



## GOVCOMMS PODCAST

### COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR A SOCIAL PURPOSE: HUMILITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

- WITH LUCAS PATCHETT AND TAYLOR  
WILLMOTT

TRANSCRIPT

# TRANSCRIPT

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Welcome to the GovComms podcast, bringing you the latest insights and innovations from experts and thought leaders around the globe in government communication.

Lucas Patchett:

We have orange chairs and we sit down and we yarn whilst the washing's on. So how do we really embody that through a word? And it started off as friends of Orange Sky, and then we just dropped the Orange Sky and just went to friends, and I think culturally it's been such a critical thing, is that 90% of our volunteers probably couldn't tell you our mission statement or our values or anything, but they know that word friends and I think that really just embodies all of it.

Intro:

Now, here is your host, David Pembroke.

David Pembroke:

Hello everyone, and welcome once again to the Collective Engagement for Social Purpose podcast, which is a collaboration between GovComms and the University of Adelaide's, Dr. Taylor Willmott and Professor Jodie Conduit. What we are doing, is following their Australian Research Council funded Collective Engagement for Social Purpose, project and research, and as we go along on that research, having discussions with people along the way, not just about the research, but about some of the great people involved in social impact and collective impact around Australia.

Now, we have had a couple of early episodes, probably episodes one and two. Now, if you've arrived at this particular episode and you haven't listened to one and two, maybe dive back and have a listen to those because it'll give you the background as to where the research project has come from, the problem that it's focused on, and that'll give you the context that will really help you to understand and really bring meaning to today's discussion, because I'm absolutely delighted today that we've been joined by one of Australia's really impressive young social entrepreneurs, Lucas Patchett.

Now, Lucas is the 2016 Young Australian of the Year, and he was in 2020, awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his work with his social enterprise Orange Sky, which is the world's first free mobile laundry and shower service for people experiencing homelessness.

Now, Lucas plays a critical role as both the co-founder and chief executive officer of Orange Sky, in setting the strategic direction and managing key relationships with all of their supporters, which I'm sure are many and varied.

One of the key objectives that Orange Sky has set themselves in their five year strategy is to help 40,000 friends by 2025. What a great noble and hopefully achievable objective, to be able to help 40,000 friends with both free mobile laundry and shower. Now, Lucas joins me on the line, so welcome to you Lucas Patchett.

Lucas Patchett:

Thanks for having me.

David Pembroke:

And also, we are joined by one of the lead researchers on this particular project, the University of Adelaide's, Dr. Taylor Willmott. So Dr. Willmott, thanks you for joining us also on this episode of the Collective Engagement for Social Purpose podcast series.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Thanks, David.

David Pembroke:

So listen, Lucas, beginning at the beginning is probably a good place to start. So tell us the story. Where did the idea come from and how did you take that idea and move it to action to the great success that you've been able to create?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah, absolutely. And this story of Orange Sky really started a few years, before Orange Sky got kicked off in high school, my best mate, Nic and I went to school together and our school actually ran a food service for people doing it tough. So we had this opportunity when we were 15, to head out, cook breakfast for people, a kilometre from where we went to school who were sleeping in the park or sleeping, crisis accommodation centres around that centre.

And I think for both of us, it really sparked this curiosity around why is this such a massive issue, in our own backyard doing a bit more digging, found 116,000 people on any given night are homeless here in Australia. And Nic and I were really challenged by that, but also curious as to what could we do or how could we help in more ways than just providing food or providing tea and coffee, which is what we'd sort of had that experience when we were 15.

So to left school, went to uni and worked full time and kind of left that part of our life behind us and a trip overseas. And on the second day I was back catching up with Nic for breakfast and we started talking about this idea of, "Well, how amazing that opportunity at school was to give back to volunteer, to provide a really practical way, but could we do something a little bit different?"

So started throwing ideas around and eventually land on this simple but crazy idea of two washers, two dryers in the back of a van and then said, "Well, there's no time like the present. Let's give it a crack." And convinced a company to give us some washing machines, some dryers. We registered a business name and started going down the registration for a charity.

And Orange Sky kicked off for a couple of months later with our first wash in Brisbane, and that was October 2014. So now eight years on, we've tick over 2 million kilos of washing. We've done over 25,000 safe hot showers, got two and a half thousand volunteers, every week going to 300 locations across Australia and New Zealand. And today it's really ballooned into something much bigger than what we initially thought, but it was a pretty simple but crazy idea from when we started.

David Pembroke:

What an amazing story, and I can't wait till you tell us about the ups, the downs. How you started to solve problems, because I'm sure as soon as you began, it's really just been probably one problem after another, after another, after another. And really interested in how you go about that in order to create this sort of collective impact that you've been able to have.

But I do want to take you back to those very early days as a 15 year old, having those conversations with people, obviously less well-off. What were some of the things that were said to you back then and how did it make you feel when you were having these conversations with people, who were having challenges in their life and they were homeless, and do you remember it and do you remember how it made you feel?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. I remember being 15 and a few key parts, but one was to head out on the van, all you needed to do was sign your name up at the office and then the next week almost you were out. And so it was really low barrier to entry. It was really simple culturally at the school, it was actually a really big part of. It wasn't an unusual thing to do.

Majority of the kids that went through school actually participated in that van. I can remember the first morning going out and you know, get to school nice and early, about six o'clock and head out on shift. And as we got there, the person who, the driver and a bit of the leader of the shift is says, "You know, only a couple of you need to cook a barbecue. The rest of you just go out and have a chat."

And I can remember chatting to this young indigenous lady who was experiencing domestic violence, who was living on the streets, and as a 15 year old from a super privileged and lucky upbringing, all of a sudden had those moments of those aha moments of how could this be such a massive issue.

A kilometre from where I went to school every day, there were people doing it so, so tough. And talking to her and then talking to multiple other peoples. Another fellow Harry, who is just like my granddad or my uncle. He's got the same stories that go on and on forever and all these bad jokes, and yet he was on the streets.

At that point and is, he's now still connected as part of Orange Sky, but he's in accommodation now, but I think he's one of those people that stay connected, and it just reminds you that it's one or two or three little things can go wrong in someone's life and you can find yourself in a pretty tough situation. And so at the age of 15, having that opportunity, to have that experience, but then really that growing and cascading into what it is now is one of the great privileges of my life.

David Pembroke:

Mm-hmm. So you said that you went overseas and probably left all of that sort of social justice stuff behind and probably went and visited countries and had a good time, but then it was when you came back, you sort of reignited that conversation.

So can you tell me a little bit about that conversation with Nic and those very early days of trying to find the social enterprise that was going to have an impact, and maybe what were some of the other ideas that you were kicking about at the time that weren't Orange Sky, that you thought were going to be able to solve a problem?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. I think we were really fascinated with this idea of being mobile and bringing services to people. And I think that was one thing born out of the food vans, is that you can create these pop-up communities quite quickly, but then also disperse.

So then it's really flexible. You can take it any time. You can have a different approach for different communities and per city, even you can have a different approach based on the type of vehicle. And so we're really fascinated with this idea of being mobile and also providing services for people experiencing homelessness. So I suppose those two things.

And Nic had actually sketched this truck with washing machines in it. I remember even before I went overseas and he was just sitting in his notebook for a little while and coming back from overseas, again, no uni, no work at this point, I was sort of trying to find my way into what was going to take up a bit of my time from when I got back and it was just a bit of serendipitous timing.

I think we... Also, no family, no mortgage, we could really take the plunge and take the risk in that space. And I think, so it was once we had the idea, started chatting a few different suppliers about how we could make it work and it really just started snowball from there.

So we spoke about a different food van, we spoke about showers in the first instance to, but then we said, "Well, actually let's just do one thing, do it well, give it a go and then we can build on it from there." And that I think has been a really key foundation to what we do now. It's really simple. It's doing a couple of things really well and then plugging in and collaborating with other service providers to make the biggest impact possible.

David Pembroke:

So from a sketch in a notebook, you mentioned suppliers, were they the first conversations that you were having or did you speak to local councils? Did you speak to government? Did you speak to other NGOs? Who were some of those other people that you were having conversations with? And then how were you presenting the proposition to them that two young guys with a sketch could actually deliver on the promises?

Lucas Patchett:

I suppose working our way through the priorities almost of, well, we had this idea and we said, "Well, how are we going to make this come to life?" Nic and I ran a different project, we had an old van, so we said, "Well, let's use that van." And then the first ones of the problem we need to solve was how do we get this to technically work? And at the same time, well, where are we going to take it? Who's it going to help? Also, talking to people that were potentially going to use the service and that we used to see out on the school food van as well.

So I think that almost... End recipients obviously is a key part of it. Those different service providers that we were going to partner with, which again, started with the school food van, but then started to blossom out from there, both from a big not-for-profit NGO through to a local community centre, through someone who puts a barbecue on, once a week for people in their community.

So as a broad range of stakeholders in that space, councils, obviously we operate in some council parks as well. So having started to have those conversations, the whole, I think, so as the whole spectrum in terms of who we were connecting with and who was, but it was also tackling one thing at a time, I think, and it's pretty hard to convince someone what we're trying to do without actually having a tangible product.

That was a key focus for us first, was actually once you could see touch, feel the van, it actually made a lot easier. So we said, "We funded ourselves." We said, "Let's give it a go and let's just make it happen." Because we didn't want it to be a blocker or we didn't want to spend 12 months trying to raise money to get something together. We said, "Well, if we build something and then people can see it, touch it, feel it, engage with it, we can start providing an impact, we can start bringing volunteers on then." It's going to create that momentum a little bit easier than a hypothetical sketch in a notebook or in a something like that.

So I think tangibles also tangibility is a really important part of what we do as well, in terms of it is really hands on, it's really practical, it's really tangible. And that started with the first main subsidy and getting it going. And even for, it's a pretty challenging thing for a council or for a government is that we don't fit in a box necessarily.

There was not a form to tick for operating a mobile laundry in a park. There's community gardens and there's weddings and there's different things, but it doesn't necessarily fit in a box. It is definitely was some of those challenging conversations that I, Nick earned what would it look like and what could it look like? But I think once we had that tangible product, then people could touch and feel it and engage with it as well to get a better outcome.

David Pembroke:

So were most people supportive straight away or did you face considerable barriers to your idea?

Lucas Patchett:



Always a mixed bag I think. But also we talk about a challenge is part of our DNA and problem solving is one thing that both Nic and I really love. So I think that it's how do we flip some of those challenges into a positive. So how are we going to operate in a park, which is how do we then fit in within the existing framework or actually show people it works and then start to go on that journey or start in a local business and then start to prove the impact and prove the demand of those services.

A little bit of that in the early days, ask for forgiveness, or permission as well, and I think that's an important part of getting started. And even being young, we were 20 when we were starting this up and so some people that's a massive tick and it's like plenty of, "Boys get on with it," and then for other people it's like, "Oh, you're going to, in six months you're going to be over this and you're going to be trying to focus on something else." So I think it was with everything a mixed bag, but I think for us it was a really strong vision, a really tangible product, and also not, we weren't trying to take over the world.

The first step was get the van to work, second step was, well, where else can we operate it and let's refine the model. First step was then start to bring volunteers on board, fourth step, then you start to bring that volunteer leadership structure on board, so we can put the second van on the road.

So it's step by step I think, to get to that bigger vision. And not trying to, it can be scary if you're saying, "Oh, we're going to have 10 laundry vans popping up around the place." And that can be quite scary for councils of the governments, but so how do we take people on that journey and go step by step as well.

David Pembroke:

How important was it to have the vision though, to be able to communicate that to people, to have it to be simple and clear? Obviously you've mentioned also having the tangible product or service delivery vehicle there to be able to show people, but what about the importance of vision and of narrative, and of being able to get people excited that you're going to be really helping to solve an important and obvious problem in the community?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. I think narrative is and still is, and was such a critical part of what we do and that's how we articulate the people that we help are just one or two steps away from us, or from our uncle or auntie or cousin or whatever it might be. And so starting to build that empathy I think is really important.

And it's challenge stereotypes, I think within the homeless space, it's a lot of cardboard boxes, cardboard signs, and it's all negative, it's all geared around negativity. And actually how do we flip that to positivity narrative, talking about, it's a pretty terrible thing that happens to people, but also how do we take the positives within that or shine a light on that and tell those stories I think is really important, purely from a user perspective but also from a volunteer perspective as well.

So we've got volunteers who are lonely and isolated and their volunteering shift once a week is actually their connection to the community. So it's far directional as well for us for people that we impact, and also from volunteer perspective, and then from a vision perspective. I think it's like we went, in those early days, I remember maybe after a few months we said, "Oh, we want to go Australia-wide." But didn't throw that out there and say, "Oh, we have 10 vans, we have 15 vans." Whatever it might be.

But then it's really just chipping away one by one. And once we had a little bit of momentum starting to turn and once we knew the demand was there and we knew that volunteers were interested and donors would start to support it, then it really started to snowball from there I think. And so the vision kept evolving, but also was grounded in ultimately, helping people, expanding, engaging volunteers and supporting people in their homelessness journey I'm taking.

And also for us it's homelessness is a really scary, hard, wicked social issue, and we're not proclaiming that we are the solution to homelessness. We want to work in the space, we want to collaborate. We know that we

need to work really closely with lots of different people to support people on their journey, and if we can make someone's life a little bit easier on that journey and that's, we're doing an okay job, I think.

So it's really knowing that space and knowing that place as well because we, it is, like I said, such a wicked problem. And we're not building houses, but we're working with lots of groups that can support people and can provide that a greater support but ultimately, if we're the first interaction that someone has on their journey, and if we can make that transition or that journey a little bit easier, then that's ultimately what we're going to do is connect people and connect communities.

David Pembroke:

I'm interested in your insights around that collaboration piece and how does all of the various actors in the space work together effectively. But before we come to that particular question, I do note that in your narrative and your storytelling, your choice of the word, friends, who you are helping and that the five year strategy is talking about helping 40,000 friends by 2025. It's such a powerful word, and how did you land on that particular word to describe the people who were using your services?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. Absolutely, and language is so important, and I remember it was one of those early days, probably would have been taking the van out for about a month and we're sitting in Nic's kitchen and every provider we went to and that shift massive or international or national charities through to the local community centre through the butler that cooks a barbecue in the park every fortnight for people doing it tough.

So it's like this, I think that's one of the challenges in the space is you've got massive government or government funded organisations through to these really small do-gooders, but that has negative connotations, not like everyone's contributing and you've got that really broad spectrum, but when we're talking to people, everyone was talking about clients, customers, patrons, and it just was a bit clinical I think.

And so we said, "Well, actually we don't have perspex fences or we don't have..." We have orange chairs and we sit down and we yarn whilst the washing's on. So how do we really embody that through a word? And it started off as friends of Orange Sky and then we just dropped the Orange Sky and just went to friends, and I think culturally it's been such a critical thing, is that 90% of our volunteers probably couldn't tell you our mission statement or our values or anything, but they know the word friends, and I think that really just embodies all of it and brings it to life every day, and ultimately it's a leveller and we're there and we are providing.

Like I said before, it's a bidirectional service. It's not a one way. Here, you must fit in this box and you have to do this, in order to do this, it's really just a laundry and mental space that people rock up to. And some people do their washing, some people have a shower, some people just come along to have a chat, and I think that's a powerful part of the services is definitely, but it's grounded absolutely in friendship and conversation.

David Pembroke:

Yeah, wow. That is just so powerful. And you look at that word and you hear that word and everything that word brings with it in terms of this association, it just brings dignity to the friends, who I'm sure are struggling with all sorts of other challenge. But if they know that they can engage with friends, when they engage with Orange Sky, that's just create such a powerful relationship.

Yeah. Fantastic. Congratulations on being able to identify that and use it as a way to create social impact. Now, I do want to ask you before we come back to Dr. Willmott from the University of Adelaide, who's running this research programme into Collective Engagement for Social Purpose and to get her reflections on the Orange Sky story.

But this is a crowded space. There are lots and lots of plays, as you said, who are there using lots of different words to describe the people who are involved. How do you work together? How do you find is the best way to bring those diverse groups with diverse objectives, perhaps even diverse priorities? How do you walk alongside, walk with and collaborate effectively? What's your attitude towards that and what are some of the methods that you use to cooperate and collaborate with people?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. It's one of our values, collaborative partnerships, and we firmly believe that we can't do stuff by ourselves and we're not the only ones in this space, and also there's been, there's organisations that have operated in this space for a hell of a longer than we have and people that dedicate their lives to researching, to providing service. And I think it's because of the complexity of the issue. You need that breadth and you need the lots of different strategies and whatnot to support people I think. But also, we're not perfect in the space.

We've made good steps in terms of every shift we operate is always in partnership with someone. If that's a food van, a soup kitchen, a healthcare clinic, a local community centre or a housing provider, there's a litany of different providers that we work with across the country.

I'd say that we're starting to now collaborate even further in terms of how do we really curate pathways for people. How do we train our volunteers really well to know what are the key service providers in the location.

Ultimately, they're the ones on the coalface providing the service, but it can be, I don't know all the different providers in Adelaide or in Perth or in Darwin, but the volunteers, the more we can invest in supporting them to know those, know that space, the better. And then I think from, how do we then start to work more at a higher level as well in terms of Orange Sky being super lucky in how we've grown and how we've been able to evolve.

And now we're at this point where we've got all these touch points for people, we're rich data set and this rich opportunity to get the sentiment of thousands of people every week, purely by the geographic spread by the different providers that we work with and the breadth of the service that we provide. Which is a pretty unique position for any other, because a lot of other orgs are federated models and might not have that overall sort of national and New Zealand approach as well.

So I think that we've got an opportunity in the next little while. And we're starting to look at that and start to have those conversations around, well how do we then... Ultimately, Orange Sky doesn't want people on the streets. It's a shitty existence and no one should have to live rough. So how do we ultimately make an impact on that cohort and either stop it from happening altogether or shorten the time it happens as short as possible, and at the worst make it a little bit more bearable for people whilst they're on that journey and on that transition as well. So I think that there's a lot of opportunity.

What Orange Sky's great to start is building relationships, having conversation and doing it over laundry washing or a shower. And I think that those foundational things, you can't help someone unless you know them or unless you walk with them and build a relationship. And especially for some people who have been done over by the system, have trust and real challenges in terms of trust and whatnot with, if it's religious organisation or government or whatever and Orange Sky is not denomination or it's not or government, and it's just a grassroots effort of people helping out.

And I think that puts us in a really unique position to help even further. Are we nailing at the moment? We're doing some things pretty well, other stuff could be a lot better. Are we really committed to doing that as part of the future? Absolutely. That's it.

David Pembroke:

We'll come to the future in a minute, because I'm interested to know where you are going to point this social enterprise into the future, but I do want to come to Dr. Willmott, but I just want sneak one more question in, if



I may, before we do that. And that's around this notion of volunteering because you've mentioned it and clearly you have an army of volunteers who are working with you across so many of the locations across Australia.

But there are so many choices that people could direct their efforts, so many places that they could volunteer at. How do you go about your acquisition of people coming on board to have those conversations, to build those relationships? How is it that you appeal and attract people to come and volunteer for your organisation as opposed to going and volunteering for another organisation?

Lucas Patchett:

Yes. It's definitely. We've been lucky in the journey we've been on, but it's an ongoing challenge in terms of keeping and retaining people from an organisational sense. I think, core things that it comes back to for us is being simple. So how do we make as simple as possible to volunteer?

People don't want to jump through a million hoops if they're actually volunteering their time, I think. So how do you make it really simple and alongside, how do you make it really impactful? So we're lucky in the sense that 99% of our volunteering jobs are out on the streets and no matter what we say or think or give people, Orange Sky t-shirts or whatever it might be, which is all goes into it, but ultimately the thanks that someone gets, when someone jumps out of the shower and they've haven't had a shower for a couple days or they've done their weekly load of washing with Orange Sky, you've had a really amazing conversation with someone like that powers in comparison to anything that we can do.

So how do we actually make it as simple and impactful for people to volunteer? And that's what the majority of our work goes into in terms of even how we make nothing in Orange Sky context frustrates a volunteer more than when the van doesn't work, because if the van doesn't work, that means that someone's stopped from helping people. They need to give someone back, washing that stop fully completed or have to pull up, stop so the bit earlier, whatever it might be.

So how do we make that as reliable, as important as possible? So it's, I think really simple things for volunteering. Also, being clear I think with how the time and the commitment and whatnot in that, the value, again, both from a volunteer and from a friend perspective isn't actually on your first shift or your first five shift. It's probably six months down the track where you've actually started to form really nice connections, really nice relationships, and you've got these webs of friendships that are the forming of.

I was out on shift this morning in Brisbane and chatting with the volunteers and seeing some of those volunteers have been there for seven or eight years and the relationships that they have and the competence they have and how those people and relationships have evolved over time. It's just every day I feel lucky to be a part of that. And through to a volunteer, as a volunteer this morning who's only been volunteering for a couple of months and so then the sort of other volunteers have taken them under their wing and taken them on that journey, but then they won't, they'll be on that journey and six months, 12 months down the track, then they'll start to have those really strong relationships and foundations as well.

So I think it's impactful, simple and having those expectations clarified for everyone at the start. And again, we've done some stuff pretty well on there. We've also stuffed a lot of stuff often and so how do we keep getting better? I think is the other one, ultimately we, I'm here to learn and grow and so how do we continue to... As long as we're getting better, then that's one of the things I'm passionate about.

David Pembroke:

So listen, Dr. Willmott, really the gold standards in an organisation that started from a conversation and then a sketch in a notebook, and then two young men deciding that they were actually going to do something, turn it into action and to be able to roll through what they've been able to do, there's so many elements to this. Isn't there in terms of being able to draw together a coalition across many, many areas to be able to deliver on the

promise of collective impact and collective engagement. So what are your reflections on the story of Orange Sky?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

I think one of the key takeaways is the importance of relationships, which we have, and that's been a common thread throughout the project. Particularly when you're dealing with complex wicked problems and that focus on collaborative partnerships that Orange Sky has all the way through to it being a grassroots level effort, and engaging with community as friends and delivering that value to both friends as well as volunteers is probably what I would say have been the key lessons that I've learned through listening to the Orange Sky story.

But also that innovative mindset I think is being probably another key element to that story that I would like to reflect on further and how that looks like in the non-for-profit space is a slightly different than may have been in the commercial space.

So I think Orange Sky has proved that it can compete, I guess with those organisations that do have a bottom line and commercial objectives in order to move forward and grow the organisation into the future. So yeah, it's been a pleasure to listen to the conversation again.

David Pembroke:

But it's quite powerful though, isn't it? And it really is a mindset when challenges and setbacks arrive and on the face of it they take the wind out of your sails and you do think that they are, "Oh this is a terrible thing." But as Lucas was saying before, it's like they've developed this mindset where it's like, "Well okay, where's the good in this? Where's the opportunity and how do we adapt?"

So again, I think that could be a powerful insight, isn't it? Around that collective ability to be able to move from what seems like a serious setback to a, "No. It's not that. What it is, is a major opportunity."

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think Lucas's words was challenge or problem solving is part of their DNA. So I think that says it all, that of how their mindset is around tackling complex problems and as you say, David, not necessarily seeing it as a setback, but maybe an opportunity for growth.

David Pembroke:

And what's come through in to me anyway, talking to Lucas, there is this reservoir of humility in the way that Nic and Lucas and the team have gone about building this organisation. And it's not there to do anything other than to deliver on the promise of, "We'll talk to you, we'll give you a shower and we'll clean your clothes." And that ability to keep it simple, create experiences not only for the friends but also for the volunteers who are also part of these friends network.

But in your research, just how important is it that humility be nested into these organisations such that people will support them and people will grow with them?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

I think humility is a key part of being able to develop partnerships. So as Lucas said, they're not here to solve the problem of homelessness on their own. They recognise that everyone has a role to play and contribute. And I think that model of focusing on one or two things and doing them really well, as well as feeding into other service providers and community centres for example, and being able to have that mindset of let's involve people so that we can have greater collective impact is probably underpins some of the foundation of the work that Orange Sky does.

David Pembroke:

So listen Lucas, then for you from here, when you look out a little bit further and I know to set those visions and to stay in the moment and to keep it simple, to keep it impactful, to continue to learn the lessons, to continue to improve was another idea that you sort of presented a moment ago.

This notion of on the face of it things look fantastic, but there's a lot going on, that is probably not working as well as you would like it to work with. Where are the next big challenges for you and where you're going to be able to have those next big impacts?

Lucas Patchett:

Yes. And Orange Sky's evolved a lot over the last eight years and that we started very much focused around those metro centres for people experiencing homelessness. And we've now evolved into doing showers, we've now evolved into doing work in remote aboriginal communities providing access to health hardware.

So we've now got, last week launched our 10th service in a remote aboriginal community here in Australia. So the heap of need and there's a heap of really simple and good work that Orange Sky can do, and those communities to tackle health outcomes and massive health inequity issues that are happening in our own backyard. So I think that's a big part of process.

Another one is how do we really bring the service to every in any community? So we've recently started running shifts out of laundromats in some smaller communities across the country where people pull on Orange Sky shirt, go down to local laundromat and we invite people, friends from the communities to come in and do washing for free at those communities. So it's almost, we've now got this spectrum of no capital required startup immediately in any community and really democratise almost Orange Sky services all the way through to multiple vans and hundreds of volunteers in different cities.

So for us it's about continuing to grow, providing that service that to as many people that need it across the country and based on the trajectory that we're heading on, getting to 40,000 people in 2025 is kind of that North Star metric across that matter. But simultaneously, like I was talking about before, starting to build, well now, we've got this width of different service offerings and locations and geographies and people that we're connecting with.

How do we then, if we can find one way to help people a little bit further? So really tangible example is a lot of our shifts around the country will have a hairdresser come out and do haircuts. We had people throughout COVID, giving COVID vaccines out on shifts with, because we've got this safe space that people trust us with their time and with their possessions. So how do we then utilise that without violating that trust but really start to go take people on that journey as well. So it's continuing to leverage that, continuing to grow, provide the services to communities that need it.

I think continuing to build that, the Orange Sky narrative and story as well in terms of more volunteers, more people helped and more people in that community that make it happen as well. So I think one thing which you haven't touched on too much is around our supporters and Orange Sky is not-for-profit. It's funded purely by the generosity of the public, and that's one thing I'm really passionate about is that the community that we operate in are the communities that volunteer for it, the communities that utilise it, but it's also the communities that funded as well.

So again, the shift I was at this morning, the hotel across the road, every couple of weeks they'll bring out some shampoos and conditioners and hand them out to people on the streets there. They've also donated to us in the past as well, and that's, they're directly across the road from us and they use that as an opportunity to lean in and support further, whereas could in some cases it can go the other way as well. So how do we really keep inspiring and bringing communities together.

David Pembroke:

So what does that funding mix look like for Orange Sky?

Lucas Patchett:

So we're a not-for-profit. So normally funded through the generosity of the public. So corporate partners, philanthropists, grants, and then everyday people jumping on the website and supporting us through the schools doing fundraisers and stuff for us as well. So it's kind of 97% of our funding. We have had a small portion of government funding in the past, but no funding currently from the government.

And then we also have a few of sustainable revenue streams that we're trialling in terms of some commercial opportunities, both in selling merchandise, selling a software platform. And also we've got a little laundromat in Adelaide as well that we, is open to the public for people to utilise as a commercial laundromat as well.

So a few different things were trialling to what does the upshot for Orange Sky look like? And so how do we build that? But ultimately it comes back to the power of the community, and 97% of our funding comes through donations and corporate sport and philanthropy.

David Pembroke:

Now, you also mentioned in an earlier answer around the access to data and you are having these conversations in multiple locations across Australia every day. And clearly, trust has been mentioned as you assemble that data, but how do you go about assembling that data and then how do you use it to continuously improve the services that you offer?

Lucas Patchett:

Yeah. As one who knows, probably another thing we saw early on is that some places you'd go and in that order to engage with the service, you'd actually need to fill out a double page, a four of all this very in depth, which sometimes link back to the government funding or whatever the groups might be capturing.

So for us, all we capture is pretty high level data around obviously time, location, how many people we did the first name, if people want to opt into that, and also if we have turned anyone away or if we've preferred people onto that helps us with our demand management and looking at that, we've just, and we're trial, we're prototyping and trialling at the moment a project called the Friend Voice Project, which essentially is how do we take that data and get a bit more richness to that data.

So it tells us more information about where do people, again de-identified and whatnot, but where do people sleep last night? How do they hear about Orange Sky? What do they gain most out of Orange Sky? That's in its very initial phases, stages because again, we're very cognizant and conscious of being non-judgmental, having that open environment, that anyone can come along to and engage with our service.

So I think that, but also we know that the richness of that data is going to, not only for us in terms of our service delivery, but also for homelessness and people doing it tough as a whole can have a tremendous impact. So I think that we're really invested in making that as effective as possible.

David Pembroke:

So just as we wrap up, Dr. Willmott, your reflections perhaps on Orange Sky as you continue to work through this research project around Collective Engagement for Social Purpose, what are the key things for you?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

So I would say the one of the main ones is around this idea of maintaining engagement within a group over an extended period of time, which Orange Sky again is almost a great case study of understanding the different

ingredients for maintaining momentum with engagement, not only I suppose at the funding level, but particularly at the friend in the volunteer level.

And I think one of the key things I wrote down is around relationships and almost building in that sense of ownership so that it's not Lucas or Nic that own Orange Sky, but almost allowing friends, volunteers, and everyone within the Orange Sky community to have a sense of ownership and pride in the work that they're doing in order for them to keep coming back and giving their time to helping make sure that orange sky continues to go in the future and increase their impact over time.

And I think around that idea of sustainability and linking back to the innovative mindset, it would be really interesting to continue to follow the work I think of Orange Sky to better understand how collective engagement can be maintained over a longer period of time.

David Pembroke:

So Lucas, it's, yes I think that collective action is one thing, but it does require leadership and certainly you and Nic have been able to lead very strongly, and I'm sure people are leading every day, but the clarity with which you speak and you tell stories and you shape your direction, it's inspiring, clearly.

And to have had the impact that you've had, I think comes reflects enormously well on your ability to be able to tell a story and to be able to solve a problem and to be able to direct people and the best of people towards helping others.

So what a great story and thank you so much for giving up some of your valuable time today to share it with us on this podcast series. And I'm sure people who are listening, who are trying to understand, well how do we create collective impact? How do we bring people together? This has been a masterclass.

So thank you so much in the way that you've described what you've done and all the very best in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

Lucas Patchett:

Thanks so much for having me.

David Pembroke:

So there you have it, audience. Wow, what a story. But again, that just humility, just coming out of Lucas in every action, every thought, every problem, every identification. This notion of we're not going to call people clients, we're not going to call them customers, none of that. They're our friends. And that builds that culture, doesn't it? In the organisation that inspires people to get involved.

So what a rich contribution to this podcast series and indeed to the work that Dr. Willmott and Professor Conduit are doing over there at the University of Adelaide on this Australian Research Council grant. So a big thanks to the Australia Research Council also, for enabling this research to take place.

We have more conversations as we continue to follow this research programme, but a big thanks to Lucas Patchett today. And once again, a big thanks to Dr. Taylor Willmott. We'll be back in a couple of weeks time with some more episodes, but for the moment it's bye for now.

Outro:

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