



Take on Board Podcast – Episode 321

Transcript – Professional development for board directors mini series - Professional development in governance with Kiki Paul

Helga Svendsen: Today on the Take on Board podcast, I'm speaking with Kiki Paul about the Institute of Community Directors Australia Professional Development Course, their diploma. This is part of the professional development for directors miniseries, so we will dive into that in a moment. Before we do that, as always, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet.

For me, I am on the unseated lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and I pay my respects to elders past and present, and to any First Nations people who may be listening today. I acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters, skies, culture, and country. As I know I've said before, I support Voice Tri and Truth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and I encourage others in the Take on Board community to do the same.

Now, let me tell you about Kiki, although you may have heard some, well, you have heard some of this before. Take on Board community because Kiki was on the podcast a year ago. So Kiki is on the boards of Go Gentle Australia and is the chair of the Australian Online Giving Foundation. Formally been on the boards of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter, PANDSI and a founding member of Cancer Chicks

Kiki is an experienced CEO and non-executive director. From 2016 until 2022, she was the CEO of the National Charity Go Gentle Australia, which was instrumental in passing voluntary assisted dying laws in all six states in Australia. She's held a variety of not-for-profit board roles and is currently the CEO of Community Transport Organisation, a peak body for community transport providers in New South Wales.

Kiki, welcome back to the Take on Board podcast. Thank you. Helga lovely to be here. Thank you for having me. Oh, always a pleasure. Now, folks, and you know that generally what I do here is dig into your background. People can go and listen to the previous episode. For that, I'd like to dig a little bit more into maybe more recent history than long Gone History.

As I mentioned in your bio, you recently started as CEO of a community transport peak body. Was that a logical step? Talk us through that. Oh no,

Kiki Paul: that was not logical at all. Somehow we like to think when we, I think when we start our working lives, that we'll have a career that is logical and takes.

Logical steps and clearly not. So I had literally zero industry knowledge when I took on this role. I didn't even know what community transport was. I'm in good company though because most of my friends are like community transport. Oh, that's great. Are you now in charge of the metro, the trains? No, no, no.

That's public transport.

Helga Svendsen: Can I take a guess? Can I see if I know. Yeah, and see if I've, I'm completely wrong too. I'm guessing, and this is only because my mother now has a aged care package. I'm guessing it's, there was a volunteer and another organisation that used to drive her to medical appointments and all that sort of gear.

Is that community transport or is it something else? Again,

Kiki Paul: that is community transport in a nutshell. That is community transport. Yes. But most people don't know it exists. Most people only find out about it when they have a loved one who. Maybe can't drive anymore or is in rehab and needs some because they can't walk into the bus because they've had a hip replacement or a knee replacement.

They need transport or they're just not well enough to drive, but they're not that sick. They need an ambulance to get to the, to the hospital. Those kinds of things. I had

Helga Svendsen: a conversation with somebody recently about transferable skills and landing in different places and how careers are not. They're not linear really.

They're a winding road. So this is another wind in your career road.

Kiki Paul: Absolutely. In a nutshell, my basic training is in PR and communications. Then I did 20 years in financial services running a, a financial services group with my husband. We built and, and ran that. Then I pivoted into not-for-profit where I've been working in.

Domestic violence and homelessness via pandas. I had something to do with with disease cancer chicks. My biggest work was with go gentle advocating for the assisted dying laws, and now I'm in community transport. So clearly, very logical, very well planned. Yes. I'm very grateful to my board that they took a chance and really looked at the transferable skills because yes, you can learn about all the ins and outs of the compliance and there is a lot in community transport and the funding and all of that, but you can't teach someone culture.

So it was really a, a cultural fit that worked out really, really well. So

Helga Svendsen: thank you for giving us that update, which is the update since last time we met. So today I wanted to talk about the Institute of Community Directors Course, which I think is a diploma, diploma in governance. This is part of, as I said at the top of the episode, this is part of a miniseries I'm doing about a variety of different professional development options and what I have learned from doing this miniseries, I think there's now seven episodes in this miniseries, and they could be 112 episodes because.

So many different professional development options for people, and really it's about people working out what they need and then finding out which course meets what they need. So it would be great if we could have a conversation about that. So first up, maybe how did you come to be doing the course? I'll ask things like content, but how did you come to do it?

Kiki Paul: When I started working with Go Gentle Australia. The charity was very, very young, so we were building the charity from scratch. I'd done that with another charity before where I'd come in on, on the ground for we were doing, but that was more an on the fly and collecting information as I needed it. But when I started working with Go Gentle, I thought, okay, it'd be great to just get a silver platter that says, here's everything you need to know.

So I thought, okay, let me just start with that. So I looked at the Diploma of governance just to get me the official baseline because I was concerned that I might be missing something. As I went through the course, I realized that I pretty much had the basis covered. But it was great to have that knowledge formalised and you always learn things along the way, and particularly with this course, the.

Teachers were so, so good, and they had such a wealth of experience that it was fantastic to be able to say, okay, but I've got this, or I've got this, and we could workshop that. And so that was really the driving force behind going and doing the course. Just making sure that I did have all the boxes ticked.

Helga Svendsen: So you've touched on the teachers, which probably brings us to some of the nuts and bolts of it. It sounds like there was different people that taught different parts of it, but what was the format? What was the content? How was it all arranged?

Kiki Paul: So the format at the time was fully face-to-face, and it was taught by Denis Moriarty.

Who is one of the founders of the Institute of Community Directors? I think it's a family business. It's Denis, so they taught the course. I think the bulk of the course was taught by Denis, and he just has like decades of experience in the sector and has worked with so many different community organisations.

If he doesn't know, he knows, he definitely knows where to find it, but he probably just knows. When did you do the course? It was some time ago. It was 2018, I think. 2018 - 2019, something like that.

Helga Svendsen: Pre COVID when everything back in the olden days. What is now the olden days? 'cause the world is so different now.

So back when everything was face to face, do you happen to know how it's delivered now? My guess is it's a hybrid, but maybe not. Do you happen to know?

Kiki Paul: I think at the moment there is a both a hybrid and a fully online option, but when I did it, we were a group in a room, which was really fabulous. I'm a people person and I love being in a room with people to share experiences.

I always think that that's much better than just doing it online.

Helga Svendsen: Totally, and I think many organisations are giving people that choice now. And what did the content cover? What were the things that you covered off on in the program?

Kiki Paul: So we covered off a lot and I pulled up the page of, of what it looks like now and it's pretty much still the same.

So the course is really focused on those people stepping into a governance role for the first time. They haven't had much exposure to governance yet, but they may have taken up a committee role

in their local organisation. This course covers. Everything you need to know, and it's a great first introduction to governance and running an organisation and what you need to be aware of.

So it looks at the roles and responsibilities of committee member or a board member. We reviewed constitutions and looked at what you need to be aware of in a constitution. So it, I meet a lot of people who step on a board for the first time and go, I've never read a constitution. I dunno what to look for.

It demystifies it. It's not that complicated what the Australian culture is in communities and and organisation and how that intersects with your aboriginal cultures, but also cultures from all around importance of and how you communicate with particular community stakeholders, what a strategic planning process looks like, what your finances.

Not so much what they should look like, but what you need to look for, what you need to be aware of, how you go about looking for funding opportunities, what you need to be aware of. And I think one of the key things is leading and managing organisational change. It's, for me, that's almost the most important one because that's the only thing that constantly happens.

Change, change, change. Change. There's also how you manage your CEO if you have one. My very first board, we, we didn't have a CEO. We, we were just a very operational board. There's a lot of organisation where the board members initially roll up the sleeves, but as the organisation gets bigger. Maybe they look at, okay, we need to put in an executive officer and some of the original founding board members may want to step aside.

Well, so how do you do that? So what's your selection look like? What's your induction look like? These are communications module in there. How you communicate with influence storytelling, of course, is um, is hugely important in communicating with influence. But also how you manage conflict in the board or the committee and the organisation, and some tips and tricks on managing negotiations and stuff that you don't necessarily learn elsewhere unless you've been exposed to it.

So all in all very well-rounded, great stepping stone to demystify governance as well. 'cause it's such a big word and it can mean so many things and it's a great starting point.

Helga Svendsen: Amazing. I love the breadth that you've described. Yes. There's all of the kind of foundation. Go stuff. Roles and responsibilities, duties and obligations.

What does the Constitution look like? As you say, it's a big, fancy word for just the governing document. It's not a big thing really, and generally quite actually understandable, but I love how there is finances and all of strategy, all of those sorts of things that you would expect, but things like.

Change and communication and storytelling. I think those are things that all board members need to know, and I don't hear that described much in some of the courses or development opportunities. So it's interesting to hear that. That's fantastic. How long, either when you did it or from what you know of the program now, is it, I don't know, run over four days?

Or is it 10 online sessions or whatever it is? What, how long's the course take?

Kiki Paul: At the time, it was a number of weeks and we'd go back for that. I don't know what it's like now, but I think it's, um, yeah, you've got a number of tutorials, so I think it, it's like a three months or six months. It's multiple months.

So, and I think that's a really, really good format because. It allows things to percolate and process, and with the AICD course that I've also done, there is one format whereby you can just get through everything in one week. For me personally, I don't learn very well like that because it's. Too much, and I found that when I did that particular course, because there is so much material that you need to pump into your head really quickly.

I was so glad that I did this self-paced online so I had more time and I could go back to things and then when I first read them, I was like, oh, my brain was like, oh, you haven't studied formally for quite some time. Are you sure you want to do this? But when I went back to it, it was like, oh, okay, that makes sense now.

And I can tie that in with that and that makes sense. And it just needs. Sometimes things just need to settle a little bit.

Helga Svendsen: Can you recall what the, um, because it's a diploma, right? I think that's right. It's a diploma of governance. What was the assessment processes or requirements?

Kiki Paul: So there was an exam and there was an assignment for every module.

There was either an exam or an assessment or an assignment. There was a combination of things. What

Helga Svendsen: impact did it have on you and your governance practice? What impact did the program have on the way you undertook your role? It made me

Kiki Paul: certainly, more confident because I knew that having that course under my belt, I was just confident that I was ticking all the right boxes.

I was doing all the right things, and it also made me a better board member in my other organisations because I had a more rounded view, so I was using it. Both as a CEO and as a board member. And I could just change the hats and look at things from different perspectives. Um, and particularly at the shelter board, that was a group of community members who didn't necessarily have a lot of board experience.

So it was really good to be able to say, okay, well this is what I've learned here. Let me share that with you here. It was

Helga Svendsen: helpful when you were describing it before, it sounded like most of the people who did the course were already on the board of an organisation. Is that right? Or was there some people who were also seeking board roles?

What was the mix of people?

Kiki Paul: It was a bit of both. A lot of them were already. A leadership position in an organisation. So whether that was as the executive officer or whether that was as a relatively new or even a longer committee member, it was definitely senior leadership.

Helga Svendsen: What should I have asked you about the program that I haven't asked yet?

Kiki Paul: that's it. It's a very practical course, very practical. So yes, you get all the theoretical information that you need, but you also get where to find stuff and with the ICDA membership. You get access to a fantastic policy bank that has all sorts of policies, particularly for community organisations, but most of them are applicable in larger organisations as well.

And I think that the difference with this course is that it is very practical and it's, it really looks at governance for purpose. You can get lost in creating governance policies because you could create a policy for just about everything under the sun and sometimes one organisation. Says, oh, here, use our policies.

But they are written for that particular organisation. And I can tell you the set of policies that you need to run a domestic violence and homelessness shelter are completely different to the set of policies that you need. To effectively run an organisation like Go Gentle or Community Transport Organisation completely different.

So it's really important to be practical about your governance, and this, I think, teaches it very well.

Helga Svendsen: I just wanna swing back to the ICDA membership in the Policy Bank. Resources generally, the ICDA, the Institute of Community Directors Australia has, I agree, has an incredible library of resources and folks.

Membership is free, so I strongly recommend no matter what board you are on, as you've said, a lot of these things are transferable. So this is not so much about the program. They run, but more about the membership and the resources that you can access. Gold, absolute gold. So if you're not already a member, go and sign up because it's free and you get access to the whole library of resources.

It's amazing.

Kiki Paul: And another tip, they also run a Facebook group. The Not-for-Profit Happy Hour Australia Gold. If you have a question, just pop it in that group. And there's a whole team of people. That is happy to support you and give you tips and tricks. Yeah. Fantastic.

Helga Svendsen: You've already tipped into the resources part, so I'm gonna go backwards now.

So Kiki, from the conversation that we've had today about the program and content and format and impact and value, what are the key things you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today?

Kiki Paul: I think the key things really are that if you are worried about, or you are a bit intimidated by governance.

And you don't really know where to start. This is a really good spot, and I think the governance for community run organisations versus large businesses is different. I've also done the company directors course, and I have to say it's a fabulous course. But it's very much geared towards larger businesses, multi multimillion dollar businesses that have teams of people and have different cultures, whereas.

This course really focuses on the smaller organisations and makes it more practical. Having said that, the company directors course really lifts your thinking in terms of the strategic risk assessment and the financial literacy and the more corporate applicable legislation, and it definitely, it has a place.

This one absolutely also has a place particularly. For people on smaller organisations that are not yet perhaps run like a large corporate.

Helga Svendsen: Now we've already talked about some of the resources joining the ICDA and there's a huge resource bank there as well as this program of course. So we'll put a link to both of those things in the show notes.

Is there anything else? I mean, they're pretty good resources, but I'll just check if there's anything else you wanted to share with the Take on Board community.

Kiki Paul: Just generally the ICDA website. It has an awful lot of stuff on it, and it has a great job board as well for those seeking directors as well as those seeking their first directorship roles, particularly for community organisations.

There's a few more from Victoria than elsewhere in the country. Mainly that's possibly because the ICDA of course has its seat in Victoria in Melbourne, but it's got a very good reach.

Helga Svendsen: Shout out to people who are, as you say, looking for board roles, check that they're registered, but also if you wanna advertise board roles, it's a free register to put out there.

And, um, I think is predecessor organisation, our community is how I found my first board role through it. So yeah. Great to do. Oh, thank you so much for being here and sharing your wisdom about the program. It's been so interesting to dig into all of these programs and as I say, to just discover how much there is out there.

Kiki Paul: One more thing, there are scholarships available as well, information on the website, so definitely check them out. And they've also got scholarships for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, so. Very inclusive program, absolutely recommended.

Helga Svendsen: Yes, I think they have a variety of scholarships that come up at different times, so keep your eye on their website

Kiki Paul: and generally the pricing is very, very reasonable.

Very reasonable. They don't ask for your firstborn, unlike some other organisation who shall remain nameless for the purpose of this

Helga Svendsen: argument. But, and I haven't mentioned this on others actually, but it prompts me given we're talking about the money basically. This is definitely not financial advice, but often folks you can tax deduct the cost of the program that you do as well as a professional development expense.

Please check that with your own accountant. This is not financial advice, but it is worth checking, and particularly this one, which is an accredited qualification, so well worth checking that with your financial advisors or tax people as well.

Kiki Paul: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Helga Svendsen: Thank you. So good to see you again and I'm sure we'll come up with something to get you back depending on how you counted third or fourth time.

Thanks so much for being here today. Thank you.

Kiki Paul: Pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me.

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