

Future Generation and 2Fold: Investing for impact
Episode Eleven | Caroline Gurney and Mike Baird

Future Generation acknowledges the traditional owners of the country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

CAROLINE GURNEY: Hello, my name's Caroline Gurney, the CEO of Future Generation. Welcome to 2Fold! Today's guest needs no introduction – but I'm going to give one anyway because he's done some incredible things in his life. I'm talking about Mike Baird, the 44th Premier of NSW.

Mike used to be an investment banker then almost became an Anglican Minister then went into politics, where he reached the heights of NSW Premier and Treasurer. He then returned to banking, became a top executive at National Australia Bank and he's now chief executive of HammondCare, an aged care group. He's also found time to be the Chair of Cricket Australia and of Future Generation Australia, which, of course, I'm very pleased about.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Thanks Caroline. Great to be here. It's been a long time ambition to be on this podcast with you.

CAROLINE GURNEY: Oh fantastic. Thank you. So let... I just really want to look at your career...

CAROLINE GURNEY: and you know you were very much ahead of your time. You've had a very nonlinear career before that was even a thing and I'd really like to get to that, but first of all I really want to ask you something that we ask all of our guests. This podcast is called 2Fold, because at Future Generation our purpose is twofold. So for you, what are your main purposes in life?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Well it probably is twofold. I would say I've always wrestled in some way with this deep desire to make a contribution to community, state and country. And there's been all types of ways that's played out, but fundamentally it comes down to helping people. Like how can I help people in vulnerable circumstances or leaders that I have the privilege to work with to make them the best they can be? But the opportunity to contribute to improve community, state and country has been a big driver. Then, on the other side, I want to be the best husband, father and potential grandfather that I can be. For me those that are closest to you are not just part of your bio - you know, being a husband and a father. It's a rare privilege and treat and opportunity. So how do I balance all of that? Well those two things have been a guiding principle in my life.

CAROLINE GURNEY: So let us go back to politics because obviously it's been a really large part of your life, being involved in politics, and I'm really interested you know what do you think of politics now?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Well I have to say I'm... one word that comes to mind is "disappointed". I think a whole range of circumstances; it's not just the leader's fault or the reason we're here. I think social media has played a way. I think particular leaders globally have kind of taken approaches to politics that are divisive - and "us and them" at every single day and moment and media appearance. But the biggest thing to me is political leaders that don't do what they know is right or what they believe in. That invariably means that people are managing to try and win elections. They're stoking the division for that aim - because they're either trying to drive support in their base or they're trying to drive people away from opponents. And I think we've lost something. I think we've lost you know that great capacity - what is needed for our country. How do we create an environment that gives all the best opportunities for our kids? Obviously education is something. I look at Aged Care. It is very clear at the moment that, dependent on your postcode, you're not necessarily going to get the quality aged care that you deserve. They're the sort of issues that should be driving our leaders and, dare I say it, working together at times. Of course there will be differences. But you know when you look at politics that lack of conviction in leaders, their lack of consensus building. I go back to people like Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and some of the significant economic reforms that were done when all types of stakeholders came together for good of country. That to me is something that's missing. Then you couple that with the rise of social media, the coalescing of those that are against various government decisions or policies - that creates a very angry, noisy place. Most of my time at politics, there was all types of people that were upset over all types of issues. The challenge becomes when they overwhelm you to the [point] that you can no longer focus on the policies that I think the government need. But it comes back down to a leader - or a group of leaders, you know in a cabinet context -, that are determined to do what is right and what is for the good of country and/or state. That sort of feels like it's missing.

CAROLINE GURNEY: So I remember when you quit in 2017. Tell us about why you actually decided to move on and go back into banking, but that wasn't an immediate decision, but do you wish now that you had stayed? Like do you think you could've got through more change and more support for the community?

MICHAEL BAIRD: No not, not for a moment have I thought that, Caroline. I haven't looked back for a moment and said I wish I was still there. I think across many fronts, it was almost the perfect time. If I go back to the decision, I always thought - having been an observer of politics and then a participant - that many politicians, indeed most politicians, stayed well beyond their expiry date. They almost became

institutionalised. It became almost a career. I always viewed it as a chance to contribute, to try and shape and change - and then go and do something else. I certainly didn't want to become institutionalised in politics. I ended up being there eleven years, but I think there were probably three things that really impacted me at that point in time. The first is I always had this deep sense and desire to make sure that the person in front of me, the issue in front of me, the community need in front of me was - at the time I was looking at it - the most important thing in the world. That often involved very difficult circumstances and people. Remember in the Lindt Café siege – the loss of Tori and Katrina and engaging with their families. That has an impact. You connect with them personally and you feel the pain. That was obviously a significant event, but there are many events that you don't see anything about where government leaders are engaged. And if you're personally giving of yourself and connecting into that grief and pain, that has an impact. By the time I got to the end of my period as Premier, I realised that when people came along in those situations, I wasn't feeling it. There was a numbness to it. In order to be authentic and connecting and engaged with all of those people and community groups in pain - whether it be floods or fires - you're giving yourself. So you should, that's the role. But I realised if I become numb, I'm not able to do the job. There's also a self-protection in that - it's having an impact on you beyond what you can capably deal with. So that was one [reason].

The second [reason] was when I became Treasurer, I put a list of everything of I wanted to achieve with the chance of being a Minister in Treasury and government. I had a long map of everything I could ever think of. I went back to that list and not only had we ticked everything off, but many more things. The big part was infrastructure, but it was also recalibrating budgets in the context of helping the vulnerable and we did a huge array of things in that. So, I felt that I had achieved everything I'd set myself to do.

And then the last [reason] was just the personal. It takes a toll not on just you, but your family. There were many difficult situations in the family. My sister was unwell. My mum had had been diagnosed with a terrible disease and that was weighing heavy on me. My kids for a long time had had to carry it and there were various circumstances where it was quite graphic the pain that they had to go through because I was a public figure. So all of those things, made it very clear. I wrestled with it. And my wife and I went away for a weekend in in early January and we said, "No, no this is it, you know our time has come". So, I loved every moment [but] it was very clear at the end. Also there was a Successor, both as Premier and as local member that was clear to me, so I felt my job was done.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And how do you think politics could change for the better? Do you think we shouldn't have career politicians? What way could we encourage people also to go into politics to give back more?

MICHAEL BAIRD: No I think that's part of it. I would love if the next generation looked at politics and said, "Well, I'd love at some point to get involved or participate or use part of my career."

Indeed when I left, the Herald came to me - because I obviously went back into banking - and they said, "Well what sort of message does that give?" That's what the Herald said. And I said, "Well I hope the message is an incredibly strong one that I'd love for people to consider going into politics or playing a Senior Public Servants role, using their skills, talents and expertise to help make our community, state and country stronger. It does happen more in the US than it does here, but that, to me, would be a great way to change politics. It shouldn't be a race to the bottom. We shouldn't be making it harder - and it is hard - to get into politics. All sides of politics struggle with this. But Public Servant opportunities are large and vast. There are many sort of Board opportunities in government, where people can come in. If people are thinking, "At some stage in my career, I want to contribute in a public policy sense for the good of future generations and the community, that would be an amazing thing."

I don't think I'm going to fix social media, but that's something that you could do. I think that's something you could do.

CAROLINE GURNEY: So I mean I would really like to talk to you more about, but I really want to turn to a subject that I know is really important to you and that's Cricket.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Mm

CAROLINE GURNEY: So you are Chair of Cricket Australia. How would you describe the current state of sport in this country and then how does cricket fit into that?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Well it's pretty... it's pretty amazing. I think the power of sport is [on displays] in so many ways. The Matildas you saw them...

CAROLINE GURNEY: Amazing.

MICHAEL BAIRD: That kind of captivated the nation. It's a sport that's played across the world and our Mighty Matildas competed with the best in the world on home soil. Incredible. You know, that's sport. It can inspire. It can connect. It can engage, Even if you go back to something like cricket, we saw Phil Hughes [whom] many who are listening may not remember. But, you know, fantastic young Cricketer who lost his life to a bouncer. And you know when he lost his life, it impacted across Australia. There was such an outpouring of grief. It wasn't just the loss of an incredible talent – though obviously that was a

big part of it. But, within the DNA of the country, cricket is special, whether you're playing backyard at Christmas or you have kids playing, or heroes you've seen, men and women. It's been something that's part of our psyche. It's an important part of not just our day-to-day interests and leisure, it's a part of who we are and a part of our country.

At the moment, it couldn't be more exciting though because if you look at cricket, we are connected into the largest population in the world – India - and all the opportunities that that brings. You've seen the Prime Minister of the country go round in a chariot around the stadium, which you couldn't do in Australia. You can imagine how that would go down across the MCG or SCG or any ground. But we also are now going into the Olympics. We've got connections into the US Sports markets, with the World Cup being played there and that's a \$US250 billion dollar industry. So there is a huge capacity of commercial opportunities, playing opportunities, global opportunities starting right in the backyard. Backyard cricket can lead you to playing for an Olympic gold. Backyard cricket can lead you to being front and centre of 1.4 billion people and playing in stadiums with a passion and fervour you have to experience to understand. So, there are these amazing opportunities, commercial opportunities. But it's a game that I think right now is on the cusp - unlike any other sport I think we've seen. What we're going to see in cricket in the next 5 to 10 years is going to be some of the most exciting in sport.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And how... what about the future of Test Cricket? I mean how is that going to change? You've got sort of you know many players being lured overseas, how do you see that playing out?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Well I mean Test Cricket - and I know that you love your Test Cricket Caroline - but to me it remains the centrepiece of the game. The broadcasting here in Australia will depict that. It's still the most important form of the game. And you talk to all the best players, it is the one they want to prove themselves on. It's the hardest formats against the best players. I think the Ashes Series, most recent Ashes Series, showed how compelling it can be. Americans might not understand a 5-day sport but we were gripped until 3 in the morning for most of July as we watched those Ashes unfold. And the personal drama, the tensions, the stories, the battles within battles - there's so much about life in Test Cricket. So, yes, that will remain the centre. But you also have to understand White Ball Cricket and the economics of that. More countries can participate because you don't need all the investment to create capable, first-class cricketers that can compete at test level. So, there's more capacity in the other formats. But I do think the three formats will play a role. We've seen in this one-day format, what a compelling tournament it has been...

CAROLINE GURNEY: It is.

MICHAEL BAIRD: ...some amazing matches and that's different to T20. It's an extended version, there's different dramas that come. So I think it's all three [formats]. The most important thing is that there needs to be context for every match. As you say, there are other commercial opportunities. But if every match you're playing for your national team means that's qualification for the T20 World Cup or qualification for the ODI World Cup or qualification for the World Test Championship, then every match matters. And that's, I think, where we need to get to. That context so that when you're playing games you know that you're contributing to something bigger. I think that's going to be the secret.

CAROLINE GURNEY: So let's go to the number of schoolboys and schoolgirls which I believe the number is soaring in terms of them learning to play cricket. But why is that? I mean I... it is because of the Matildas or has it been some long term trends that girls are now wanting to play cricket?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Well I mean it was the push to make it professional and cricket led the way with that.

CAROLINE GURNEY: Mm.

MICHAEL BAIRD: And our Women's team has been most successful. We've had Meg Lanning's retirement, one of Australia's most successful sports people full stop. She's won 7 Worlds Championships. She's won a Commonwealth Games gold medal. Overseen one of the most successful sporting teams of all time. That obviously is role modelling and inspiring. And you're right. We're seeing the uptick in girls continuing to thrive. It's about 20% so far into registrations this year and that trend has been going for 6 or 7 years. So it's undoubtedly appealing. In the recent MOU that we did, we now have the capacity for million dollar players. It's something that any young girl looking [at the sport], they've got role models, they can play something they love and they can achieve significant financial success. So all of that rolled in together, with some of the opportunities you're talking about, like going to the Olympics...

CAROLINE GURNEY: Which is fantastic news.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Yeah.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And I think that's really important, especially in terms of that you know boys and girls getting equal pay.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Mm.

CAROLINE GURNEY: I think that's something that I really, really believe in so...

MICHAEL BAIRD: It's excellent.

CAROLINE GURNEY: I'm glad it's happening more in cricket. But one of the other things I really wanted to talk to you about which I wasn't really aware until a few years ago is that you were... well you were going to enter the Anglican Ministry.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Mm.

CAROLINE GURNEY: You know why is that? Like investment banking, Anglican Ministry, you know went to Canada to study theology, you know what happened and why did you change your mind?

MICHAEL BAIRD: It feels like a long time ago now. If you go back to what I said about what has guided me and driven me, that sense of wanting to contribute to community, state and/or country, was something I had right back. You know, so I started in banking ...in investment banking, and there was something in me that felt I wasn't necessarily doing that. In time, you can see that you can make big contributions through those sectors and in those roles, but I certainly didn't feel it. So that wrestle had led me to think. Obviously, I have a faith and I had seen local church ministers and the impact they've had within the terms of the congregations, but also broader community. There's a real connection in, whether it be Soup Kitchens or work with victims of domestic violence. There's practical work that you see a local church does - and that was compelling to me. So I thought, "I might leave investment banking and I'd love to become a church minister". So, I found this place in Canada, and it was Non-denominational, called Regent College. People from all round the world went there. People took a year off their career just to study. People who were there to become ministers and missionaries and it was an incredible place. So I went there, and the first thing you do when you get there is you write a paper on your life and why you're here and where you're going.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And have you still got that?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Yes I do. It was fascinating. And within it I put that I was looking forward to being a minister and caring for a local congregation and the community I'm part of. And the Lecturer put in pen next to that, "Or in Australian politics". That's what he said. I [thought] "Oh my goodness" because my father had been in politics, I'd seen all the downside. I thought, "That's not for me". [But] that simple reflection enabled me to challenge myself and say, "Well, there are other ways that I could make a

contribution. I'd thought that being a minister was one, but maybe I should think about politics and how that was." So, anyway, I spent a year on that Caroline. It wasn't a quick decision. And I decided, "Actually I think I will." I thought that what I could do is use a finance background and understanding to potentially make a difference in a government that I was part of. It seemed to kind of bring everything together. And to represent my local community in Parliament, I thought, "Wow that would be amazing. What a privilege that would be." So yeah, it was a long and winding road to use the song, but yeah it was a really important time, very foundational.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And how difficult has it been to be such a public Christian, especially now as Australia is becoming more and more secular?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Mm. Yeah I mean that's we almost need our own podcast on that one.

CAROLINE GURNEY: You can do that.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Look I... it's something I wrestled with. When I became Premier, the Sydney Morning Herald on the Saturday, their takeaway was that I had this dangerous devotion. That was the headline, "Dangerous Devotion". It was reflecting on my Christian faith and I was sort of amazed by that. I was a bit taken aback. I thought, "Wow that's the takeout." As my Chief Media Advisor said at the time, "Look, you know, Christianity wanting to serve people, look after people - that doesn't feel threatening to me, but maybe we need to get you to join a cult. A cult would be far more [acceptable]." That's what he said. Anyway there was a bit of humour in the office about it.

But there was interest. And the church, let's be honest, hasn't covered itself with glory. It hasn't dealt with many issues in compassionate and caring ways. That has hurt people and hurt communities and that is part of the resistance to the church. No doubt about it.

But, as I've reflected on it, how do you live it out? Well, I'm currently working for HammondCare, which is an independent Christian charity. How do they live it out? Well, I'll give you one example. There was a resident that we took in three months ago. He had a cancer on his face, [which was] really confronting, and he had dementia. But he didn't need to be in hospital, he was palliating. The sense was it was two or three months that he would probably be alive and an aged care home could take him. Aged care home after aged care home decided they wouldn't take him. We passionately believe that we will try and care for those that others won't or can't. Here's someone that needs, he deserves, [the same] amount of dignity and respect than anyone else. So the team, living it out, took him in, cared for him. He had no family that was known to the hospital, but we ended up finding his sister and they were with him in his

last hours. And, like, that's living a Christian faith. Caring compassionately, living what you believe. So how should a Christian live in that context? That the way to do it. Its deeds, not necessarily words.

CAROLINE GURNEY: I think that's really important to have respect as well you know for people who are in need.

MICHAEL BAIRD: Yeah.

CAROLINE GURNEY: And the fact that in terms of what you do at HammondCare which I'd really like to talk to you about. I mean why did you go and work for HammondCare? I mean obviously you left banking to go to HammondCare...

MICHAEL BAIRD: Mm.

CAROLINE GURNEY: ...and in terms of what the Anglican Church is saying so for example on same-sex marriage or assisted or voluntarily assisted dying you know, where is HammondCare in that debate, but first off I'm interested why you moved to HammondCare because it's a massive role?

MICHAEL BAIRD: I didn't know what I wanted to do but I thought it's likely to be the last CEO or you know maybe I do one more beyond it. But I wanted to do something that was purposeful and had an impact and...

CAROLINE GURNEY: And it's a not-for-profit?

MICHAEL BAIRD: It's a not-for-profit yeah. I think that not-for-profits, well they're for purpose. They need to be profitable and the more profitable they are, the more capacity you've got to put it into the mission and what you need. So, we're certainly pushing that. But you know, I was approached and I was compelled by the story of HammondCare. It started with someone called Bob Hammond 91 years ago. In the middle of the Great Depression, he saw all these homeless families. They were living around the church, he was down at St Barnabas. He cashed in his super at the time which was an insurance policy. He bought blocks of land out near Liverpool. It's now called Hammondville, so it's named after him. He got donated materials and labour and put a hundred families into homes. That's where it started. He was all about improving the quality of life for people in need and that's followed on ever since. And the more I read the stories of what they do - and they have now specialised in complex dementia. Again they take people that others won't or can't. They believe in the dignity, the independence and the respect of absolutely everyone. It's contagious, compelling and powerful, so I was captivated with the story.

But you know, probably the big, personal [reason] was my mum being diagnosed with a terrible disease. It was degenerative, like a multisystem dystrophy, [and we] just watched her lose function after function. And it was really heartbreaking to watch. What was heart-warming was what I saw in the carers and in the sector. It was incredible. And the importance of aged care, the difference you can make, was just so compelling to me. So, having that experience alongside the opportunity of HammondCare, I thought, “Wow, well I can use everything I’ve done in this role to try and help HammondCare and the sector and the care workers.” So, it became a very easy decision.

[Moving] on to those bigger debates which you’ve got to, I mean in terms of voluntary assisted dying. The thing is, there’s a deep belief that good palliative care can provide the best possible opportunity for everyone. I know that’s not what everyone thinks and believes, but we believe that and we’ll do everything possible. Many experts in the palliative care space believe that with that sort of care, you can overcome some of the resistance. And some of the best moments come in those last days and weeks. Certainly, you know, with my mum, she was in a terrible position physically. It was really hard to watch, but she connected in personal and powerful ways in the last few weeks that will stay with us forever. So that means though, as an organisation (i.e., HammondCare), it’s still an option for people. We will do everything we can. Obviously, we’re not supportive, we wouldn’t undertake the activity ourselves. But for those in our care, if that’s what they choose, we’ll help and facilitate. And if our staff want to be there with those residents or patients or clients, we’ll support that. I think that’s a balance. We don’t support it, we think there are other means. But if people choose it ... For us, it’s all about the individual. How can we just be compassionate? If they’re within us and it doesn’t make sense to move them, we’ll try and facilitate it.

CAROLINE GURNEY: Thank you very much for sharing that about your mother. I mean one of the other areas that you’ve always spoken about is Youth at Risk and as Chair of Future Generation Australia, which obviously we’re giving money to not-for-profit Youth at Risk, how... why is this close to your heart and how do you think you can help more?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Yeah. It’s one of the...it’s one of the great things about politics actually, or being an MP or being in government. You see so many organisations doing incredible work. I was the Shadow Youth Affairs Minister and that connected me to some organisations that deal with youth at risk. I did work with Youth Off The Streets. Individual organisations, [like] Southern Youth and Family Services, I’m still to this day an Ambassador. They’ll have crisis accommodation, then supported accommodation, then independent accommodation - and they go through a cycle where they give them all the support they need, they’ll encourage them in terms of education (either finishing high school or a chance to do a TAFE

[course]), and then, you know, opportunity to employment. They'll often take them to job interviews. It's amazing some of the work they do to see them become independent... You're not human if you can't see that and meet some of these incredible youths and [hear about] some of the challenges they've had. I had the privilege of having a couple of years where I took eight kids who had come through a crisis on a hike. So when I was Treasurer and Premier, I did it for a week and I got eight mentors and we went up and hiked at the Larapinta. I wanted to take them somewhere beautiful because they hadn't seen much beauty in their lives. [We had] all types of amazing people [as mentors]. People like Layne Beachley and Gail Kelly and Kirk Pengilly, Mark Donaldson, who has a VC [Victoria Cross], so a whole range of different people, different skills. We would walk and talk with the kids and we'd sit around campfires and we'd get great stories from some of the mentors. But every single one of the mentors said their lives were changed because of what we heard from those kids - the resilience in those kids, and what they'd overcome. And some are still in contact today from those times. But it's that tangible experience and hearing their voices and what they've been through and knowing the services [that helps attract] funding into these sort of organisations.

I talk about country and community. Well, we're stronger if we give every kid the same opportunities. And those that aren't getting it, if we can lift them up and support them - well that's an incredibly important thing to do.

CAROLINE GURNEY: I'm very much in agreement with you there. So obviously it's helping their mental health as well to do something like that, but how do you take care of your mental health 'cos you've had some enormously stressful jobs so and even recently with HammondCare with everything that's been happening in so many of the regions. What do you do to take care of yourself and would you seek help as well?

MICHAEL BAIRD: Yeah. I certainly think any leader has to plan their week, so that they have things that they enjoy doing and that take stress off. So, for me [that's] surfing, gym, running. Well, running has been taken off the agenda a bit because my knees ... I've smashed them, so they're no longer any good. But that sort of activity. I'd often have all types of things weighing me down; you go for an 8, 10 kilometre run and at the end of it, you feel that the stress has gone. Similarly jumping into the ocean for a surf, that first duck dive. It's almost like it washes over you. So those sort of disciplines I think are really important. I also talk about the need to not just be doing what you love, but also being with who you love. Every week, date night was always a staple for me all the way through being Premier. But in every role, there's a time during the week where it's just my wife and I - and we connect. Someone said its constructive feedback, but...

CAROLINE GURNEY: And constructive criticism hopefully.

MICHAEL BAIRD: That's generally what it is! So that's important. But sometimes that's not enough. You know, I was there during the siege and that impacted me profoundly and still does. I'd never dealt with it in any way professionally, but a few years ago and a few years after leaving politics, I finally did. And my mum, bless her, at the time ... she had trouble talking and she used to type out, "See a counsellor." And I said, "Yes mum, yes mum I will." And I didn't at the time. But, I finally did and it was incredibly helpful. There are things that I had built up and repressed, and hadn't really had any avenue to talk about or engage with - and it was very helpful. So I think we have to be open. Like, my wife had post-natal depression and when she had it finally called out and when she finally got some help with it, it was amazing. When I was Premier, she spoke a little bit about that and people found that encouraging because it's often something you can't talk about. We'll happily talk about a broken leg, but we don't in terms of our mental health. The more we're open about that, and also aware that there are times that are really tough. Long COVID is a good example. The longer term impacts of COVID, we are in essence through it, but there's that social isolation and [other] broader impacts. You know, those families that lost loved ones and were unable to be there - there's lots and lots that needs to be worked through. So the more we're open about it and talk about it, the stronger we'll be.

CAROLINE GURNEY: I think that's really important. I mean you've seen so many different parts of our society. I mean what concerns you most and finally maybe I could ask the question what gives you hope?

MICHAEL BAIRD: What concerns me most about society? Oh goodness. Look I'll start on the latter. I always have looked at hope. I think we don't spend enough time - organisationally, individually - dreaming and aspiring. When I look at Australia, there's often (in terms of media and the discourse) just constant reflections on what we're not doing. You know what governments are doing wrong, what corporates are doing wrong. All true, likely. But where is the incredible celebration of who we are? Those Youth Services that I was talking about; there is a group of heroes right now. I've got Care Workers all across the country that are dealing with people with complex dementia - and they're lifting them up and holding them up, telling them that they matter, trying to take away any pain, trying to give them dignity, respect, uphold their stories. Those Youth Services are giving kids that have been on the street since they were 12 a chance to go to school, get an education, get a job, and live their own lives. I know some of those stories. We don't celebrate our volunteers. My local Cricket Club, we had this incredible Manager that became the Volunteer of the Year. He has put in 40 years' service. He's looked after kids from multiple generations. You know, that's who we are. We talk about volunteer hood, we talk about mateship - there is so much good in community and country. I've connected into children's hospices and [seen] what our nurses do there and what our volunteers do there. So for me, that's one of the privileges I've had, being

in political life. I've seen it. It's not often in the media. It's not often on the radio or TV, but it is there. There are incredible people and Australia is made up of them. So, yes, there are things that are wrong. And, yes, there are concerns in a geopolitical sense. But we will be okay because of who we are. And when I look at those volunteers – all of them - it's a privilege to meet them, to know them still. And that gives me hope.

CAROLINE GURNEY: Thank you, Mike. Thanks very much for joining me today.

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