

WILLIAM & LONSDALE — **Lives in the Law** **E02: Emmett Dunne**

Voiceover [00:00:05] This is William and Lonsdale, a podcast about the legal ecosystem in Victoria and the fascinating people and stories that make it tick. On today's show, Michael speaks with former assistant chief of Victoria Police Emmett Dunne. Looking back on his 40 year career, Emmett reflects on his time as a police prosecutor, the craft of policing, John and Joan citizen and the importance of having clear personal ethics when faced with the day to day challenges of police work. Emmett also played Australian Rules Football, and as we will hear, the two disciplines impacted him in equal measure, often reinforcing the same values.

Emmett Dunne [00:00:41] In terms of policing, I was also fortunate to have some great managers and leaders in that career. I suppose one of the early ones and this happened when I was very early in the police force, I was working at Russell St, the old police headquarters where Allan Jeans Richmond, coach and football legend, was also working.

Michael Green [00:01:01] I think he may have coached Hawthorn and St Kilda to four premierships as well.

Emmett Dunne [00:01:05] Yes, he's not bad he had dual careers too. Now, Allan was a revered figure in policing absolutely and very stoic. He had these piercing blue eyes I recall. So I was working at Russell Street. I was in the police force a short time and he called me in for a cup of coffee and he sat me down and we started talking and introduced himself, and I was sort of, you know, in awe of this legend, and through the conversation, this is 40 plus years ago, he said to me, "yeah, you play football", in his accent, he used to talk, and he says, "just remember, son, you never take the uniform off". And then there was a pause and he looked straight at me. And what Allan was saying, of course, is that you play football, which is good, but you represent Victoria Police Force, so please watch your conduct. And that's stayed with me ever since. And I still live it today, Michael, because people do associate me with football and also with the Victoria Police Force.

Michael Green [00:02:26] Emmett, welcome to William and Lonsdale - Lives in the Law. Today, I'd like you to tell us a bit about your background in the law, which is different and unique to many other people. Maybe we should start with your upbringing and because with all of our upbringing influences the people we are. You were a career policeman and I guess the way that you policed, from a constable when you started all the way up to being an assistant commissioner, was influenced by the way you were brought up and and your family life. Take us back to that, because if it have something different there.

Emmett Dunne [00:03:04] Yeah, I suppose on balance, you look back and I'm doing a lot of that these days when you're retiring, a bit of time in your hands, Michael, to think about your life and the influences on it. I was very fortunate to have very good parents, great parents, actually. But things were always like many thousands of families, things were always not great. My father, for a period of time struggle with alcoholism. And it was difficult at home. He was a sailor. He'd be away in those days for months at a time and then come home. And I must admit that my mother was a fantastic person. Very strong. Great, great faith, strong woman, opinionated, particularly in terms of matters like equalit, she'd fit in very well today, and she was a great influence on my life. And so my father be away and when he was away, the house was settled and was easy you know life was good. And I must admit, there was difficult times when my father was home for a period of time. And as a consequence of that, ever since ever since then, I've had great empathy for

people, and there are lots of them out there, families who have a similar sort of situation. But it was a bright side to the story and that my father, with my mother's help, actually managed his addiction to alcohol. I don't think people ever overcome addictions of that sort, whether it be drugs or gambling or whatever it might be but fortunately some, you know, are able to manage it and move forward and have fulfilling lives. And my father did the last 20 years of his life was happy and the family situation was great. And if anything, I think my involvement in football brought us all together.

Michael Green [00:04:56] Keeping on your background little bit, just to look at the things that influenced you and how you were a policeman and policed, you had a lengthy football career as a player and a coach. And in the administration of football and in as a tribunal member for the AFL. So you've had a lifetime involvement in football, but particularly take us back to your playing days and tell us about that a bit again, because it must have influenced how you've led your life in the law.

Emmett Dunne [00:05:24] Yeah. I think it's shaped me, help shape me as I think all all sporting people, regardless of football or whatever the sport is and helped shape me and give me some values and so forth. I was indeed fortunate to, number one, to have some ability and to be of size. I was just was a battler. Probably call me a plodder as a footballer, Michael, but yeah, I went to Richmond as a young fellow, when I was about 13 in the scholarship squad. And then I made my way through the Under-19s, reserves and ultimately the seniors. Yeah, but the people you meet as you go through, great people. Tommy Haffey, mentor of yours as well, but also the players, people like you, Michael, you might not have known that, but during that phase when it was going through those difficulties at home, it was people like you and Francis who really shone a light for me. And also the ability to have achieved something, have success in one aspect of your life. It was able to move flow over in other aspects of my life and probably helped with my policing career, because you do meet along the way. You do meet people of substantial positions in the community who are besotted by football. And when you meet them and they might be politicians or very successful business people or people from the theater or whatever, they fall all over you. And when you are a young fellow and you realize at that stage this person's human they've achieved great things. So if that person can do what they've done, surely I can be successful in other aspects of my life. And when I finished playing football, I really from that point on focused on policing. And I suppose it's that bravado on that cheekiness and that drive to succeed, that helped me during my career.

Michael Green [00:07:11] Before we move off from football, I should say that you played in a premiership. So you a bit more than a plodder. You played in, and I think it's still the record score kicked in a grand final or maybe the record winning margin.

Emmett Dunne [00:07:23] Yeah at the time it was.

Michael Green [00:07:25] In 198 Richmond won a premiership. So I think that's a bit more than a plodder. So we've got a bit of background there. Tell us about your movement through the police force. How I mean, you mentioned earlier that you were a prosecutor in criminal matters in the Magistrates Court. How did that come about? And tell us about what that involved.

Emmett Dunne [00:07:45] I joined on a whim. I worked with a lady whose husband was in the police force, and she said you'd you'd be good in the police force. And I thought what was that all about? So I thought, I'll give it to fly. Couple of years would be nice. 40 years

later, it took me to get out of the organization. But no I had a wonderful career. I first worked at Heidelberg, then at Russell Street, at Richmond Polive Station for five years.

Voiceover [00:08:09] Over the next 17 years, Emmett broadened his knowledge and honed his craft by working in a wide variety of roles within Victoria Police. He was a sergeant at Prahran Police Station, worked in a specialized unit for hostage negotiation, conflict resolution and riot control. He was a staff officer for an assistant commissioner where he really learned how the organization operated from a strategic, administrative and leadership perspective. Spent time out of the academy developing and overseeing the delivery of training programs including firearms, self-defense and conflict resolution, and had two separate stints in one of his most challenging and fulfilling roles as a police prosecutor. Through his 17 year period, Emmett gained experience and insight into many areas of the force. All whilst rising through the ranks. Then, in 2010, a few months into his role as assistant commissioner of the North East Victoria, he received a notification from the Chief Commissioner congratulating him on his transfer to the Ethical Standards Department. The internal body within Victoria Police responsible for enhancing and further promoting a culture of high ethical standards through effective prevention, deterrence and investigation of unethical behavior.

Emmett Dunne [00:09:14] And that was a demanding role in many ways. And I think that's that's the type of role where, you know, 24/7 that people are looking at you, looking at your demeanor, looking at your decisions, your approach to life and decision making in particular. And I get the conflict that many people will see in the process of policing investigating police. And in that role, I tried as best I could to make sure that things like conflict of interest were addressed and sometimes made some not so many friends in the organization, but at that role in particular, I took from prosecutions, things like what is in the public interest and when files come across my desk of members who were misbehaved or committed criminal conduct. In terms of how they were dealt with, the decision was mine. And I was forever saying to myself, what would John and Joan Citizen think if someone who undertook this conduct or committed these crimes would remain in the police force? Should they be in the police force? The impact? And that was always front of mind. And when I did that role and as I said, didn't make, on occasions not too many friends, but the end of the day. I think people respected the role that we had and performed.

Michael Green [00:10:38] And I get the feeling from what you're saying there, that there are very many occasions in the life of a policeman when things are not black and white, there's a lot of gray and have to use discretion as to what's the thing that is going to do the best for John and Joan Citizen.

Emmett Dunne [00:10:55] I call it the craft of policing and it encompasses a number of qualities and aspects and abilities. It takes some time to develop and develop a well, some you know, when you're a recruit, you go into the academy, you know, you got visions of serving the community and saving the world and doing all sorts of things. It becomes tough when you're out there on the street. I have a great deal of respect for those who are on the street or the front line in the main they are the youngest members of the organization and certainly the least experienced. And we're asking the most of them, particularly in decision making, because often they have no time to prepare or think through problems, they got to make a decision on the spot. And the craft of policing, I think, is knowing, being able to assess the situation often in a short period of time with limited advice or information, what is the best outcome possible in the public interest? And for those on the street that's the hardest thing to do. And I said before, you know, talk about John and Joan Citizen as

being the community interest, sometimes difficult because John and Joan won't agree on a point. And regardless of the decision you make, there will still be criticism of you.

Michael Green [00:12:18] You move from constable to ultimately Assistant Commissioner. I guess it's a meritocracy where you rise on your own abilities, but it can't just be that. You've got a lot of training to get to where you got to extra training above and beyond, what is compulsory for the policemen or police force. Can you tell us about that training you undertook and how that had an impact upon you and how it affected your vision of policing and your vision of the world?

Emmett Dunne [00:12:50] Yeah, I did many courses like a lot of police and I wasn't a course junkie, but I took the opportunities that I thought I should in order to learn and be better at the job. And that helped me progression in my career. I remember I did the officers course, and it was at a lovely mansion in South Yarra called Airlie and any police listening to this podcast will know what I'm talking about. It was I think was a 10 week residential course and and it was, too train the next breed of leaders in the organization. I came out of that course and wondering what did I actually learn? I think subliminally you learn things, but not so much overtly. And at that point in time, I decided it was in the era then decided really pursue my career. So I enrolled in a distance education program at Monash University. The first subject that it was a leadership management and it was management theory and practice and leadership principles I think, it was. something along those lines. It was the best and I did the first subject and it was the best thing I've ever done. You know, I spent 10 weeks at Airlie being fed and kept I learnt so much by that one course and that one subject, that one course, it set a fire in me. And I looked back, I was able to look back and assess the leaders that I had previously and identify the good ones and the poor ones from the traits that I learnt from there. I wasn't a great cop, didn't lock up a lot of crooks, that sort of thing, but I think I was able to relate to people and have a relationship with them and support them. And I think I was very good, I think, at identifying talent regardless of their rank, their talents. So there'd be a committee or project group or whatever might be and I'd see someone who thought "hmmm, they've got a future". So I'd call them out for a cup of coffee and I had that conversation with them and say, where you're going with what qualifications have you got, where have you been, what do you want to do? You know, that's sort of routine conversations. And often I'd say, well why don't you come and work for me, work with me, and I'd give them projects or tasks to do and they're always successful and help them on their way. And I know now that a lot of the high ranking officers in Victoria Police work with me in those sorts of things. So that's satisfying. And particularly women, they added, have added an unbelievable different dimension to policing. When I first joined the police force, they were a separate work unit, the highest ranking policewoman in Victoria Police as a senior sergeant, and they worked predominantly with children. Then in the late 70s and early 80s, they were amalgamated or implemented in the operational world. And I was working at Richmond Police Station at the time and a policewoman Lorraine Casey, who still remains a friend today, came to our police station and that was a bit daunting for her, but she is a fantastic person and very impressive, and what what she brought, as policewomen do bring to any organ in any organization, but particularly policing an ability to reason and think through problems rather than react to think through the consequences. Great communicators, you know, it's it's a difficult job, can be a difficult job. There's no doubt about that. But women are forging great careers, not only Victoria Police, but other police forces as well.

Michael Green [00:16:35] Emmett as a member of the public, we tend to think of the police force as the men and women we see on the street in uniform who are protecting us, helping us. But in fact, the life of a policeman or a policewoman, the opportunity in the

police force are far, far greater than that, obviously it's a very layered organization with many, many opportunities for people to take their careers in whatever direction I want to take their careers. And you were aware of that and you took advantage of those opportunities for yourself?

Emmett Dunne [00:17:06] Yeah, it suited my personality I think Michael and I used to have a wandering soul in lots of ways. I used to envy those police who were fulfilled, mind, body and soul, if you like, in whatever roles they are in, and particularly those working in country stations or one man stations, they were happy and serving their communities and they were fulfilled. As I said, I was a bit of a wandering soul. I had a, if you like, a three year cycle one you're learning a job, one year on top of it, and the last year looking for the next challenge or the next job to do. And there was plenty out there. And I got strategic, particularly at the end and planned and I looked for, not so much for the rank, but for the job that I was interested in next. And I would get hold of the position description, even there was no vacancy available, I'd grab the position description of the job I wanted and I'd work through the case selection criteria if you like and the description of the job and what it entailed and critically assessed where I was at that point in time, and the boxes I could take for that job and the ones that I couldn't. And then I'd either develop myself in the areas that I was deficient in, felt I was deficient in, or I create opportunities for myself in the roles that I was in to tick those boxes. And in particular, what I'd do is get the organization's mission and vision and its strategic plan, and look at the outcomes, that were hoped to be achieved, and in the role that I had at that particular time, I would see that how I could impact positively on those outcomes of the organization is hoping to achieve. And I remember spending time at the kids cricket or football with the books in the car reading through this and thinking through what I had to do. But in the end, by doing that, I knew that I was assisting the organization.

Michael Green [00:19:15] And so you've had a very satisfying career doing a whole range of jobs within the Victorian police force. But would I be right in assuming that the most enjoyable and satisfying job you had was as a police prosecutor?

Emmett Dunne [00:19:32] Yeah, absolutely it was. Challenging. Um other roles, well every role in police force is challenging, Michael you got to understand that. This was challenging in many ways, firstly, the workload is enormous. As you would understand the system - well there is no system, it's chaos.

Michael Green [00:19:51] In the magistrates court.

Emmett Dunne [00:19:52] In the magistrates court. It is chaos. You're at the mentions court and you've got, you know, 60, 80, 100 briefs in front of you. And you're the bar counter. And people are pulling and pushing and trying to get in your ear, and then when all of the sudden the the court opens and you're in action, it's all happening. So getting on top of that and it's a bit of an adrenalin pump, really, particularly when you're young, young in prosecuting to actually get the job done. It's like a sausage factory. And that's where I respect the magistrates for dealing with such matters in a way that's appropriate when they're under the under the pump as well. I think as a prosecutor, I also used I liked prosecuting contests. Typically, the lengthy ones, you know, you'd get days where you would have three or four two hour contests and you prepare for them. Sometimes they're over very shortly, other times blow out into days. But I used to like preparing and prosecuting long term prosecuting, booked into three or four days or a week or something like that, because you really get your teeth into it. And I learned as you go along and I would endeavor to put in evidence in chair and in my case, put everything on the table,

good, bad or indifferent for my case, because inevitably the defense counsel would identify it, and you look as if you've got egg on your face. I remember a couple of occasions doing that and defense counsel before they got up, they'd say, thanks Emmett, you've picked that every point I was going to make and my reply, in very hush hushed tones of course, would be ah well you'll share your fee with me then will you. And another thing about prosecuting, you've got understand, it's not a it's not a win lose proposition, never can be. You are an officer of the court. And again, I harp back to it, you're serving the community, making sure that the best outcome is achieved. And it's so important to be transparent and as I say about your cases, the good, bad and the indifferent parts of the evidence and then at the end of the day, you rely upon the magistrate or the judge to make the correct answer. And that's your role. At times particularly, young officers early in their career would not be happy with the outcome or they wouldn't be happy with the charges you've negotiated at the end of the day. And it's a matter of sitting down with them and explaining as best you can over their exuberance and desires that there's a greater calling here. There's another thing you've got to think about it's not just winning this case, it's what's best outcome when you consider everything. Mostly they understand, but with time and maturity, they certainly did. And the other thing as I said, you get tied up and tie yourself in a knot wondering about the outcome of a court case, it's not good for your health. There's no longevity in the.

Michael Green [00:23:07] We've talked about leadership, and I'm particularly interested in the leadership of Christine Nixon because the Victoria Police force, every police force in the world up until a certain point and maybe even now in some places have been mainly male with a strong male culture. I'm interested in what was the culture like when you joined the police force? In this strong male culture. How did you cope with it? And how is a change and then within that, how did Christine Nixon play a role, I assume she played a role in somehow changing the culture.

Emmett Dunne [00:23:46] Yes, she did. When I joined it was very blokey, very, very blokey, male dominated organization charging ahead. And that took some time to change. You know, big organization took a long time for the culture to change and I think Christine's appointment was the start of an era, certainly Victoria Police and probably Australian. A female appointed to the highest position female who came from another jurisdiction and a female who may not have a great deal of operational experience, and it was difficult, difficult. A brave appointment, a brave woman and in the end, towards the end of her time, probably, and I think she's admitted this could have approached approach the fires a little bit differently, but I look back at Christine's era and I think the greatest achievement she made was our approach to domestic violence. I look back now a bit ashamed, Michael, to be honest with you, the way early days of my career we treated or did not treat domestic violence situations.

Michael Green [00:25:07] I think Emmett that was a community wide issue, not just a police issue. I think we as a community look back with shame and embarrassment about the way domestic violence was treated.

Emmett Dunne [00:25:16] In those days, you know, and in those days, you'd start a shift with 10 jobs on the plate. And your ambition was to clear them all by the end of the shift. Rain, hail or shine and it was just you're putting out fires. You're going for job to job to job to job. And so you're never had the opportunity to deal with the underlying causes of the problem. You just sorted it and moved on and we, and domestic violence is probably the best example of that of that situation, and the unwritten rule is if husband or wife are fighting, you come in and they turn their anger on to you - . you've had a win and you leave,

you know, but that left a trail of destruction. And Christine insured in her era, supported by some really fantastic women in the organization and support from outside the organization, you're quite right. The organization reached out to specialists in society and community, in business about how best can we deal with these things. And affirmative action was taken and the situation has changed dramatically in terms of our approach. Specialist units, more capacity, more education, more referral services, although there's still a gap there in my view, in terms of referral services to support accommodation and the like. But again, I look back at that now, it's probably Christine's greatest achievement and lasting achievement.

Michael Green [00:26:42] And the men who followed her; Simon Overland, Ken Lay, they worked to continue the progress that she had made.

Emmett Dunne [00:26:51] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Along with political support, of course, and community support, legal profession and some I must say, some marvelous magistrates in my time, who really pushed it and set up specialist courts there's one of at Heidelberg I was involved in that and domestic violence courts in other places, too, which really made an impact. But look, it's, domestic violence is still in the community, it'll still be there, sadly. It's a long term problem for everyone in the community, not just the police. And that's something that used to, I used to angst about the crime rate, people jump up and down about the crime rate and police can only do so much. It's about family, it's about opportunities, about education, it's about leadership, all those things in society. So it's a big picture problem, it's not just the police problem, but we can you know, the police are at the frontline can do something in the short term.

Michael Green [00:27:51] Looking at that overall issue of culture within the police or within any organization but specifically the police force. We've currently got a royal commission looking into the police force and into an informer who a lawyer. Have you got any thoughts about that? Is it something with, you know, your background in the police force, have you got any thoughts on how it might play out?

Emmett Dunne [00:28:18] Now, look, I'd rather wait until the royal commission concludes and to read the final report before I draw any conclusions. But I guess there'll be differing views. There'll be the legal profession who will be outraged and probably rightly so.

Michael Green [00:28:33] About a fellow lawyer breaching legal ethics?

Emmett Dunne [00:28:39] Yep, about that. They will be the police who who were involved, who particularly the leaders who might say that they're in a difficult situation at that time people were getting murdered in the street, and Saturday mornings in front of their children at sporting events, that we had to do something. And then there's the community.

Michael Green [00:28:56] John and Joan Citizen.

Emmett Dunne [00:28:57] John and Joan. And again, they might not agree with it. But they might say, well, at the end of the day, it was a tough situation and the murders were solved and resolved and all those sorts of things. But look, as I said before, I provided any in-depth thinking about it. I'd like to read the final report.

Voiceover [00:29:19] William and Lonsdale is brought to you by Greens List, one of the leading multi-disciplinary barristers lists in Australia. Greens List believe in promoting conversation around the ideas and issues that shape not only our legal system, but our wider community.

Michael Green [00:29:41] In you and I talking about today and preparing for it one of the things that came up which I would've expected to come up really was a discussion on philosophy. In fact, even the ancient Greek philosophers. How does it come about in the in the day to day life of a busy policeman?

Emmett Dunne [00:29:59] Michael, I learned about that through the twelvemonth ethics course I did at Melbourne University. But I think what it gained me gave me was a framework within which I could operate and think and make the decisions or support me in the decisions that I made. Sadly, again, this happened towards the back end of my career again had I had it earlier, I probably would've been a different person with made different choices at various stages. But in terms of the personal framework, I think my view is that the organization has values and it can be seen as Big Brother descending upon the workers and inflicting upon them the values that they may not necessarily entirely agree with or can fulfill. I think for me it's important to make sure you you work out in your own mind what values best suit you that you believe in, and therefore they become yours, so that at times, critical times when you have to make hard decisions and in policing sometimes the hard decisions against the organization, that you make them correctly and you can justify them, firstly to yourself, but also anyone who challenges you. I'll wind the clock back, back a bit, I was newly promoted to inspector and as a staff officer for an assistant commissioner, and his EP position become available and he got made around the selection process. So I went through the process...

Michael Green [00:31:32] This has to be an executive assistant to the assistant assistant commissioner?

Emmett Dunne [00:31:37] Yes. So he asks me to do the selection process. So I did that. I got a position description of key selection criteria and what not and advertised it and shortlisted and I shortlisted I think, this is a long time ago, about four people, I think, for interview. One of them I knew was the girlfriend of a superintendent and I'm a new inspector, a newly promoted inspector. So the day before the interviews, I got a phone call and the assistant commissioner was Bob - let's call him Bob. So this fellow rang up and out of the blue, I'd hardly spoken to him previously, just general chatter and then he said to me, ah Bob and I are good mates, we go back a long way, he owes me a lot does Bob know. And I said ah that's interesting. And by the way, you know, my girlfriend's being interviewed tomorrow for this job and you're running the selection process. And I said yeah that's right, we'll see how she goes.

Michael Green [00:32:31] No pressure on you.

Michael Green [00:32:32] No pressure. I've just been promoted you see! so at that point, I said thanks, so he ended that conversation and that's fine. And at that time, the Victoria Police had a programme on ethics and they had a decision making model, it's called the self-test, SELF; does your decision stand up to scrutiny? Are they ethical? Are they lawful? Are they fair? And it was all over the place, it was plastered everywhere, there was articles on it and so forth, there was posters. So anyway the following day we did interviews and the girlfriend didn't get the job. And I asked all the candidates at that time the topical question was, can you tell me about the self-test? And she didn't do too well on that particular question. Nonetheless, she didn't get the job and I appointed someone else. So I then advised all the unsuccessful candidates and gave them some feedback. The next day, the phone rings, it's the superintendent and he is giving me a very hard time I'll put it nicely, in a loud voice and then one of the questions he put to me, what's this self rubbish?

I've never heard of it. And he was at a suburban police station and I said to him, Superintendent, I'm sure if you've got off out of your office and you walked round your police station, you'd see a poster on the wall and it would have the self-test up there and and by the way, the self-test is this; does your actions, communications, everything you do stand up to scrutiny? Is it ethical? Is it lawful? Is it fair? This telephone conversation does not meet you those criteria, good afternoon. And I hang up on him. And for a little while I thought, well, that's the end my career or as I called it a career limiting move. But after a little while, I felt good and nothing was heard back but I knew I was in the right and was absolutely correct. And I think of that today and it goes to show that once you get this framework that you're comfortable with operating and you know, it's right it stands in good stead for the times when we've got to make those calls.

Michael Green [00:34:41] And are those the learning that you underwent, the courses that you did, the education you received in this area of making ethical decisions to use a broader term. Is that common throughout the organization today? Is everybody exposed to that sort of learning?

Emmett Dunne [00:35:07] Yes, they are. Yep. The Victoria Police set up an integrity unit at the academy as part of the program. Look it's interesting, Michael, you know, I think there's sort of tangible things when you're setting up an ethical framework and then it's the intangibles. The tangibles are the documents; the self-test and policies and you know, give some benefits policies and secondary employment and all those sorts of things that you can have those structured things in place. And importantly, in that tangible part of the equation is the importance to communicate and reinforce across the organization. But, the intangible is the ability to walk the talk, and that comes the hard bit, the hard bit, because not everyone has the the GND, if you like, or in their DNA to stand up at the proper time and say, no, stop this. This is not appropriate this conduct, to go forward and that's when you get good leaders. They do that. And I used to think I'd go visit a lot of playstation's Mihcael. A lot. And it didn't take too long to get a feel for, yes this is a good police station. It's well-run, it's tidy, people look you in the eye, they're happy to see. And they're open, communitive and they're working well. And that reflects in their business outcomes in terms of sick leave and crime rates and all those sorts of things. On the other hand, you go to police station, you know, very, very quickly, but it's poorly managed. You get that sense.

Michael Green [00:36:42] And It's the same as every other organization, be it the police be it a business, be it a sporting club. It starts with the quality of the people at the top.

Emmett Dunne [00:36:52] Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely the way.

Michael Green [00:36:59] Another part of your life in the law was football, which we've worked with, we've covered your football career earlier. But football has also had a legal aspect to you as a 20 year member of the AFL tribunal.

Emmett Dunne [00:37:14] It's quite interesting. I had some very strong mentors in those days, including yourself and other people from the bar. I learned a great deal from. Yeah look sport has been great to me. It did a lot of good things for me and I learned a lot from it and gained a hell of a lot from it. I felt my and I must admit when I was playing it was a different set of rules. You know, there's different expectations about playing tough and hard and all sorts of things. So I had to adopt to the to the time when I sat on the tribunal. And I think we really tried as best we could to improve the game's safety and the way it was played. Neil Busy was the first chair that I worked with a took it on by the by the

throat, if you like and made a stacne. And then Brian "Sticks" Collas passed, lovely fellow was sadly missed. He had a different approach, you know, more of a considered approach, a rounded approach, and very highly respected. And then we moved into the systems approach where, as you very well know, there's all sorts of gradings and points and resultant outcomes. There was a little bit of leeway within that structured system to to apply discretion, but mostly it was all set out mathematically. And I think that time, that era gave me an opportunity to get back to the game that was so good to me and set it up for the future, because it's about young people getting involved in healthy pursuits and without fear of getting injured and conduct and those sorts of things. And players today they often, although I haven't heard it for a couple of years, that they didn't want to be leaders in the community. But the reality is they certainly are they certainly are. So be it their haircuts down to everything they do the kids watch and they emulate, emulate and repeat so that they do play a big role. It's important to know that. I hope they understand the impact that football clubs have. And I'm on the board at Richmond and it's a great and I really enjoy it. But one of the you know, it's good winning games and that's importan. And then winning games is probably the preeminent thing we're trying to achieve and win premierships, obviously. But along the way, we can influence and shape society. Now we're influential, Richmond is a large club over a hundred thousand members, lot of people watch us on television and so forth. Our community activities, indigenous affairs, great programs there, Muslim community for the Basha Hooli Foundation, domestic violence for the Alana and Madeline Foundation. And we're very strong on equality and equal opportunity. So that ability for us to reach across the community and make an influence is something I'm really enjoying and clubs doing I'd say like all clubs doing a great show, but ours in particular, I'm very proud of what we're doing in that regards.

Michael Green [00:40:37] We've mentioned John and Joan citizen a lot throughout this conversation, Emmett. But what about John and Joan police officer? The police officers on the street. The principles that you've explained to us, the ethical framework within which you operate and the Victoria Police force operates. How does it play out on a day to day basis with John and Joan police officer?

Emmett Dunne [00:41:00] Interesting question. I said earlier, it's a mighty difficult job they do, given the obligations they have and and feel when they sign up the organization to to do what they do and demanding in many ways; judgment, physically demanding, emotionally demanding in every way. And it calls upon them to make decisions on the run. They're training, their training can be, as I said before, their training can be what it is and it's more of an overt process; where in this situation you do this and you apply this law and there's the points of proof for the offenses and so forth. But the craft of policing is something that that evolves over time. It's about quality at the source. So in recruiting young people in the main young people to our organization or the organization, Victoria Police, is is a lot to do with that. Getting the right people there who are motivated by the right things and really want to do the best by the community. Then it's about the training they're supplied with. But it's also about middle level management, and I'm talking with sergeants, senior sergeant, taking a leadership role and understanding what leadership is all about and their role in guiding and assisting and mentoring and helping young people through a particularly difficult phase. I think the first couple of years in the in the police force is difficult. It was for me I worked at at Heidelberg and you trip over to Heidelberg West, which the housing commission area where people had lovely televisions on hire purchase and lovely cars but the place was a wreck and there are all sorts of problems. Coming to terms with that. Coming to terms with crime, I remember at the commission flats in Richmond, walking in, and this murder has been solved, a Vietnamese lady being

murdered, cut ear to ear and coming across that those things can, you know, particularly if not prepared, can be big impact upon you. So it's a difficult thing, multi-layered.

Michael Green [00:43:16] I mean, I'm assuming with, you know, John and Joan, police officer, they're going to have to make their mistakes. I mean, everybody in all of us in doing our job is when we're young, we make our mistakes. We learn through our mistakes. Policing is such a critical part of the functioning of our society, mistakes by police officers can create huge problems for us. How do we manage that? How do we contain it so those those mistakes are not critical and create terrible problems?

Emmett Dunne [00:43:48] I used to say, I used to address a lot of the recruit squads at the academy and I used to say to them make mistakes is OK, you know, you're decision makers, everyone makes mistakes. Best mistakes are the honest mistakes. And if you do make a mistakes put your hand up first available opportunity cry out for help. And if you're not getting at the level you know you're approaching, if people ignore you, go the next rank are until you get people who will help you. And, very simply, always tell the truth. It's the easiest thing to remember. And you can sleep at night. You might have made a mistake but at least you've rectified it and get things rolling and your stories out there, warts and all. And when I was a professional standards command, would you believe I was, there were quite a few complaints against me personally for whatever reasons, you know. All sorts of complaints, people come out of the woodwork and and I used to trot up to the OPI or IBEC with my diaries and notebooks and my computers and everything like that and it was all open book for me. Open book. Here I am, what are the allegations? This is no and nothing was founded, a lot of it was was unrelated to anything I did at work. But, but that's part of the job. You've also got to understand that people get upset when there's an inquiry about what they've what they've done and they're totally innocent. And I used to say to them it's tough-love. Better off putting it all out there, getting the best possible investigator to investigate the allegations, give them everything, tell them - do your best, here it is. Because once you get an independent investigation, which is critically important so that the end of the day you can walk away and with your head held high and know that you are innocent of the allegations.

Michael Green [00:45:35] Now Emmett you retired, a relatively young age, 58. You're a career policeman and obviously have got to this day great love & respect for the Victoria Police force and you had a wonderful career in it. You didn't say a few more years where you would have served the community in your role as a senior policeman?

Emmett Dunne [00:45:56] Throughout my career, I saw many police who stayed on and hung on and on and hung on and they became anchors for the organization in my view and very negative, critical, cynical, and that had the potential to be a cancer in the organization. And I took a vow to myself that I'd never get to that stage. And I think if you really do respect an organization and I don't think you work in organization for 40 years if you don't love it or respected you wasting your life, which is crazy. But when you do commit yourself to an organization and you really do love it and you appreciate what it's there for, and you the other part of that equation is when you're true to yourself and understand how you're feeling, that you will look in the mirror one day and say, well, it's time, it's time. And the other thing that reassured me in making my decision to leave was that I knew there was absolute great talent coming through the organization. And an organization needs to offer opportunities for its future leaders to progress. So if everyone stays at the top and does their time it doesn't give opportunity to those talented people below them. And the risk is that their talents are wasted or you lose them, or they themselves turn into a sinister, grumpy old men - men in the main. And also too I always

lecture my fellow workers who are still there to leave with some petrol tank for you and your partner. I think that's critically important.

Michael Green [00:47:44] Emmett, thanks very much for your time today. And mate it's been fascinating to hear about the life of a policeman and his life in the law.

Emmett Dunne [00:47:51] Thank you, Michael.

Voiceover [00:47:55] Show notes from today's episode can be found at greenslist.com.au/podcast, there you'll find useful links, a transcript of the show and some wonderful shots of our guests. We're keen to know what you think so please reach out by all the usual channels. Let us know the questions you'd like us to ask, topics you'd like explored our ideas for future guests. If you're enjoying Lives in the Law, please tell your networks and subscribe, write and review the show. It really helps others find out about us. Our show is produced by me Catherine Green, recorded and mixed by Alex McFarlane, who also wrote and performed all the music for the series. We are coming to you this week and every week from the iconic County Court of Victoria on the corner of William and Lonsdale Streets in our beautiful city of Melbourne. We acknowledge the Wurundgeri People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of this land, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging. There is no doubt that conversations about justice have been taking place on this land for thousands of years, and we are privileged to continue this discussion here today.