

Take on Board

Transcript – Carly Jordan



Helga Svendsen 0:00

Today on the take on Board podcast, I'm speaking with Carly Jordan about stepping onto her first board. First, let me tell you about Carly. In September 2021, Carly joined the board of Southwest Community Foundation, a philanthropic trust created by the people of Southwest Victoria funded by donations from the region with the goal to provide small but vital grants to community organisations across the region. She is the co founder and project manager of City2Country an innovative project assisting migrants and refugees to relocate from the cities to southwest Victoria and to build resilient, diversified and sustainable intercultural communities. Carly's vast life experiences, including working in international aid and development, and working in a remote village in Cambodia brings a global perspective to her local region. Her experience has affirmed her innate respect for people of all cultures, and shaped her as a leader who is passionate and driven to assist migrants and refugees create meaningful lives in regional communities. Carly is bringing her passion for building cultural diversity to her role, managing the healthy engaged communities team at Warrnambool city council. And she also hosts her own podcast Me, Mark and a Migrant. It's always awesome to have another podcast or on the program and I've listened to it and it is awesome. Carly has also been recognised for her achievements as the Sally Isaak Memorial Scholarship Award in 2021, inspiring women of Moyne award in 2020, and state finalist in the Victorian agricultures Rural Women's Award in 2019. For her contribution to building and supporting culturally diverse regional communities. Welcome to the take on board podcast, Carly.

Carly Jordan 1:45

Thank you. Helga, it's an absolute pleasure to be here today.

Helga Svendsen 1:49

Carly, before we talk about stepping onto your first board. As always, let's dig a little bit deeper about you. So can you tell me about young Carly, and when maybe you got your first inkling that you had ended up supporting multicultural and diverse communities or when you thought you might end up in the boardroom?

Carly Jordan 2:08

Sure. And so I grew up in Mildura, in northwest Victoria with a single mum, she was very involved in her community driven, she was working in a regional management role. So growing up, I was really

inspired by her. She was often in meetings as the only woman around the table, who really built that confidence in myself that you can really put your mind to what you want to and achieve as much as you can. So I was really inspired by my mum growing up, she was really involved in basketball on school boards, and Rotary. And Rotary led us to hosting 10 international exchange students during my childhood. So our house was always full of different languages, foods and learning about different cultures. So inevitably, I went on Rotary Youth Exchange when I was 17, to South Africa for a year, and then spent five years abroad in my 20's. So I certainly have that international experience. And then when I settled down back in Australia, I met a dairy farmer from Southwest Victoria, and moved to the regions and sort of had to find my niche of what sort of the skills my global experience that I could bring to the region. And that was yes, certainly when I when I created City2Country, which assists migrants to move to the region's I saw an opportunity to build the cultural diversity in the regions, increase the population and build economies of our regional towns. But I'd say it was doing the leadership Great South Coast Regional Community Leadership program that really gave me the confidence and set me up to taking the first step to be on my first board.

Helga Svendsen 3:47

I'm so glad you mentioned the Leadership Great South Coast program. So Carly is an alumni of the Leadership Great South Coast program. I'm gonna get you to tell us what that is in a moment. And I got to meet Callie last week, because this year 2022. I am the lead facilitator for the opening retreat, the media retreat and the closing retreat. So it's fabulous that I get to connect with some of the alumni in this way as well as this is program so yeah, tell us what the Leadership Great South Coast program is.

Carly Jordan 4:15

Sure, absolutely. Leadership Great South Coast. Certainly very lucky to have you here this year. I'm certainly jealous that we didn't have you but we did have the fabulous Corinne Armour who I know you know very well. Leadership Great South Coast program is an incredible program supporting emerging leaders across the Great South Coast region. It's part of a wider network across Australia. But it's a fantastic program to learn about the opportunities and challenges of the region. I think it crosses professional as well as personal levels of developing yourself as a leader, but I actually started the city to country as a Leadership Great South Coast alumni project. So while the program itself certainly set me up, to build my confidence, as well as my leadership capabilities, the program itself supported me to get that project off the ground, and initially started from our cultural program day, where a group of us decided that we're really committed to supporting refugees and migrants and to build that cultural diversity in the regions

Helga Svendsen 5:16

That is fabulous to hear. And in fact, for others that are listening, thinking about those community leadership programs, and how they also might help you to think more broadly about projects

generally, and or about boardroom opportunities, there's probably opportunities there as well. So there are community leadership programs all over Australia, and probably all over the world. So have a look in your local region, wherever you happen to be. I want to pick up on something that's also completely unrelated to board things, but I love hearing these stories. So you flippantly said in there, you know, got back from traveling. And I met a dairy farmer and then moved to the Great South Coast. It's like, Okay, talk us through how did you meet your now husband? I love how did you meet stories? So how did you meet your husband? Love it?

Carly Jordan 5:59

Good question. So we met in Melbourne through a friend and a mutual friend. Yeah, he was from the region. So they went to school together. So that was great. And yeah, certainly being from a regional area myself, it wasn't a hard move to move from the city, to the southwest region. But it was just about how I was going to change my ex was working in international development at that point. So I was working for WaterAid, Australia. And then to go from working from this fantastic international organisation, I was so passionate about to then move to the regions and go, What am I going to do? That was when I moved into local government. So it's been a really nice progression as well, because that's what I'm doing now as well in my day job. So I moved into tourism and events, and then move to another show where I was managing a team in tourism and events. And now working back into community development, which is what I'd studied as well. So and I love the southwest region. That's just such a fantastic area. Amazing, beautiful part of the world. So really happy to be here. So I will say it's really difficult for me to get back to Mildura as well and struggle with those 40 degree days.

Helga Svendsen 7:11

Yeah, it is, yeah, probably a slightly more amenable climate down on the great Southwest. All right, awesome. I've got lots of background on you there. That is fantastic. But let's talk about boardroom stuff. So you have recently joined your first board. Just talk us through how that happened. What motivated you what how did you find it? Talk us through how you've ended up in the boardroom of this organisation.

Carly Jordan 7:34

So I've always thought that I would end up on a board and sort of just about making it happen and finding that first opportunity involved with the local football netball club, as happens in the region's I was on my daughter's kindergarten committee. So I started, I guess, getting a little bit of an experience of of that strategic approach that happens on that board level, but also city to country as well, the conversations that we're having were really strategic about where we were moving the project into the regions and thinking in terms of strategically thinking about applying for funding our budgets, working closely with stakeholders, and what locations, what local government areas we're going to move into. So I was having all these really big decisions as part of that project anyway, while

also undertaking the operational work on the ground. So in terms of applying for my first board, I've been considering it for I want to say two years, probably no actually, I want to say since doing the Leadership, Great South Coast program, that it was about when I was going to find that right opportunity that was going to suit.

Helga Svendsen 8:44

And I love hearing that that you look for the right opportunity that suits your needs. So two things on that, I'd love to hear how it was you landed on what sort of organisation you wanted to make a contribution to and what your thinking processes were there. Because I think I think it's really important for people to think about what sort of organisation they want to join, what sector, you know, what sort of board what stage of development, they're at whatever it may be, and to have a clearer picture about that. And also to have a clearer picture about what contribution they're going to make in the boardroom what their value proposition is. So I'd love to hear your thinking about both sides of that equation.

Carly Jordan 9:21

Sure. So for me, I want to say it was actually a reasonably easy decision to make when I considered hopping onto the Southwest Community Foundation, as I'm really passionate about grant writing. So across my career in international development, as well as community development, I've applied for grants as well as being on the other side and deciding community grants. So working in local government, I was part of the team that were deciding community grants for organisations in the community. And then across my career, I've raised over \$1 million for the organisations that I've worked with. So And I love writing grant applications and writing reports it's on, I want to say I'm a bit of a grant nerd. So when I looked at this board, it just made sense. And for me stepping on my first board, I really feel confident in the board and taking this on, because it's an area that I'm really passionate about and feel that I've got knowledge, being recipient of a grant for someone who's applying for a grant as well as on the other side as well, from an organisation's perspective. So I feel like, I've got a lot to give from that end. And then, because I've got that confidence, I feel like I can learn a lot more from the board itself, about being on a board. In my interview, they talked about what committees to go on. And they said, you're naturally we would be suggesting you for the granting committee. So that's who decides on the grants? And I said, Yes, that would be fantastic. But down the track, perhaps in 12 months, I'd love to consider being on one of the other committees, so that I can learn as well. And they said, Yes, that's fantastic to hear, we're certainly keen to, to grow our board members. So that was, that was lovely, I'm looking forward to that experience, too.

Helga Svendsen 11:13

Fantastic. You've got that right balance of what you can give to the board, and also what you're going to learn from it, which is fabulous. So you talked about the interview there. Can you talk us

through the process for those that might be going for their first board? How did you see it advertised? How did you apply for it? Do you have a board resume, tell us about the interview, tell us just about the nuts and bolts there?

Carly Jordan 11:33

Sure, I saw the role advertised, I want to say it was on social media. Um, so I follow the board on Facebook. So I saw that they were advertising. And then one of the current board members did reach out to me, so a bit of a reputation in the region. So that was lovely. And I guess that I think that tap on the shoulder really put me over the edge to make sure I put in my application. And so I put in my AI and then had an interview with the chair and the executive officer. We went through that process. And I think I found out that afternoon that I had been successful. So that was fantastic.

Helga Svendsen 12:14

Fantastic. Okay. And for that interview, in what ways was it similar or different to interviews that you might be doing for a job?

Carly Jordan 12:23

I think for me, and I want to say I've been in a lot of job interviews as well, having been overseas and had a quite a varied career. I think the difference is that conversation about you as a person and what you can bring, because I think they're looking for my understanding through that process is that they're really looking for someone that's going to fit into the culture of the board and knowing the other people there on the board. Whereas a job interview for operational role is more around the skills that you've got and the experiences and making sure that you can do the day to day. So I certainly noticed that difference in that interview.

Helga Svendsen 13:03

Okay, so were you definitely in on it, as soon as they said, We want you on the board? or was there some additional due diligence you wanted to do?

Carly Jordan 13:10

I think I was right. By that stage, I'd spoken to the executive officer before the interview as well. So from her, I got a bit more insight into the board. And there are undergoing quite a bit of change at this stage. So which is probably also a really great time for me to step on the board because there was four others that are starting at the same time. And it means there's real change in the board itself. So there's there were a couple of board members who had been on there for many, many

years. So their time was up. So it's quite nice to be new stepping on the board, as well as some others as well.

Helga Svendsen 13:48

Great. I would love to ask you about that now then about the induction and what happened then. And it's interesting. You say a group came on together. I know that at least one other board that I know where they will only recruit people in groups of three, I think it is for this exact reason. So you've got a number of new people. So yeah, tell me what happened next in terms of your induction.

Carly Jordan 14:08

I don't think there was that much happened after that. Actually, to be honest. I think that was it. And then we had our first and that's no it was the AGM so attend to the AGM. Obviously those outgoing members so they spoke about their contribution. And then during the AGM, the newbies, we it was online, because it was last year and COVID restrictions. So we all went into our our own breakout room while the board accepted us onto the board basically. So that was really nice to be in a breakout room and we did our introductions and got to know each other as well. So that was quite lovely. And then we attended our first meeting at the end of last year.

Helga Svendsen 14:51

Fantastic. Okay, that is Yeah, it's nice having those others around you in that process. You say you've been to two board meetings in that time,

Carly Jordan 15:00

I've had one board meeting and one committee meeting.

Helga Svendsen 15:05

How are you settling in? How are you finding it?

Carly Jordan 15:07

Look, first board meeting, I was able to contribute. And I went home. And I said, I said some things. Yay. So happy days. But again, I knowing the content of grants. And that whole process just built my confidence, when we're talking earlier about making that decision. So for my first board, I can

remember looking at board opportunities, and thinking I don't have enough to give. But on that first board meeting, I just went, I've got the confidence. It's that imposter syndrome that I have heard you speak about many times on this podcast, hell yeah. But comparing how I felt on that first board meeting, to me looking at any other board previously, I just had got rid of that imposter syndrome that I knew I may have felt on any other board, obviously proven myself as a leader through all these other exciting things I've been doing in community. But being able to step on this board and knowing the content, I just really felt confident that I was in the right place.

Helga Svendsen 16:13

Fantastic. So you get to, I don't know, build your governance wisdom with a technical area that you already know. Yeah, fantastic.

Carly Jordan 16:23

And the granting committee was the same as that was, we were reviewing the grant guidelines and the grant applications. So it was it was great to be able to contribute.

Helga Svendsen 16:33

Weell, then I'm interested in the flip side of that, in a way, because sometimes knowing the content area, the technical side of things, you know, we know boards are about noses in fingers out. And sometimes the more you know about the content area, whatever that organisation might be, it makes it a little bit harder to keep your fingers out. So can you talk me through your thinking, your thinking on how you will stay in that governance space, rather than how you keeping your nose in but your fingers out?

Carly Jordan 17:01

Yeah, I think it's probably that I'm where I need to be right now. And that on wanting to get out of this is Board experience, and to build my governance knowledge. So as I said before, I'm hoping to get onto another committee. So when Finance Committee are going through their report, I'm all ears because I'm thinking this is an area that I can learn more in. So I think it's probably me at that right point. And it's probably a good balance of those things we're talking about is what I can give them what I can take out of it.

Helga Svendsen 17:38

So just reminding myself about that, or music to my ears, hearing that stuff. And even before, when you were talking about the reason you wanted to get on a board was because you had already

started thinking about in that strategic space in that kind of governance space, you started thinking about the bigger picture stuff, rather than inverted commas, just the doing not that the doing is not important. But you had already started on that thinking journey. So it makes perfect sense in that way. What about the other newbies on the board? How are they going?

Carly Jordan 18:06

Good. One of them is actually on my subcommittee. So that's nice. And I'm gonna say the others have come with quite a level of experience. So yeah, I think, you know, we've had one board meeting and everyone contributed. So yeah, I think everyone's going well, everyone's Yeah, this after the first meeting was really good. It was actually great, because because we had so many new members, they put on some light refreshments for us to have afterwards. So it's a great opportunity to get to know other members. And speaking to some of the old board members, they hadn't done that before. So it was a great opportunity to get to know people.

Helga Svendsen 18:43

Fantastic. It's interesting, I think, hearing that, you know, induction processes, whatever they may be, whether it's just getting to know people better or whatever, it's often useful for the rest of the board. Sometimes some boards will do, they might say, Oh, we're going to take the new board members through the finances. I always, even as a board member that's been around for a while always love to sit on those things, because you just learn more each time. And also some boards do a buddy system. As the buddy for new board members, I always learn more as well from the questions that they asked and having to explain things that so it's super valuable for everyone. I think I'm wondering as well, you've done so much work around diversity and inclusion and intercultural communities. I'm wondering if there's any learning that you've got from that, which is transferable, I guess, to the boardroom and what you're learning is from Yeah, from that work that might be helpful in thinking about how boards operate as well.

Carly Jordan 19:39

Absolutely. I would, I think being in a regional community as well, where traditionally we don't have high numbers of cultural diverse communities. That's certainly the case in southwest Victoria. So I think often some boards probably don't put cultural diversity as a priority in terms of the work They're doing operationally but as well as at the board. So I think I certainly bring that element to the table, I can see myself playing a role in supporting other people from diverse backgrounds to have a voice and to be involved in boards or committees, I've certainly already been fortunate to have been able to do that, because I'm starting to build up my network of people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and often in small regional communities, it's who you know. So I'm certainly always trying to bring them along, and to get them involved as well. Because the, the research is certainly there about the benefits that people from culturally diverse backgrounds bring to a board. So and it's amazing, you know, you spend time with people from diverse backgrounds, and you can

tell the conversation will change, they pick up on things that people similar to you may not, and I said workplace, but I'd also love to see that on the board.

Helga Svendsen 20:56

Absolutely. No document out of me wait around here and take a bulk humidity knows, you know that all of the research, as you say, says that diversity in group decision making, which is essentially all aboard is is vital. Great to hear. And I think having somebody championing that at the board level also helps for different ways to happen, which is fantastic. Oh, Callie, this is a wealth of knowledge. And I can't remember when we first emailed about this, it was about something else entirely, wasn't it? I think it was

Carly Jordan 21:27

Lleadership, great. South Coast alumni was connected.

Helga Svendsen 21:32

Yeah that's right. And then, and you said, Oh, by the way, I've just joined my first board. And I'm like, Oh, well, you should come on the podcast. And you're like, oh, not yet. Let me you know, learn more about it. I'm like, no, these initial reflections about joining a board and contributing in the boardroom and how it all happens are incredibly valuable. So it's really useful for other people who are in the same boat, while same boat as you six months ago, to hear your thinking around this and how you approached it, and what it's like to be new in the boardroom.

Carly Jordan 22:03

And I have certainly been listening to all of your podcast Hellyar. And that has been a really great way of providing me some insights, and preparing me to hop onto my first board. So I'd love the opportunity that I can give is to hopefully inspire someone else who's been thinking about stepping on their first board. And my advice is certainly just to go for it. And so I probably have a bit of a thank you to you as well. For all the advice that I've been provided over the last six months, so I'm all

Helga Svendsen 22:35

Oh, that is fantastic to hear. And you know, it's exactly what it's designed to do, to share stories, basically, of boards, getting in the boardroom being in the boardroom, all of those issues. So that's fantastic to hear. Thank you. So what are the main points you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today,

Carly Jordan 22:51

I would say to anyone listening who is considering stepping on their first board, to just go for it, that's certainly been my experience. And the benefit if you do have some knowledge, some passion or insights into the board that you're looking at, but I also look back on myself and and I was talking about the imposter syndrome, I was considering as applying for other boards, that actually I was probably ready at the time to do that. So I really want people to be confident and don't second guess themselves, because I should have applied for those boards previously. However, being on this board now my confidence is exactly where it needs to be to make me feel that I'm contributing appropriately. And yes, certainly looking forward to where this will take me as well.

Helga Svendsen 23:46

Fantastic. So, folks, there you go, go for it. Go for it on your first board and then build from there. Other than the take on board podcast, is there a resource you would like to share with the take on board community?

Carly Jordan 23:59

Yeah, absolutely. There was true that I thought of the first is "Legacy" by James Kerr , which is a story about the All Blacks rugby team, one of the most successful sporting teams. And it's a fantastic book about creating high performing teams with a really strong emphasis on building a strong team culture, creating unity and building effective leadership. But for me in the workplace, as well as now on my board, I think the most important thing is building that team culture that's really important to me. And this book certainly gave me some really strong insights on how to do that. Well. The other one, which I'm not sure if this has been mentioned on your podcast before Helga, which is the app Blinkist which has been a life changing app for myself as it takes the concepts of books and narrows them down to a 10 minute read or podcast. So being able to read a book very quickly, is fantastic. So I've read so many books over the past last 12 months in a very quick time, so yeah, really recommend that one's called Blinkist.

Helga Svendsen 25:05

Oh my God, that sounds amazing how to read lots for busy people. That is fantastic. Oh, Kelly, thank you so much for taking the call really literally like your Oh no, I'll do it later. No, let's do it now. So thank you so much for stepping into it and sharing what you've learned as a new board member going through the process and being on the board so valuable to people in the take on board community. So thank you so much for taking the time to share with us today.

Carly Jordan 25:35

Thank you. Helga, it's been an absolute pleasure. Thank you very much.