and therefore gives you some levers about where to target. For example, a straight ASX pure commercial board. I don't know whether I would actually get some satisfaction out of that because principally profitability and commercial reality is right up there in terms of shareholder return. Although given the role commissions that we've had, you could argue that maybe that's not as important as some of the what is important, but other things like social awareness effect on communities, and also the environmental impact that you have as a director is also important. But that's a whole different topic.

#### **Helga Svendsen 12:28**

While I'm keen to go down, but maybe not right at the moment, we will see how we go. So thinking about the skills and strengths that you've got for the boardroom. I'm wondering how did you identify those strengths? And again, how did that inform your role in the boardroom?

**Julie Green 12:47**

So it's probably an extension of what I talked about in terms of core purpose. Because clearly commerciality and orders and the financials and risk management is very much in my DNA. Every company needs an audit committee or and some have audit and then risk management a separate committees. So that was pretty strong. As an example, when I was in a mentor program with the Australian Institute of Company Directors, I had a mentor who's a lovely man called Charles Matric, and he said, Julie, make sure you put that first because of what I've said, every company needs those skills. And I was actually downplaying them, which was probably not to my advantage. So as well as those skills, I think the core purpose brought out that I am passionate about community. I do want to do the right thing. I do have a strong set of beliefs. And I think that came about in part recently when there was a survey that we did in a board just to understand your competencies and for me, as well as Strategic layer and looking into the future, there was a big one in there about beliefs. So it's resonated with me that if something isn't quite right to always listen to God, and in a boardroom concept, that means that you have to really dig deep and have the courage to ask the questions that you don't feel comfortable about. So that is a lesson that I have learned. If I don't feel comfortable, I have an obligation to myself to follow through and put it on the table. And that's really what boards should do.

**Helga Svendsen 14:41**

So that's interesting. You, You did some, I don't know strength mapping, I guess with your board. Can you tell us a bit more about that what tool you used what it showed for you and also what understanding it gave you of some of the other directors in the boardroom?

**Julie Green 14:55**

Yeah, look, a couple of my boards have actually gone down this route. Their various to methodologist if you like, there's one called Gallup strengths. There's another which is in the health sector about student, which is a way of behavior really and setting of culture within organisations. They do things a wee bit differently, but that's not really the relevance as you would in exacting you want an exec team to work together. And for you to know, the other people that you're around the table with. And it's the same with a board. It's an effective board understands the strengths of the board and the chair of course tries to harness those strengths. And then as a team, you can get the best out of delivering on strategy and fulfilling your board obligations. So I would recommend it it's another layer if you like, I mean, you can you know, have social events, go to dinner, etc with a boat to Bond and to understand each other. But this is a deeper way of learning what is important for your other directors around the table. Because if someone said to me, You are really all shackled at the ankles, something happens, you are together, and you jump together. So it's really good if you understand where people are coming from.

**Helga Svendsen 16:21**

So you mentioned in there that you did a mentoring program with the AICD. I'd love to hear a bit more about that and how that might have, I guess, supported you to build your skills and strengths in the boardroom?

**Julie Green 16:34**

Yes, it was a very good program. For me now it was about three years ago. So while you do get partnered with a mentor who's willing to contribute their time, and that's a bit of a luck of the draw, to be honest, it doesn't always work. But it's a national programs so you have various people from different states and The beauty of it is that you do have some education or training with the AICD and your group that you're with. So learning about resumes and networking, those sorts of things. But the one on ones that you have with your mentor is very valuable. And you can use it as you see fit. But basically, you set the agenda. So, for me, I felt quite comfortable with resumes. For example, it was more about, you know, how do I actually develop the portfolio of boards to be what I want them to be. That was very valuable for me because the person Charles Matric I mentioned earlier, he had fantastic knowledge. He was very good at governance, a very solid sort of person. He was on Wesfarmers and Telstra is has great experience. You learn from him and also, it's lovely that we have continued contact, because technically it's actually just a year. Yeah. But as time has progressed, I still kept out with him. And he's also an RACV club member.

**Helga Svendsen 18:13**

That helps you and run into around the traps there are fantastic. So thinking about your board portfolio and building it, you've clearly been very successful at that, Julie, because you have a very impressive portfolio. And if it's not too cheeky of me, I confess, I've always thought that the rule of thumb for board directorships is around about four would be about the maximum number. You're on a few more than that you're on seven, I think plus an advisory board or is it or seven, including seven including the advisory board. So if it's not too cheeky, I would love to hear just how you do it, how you juggle all of that together and and what your thoughts are around. If there's a maximum number what that should be.

**Julie Green 18:58**

Yes, also, good question. Say that they're not always equal. So the RACV would be big clearly, Bendigo health is enormous in size, 4000 staff. So they would be big, but some of the other ones like the Western Resource Recovery, and also Malden Hospital, which is, which is where I live are smaller. So the time commitment isn't as large, the advisory board is only quarterly. The other thing that's important is that they meet on different days. So Bendigo hills is on a Tuesday or a series on a Wednesday, the Fridays the waist one and the others tend to fall on the Thursday so they actually don't cross over.

**Helga Svendsen 19:41**

That's very handy because that dairy management can be very challenging.

**Julie Green 19:45**

Indeed, and you have to be prepared to change hats. And for some reason, I'm quite good at putting different hats on to address the entity that I'm obviously fulfilling a very important role for as a director. So I don't think it's a hard and fast rule. If they were ASX listed companies then for sure, maybe three would be max. And some people would argue that if you were a chair, that's a sort of an extra commitment that you certainly need to manage very, very carefully. So my reply is that they're just not all equal.

**Helga Svendsen 20:25**

Yeah. And all boards are created equal. And I agree wholeheartedly to a chair role. Again, my rule of thumb would be that being the chair of a board is at least double the work in assembly more.

**Julie Green 20:38**

Yes. And someone said to me that there's no way you could be the chair of two major, big companies because you would be conflicted in your time commitment. And I would say that's probably right. As I say, it's challenging enough getting the diaries together with just a couple of boards sometimes so yes, and look the other thing is that disasters do happen and crises do emerge. All you need is for two crises at the same time, and then you get a bit of chaotic activities. So you do have to have balance.

**Helga Svendsen 21:14**

We've talked about so many fabulous things here in terms of skills and strengths on a board and finding the one that aligns with your values and your purpose. One of the main points you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today.

**Julie Green 21:28**

Look, I would really like to encourage those listening to the podcast, be they women or otherwise that we are all individuals. We all have our own unique set of skills. In terms of women in the boardroom, we are making progress, but it is still slow. We've just hit a 30% mark with the ASX. The government boards tend to be a lot more balanced 50% is achieved on many boards. So my message

is really don't give up. We're all different. And I personally encourage and mentor a lot of women. Because of that, I don't feel like I'm in competition with women. It's the people, some women might see the case that they pull the ladder up from under them. But truly, I think that is declining trend, because it is so tough. And we do need to step up because the world needs professional, technically savvy women to participate at the high end of governance within our country. So we just need to step up to that challenge. And it's not easy therefore it's incumbent I think on myself and others like me to help other people to get the goal that they want to achieve.

**Helga Svendsen 22:57**

Oh, you are speaking my language Julia could not agree more. I think that we need to build a community of women and we are stronger together. And I'm wondering, is there a resource that you would like to share with a take on board community might be a book, a podcast or a TED talk or anything else?

**Julie Green 23:13**

A very good friend of mine, Finbar O'Hanlon, quite an extraordinary person, he is an entrepreneur, he's a musician. He is a purveyor of difference. And if you saw him, you'd understand what I mean physically as well. He did a TED talk, which is the complexity of simplicity. And he talks about navigating through the overcrowded digital world. And he has a mantra that everything is not important.

Which is part of the same thing in a way isn't it that working out what the value proposition is working out what is most important because we can't do everything can't do everything. So, with digital media LinkedIn, Facebook, if you're on Twitter, it's bombardment of digital awareness that if you delved into any of those, you know, you might not come up again. But that doesn't really add value when you think about it. So what is important?

**Helga Svendsen 24:20**

Yeah, focus on what's important. Fantastic. Thank you, Julie. It's been so fabulous having you on the podcast today, imparting incredible words of wisdom that I know the community will find a value. So thank you so much for joining me today here at take on board.

**Julie Green 24:35**

It's been a pleasure.