



GOVCOMMS PODCAST

EPISODE #132

COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR A SOCIAL PURPOSE

EPISODE ONE

TRANSCRIPT

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Introduction:

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

David Pembroke:

GovComms is going along for the ride, and we will follow the journey of this multi-year, multi-phase research project, which is called Collective Engagement for Social Purpose.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

It's not enough just to get individual level behaviour change if you want systemic change. And, I think we can all recognise that we operate within a system, within institutions. And, if we can't bring everyone together, in order to bring about the change we wish to see, one person changing is just not enough.

Jodie Conduit:

We need to have engagement among groups, and we wanted to do that in a really meaningful context. And we didn't want to be, I guess, tied down to any one sector. So we started to think about this notion of collective engagement towards, or driving a real social purpose in society.

Introduction:

Now, here is your host, David Pembroke.

David Pembroke:

Well, hello, everyone, and welcome to a very special podcast series for GovComms, in partnership with our good friends at the University of Adelaide.

David Pembroke:

Dr. Taylor Willmott and Professor Jodie Conduit are from the university's business school. And they were smart enough to convince the Australian Research Council that it was important, in our rapidly changing and evolving world, to understand how leaders can create movements, to create public good. With the help of Taylor and Jodie's wisdom and insights, GovComms is going along for the ride, and we will follow the journey of this multi-year, multi-phase research project, which is called Collective Engagement for Social Purpose.

David Pembroke:

Dr. Taylor Willmott is a lecturer in marketing and a senior research fellow, with an interest in how to apply evidence-based, human-centred methods and frameworks to solve wicked problems such as climate change, domestic violence and chronic disease. Her mission is to educate and empower practitioners, policy makers and citizens alike to find new ways to work together in the interests of the community.

David Pembroke:

Jodie Conduit is a professor of marketing and the Deputy Dean of Research at the University of Adelaide. Her research also focuses on social change and how we can motivate people to do the right thing. Throughout her academic career, Jodie has worked with several not-for-profit organisations in areas such as homelessness, healthy ageing, domestic violence and sustainability.

David Pembroke:

A podcast series supporting a research project is something new for GovComms, and I'm really looking forward to, as I say, walking alongside Taylor and Jodie on their journey to understanding more about the best ways to create positive social change. And I'm delighted that they've joined me on the line now.

David Pembroke:

Jodie and Taylor, thank you so much for joining us on GovComms.

Jodie Conduit:

Thank you, David, for the invitation to take part in this podcast series. It's great to sort of share this experience with you and your listeners, so.

David Pembroke:

Yeah. This is going to be great. This is going to be really, really looking forward. But look, before we get started into the research, I'd really be interested, as I know the audience will be interested, to understand a little bit more about each of you. So, Jodie, if I might start with you, what's the Jodie Conduit story?

Jodie Conduit:

David, as you mentioned in the introduction, I'm currently a professor of marketing and Deputy Dean for Research at the University of Adelaide. My research has always focused on how organisations can be much more customer-focused in the work that they do, and really work together with their customers. But I actually haven't always been an academic. So, I completed my PhD at Monash Uni in the early 2000s, but I was then really keen for a career in industry. So, I left academia and was really, I guess, driven by a desire to see the research that I was doing being implemented into businesses, so that I could see the impact that it was having.

Jodie Conduit:

So I worked for nearly a decade in the banking and finance sector, first in consulting, and then as a market research manager for NAB. And, about 10 years ago, I was drawn back to academia, for almost the same reason. I wanted to really make a difference and have an impact through the research that I was doing, and be able to make that difference to society. So, despite my background in banking and finance, since returning to academia, I've mainly worked in areas of social purpose. So firstly, with not-for-profit organisations and social enterprise, and now more recently, in the areas of sustainability and circular economy, but still with that focus on how organisations can really work together with their customers and with other stakeholders to make change and to make a difference in what they're doing.

David Pembroke:

So, that banking and finance insight, was there one or two things that you brought back from that career in banking and finance to your work that was a sort of foundation pieces that really had a big impact on the way that you think about engagement with citizens?

Jodie Conduit:

I think working in industry, David, and I don't think it's limited to banking and finance, but was a recognition that customers really aren't passive. Your customers want to interact with your organisation. They want to tell you about their experiences. And, in many ways, they want to help make your services and their experience better through those interactions. So, that was probably the main one that I brought back, and the real shift from the time that I spent working in industry, rather than just as an academic.

David Pembroke:

So we'll explore that. But I think that notion of citizens not being passive, citizens wanting to participate, citizens wanting to have their voices heard, I think is a great lesson for those working in public policy, in terms of the design of policy, programme, services regulation, but we'll come to that. Jodie, thank you so much. And, Taylor, before you were a doctor, where did your story begin?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

It depends how far you'd like me to go back, I think.

David Pembroke:

All the way back. All the way back to the beginning, because people love to know about people. They like to know, because they want to understand where it is, that journey? What sort of took you along the road to make the decisions that you've made?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah, sure. So, I was actually a multi-sport athlete in high school, competing at regional, state and national levels all throughout my schooling years. And at the same time, I was quite a conscientious student who achieved quite well, I would say, in my academic studies. And then when I finished high school, I had planned to become a radiologist, until I learned how much physics would be involved in that degree. I studied physics in my senior years, and it was, by far, my least favourite subject. And unsurprisingly, my favourite subjects were actually health education and physical ed. I loved biology as well. And so, not only did I have an intrinsic interest in these subjects, but my health ed and biology teachers were absolutely fantastic. My physics teacher, not so much.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

So, after deciding that radiology wasn't probably the career choice for me, I chose to study business and law at university. I ended up dropping law after my first week, and pursuing a double major business degree in economics and marketing. And, both for me were okay fields of study. But I wouldn't say I was sold in either career at the end of my undergraduate degree. So not long after graduating, I actually received an email from one of my marketing professors, asking whether I'd be interested in studying my honours. And the project was actually funded, funnily enough, by another ARC Linkage Project, and focused on binge drinking among adolescents. And my first thought when I got this email was, "This project seems really interesting, but what does it have to do with marketing?" And then a crash course in social marketing quickly ensued.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

And I went on to graduate first class honours and was able to also deliver some papers and things around how we can apply marketing to tackle wicked problems, such as binge drinking and drunk driving, illicit drug use, et cetera. And from there, I was offered a full scholarship to go on and do my PhD. And, I graduated quite early. I graduated at 25 with my PhD, and went on to then complete a two-year post-doc fellowship, all in this area of social marketing, which is applying marketing principles and techniques to social problems.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

And, I think I can confidently say now that I have found my vocation in this area. But looking back, my favourite subjects in high school are actually those that allowed me to be curious, ask important, socially-oriented questions, do my own research, formulate and test hypotheses and present my conclusions based on evidence. So little did 17 year old Taylor know at the time, but you could actually make a career out of those things. And so, I can say that I absolutely love the work that I do today.

David Pembroke:

Yeah. So, what did you bring from that multi-sport athlete background into your approach to your career? Because it sounds to me that you're uncompromising type, and you weren't going to stop until you actually found the area that you wanted to dedicate your career to, and you weren't really going to settle for second best.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah, that's it. I think, competing across sports, it gives you a drive and a discipline that not much else does, in my experience. And I think it also teaches you how to listen to yourself and to trust your instincts, whether it's on the field or whether it's in business, being able to go inward and listen to whether it's what you truly want to be doing and being able to find your vocation, or whether it's being able to make quick decisions under pressure, being able to pull them across. And also combine it just with, as I said, I had an intrinsic interest in socially-oriented issues and problems. So, combining those two, I think, kind of is the force that I take and approach our career with.

David Pembroke:

Okay. Well, listen, I'm really now interested to know about how these conversations started about this project, the Collective Engagement for Social Purpose, and thinking about what it is that you were trying to achieve. How did the conversation start? Who brought the idea to who? And, what were those original insights and problems that you were focused in on, that you thought was worthy of, not only an application and happily a successful application, but the benefits that society was going to get from this work?

Jodie Conduit:

So, a lot to unpack there in that question, David.

David Pembroke:

Yep. Indeed. Indeed.

Jodie Conduit:

The project actually emerged, I guess, as a culmination of several projects that a group of us had worked on over several years. So, we'd been working and doing research across several sectors. So, everything from mental healthcare organisations to not-for-profits looking at homelessness, education sector, even into the wine sector. But, the thing that all of these projects had in common were our really focused on how organisations could better engage with their stakeholders, if you like, primarily their customers, but also looking at how they could better engage with the volunteers, with carers, with other businesses, all to, as I said before, drive that improvement in both their products and the services that they were offering. So, we were coming from that position that we spoke about, that the stakeholders weren't passive recipients, that they were people that you want to engage with to make change, to work better with them, and to really drive that enhancement in everything that you do.

Jodie Conduit:

So, I guess, we came together as a group, with some co-authors that had been working together, and they're also the chief investigators on this project, and said, "If we have the opportunity to, if you like, chart our own destiny and really focus on something that's meaningful, that's going to make a difference over the next four years, what would we like that to be?" And so, that's really where the aim of our project started to emerge from. We were thinking about how we can bring people together to generate, not just engagement at an individual level, but engagement really at a collective level, where we know from work that we'd done to drive change in any sector. And I've got some stories for you later, a little bit, David, if you like. But, we need to have engagement among groups. And we wanted to do that in a really meaningful context. And we didn't want to be, I guess, tied down to any one sector. So we started to think about this notion of collective engagement towards, or driving a real social purpose in society. And, our discussions really took off from there.

David Pembroke:

And, Taylor, what was your part of this particular conversation, and where did you join this journey of multi-research projects and programmes, and how did you fit into it?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. Well, my addition, I suppose, to this project has only been quite recent. But, in looking back further to that, I would say, all the years that I've worked in numerous social and behaviour change projects, the one observation that we continually made, and I think is becoming increasingly accepted in the field, is that, and Jodie touched on it earlier, is that, it's not enough just to get individual level behaviour change if you want systemic change. And, I think we can all recognise that we operate within a system, within institutions. And, if we can't bring everyone together, in order to bring about the change we wish to see, one person changing is just not enough. And so for me, being able to apply those learnings, across different projects in the social change space, to the work that we're doing now on collective engagement, and how we can cultivate engagement at the group level, I think is key and something that I hope we'll be able to share findings on throughout the course of this project.

David Pembroke:

So, Jodie, that's actually quite interesting, that in a lot of that earlier research, as you said, that there was across not-for-profits, mental health, all sorts of different areas, was it a gap that you kept seeing that, yes, we're focusing on the individual, but really, what we need to be focusing on is the collective? Was that something that just kept coming up, that there was a hole and we weren't really understanding how indeed we were able to move groups of people as opposed to individuals?

Jodie Conduit:

Absolutely. It was a phenomena that we had observed in many of our projects, is people wouldn't necessarily talk about the I. They would talk about the we. And, they're talking about how they were forming groups and about what the group was achieving. And, it became apparent that there really was this shared understanding or shared drive towards what they were trying to achieve. But on the flip side, we could also see that, in other instances, we were having problems

because we didn't necessarily have that group achievement, that individuals or even organisations in a sector, were perhaps almost working against each other while still trying to also achieve the same thing, just because they didn't have that alignment, so.

David Pembroke:

So, when you were sitting down to write the grant, because they don't hand these things out, you actually have to be quite persuasive.

Jodie Conduit:

Yep.

David Pembroke:

And bring quite a bit of evidence to the table to identify, not only the problem statement, but also theories around it, and what more you need to be done. When you wrote that down, what areas were you really focusing in on that needed this further requirement? So, in terms of this examination of how groups behave, what was in your application that really, you feel, convinced the assessors that this was a worthy investment of taxpayers' money?

Jodie Conduit:

Yeah. David, we tackled the application from two perspectives. Obviously, there needs to be an academic contribution. And there, we drew a lot from the literature on engagement and showing how we could make a contribution, looking at the concept of collective engagement. But I think what really sold our application was our focus around social impact and social purpose. We had highlighted an analysis that was undertaken previously by PWC, in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact. And, in that report, they showed that Australia spends more than half a trillion dollars on social purpose sector each year, so about 32% of our GDP.

Jodie Conduit:

Now, traditionally, a lot of this is left just for not-for-profit organisations or social enterprises to really focus on, while traditional corporations would have that focus on the bottom line or they're returned to shareholders. But we also know that there's a strong movement at the moment with companies looking at their ESG credentials. And so, this balance of who's going to be addressing social impact and social purpose is changing. So we know that it's something that many organisations are interested in. So, this is really where our research can come in. We talked about, not only the potential social benefit, but also the potential economic and commercial benefits that would result from our research. And, a key recommendation of the PWC Report was that we needed new approaches to the market and system design, that would encourage all organisations to play that greater role in addressing social purpose. And this would ensure scalability and greater societal impact from the work that organisations were doing.

Jodie Conduit:

So, for us, it was, yes, it's about the theory that we're generating and our understanding, but it's actually about the impact that we expect that this knowledge will help us to achieve.

David Pembroke:

So, Taylor, from your point of view, as being part of the team, you get the good news. It comes through. Obviously, everyone gets very excited and this is going to be great. But, what's your first thought? And what's your first act? What are you now having to do, as you start to assemble this Collective Engagement for Social Purpose project?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. That's a great question. I wasn't actually around when the news of the grant had come through. I joined shortly after. But I would say, when I joined the project, we kind of hit the ground running in terms of reaching out to leaders, managers, consultants, who did have experiences bringing groups of teams together to tackle a social purpose. And for me, any kind of start of a research project does start with that listening and learning phase, and ideally, being able to sit down and conduct interviews with leaders to learn what their experience is and has been was the starting point for me for my role in the project.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

And, just, I guess, to echo what Jodie was saying, I think more and more businesses are recognising that social purpose is not only something to be doing as a responsible business decision, but it's kind of an innovation imperative as we consider resource scarcity and increasingly things like climate change. I think if businesses don't make that shift, they'll be left behind. And, that's been echoed in the conversations that I've so far had in the interviews that we've done as part of the project.

David Pembroke:

So, what other insights have you been able to gather so far, in this discovery phase? What are some of the other standout things that you've identified that are going to require further examination?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. So I think, in a nutshell, there's a new paradigm coming through, which is that businesses are no longer or should no longer be considered just a company, and more as an institution that's really integrated into the social fabric of society. And, in order to kind of get that integration, you do need clarity and purpose and a clear mission. And the leaders that we've spoke to have said how important it is to have agendas aligned and to have that one overall goal that you're striving to achieve. And if you don't have that, and if you have disparate agendas, then you won't be able to get the groundswell momentum that you're after in order to pursue a social purpose.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

And I think, related to having clarity and purpose is values alignment, and that's internally within the organisation, but externally as well, if we consider an organisation as an institution or even an ecosystem. You've got customers, stakeholders, communities, business partners, employees, and they all have an enormous impact, not only on the company's brand, growth, profitability, but in how they kind of communicate and interact with that ecosystem. So, I think having that values alignment between all of those different actors within a system is kind of critical.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

And then from there, I think it's recognising different roles within a group level engagement and the importance of having strong leadership.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Jodie, did you want to add some further insights from... Jodie's done a few of the interviews with me as well, so I'm sure you have a few more key insights to share as well.

Jodie Conduit:

Yeah. It's interesting, David. There's many different facets to this that are emerging. And one that really interests me is just the role of even social connections and emotions that are really important in bringing the group together. People will talk about their level of trust and their real belief in their emotional connection to the social purpose that they're pursuing. And, we're really investigating the role that these aspects play, as well as really the rational and logical reasons behind why people will pursue that social purpose.

Jodie Conduit:

And, another one is the sense of ownership that people are bringing towards driving, and Taylor talked about the importance of values. But that leadership isn't just coming from one or two people. There's many people that become champions and take on different roles for leadership and are really owning and wanting to address the problem. So, there's some of these things that over the course of our interviews, and we're just starting to start our analysis now that we'll be unpacking and hoping to share with you over time.

David Pembroke:

Excellent. So as this new paradigm emerges, and you've articulated it very clearly about where this shift is taking place, and what, hopefully, the benefits will be as organisations adapt to this new paradigm, what role does government play? And what sort of feedback are you getting when you're talking to these organisations about the role of government as this new paradigm emerges? Because perhaps in some ways, maybe the private sector is starting to get into the business that government has traditionally been involved in. Jodie, I'll put that to you first. And then, Taylor, if you could respond as well.

Jodie Conduit:

I think the government plays a really important role, and I think one of its primary role is a facilitating one. Governments are often in the position to be able to bring these groups together in the first place, and to really be able to, not just even financially, but give people the support to enact change. So we are seeing a bit of that, especially, I mentioned before, I'm doing some work in the sustainability sector. And, government organisation that I'm working with will bring people together in terms of workshops or events, and really help drive the dialogue and drive the need for change. And then, showing that initiative and support brings groups together to then enact and empowers them to make that difference.

David Pembroke:

And, Taylor, your views on the role of government in this new paradigm?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. I would echo what Jodie has said. I think government really is an enabler, a facilitator of change. But I think more than that, when we get movements happening that have become bottom up movements, ultimately, you do need someone to come in and provide some level of structure and organisation. And, for real change to happen in the long term, you really do need the government to take ownership and share responsibility. When these movements are coming together and making noise and saying something needs to change, a government also needs to follow suit, in order to provide that supportive environment for individuals and groups to be able to drive change in communities.

David Pembroke:

Jodie, back to you, how well-prepared, in the thinking of government, is it to take on this new role, this convening role? Or does it still feel it has to take responsibility for the solutions?

Jodie Conduit:

I do think that government is tackling things from different perspectives. They do play a role still in implementing regulation where it's needed. But I think this facilitating role is becoming larger. And I do think they're aware of that. If I can share an example with you, David, it's maybe not quite a sexy one, but working with green industries, one of the things that we were contemplating is, how food waste is treated in remote and regional areas. And, the problem is that, many people know that they shouldn't waste food, but they don't necessarily recycle it properly and put it directly in their composting bin. Instead, it often will go into landfill bins. What happens is, if people can put their food waste into the green bin, if you like, or the organic bin, from there, it can be composted.

Jodie Conduit:

But in remote and regional areas, they don't always have the facilities for composting. And the business case for investing is difficult because there's not necessarily enough food waste for the composters to make money. And so, you actually need to tackle this problem at two levels. You need government perhaps drive the infrastructure support, but you also need to get the behaviour change for it to be able to be sustained.

Jodie Conduit:

And, this is what I like about this project. Government can play a role in bringing together community initiatives or communications such as GovComms to get the word out, to sort of help drive behaviour change. But it can also bring the businesses to put the infrastructure in place and perhaps provide the support around that as well. And this is where we really talk about the collective engagement of getting all the different players in the market to come together to solve a problem like waste. We don't need the waste to be going in the wrong place or tracking it around the country to deal with it, so.

David Pembroke:

And, Taylor, your views? How optimistic are you that government can play this convening role, this sort of lighter touch collaborative role in finding these solutions inside this new paradigm?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. I would say reasonably optimistic. But I also know that governments operate on their own cycle and budget, and that obviously will impact the extent to which they can play that facilitating role. And, there will be disruptions in progress

that has been made as new governments are elected and kind of come on board. So, that would be my hesitation. That will obviously cause quite a significant disruption to plans and agendas that are being put in place.

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

I would also say, I think governments are increasingly recognised in the importance of citizen-led action. And you can increasingly see governments reaching out, whether it's youth engagement or youth advisory councils to up and coming generations, and kind of giving them a voice. And I think demonstrating that and bringing young people into the conversation gives me a level of optimism to say that I think the paradigm shift is occurring at that federal kind of government level, where we're engaging with citizens and recognising they have a role to play in the change and the policies that are being made at that level.

David Pembroke:

Jodie, we're in the middle of this, well, we're not in the middle of it. We might even just be at the real beginning, because I don't think we fundamentally understand what change is actually coming our way, when quantum computing takes place and multi-sensor environments, and we go from 5g to 6g to 7g to whatever G after that. What's the impact of this transformation that we're seeing in terms of that communications infrastructure and the impact on behaviour, the role of mobility, the importance of phones and the primacy of that? Where does that fit into your examination as to, how do you sort of, I don't know, grab the tiger by the tail, so to speak, to understand this ever evolving behaviour that's going to emerge from this ever sort of accelerating digital transformation?

Jodie Conduit:

Big question. I think digital transformation, it's-

David Pembroke:

I'd like the answer please, because I have got no idea. Because it is so fascinating, I find. I was talking to somebody about this over the weekend, and the role of TikTok as an influence. And, go back 12 months ago, you'd never have picked that it would've arrived where it is to have the role that it plays now in terms of the impact. And that's just 12 months ago. And that's just one platform that's been able to establish itself, and therefore, have a big influence on behaviour and other things. So, I'd be really fascinated to know how do you build that sort of adaptability into your thinking and into your analysis, knowing that the change is going to be ever present?

Jodie Conduit:

Yep. I think, I mean, there's many aspects to this, but one aspect I think is the ability to build those social connections among like-minded people. If we are looking at driving social change, as we've said, having one individual trying to make a difference in their own community, you could often feel like you were a lone voice or a lone soldier. And, as you said, platforms, whether it be TikTok or whether that be Instagram or Snapchat, it's allowing you to connect in with groups of people that are geographically dispersed, to tackle some of these problems. It also therefore allows us to have greater reach among those people with our communications as well.

Jodie Conduit:

But there's also other aspects where we can also be looking at getting real-time data around people's actual behaviours. If we're looking to drive behaviour change, the critical aspect is actually understanding those behaviours. And, a lot of the technology that we have now helps us to understand that in much more detail.

David Pembroke:

And, Taylor, your views? What are your views around the changing environment, that changing communications layer, that sits on top of this digital transformation? What are your views on how you assess and analyse that, as you look towards establishing some enduring principles around Collective Engagement for Social Purpose?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. I think, communication, when we're looking at the digital age, can now transcend geographical borders, and conversations can be had between and across different groups that may never have happened without technology playing a conduit between different people from different backgrounds and experiences. And, I guess, to give you a contemporary example, we know the discourse that's currently happening over in the US in regards to Roe and Wade and

the abortion rules over in the US. And if you just open your smartphone or your tablet, the news coverage on social media around what is a really pressing social justice and equality issue for women is just astonishing. And I think the momentum that is around that is a great example of the role of technology. It's not a conversation just for the US. It's an international conversation around women's rights and choice. And I think, if we can leverage that for the greater good, and allow people to come together to drive change, for me, the possibilities of where we could go in the future are limitless.

David Pembroke:

And, Jodie, you mentioned it before, it's that emotion piece, isn't it? And these basic fundamental principles and universal principles where people can connect and understand, that sort of sits at the heart of great movements, doesn't it? That accessibility through universality that I know I intuitively understand, and therefore, I can move. There might be all of these stats and facts and reasons and everything else, but ultimately, it's that emotional piece. And marketing, obviously, we're sort of circling back to marketing now, aren't we? Because that's the job of marketers is to really create that emotional engagement that leads to the behaviour that ultimately leads to whatever it is that objective is that you're seeking to achieve.

Jodie Conduit:

Absolutely. And, in the research that we've done, we talk about engagement in terms of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement, and at times, social engagement. And, through many of our studies, even at an individual level, we've found that emotional engagement can be the biggest driver of the desired outcomes that we're looking for. When we're starting to look at this at a collective sort of movement level, if you like, the emotional bonds and the emotional connections we're finding is what really helps to form the group. So, we were finding that that role of emotions is almost having two effects, I think. One, it's actually connecting people through to the social purpose and the cause, but it's also, we're finding emotional contagion, if you like, among those people in the group and how they connect with each other. So, I think emotions, when it comes to driving social purpose and social change, can't be underestimated.

David Pembroke:

Well, we could talk forever, I think. There is so much to go on with here. And I want to let you two get back to work, actually, because I really want to know what's next. I don't want to take up too much more of your valuable time, and I am really fascinated as to when we talk again. Now that you... Have you finished that first phase, Taylor? Have you spoken to everyone who you are going to speak to? Have you read everything that you're going to read? Or, just about where are you up to at the moment with your work?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. So, we've spoken to quite a few people. So we've had 31 interviews so far, but we're hoping to speak to at least 40 managers and consultants and leaders who do have that direct experience of bringing groups and teams together to work toward a social purpose. So, once we have time to sit down and analyse those interview transcripts, from there, we're hoping to be able to deliver those key insights in a digestible form, and share that in some industry engagement workshops later in the year. And then from there, I guess, we'll be also looking at how can we analyse and measure collective engagement in developing some tools and frameworks around that over the next six to 12 months.

David Pembroke:

So, Jodie, from your point of view, what if, sort of six months time, the world's changed, the world's moved on, the world is continuing to evolve, how do you bring that into the work that you're doing? Or are you just looking for those enduring principles that are going to stay true no matter what that external enabling environment might look like?

Jodie Conduit:

I like to think that we're at the cutting edge, David, so yes, as things evolve, we will be capturing that as well. But I think many of the things that we are seeing are enduring. We are hoping to come out of this, both some frameworks, as Taylor mentioned, that will give people some guidelines and frameworks into how to really drive engagement or collective engagement for their own purpose. But we're also looking at developing some measurement tools, so that they can do some self-analysis, if you like, and some self-interventions, to really look at how they're performing and look at which areas they can improve to drive their collective engagement.

David Pembroke:

You're teasing me now, Jodie. You're talking frameworks, measurements. Oh gosh, this is going to be good. This is going to be so good as we go through this particular process. So, before we sort of leave part one of this series, because as I say, we are walking alongside you as you go through this very important compelling market research programme or wider research programme, is there anything that the audience needs to know now, as we say goodbye, ahead of talking again? Jodie, I'll throw to you first. What would you like to say that hasn't already perhaps been said in this very first podcast?

Jodie Conduit:

I think, David, what we are seeing is that, there is a lot of people out there doing real social good in the work that they're doing. And I think that's been a lasting impression for both, I'll speak for Taylor, but for our group is the number of people that are really driving social purpose and doing it well. We do know that a number of these businesses do have challenges, but in exploring those challenges, we can help and work alongside them to look at how they can even have more impact from what they're doing. So, I think the probably my last words would be to keep up the good work that everybody's doing, and know that it is making a difference, because we're hearing some absolutely fantastic stories about the social impact and social good that's happening within Australia and globally.

David Pembroke:

Excellent. And, Taylor, closing words from you?

Dr. Taylor Willmott:

Yeah. Echoing what Jodie said, I think it's the power of bringing humans together, and I think for real change to happen, we need collective action. For collective action, we need collective engagement. And, the more conversations that we have and learn from each other become stronger, the closer we'll get to better unpacking and understanding what that engagement is at the group level. And I would say to listeners, if you do have your own stories of bringing people together, a group together, please do reach out to Jodie or myself. We would love to hear from you, and we would love to get your experiences with that. Whether they're wins, successes or failures, we want to hear it all and we want to learn, so that we can help others get stronger at what they're doing as well.

David Pembroke:

Excellent. So what we'll do is make sure that we, in the show notes to this programme, that we put your contact details up there, so people can reach out from the audience, and yeah, as you say, to share their stories, to share their experiences, so this outcome of the Collective Engagement for Social Purpose is a richer, more valuable piece of work. But I'm sure it will be. It certainly promises a lot.

David Pembroke:

So, that is fantastic. So, Dr. Taylor Willmott and Professor Jodie Conduit, thank you so much from the University of Adelaide's business school. Thank you so much for joining us today, in the first of this podcast series about the Australian Research Council project, Collective Engagement for Social Purpose. We will be back sometime in the future, not sure when, with episode two. We will actually get Jodie and Taylor, and put them on the grill for when we actually have them back. And we'll make sure that we publicise that, so people don't miss what has happened in this next exciting instalment of this research project. So a big thanks to Dr. Taylor Willmott and Professor Jodie Conduit.

David Pembroke:

And a big thanks, as always, to you, the audience, for coming back once again. So much exciting stuff going on in the world of government communications. We have spoken many times now about the OECD research into public sector communication, and I would encourage you to go and have a look and a read of that particular project, because this work that's being done by the University of Adelaide around Collective Engagement for Social Purpose sits neatly into the gaps that we know that there are. And so this work is certainly going to lead to greater capability for government, certainly, to step into, as Taylor said, this new paradigm, and to, as Jodie said, take up this convening power that government has, in order to solve many of the wicked problems that face our communities around the world. But anyway, exciting times. So thank you, audience, for coming back once again.

David Pembroke:

Thanks to Olivia and Ben Curry here at the contentgroup who helped put this programme together every fortnight. Very delighted with the work that they continue to do. We'll be back at the same time in two weeks. And if you do get a

chance for a review, or if you do see any of the social media promotion for this episode, please pass it along, share it, send it about. It helps the programme to be found, helps more people to listen into what we're doing. And again, it just helps everything to be better promoted. So, if you could do that for me, I would be very grateful. But, I'll be back at the same time in two weeks, with another episode of GovComms. But for the moment, it's bye for now.

Outro:

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