Take on Board Podcast – Episode 366

Transcript – Take on Board x Flourish After Fifty: Is a board role really for you? I answer all your questions

Hello, and welcome to Flourish After 50, a podcast that supports women navigating change to create a life that feels true, more intentional, and more their own. I'm Sue West, coach and facilitator of small group programs, and today we're talking about something that many women start thinking about in the second half of their careers: serving on a board.

Maybe you've imagined this as a natural next step, a way of contributing your experience to something that matters to you, or even maybe a more flexible paid role. In this episode, we're going to unpack what board work is really like, the opportunities, the hard truths, and how to decide if it's actually for you with someone who spends her days helping women into governance roles, Helga Svendsen.

Helga is a governance expert and the founder of Take On Board, where she supports current and aspiring board members to find, secure, and thrive in board roles. She's a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, serves on multiple boards, and brings deep experience in strategy, governance, and leadership.

She also has her own podcast, Take On Board, where you're going to find this episode as well. Heljä, welcome. Oh, thank you, Sue. It is so glorious to be here. We've talked about this for a while, so it's so great to get it happening. And, um, so fun, slightly nerve-wracking, to be on the other side of the microphone answering-rather than asking the questions. So thank you so much for having me here. Oh, you're very welcome. And so for those who don't know you, who is Helja, and what drew you into the world of governance and boards in the first place? Who is Helja? Who- Yeah. The big question. My gosh, how many layers can I go into there?

I mean, partly Helja's a governance geek, uh, as you've talked about, and I think being a governance geek can be fun. Sometimes people go, "Ugh, governance." Although maybe I just don't s- talk to those people. But, uh, I'm a bit of a governance geek. Uh, I, uh, love bringing people together and building communities and just bringing, uh, particularly women together to share, learn, and support each other and be a bit of a cheer squad to each other.

Um, I'm sometimes a gardener. I am a cat mom to our gorgeous cat, Mungo, who may or may not visit us during this recording. Uh, I'm a hiker. Lots of things. Yes. Lots of layers to Helja Svensson. And what was it that first got you interested in governance? Oh. You know, it's so interesting, Sue. I often ask this question of other people, and now you're asking it of me, and as I say, "Oh, what's my answer?"

So again, I think there's layers. If I really think about it, I think the first governance role that I had was in school. I was the student rep on the school council. Um, so kind of went to school council meetings as a, I don't even know, 14-year-old, 15-year-old, something along those lines. Uh, and I loved being part of the conversations that made a difference to the everyday lives of us as students, to the teachers, to the community around where I grew up.

So that was probably my first board. Uh, I didn't hold director's duties 'cause I wasn't old enough to hold director's duties and would not have had a clue what director's duties were even about. Uh, but that's probably my first board role. Um- Then I was also involved in a board through one of the jobs that I held.

So I was a, you know, representative on the Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Board. There's a mouthful. Uh- ... that was through my job. And again, uh, I ended up, I think, I was e- on the executive group or deputy chair, I'm not quite sure, but I was quite involved in that, and again, just loved having that input.

One of the things that we did whilst I was on that board was engage a new CEO, and having that opportunity to choose the leadership of the organization, which is a key role for boards, and being really closely associated with that was just fantastic, and shall we say, taking that organization through a bit of a change process.

Um, so I think then my first kind of non-executive independent role was with the YWCA in Victoria. So I had been working at that stage, um, I'd been working in the union movement for some time. S- some of the coverage of our union was in the community sector, and I was leaving the union to work in government, and I knew I wanted to maintain a connection to the community sector.

So I thought, "Oh, why don't I just go and join a board?" Uh, so I started looking around, saw the YWCA role advertised, um, and then was very fortunate to be appointed to that board. That experience was, I think, probably the transformational governance experience for me. Partly there was excellent governance structures, so I learnt a lot about governance.

There was, um, a couple of different chairs, but all of them whom were excellent, uh, in kinda supporting the board and building the board to have really tough conversations. Uh, I'm still in touch. In fact, just yesterday I was organizing for the Y Women, uh, so women who have been board directors of the Y to catch up.

We catch up every now and again, not just those that I was on the board with, but others. So again, that experience was just... I learnt a lot about governance. I formed strong relationships through the governance, and then I became a little bit known in my own network as the person to talk to about board roles.

So people would come to me and say, "Oh, could you have a coffee with Mary? She wants to talk about getting on a board," or, "Have a coffee with Samantha," or whatever it may be. And then when I started working for myself, I thought, "Why would I just have all these individual coffees? What if I brought these women together into a bit of a community?

Let's see if I can run a program." So I kinda put together this program and thought, "If people sign up to it, then I'll do it, and if they don't sign up to it, we'll never speak of it again." People did sign up. That was probably 12 years ago now, the first Board Kickstarter. And so then it gave me an opportunity to share what I knew about getting on boards and governance and create a bit of a community about it.

And like I say, I love that community sharing of experiences, sharing of challenges, sharing of shout-outs and celebrations, and the support that comes from bringing a group of women together, basically. Mm. So yeah, I think it was the YWCA that was that real transformational experience for me, both in that experience in the boardroom, but also how I then got to use that experience to support other women.

So let's map the landscape a little bit for people who might not be as familiar with what we're talking about. When you talk about governance and you w- use the word governance, what are you referring to there? So governance, gosh, I should have a, a, um, quick definition for this, which I don't, so I'm just going to give you my definition of it.

Mm. Great. Governance is the oversight of an organization. It's not in the organization doing the work. If the organization's large enough, there are staff that do that. But it's the almost the checks and balances, I guess, and that independent view. So the board might come together once a month, once every couple of months, whatever it may be.

The executive team and the CEO report to the board what they're doing strategically, what's happening around risk, what's happening around compliance, what's happening around culture in the organization, what's happening around, I don't know, key stakeholder en- um, engagements and- The board is there to ensure compliance is done, absolutely, to ensure that the organization is financial, uh, and not operating beyond its means.

And it's there, I would say, to almost coach the executive t- team to ask the smart questions, to advance thinking in a way that sometimes can only happen when people are not in the day-to-day. You know, the executive team are there all day, every day. Everybody knows exactly what's going on. Sometimes the heavy, inverted commas, stupid questions that the board asks is the thing that might make them go, "Oh, interesting.

Maybe that will take us down this path," which is helpful and constructive. So yeah, the, the board sets the strategic direction, has oversight of the finances, has oversight of compliance and risk, and hopefully the real value add is hopefully helps the executive team and helps the organization think better.

Mm. And w- what motivates people to go on boards, do you think? Um, sometimes it's about being able to have that big picture view, the helicopter view, or even- Mm-hmm ... only because I hiked the Larapinta recently. Sometimes it's bigger than the helicopter view, and sometimes it's the starry night view, like really getting above the day-to-day and seeing what patterns and so on might emerge.

So sometimes people just love that big picture thinking. I certainly do. Yeah, sometimes you get an insight into an organization or an industry that is not your day-to-day. Well, that's certainly how I've used it. So I said before I joined the YWCA because I wanted to continue that connection to the community sector.

My day-to-day work at the time was in the Victorian government working in sustainability. At the same time, I was on the board of a women's organization that provided housing, ran a hotel in the middle of Melbourne. Mm. Like, I got to have this insight into a whole range- Mm-hmm ... of different things, which was fabulous.

Mm-hmm. Uh, likewise, I've joined the board of a health service previously. That's not my background. But it gives you that insight into a n- range of different organizations where you can bring your governance skills into different places. So I love that, for me anyway, that you get to learn about different things, and that often is what attracts people.

Um, I think the other thing that often attracts people as well is that it gives you that strategic oversight and experience of Being on a board can be very helpful when you are working to a board. So I, I often advise people who are working at executive level or want to work at executive level, that being on a board can really help them understand what it's like to just, you know, swan into an organization once a month and not be across everything.

So it can give you a really good understanding. I wouldn't do it just for that purpose. Mm. Uh, but I think it is a helpful, you know, side effect of it, I guess. Mm. Um, and of course, sometimes people join paid boards, so it can also be an income stream for people- Mm ... to build that kind of professional, uh, portfolio, as we talked about before.

So it can also be part of that. So yeah, there's a range of reasons that, that people might want to join a boardroom. Mm. I really like that, that second last one, and that's certainly been my experience having been on a board when I'm working with women who are ... And it's around, um, career change or career coaching, and they're talking about, um, meeting with the board, you know, in the recruitment process.

And I just know that I've, from having been on the recruiting side on, as a chair of a board- Absolutely ... it's just given me all this insight that I'm able to offer to, um, clients- Absolutely ... in the process. And, uh- I- Yes, I, I absolutely agree with you about that. Mm. I mean, I know for my first CEO role, I could say to that panel, um, like it was my first CEO role.

I'd never been a CEO, so I couldn't say to them, "Oh, I've got all this CEO experience and I know exactly how that works." Mm. I couldn't say that. I could say, "I think I'll work it out." Uh, but I could say to them, because you're being interviewed by the board, I could say to them, "I know what it's like to be on your side of the table.

I know what it's like to get board reports that are helpful, and I know what it's like to get board reports that are not helpful." Mm. Mm-hmm. Uh, I know what it's like to have interactions with your CEO that are constructive and positive and open, and what it's like to have them when they're not. Mm-hmm. So whilst I'd never been a CEO before, I'd definitely been on their side of the table in terms of board work, and that gave me an excellent insight to being a CEO and working with the board and keeping that close relationship.

Mm. Really important, isn't it? So the, the last, um, reason that you offered was around portfolio career and paid roles. Certainly the nine years that I spent most recently on a board was unpaid. Um, but I, but I do know that there are paid positions. And some women- Yeah ... think about this as kind of their late career change.

It's replacing paid employment with board work. How realistic is that? Um, sometimes realistic, but not always. So- Mm ... you know, I think sometimes, uh- Sometimes people are sold the dream, I guess, of work, do your working life, and then go off and pick up a couple of board roles. You know, they'll pay handsomely, and you can swan around the golf course for the rest of the time and just turn up to board meetings every now and again.

I mean, I'm over-exaggerating, but you get the drift. Hmm. Uh, I, I, I'm not sure. I think that is possibly board work of years gone by, and I don't think it's the case that it is now. I mean, if you think about, this maths is not exactly right, but if you think about, um, often there is work done about the ASX 200 and how many women are on boards there, about 30%, 40%.

So even if you go to the ASX 500, so let's assume we're looking at the top 500 companies on the, um, stock market. Let's assume they all have board, uh, board sizes of 10 people, which they don't. They're mostly smaller, but it makes the maths easy. That's 5,000 people. If we imagine half of them are women, which they're not, but again, it makes the maths easy.

That's 2,500. If we imagine that they are all different women, not the same women holding different roles, that's 2,500 roles. Hmm. And number 499 and 500 and even less than that aren't paying very much anyway. Now, ASX-listed companies are not the only sorts of paid boards. There's government boards. There are privately held companies.

There is a whole range of others, so I know that the maths on that doesn't perfectly work out. But if you're at school talking to your careers counselor and saying, "I would like to get a job where there's 2,500 roles around Australia for women like me," they would probably say, "Hmm, that's not very many.

You might want to think about something else." Hmm. The, the other thing is that these days it is more competitive than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago. I think that's a great thing. There are more women looking for board roles. There are more people of colour. There are more people of, with a disability.

There are more culturally diverse people. There is a whole range of diverse people that are looking for board roles that are incredibly talented. That is great for the boardroom And it makes it more competitive. So, you know, can people wander off and get a couple of board roles and be self-sufficient?

Absolutely. It is possible, but it's not easy, and it requires a lot of work to get there. And often what I recommend to people is if you're going to do that in terms of your portfolio, you might also want to keep a little bit of consulting on the side or something along those lines to make it all work. Mm.

Having said that, I had exactly this conversation with a woman client a few years ago, and that's what I recommended to her. She rang me about six months later and said, "Oh, I've developed this board portfolio and it's all very self-sufficient." So it is possible. It is, I just think, a bit trickier than, um, than is sometimes, than sometimes people are led to believe.

So for someone who's thinking that, uh, or wondering whether being on a board is the right thing for me- Mm-hmm ... are there key attributes that, uh, would make competitive in the sort of environment that you've just described? So most boards will have what's called a skills matrix, and a skills matrix will describe all of the skills that are required for that boardroom.

And it will be a mix of, I don't know why I say I don't really like this terminology, hard skills, hard skills and soft skills, but I haven't come up with anything better, so I will use it. So it will be a mixture of hard skills, your technical skills, and the things that you will often see there, I think finance, uh, sometimes legal and regulatory, sometimes technology.

It might be people and culture. It might be subject matter expertise in that particular industry. Um, those are the sorts of things that you would expect for technical skills, marketing and comms, anything. Basically any job that you can do might end up on that, that list. And the heavy inverted commas, soft skills, curiosity, courage, uh, ethics, those are the sorts of things that make an excellent board member.

So in my view, you will be-- if you're applying for board roles, try and find out exactly what skills they are looking for. It's not always clear. If it's not clear, ask the organization. Uh, and then those technical skills are likely the ones that will get you the interview. Those soft skills are the ones that will get you the role and make sure you're an effective board member.

So you need both. You need both of those things. Mm-hmm. Yeah. And so for someone who's, is thinking about going down this path, so they're assessing themselves against those sorts of opportunities, but also wondering if it's, if, if it's going to be right for them. Are there some hard truths about being on boards that she should know?

It's hard work. Uh, it's a lot of hard work. My rule of thumb for board roles is that it's probably 10 to 15 hours a month for most board roles, and the vast majority of them in Australia are unpaid. So often you're doing 10 to 15 hours a month. That's two days. It's half a day a week just to break it down, unpaid.

Um, that's one of the hard truths, and often, not always, but often having some of that strong governance experience in an unpaid board role will help you set, set yourself up for paid board roles. You know, my first ro- well, depending on how you count it, as I said before, my first board role was the YWCA.

That was unpaid. I was on that board for I think seven or eight years. Now, I didn't join that board so I could get board roles. I joined it because that organization was awesome, and I wanted to make a contribution. However, when I was later looking for paid board roles, that experience was key for me in then being able to pick up paid board roles.

And You know, to, to really apply the experience that I had. So yeah, part of it is building that experience. It might be about joining a board, and I would say you join the board of an organization that you really care about, a cause that you care about. And that doesn't matter if it's the YWCA, if it's, I don't know, the local sustainability organization, or whether it's ANZ Bank.

It doesn't matter. Whatever it is, you need to care about it because you will be spending a lot of time, uh, reading papers, immersing yourself in their work. So you really need to care about it and get those other things like building your experience and sometimes getting paid for it. I will-- Just coming back to the pay, the other thing I would say is even for some of those board roles that are paid doesn't really cover all of the time- Mm

uh, for what you do in it as well. So sometimes they are paid, but perhaps not handsomely. Mm. There is definitely some handsomely paid boards out there, but not all of them are. Yeah. Yep, yep. And it's really helpful to know and understand that if you're, if for, for women who are thinking about, about this and thinking in really realistic ways about what the opportunities are.

Where can women find out about boards? Like if you were, you know, thinking that you're passionate about something and you want to be on a board, how, how do people find out about the board positions? So board roles, um, possibly more so than inverted commas normal jobs, uh, some are advertised, absolutely. So some will be advertised depending on what sort of board role you're looking for.

I'm based in Victoria. The Victorian government, for example, advertises all of their roles on boards.vic.gov.au. Uh, other board roles for not-for-profit organizations might be advertised on Ethical Jobs or the Institute of Community Directors Australia or Pro Bono Australia or Philanthropy Australia, some of those websites.

Paid board roles might be advertised, uh, and might be advertised either on that organization's own website or via LinkedIn or via recruiters, but sometimes they're not advertised, and in fact, the vast majority are not advertised. I think that's a real miss, to be honest. I think just re- for boards and organizations that are just relying on their networks or just relying on recruiters, I think you will just...

How do you get a broad, diverse mix of candidates if you're not going to tell the world that you are, have a role available? So I think that's a miss, but it is the reality that the vast majority are not advertised. So- Partly it's, yeah, keeping an eye on what is advertised, and partly it is endless cups of tea with people that are in the boardroom and just keeping your ear to the ground about what is actually available out there.

Mm. Uh, and that's, again, if you're thinking about a board role, for most people you can't just snap your fingers and end up in a board role. It is a long game of building the networks, building your skills, building your experience, uh, and, you know, building that value for the boardroom that, and that, that you are then finding out about board roles or the Holy Grail being approached about board roles.

Mm. So in thinking about which board, what sort of- Mm ... due diligence can- Ooh ... someone do to figure- Oh ... figure it out if it's the right one for them? So firstly, do your due diligence. Do not just go, "Oh, I've been offered a role with organization X and oh, they seem awesome and I'm just going to get in there and do it."

Mm. Do your due diligence. And part of that will actually be preparation to apply for the role 'cause they will expect you to ask some smart questions at the interview, and you can't ask smart questions at the interview unless you know a little bit about the organization. So, you know, look at their website, look at their financials, their annual reports from the last couple of years, anything else they might have publicly available.

Um, and there's various places you can often get those reports, mostly from the regulator of whatever industry it is. So look at all of that sort of stuff. Look at who's on their board. See if you know anybody. See if anybody you know knows anybody. See if you can get some introductions. Talk to people that might be on, um, boards of similar organizations and see what insight you can get about the industry.

So you want to look at the organization itself. Um, you want to look at the industry as well, and I'd say you want to look at the board of that organization and just see what you can glean from that. So yeah, just look at all of the information. Ask the... If, if you... Look, if you're just putting in an application, it's probably a bit over the top to say, "Hey, I'm applying for this role.

Could you send me your, you know, risk appetite statement or risk framework?" Um- But if some of the key documents like the strategy, you would definitely want to look at the strategy. If it's not available publicly, you should definitely ask for that even before you apply 'cause you want to make sure you are aligned in strategy.

Mm. Before you go to... If you're invited to interview, you might ask for some additional information if you're not able to find it. And before you're appointed, you might even ask for additional information as well. And there's other things you can do. Um, you know, I would, I would want to meet the chair of any board before I chose to take a role, preferably an informal cuppa.

Uh, sometimes I've heard of people who have asked to observe a board meeting prior to taking on a role, and in fact, there's one that I'm thinking of that asked to observe a board meeting, and she then Suddenly became unavailable for the role, unfortunately. So she decided not to pursue that role. Um, so- So that due diligence paid off.

Absolutely. Absolutely it paid off. You know- Which really makes sense that you're investing in this as a, an inquiry process to say, "Is it right for me?" Because it's going to be taking up not just time every week or every month, but over years. So, uh, you said you were on a board for seven years. I've been on a board for nine years.

Yeah. The- these are long-term commitments. That's right. It's a long-term relationship. Yeah. You don't want to just go on a first date and all of a sudden go off and get married. You want to go through the process, uh, and learn more and find out more. So sometimes people will join a committee of a board before joining the organization, which can be a little way of try before you buy.

And just know that it's, it's a two-way process. Yes, they are absolutely interviewing you and sizing you up and seeing how you are going to fit in the boardroom, but you are also sizing them up and assessing what contribution you can make in that organization and whether, as you say, you want to give your time and thinking space and, you know, energy to this organization.

Um, y- you've got to be a bit in love with it. Yeah. If you're not a bit in love with the organization and what they do and how they do it, you're not going to be able to make a success of it. You've got to love it. Mm-hmm. Yeah. To... Otherwise, it's hard slog, I would imagine. You, you talked before about the type of perspective that boards or the role that boards have within an organization, and for someone who's got leadership or executive experience, is there a mindset shift they need to bring- Oh, yes to being on a board? Oh, yes, there is. Um, so again, being on a board means you don't know all the ins and outs of everything. Uh, you're not down in the detail. You're either the helicopter view or perhaps the starry night view. You are really getting above the day-to-day. That means in the boardroom you are not going to know all the detail, and when you start on a board, you might want more detail.

You might want to know a bit more about what's going on, but you need to get up at that strategic level view. And I get... It's back to those curious questions with the executive team. It's not about a gotcha moment. It's about curious questions that help the leadership team think. One of the things that I think would be really helpful for people who are on leadership teams reporting to a board than in this, on the other hand, being on a board- Testing yourself.

Is this the sort of question that if my board was asking me, I would find helpful? Is this a helpful sort of question? And test yourself on that as you're asking it in the board room that you are on, where you're on the board. Test yourself, because, you know, often it's the, you know, you're on this side on the executive team and you're getting asked all sorts of rats and mice and detailed questions, and it's driving you bananas.

And then sometimes you pop over here and you end up doing the same thing- You become that person ... without realizing it. You become that person. So test yourself. Um, ask your colleagues, you know, "What was-- From my contribution today, what was helpful? What was the most helpful thing? What was perhaps not so helpful?"

And be open to that feedback. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Um, if they then are courageous enough to give you the gift of feedback about, "This was really helpful. Eh, this maybe wasn't so helpful," please take the gift graciously. It is amazing to get that sort of feedback, so, you know, take the gift of feedback graciously.

But yeah, I think the shift is going from operational and knowing everything about what's going on to the strategic oversight. I think that's a really useful test for people to do it in their own minds. Yeah. And I think for me, the, that kind of message came through really strongly when I did the company directors course with the- Ah

Australian Institute of Company Directors. And I sort of had understood it before then, but I really understood it from doing that course. Do women need to do the company directors course to be a director? Oh my gosh, if I had a dollar, if I had 50 cents for every time I was asked this question. So, um- Will having the postnominals GAICD after your name help you get a board role?

Look, it probably will. However, it is not the only governance training out there. The Institute of Community Directors Australia has a diploma, an actual accredited outcome, as opposed to the AICD. Now look, as you say, I've done the company directors course. I'm a fellow of the AICD. They do lots of awesome stuff.

But th- but their company directors course is not accredited. The GAICD is just-- The AICD's postnominal, it is well-recognized, but it's not accredited, and there are other organizations that do accredited ones. So lots of the universities will have a diploma or whatever it may be in governance or masters of governance.

The Governance Institute of Australia has a certificate, I think it is, in governance. It might be a diploma in governance. I could be wrong about that. But there are lots of organizations, and most of what they teach you is very similar. So, um, the AICD might not like me saying this, but they are all a bit same, same, but different really.

Mm-hmm. So having some governance training is helpful. Get it wherever suits you. Um, the other thing I would say is that If you can get yourself a board role first and then do the governance training, I think you'll get more out of it, and everyone around you will also get more out of it. So I know when I did the company director's course, I had been on the board of the YWCA for probably five years by that stage.

And you could tell in the room from the people doing that program, those that were in the boardroom and those that were not, and it was a different level of engagement in it. So I do think you get more out of it once you've already got the practical experience of being in the boardroom versus not being in the boardroom yet.

But will it, it or other training help you get a board role? Yes, it probably will as well. So you just need to weigh those things up a little bit, I guess. Mm. And getting on a board is one thing, but then staying on the board and- Ah ... growing and evolving. So you talked about the feed- you know, the gift of feedback and, and, and obviously most boards have evaluation processes, et cetera.

But for a woman in her own development as a board member, I know that you've got pro- support programs. Can you tell us a little- Yeah ... bit about those? So yeah, like being on a board, you don't just know governance and join a board and then it all stops from there. One thing actually that the AICD does that I wholeheartedly endorse is encourage people to have continuing professional development, and you have to score your points much like other professions.

So you have to keep up with what is going on. You have to have space to reflect and think and, yeah, think about being a board director. It is not just showing up to that board meeting. So I've got two programs. Uh, one is called Take On Board Kickstarter, which is for those women that think they might want to be on a board, but they're not sure where to start, and we go through, uh- All my programs are run as small group programs because I love that small community.

And w- we work through what are the skills for the boardroom, what sort of board should you be looking for, what are the... Some are very lightly touch on the duties of directors, and then some of the nuts and bolts, like doing your pitch, doing your resume, doing your board interviews, and so on. So that equips women with, um, all of the skills, uh, and the nuts and bolts to get on a board, and a cheer squad to help get you there.

And then I have a second program called Take On Board Accelerator, because some of the women from Kickstarter started getting board roles and they're like, "We need another community to help us out." So Accelerator is a, um, again, a small group program for women in the boardroom, so you must be on the board to do that program.

It's a once-a-month catch-up, almost like a community of practice. Each month we cover a different topic, and we share things at our board that are going well around that topic, which could be anything, risk management, succession planning, managing the CEO, accountability, whatever it may be. We share resources, and then somebody brings a challenge to the table, which...

And we go through this particular process to help them with that. That helps them with their challenge, but everybody learns from that process. So yeah, it's, if I say so myself, a really fabulous way to have a safe space to talk through some of those challenges that literally are going to keep you awake at night.

When do registrations open for those programs? Uh, the next intake for Take On Board Kickstarter actually starts in August, so in just a couple of weeks' time. Uh, the first session of that is on- I think it's Saturday the 1st of August. I don't know. The first Saturday in August, whenever that might be. I would love it if some of the Flourish After 50 people wanted to join that program.

And in fact, super early bird rates finished just a couple of days ago. But folks, if you are listening to this when it goes live, uh, you are very welcome to get in touch with me. If you get in touch before Wednesday the 15th of July, and you give me the code word flourish, I am happy to still give you the super early bird rates even though they've technically closed.

Don't tell anyone. But very happy to welcome you over. The Take On Board Accelerator program for women who are already in the boardroom, the intake starts each year around September, October, and then, um, starts in February the following year and runs every month February through to December. Mm. I should say about, particularly about the Accelerator program, it's all run online.

So you can be anywhere in Australia, indeed anywhere in the world. Uh, in the olden days I used to run it face-to-face and I went online before the pandemic. Uh, and what I found was that people show up much more to online sessions because you can do it from wherever in the middle of winter, whatever it may be.

So it's all online and you can participate from wherever you are. You can have your jammies on on the bottom half and- Absolutely ... a work top on the bo- the top half. So what's next for you and Take On Board, Hel- Helga? Ooh. Ooh. You know, we are coming up to the seventh birthday of the Take On Board podcast next week.

So I've been running the Kickstarter program for probably 12 years, uh, the Accelerator program for maybe eight or nine years, and the podcast for seven years. Um- Ooh, I'm not sure what's next for the Take On Board community. For me, it is just continuing to build it and bring that community together through events.

We have an alumni dinner once a year, you know, all of those sorts of things. Uh, I feel like it's in a pretty good flow at the moment. Uh, so it's just continuing it as it is. Although, always open to feedback, so if people have got better ideas, I'm open to that as well. Um- Well, I've been following you for a while now, and what I would say is that you're, um, what you're really good at is sharing the wisdom and learnings- Mm

as you go along. So you might be offering the same programs and the podcast, but your, the depth of knowledge and experience that you're bringing to these- Yeah ... it, there's a deepening of that all of the time. And, you know- Mm ... I read your latest, uh, post about your reflections post the Larapinta Trail, and you've talked a little bit about the Starry Night perspective.

Um, that you are someone who thinks about these things all of the time and bring in fresh perspectives- Ah ... and I, I really appreciate that. And we'll make sure that we include all of the, um, details- Oh, thank you ... about your programs and where people can find you in the show notes. Oh, that would be lovely.

Thank you. So before we finish up today, what's one thing you would like to change about how society sees women over 50? Oh. Oh, my goodness. Um, I think it's actually it's probably seeing women over 50. I think sometimes when you turn 50 you turn into this invisibility that is just not seen and not always valued.

And I would love to see women over 50 being seen, being valued, and, you know, flourishing, and their true value to the world being seen as the awesomeness that it is rather than somehow as the start of decline. Oh, gosh, no, this is now just about hitting our straps. So yeah, I would love it to be seen and valued in all its awesomeness.

Mm. And I think definitely, um, participating in governance is one way that women- Mm ... can show up as well for themselves and for others after 50, and be contributing and continuing to, uh, build out their, their flourishing life. And I really appreciate that you've shared your perspective here today with all of us, and the, the incredible wisdom and knowledge that you have.

And I highly recommend to listeners that you, uh, if governance is your thing, look up Helja and, uh, follow, follow along and you'll be in really good hands. So Helja, thank you for joining me here today on the podcast. Oh, such a joy. Thank you so much for having me, Sue. Thanks for listening to Flourish After 50.

If today's conversation resonated and you're ready to take the next step, you can work with me one-on-one as your coach, join my six-week Life On Your Terms program, or be part of a monthly discussion group where we get deeper into some of the topics on this podcast, the Flourish After 50 Circle. You'll find the details and links at flourishafter50.com.au, or in the show notes.

I'd also love your support. Follow the show on your favourite podcast app, share this episode with a friend, and leave a review. It helps more women discover Flourish After 50 and start their own journey towards what's next. Thank you for listening and for giving yourself the space to be curious about all the possibilities that lie ahead for you.

This episode was recorded on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and I pay my respects to elders past and present.

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