

David Pembroke: Hello ladies and gentleman, and welcome once again to In Transition, the podcast that examines the practise of content communication in government and the public sector. My name's David Pembroke and thank you very much for joining me. Today, we have a great conversation in store with someone who's had a varied career, but a career with a couple of key moments and key challenges, which I'm really looking to explore, around how do you manage the story at a time when everyone's losing their heads around you, and it's massively challenging?

I know in public sector communications, crises is something that we all deal with, so we're going to talk to someone who really understands exactly what that looks like. But as we do each week, we start with the definition of just precisely what it is that we're talking about. Content communication is a strategic, measurable, and accountable business process that relies on the creation, curation, and distribution of useful, relevant, and consistent content. The purpose is to engage and inform a specific audience in order to achieve a desired citizen and/or stakeholder action. That is the practise and the process of content communication.

But to my guest today, it's Alison Wright, who's the Director or Assistant Director I should say, of Engagement and Development, at the National Gallery of Australia. Alison has a great career. She started with a Diploma of Fine Arts from the Western Australian School of Art and Design, and I'm really interested in talking to her about that just in a moment. But then it was a shift into journalism, working in the ABC, but then a variety of communication and strategy jobs. Visteon, Director of Public Affairs, Head of Marketing and Communications at the National Gallery of Australia. She was also the General Manager of Marketing and Communications for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, and also a Managing Partner at Red Bridge Communications.

But she joins me now in the studio. Alison, thanks very much for coming, and to be in transition.

Alison Wright: Thank you very much.

David Pembroke: So listen, take me back to that fine art degree. How did you find your way into that world originally? What was it that motivated you and what were you hoping to discover about yourself and about the world through that art and design course?

Alison Wright: I love telling this story because I always think that we're often so linear in the way we think when kids are going through school, and choosing what they've got to do. I just threw myself into more performing arts and theatre arts when I was at school.

Alison Wright: I had a disastrous score when I left, and said to myself, "Wow."

David Pembroke: Didn't have enough numbers to get into university, or?

Alison Wright: Pretty much didn't get into NIDA. Let's just leave it there.

David Pembroke: Righto.

Alison Wright: I didn't get into NIDA first step, so I said, "Right, I'm going to go and do [something]". I was quite good at art and thought, "I'm going to go and do this fine arts degree." It really was I think a very, looking back, a very defining moment, because there were an enormous amount of mature aged students in my degree. It forced that really early learning. Art is an amazing vehicle to look at a world in a different way. Art history teaches us so much. I was looking at contemporary art practise, I ended up being a sculpture major, painting minor. I threw myself into it. The school that I worked through had a lot of practising artists as teachers, and so I really felt my whole world opened up.

Towards the end of it, I was desperately worried about being poor. I think it's a conversation that a lot of artists have because it's an enormous struggle to follow the pursuit of art and be that passionate, and continue forward. Perhaps I didn't have the courage for it, I'm not so sure. I had other skills, so I actually-

David Pembroke: But it was a conversation with your fellow colleagues where they were perhaps even the more mature age people? Were they saying, "Hey look, this art thing's great, and it's given you a great perspective and different skills, but maybe it's not going to put food on the table?"

Alison Wright: I think there was the understanding that the business of art is incredibly difficult. We were in Western Australia. The size of the market there, what that meant. The pursuit of becoming a full time art practitioner and supporting yourself through that way is so difficult in Australia. There's a lot of trends even now where we're seeing the art market in Asia changing, Europe is incredibly Eurocentric, but to be a practising artist in Australia, which is why when you do see practising artists' work, it is like a rare treat. These are people that have given their lives to the pursuit of their passion.

I unfortunately, and it doesn't really make me sound that great, didn't seem to have the courage to continue. Although, I've since gone on and continued to practise art, and I've actually had a couple of exhibitions, but that's by the by.

David Pembroke: Take me to that moment when you said, "Okay." Leave courage to one side, I think reality arrives. What was that like? What was the consideration and what skills did you think that you'd acquired and how did you think that you were going to apply them in a way that was going to create value for a potential employer?

Alison Wright: I decided that I was making a permanent change, so I knew in that final year. I actually engaged somebody to prepare me for I suppose a broadcasting career. I

worked with that person over six months. While I was studying art, I was also throwing myself into what was then the world of journalism. We read seven newspapers a day, I was practising my broadcasting skills, and getting ready for ultimately an audition into somewhere and working in that area.

David Pembroke: But they're the practical tools of the trade. Improving your vocabulary, being able to write effectively, broaden your knowledge, so as that you're able to pick things up very quickly. But what skills or what knowledge or what attitude or what did you bring from the fine arts that you were able to bring to journalism that helped you to tell better stories?

Alison Wright: I think that whole three years allowed you to constantly question and see the world in a bigger and open way. I think in Australia, I always knew that I would live overseas and work overseas in another area. I always knew I would do a lot of things in my career, not one thing, and I always knew I was ... I'm a pretty okay storyteller. The art is that vehicle. It allows you to see up and out of where you are, and you connect into whole other ways of thinking that are not your own. Artists have this incredible way of telling their own stories through visuals. It was that experience that just made me really expand my thinking. I've been a very open thinker pretty much since that day.

David Pembroke: How depressing was it then when you arrived in a newsroom and you realised that no one's looking up and out. Everyone's looking in and everyone's looking at the top of the clock and it's just a different way of movement. Information moves in a linear time, directed, top of the clock, particularly in radio where it's like, "Okay, we've just got to get this bulletin up and out."

Alison Wright: I think I had the most wonderful entry into radio. My first job, I was working in the Midwest of Western Australia in a town called Geraldton. I was the journalist, the one and only journalist for two commercial radio stations. I had the full remit. I got to write and do all of the investigation work for the stories, and then broadcast that. I also did a bit of on air broadcasting on the weekends, so I would get to know what my colleagues were familiarising themselves with, and we back in God damn when was it? 1998. 1996. We were the first radio station in Australia to go digital.

I actually learned my craft in '96, in digital, and I went back into metropolitan cities and had to go and learn on tape and all sorts of other more archaic methods. In that year, I had three amazing stories break which included a German windsurfer went missing and was eaten by a shark. I had a key Crown witness was murdered. There were enormous stories and so I got a chance to cut my teeth, albeit naïve as I very was. I was very naïve, but I really learned very fast and very quickly. Then, went into bigger newsrooms where I had a lot of success and I had a lot of fun.

I think news moves very fast, so the ability to tell a story in a very succinct way was something that I was loving. It was not long before I was a crime reporter

for radio at the ABC, and then I moved into television, and television's a whole other matter. It's good fun.

David Pembroke: Yeah. Indeed this transition and this journey, this story that you tell, so out of the regionals, like most of us, I was exactly the same. Many of us have been on the same journey, through regions, into the capital cities, and into the journalism. Did you think that you were going to stay in journalism or did you always think that there was that next part of your career which was going to go into more broader storytelling on behalf of private sector organisations and others?

Alison Wright: I honestly believed I was going to be a journalist for the rest of my life. I loved being a journalist. It was the most enthralling, best grounding I ever got for a professional career. I found myself in the ABC, loving it. I dreamed of being a foreign correspondent. I was in Sydney, I'd done some stories for 7:30 Report, not a lot, but enough to give me a taste of really where my career could go. One day, somebody congratulated me on a milestone of being at the ABC, and they said, "That's it. You're a lifer. Guys in Sydney, they're onto you. This is it. Your career is on its way." I quit six weeks later and got on a plane to Shanghai.

David Pembroke: And what was that? Was that the fear of being a lifer?

Alison Wright: Yeah.

David Pembroke: Someone who was connected to the permanence and the comfort and the conditions?

Alison Wright: One of the things that can be so frustrating about ... I think back in those days, obviously I'm not at the ABC now, but I think and even in government, some of the slow aspects of the machine of those organisations became frustrating for me. I was Chief of Staff for a year, and I loved doing that, and the moving fast. I could start to see my skillset change as well, and the management of being a Chief of Staff. You've got 50 people, you've got crews, you're moving through crises, and how much I enjoyed that decision-making.

I think it was that I was absolutely terrified of being like everyone else, of staying in the same place. Like I said to you before, I think I've always had a very innate knowledge that I would do many things and that I would not do them in the one spot.

David Pembroke: Sure. So, was it that sense that the challenge was exhausted? That you'd probably learned what you were going to learn, having had that job, and that you needed to do more? Or, you wanted to do more? Or, you felt you wanted to do more?

Alison Wright: I think it was more that worlds were colliding and everything was saying, "Move now." I was turning 28 and this was an opportunity. I had reached a really great

point in the world that I was in and if I wanted to, it was going to be Sydney. If I was going to take my career further in journalism, there was no doubt I would need to be in TV current affairs and move to Sydney. I just picked China instead.

David Pembroke: So why China? What did you do in China?

Alison Wright: Great. I always think I should have a much better answer for why China.

David Pembroke: Tickets were cheap? Someone said, "You should go to Shanghai?"

Alison Wright: I think I didn't at that stage think I would stop being a journalist. I saw China as a place that I could be a journalist. One of the hardest places in the world without being a war zone. It was a really like a, "I'm going to take a one way ticket" mentality. I got there, and within 24 hours I met, literally bumped into Bob Cronin who's the former Editor and Chief of the West Australian Newspaper, and I'd interviewed Bob in his foray into federal politics. I got out of the lift of a building, and I bumped into him and he said, "What the hell are you doing here?" And I said, "No, I think what the hell are you doing here is more the question?"

He was working on a project for Kerry Stokes for the Shanghai Daily Newspaper, the only English language newspaper at that stage. He begged me to come and work for him. He'll love me for saying that, and I reluctantly said yes. I started working and we were trying to get the paper to be more commercial. I started working in the features department and within ... I didn't work there for very long because what we used to call at the ABC, the dark side came calling. The best part about my career is that I found out that the dark side is not dark at all.

David Pembroke: No, indeed. I'm again, like you, former ABC who's been in the dark side for the last 20 odd years. It's the most-

Alison Wright: It's very light, isn't it?

David Pembroke: It's the most ridiculous notion of all time, but anyway. We'll leave that to one side. We could get lost in an ABC conversation. But again, what skills have you been able to transition from that journalism background into this storytelling on behalf of other organisations? What is it that as a journalist you've been able to bring that's been a real strength of you being able to add value?

Alison Wright: It's almost singular. A fearless ability to ask questions and to ask the right questions.

David Pembroke: Okay, there's a good answer.

Alison Wright: Thanks.

David Pembroke: Let's explore that a little bit more, though. To ask questions, to have the courage to ask questions. Do you think that you, having not been brought up into the organisations up through the levels, that you came in at a level where it's like it was obvious and clear that that's the only way that you could create value, was to uncover the truth of whatever situation you were in?

Alison Wright: Well, I was very fortunate. I went straight from journalism into a senior executive position, so I joined a company that was very, very troubled. It had been spun off from Ford, it was a car parts manufacturer, spun off from Ford in 2000, hadn't made a dollar in four years. It had 70,000 employees and the Asian operation had gone from two to four billion in 18 months. It was this wild and massive moving New York Stock Exchange listed company. For me, I got a chance to immediately step into a leadership role.

Because I was doing that in a world where it was very masculine and there were most of my peers, so the directors of the company that I was an executive with, were 20 years my senior. When we talk about asking questions, I think at that stage of a career, you'd be forgiven, right? For not actually saying, "Oh, I think I'm just going to hold back on that question because it doesn't sound particularly smart." I think that we deploy in our professional lives enormous filters, and I see it every day, and I've seen it all throughout my career.

One of the things that I do not do is deploy those filters. That has assisted me as I have taken on very senior roles with a lot of responsibility, because I'm simply not interested in the filter because it's cutting out a lot of time, but also, it doesn't enable a truth telling environment. That kind of ability to ... It's less about the courage and more about the fearlessness. It's just, "This question needs to be asked." I've also been, whenever I get asked this in interviews, I've always been very unafraid to say what I don't know.

I think that level of vulnerability or the ability to say, "I'm exceptionally fast learner, so let's just talk about what I don't know here. Explain to me what I don't know." I think that I've seen that in the great CEOs and presidents that I've worked for, and great chairmen as well. They're the people that just lay that down on the line and there's nothing behind it. It's not loaded.

David Pembroke: A lot of people in this audience are people who work in government. Very hierarchical organisations and this sense of upsetting people by being direct, by seeking the truth, by asking those hard questions in a bureaucratic structure can be challenging. What advice might you have for people who are in pursuit of that knowledge that they need to do their job, and they know that they have to ask the question, but it's very hard to do so? What advice might you be able to give to them, or encouragement you may be able to give to them, so as that they can ask the questions?

Alison Wright: I mean, you should know that I'm a rule breaker and a risk taker from way back. Anyone listening to my advice would go, "Right, she's actually, that's her DNA." I'm absolutely was born to challenge the professional worlds, and actually take

organisations through periods of change. That's the challenge that I love. My encouragement would be that that's a very authentic place to come from, so if that is something that you're wanting to do in your workplace, being authentic around it and saying, "Well, I'm just going to sit back and let somebody else ask that question" isn't actually delivering your true self, for want of sounding like a self-help book.

You've really, if that's a calling that you've got, if there's something in there, then you've got to pursue that, because-

David Pembroke: But you ultimately owe it to the organisation. If you're getting paid to do your job, you have to bring your full self, don't you? You really have to have that courage to be able to say, "Well listen, actually, I don't understand it" or, "I really need to ask a few more questions. It may be a bit difficult. I might look a bit stupid, but I really do need to know that to be able to create the value."

Alison Wright: For sure and one can never understate the importance of what it means to continually value that you're paid for by the public and their taxes. If you never forget that, and I think a lot of people do, the weight of that actually can force you to be better at your job. We run an organisation that is given money to buy art, the decision-making, the depth of care that goes into every single dollar I can proudly say is actually really robust, as it should be.

David Pembroke: Sure.

Alison Wright: But it's perhaps an encouraging point around this is not just a job and an organisation. There's a service element to it, as well.

David Pembroke: No question. Now listen, we could talk forever about all sorts of different things but I'm keen that we get to this crisis management and communication in a crisis, because you were involved in one of the most notorious cases around art provenance in Australia, where the National Gallery of Australia bought this Shiva is the Lord of the Dance bronze statue from someone, and anyway. Not let me tell the story. How about you tell the story and we'll just go into this sense of the crisis and then how did you manage that crisis? How about a bit of background and then we'll take it from there?

Alison Wright: Sure. I've really I suppose, I have quite a bit of experience in crisis communications. I've done a lot of different roles.

David Pembroke: Things going wrong.

Alison Wright: Things going wrong. It's always a great time to step in.

David Pembroke: That's actually not a bad ... Sorry to interrupt you there, but I've often found that, that when things go wrong, if you're the person in the room who is

prepared to say, "Well actually, I'm going to move at this moment" that's a big opportunity sometimes, isn't it?

Alison Wright: Yeah.

David Pembroke: That you do step forward rather than, "I'm not going to own this situation because I mightn't have created it."

Alison Wright: Absolutely, and there's often such complex stakeholder environments as well that there can be limited opportunities for you to do that, or it is definitely an opportunity and one that I feel very comfortable in that space. Anyone thinking about crisis management, think about being in a crises and how you react in them, and if you're really comfortable in that, you can often deploy some great skills. Most people go to water, most people lose that really great thing that happens in the eye of a storm, which is total stillness.

For me, the gallery called and asked for some support to navigate a period of time, and I came to do that. This was at the end of 2014. It was on the back of really three years of this issue. We can sit here and argue about whether they did a good or a bad or an indifferent job about managing it. At the end of the day, there's a dealer that we believe and we are very clear that we're the victims of fraud, who sold us a whole lot of work, is currently awaiting trial in India. There hasn't been a judgement on that, and we do believe in the presumption of innocence, and yet we've got all this other evidence.

There's a stack of statues that have got claims around them and we're trying to unpick the whole thing. What my role, I had an opportune moment. I think that that can't be overstated enough. I had a director that was leaving and a new director that was coming onboard. The ability to make change at that point, so I certainly am not criticising previous colleagues or anyone that's tried to unpick and navigate something so complex. With Gerard Vaughan coming onboard as the new director, he and I had a very similar philosophy around how we wanted to manage it and that was something that actually we discussed on the day he was announced.

I knew that there was an alignment there and because it's not just about managing the message. I always say, "Truth is the only defence." Managing messages is just really, you just open yourself up for conversations around spin. At this stage of the game, we're three years into that trajectory, we've just handed back, Tony Abbott handed back a five million dollar sculpture to India. We've got a very serious situation. What we did was we worked on a four week programme to dive into the issue and understand the extent of it. Then also look to a whole strategy around what remedy looked like, and with a commitment to the people of Australia, that we would have within four weeks of Gerard's tenure, an announcement around what that might look like.



It was a daily focus for the whole organisation to really get into that, and we've had a lot of success in I suppose not necessarily dealing with the comms side of it, the content, it's much more about actually we've negotiated a refund, we've got two other works that have gone back, we've got closer ties with India, we're in conversations with them. And, we launched an investigation on not just the works that we thought might be suspect. We also launched an investigation to the entire gallery of Asian art.

David Pembroke: What you're suggesting there, though, is really in the management of the crisis was to understand the problem and the context around the problem, to then build and design the solution, and it's at that point where you start to consider how you're going to tell that story. But you can't tell the story until you've got the solution or the design of the solution clearly articulated.

Alison Wright: I think so, but you can define the solution's timeline which in many respects is what those that are critical of you are calling for. The criticism that the NGA had was around transparency and was around sharing of information, and around, "What are you going to do and when?"

David Pembroke: But at the same time, and I get that, but the media are saying, "What is the answer now? What is the solution today?" They're not interested in you saying, "Well, this is going to take us 18 months, or 12," whatever it is. They want someone's head on a stick. How do you manage that?

Alison Wright: You say, "What we're going to do, first of all we're making a commitment to sharing information."

David Pembroke: Transparency.

Alison Wright: Yeah. I think that it's a very overused word, right?

David Pembroke: Transparency?

Alison Wright: Yeah. We hear it all the time.

David Pembroke: Yeah, it means lots of different things.

Alison Wright: But when you live and breathe it, so you want a document? We'll give it to you. You want to understand what this particular dealer was looking for in this paragraph that you've read? We'll give that to you. We started sharing documents with journalists that wanted them.

David Pembroke: I can almost hear the collective intake of breath from people listening, going, "What? You did what?" That's hard.

Alison Wright: Well, my aim was when you've got a backlog of Freedom of Information requests, so my view was, "I want zero Freedom of Information requests," and I can hand on heart tell you, we've had zero since then, on this issue.

David Pembroke: What about other issues?

Alison Wright: Let's not go there, David.

David Pembroke: "We're sort of transparent."

Alison Wright: No, look, we have FOIs on lots of things and we have a whole series of processes that we go through to answer them, but for this particular issue, we had to mean and do exactly what we said from Gerard Vaughn's directorship.

David Pembroke: But you had to break something, didn't it? You actually had to do something, because it was an absolute weeping sore?

Alison Wright: It was.

David Pembroke: That could not be contained by the drip of [information] ... Because as you say, there was continued questions about the next piece and the next piece and the next piece, and it was ... I get what you're saying, is that you had to. You had to do something radical to get an outcome.

Alison Wright: And I think we did that. It doesn't mean that stories are not going to come forward. The other thing that we did was build better relationships. A lot of those relationships with the critics, particular journalists, we got inside their world. I spent a lot of time with them, I shared information. Those stories were written and that's life. I think the other thing that is often thought about in crisis management is that zero stories or zero coverage is the picture of success. We've got an issue, let's be unafraid about how we are managing it, because we believe in what we're doing, in terms of correcting it. Those stories will come, and as long as they're accurate and we're working with those journalists to ensure that they are accurate and we're telling the truth, then we shouldn't be afraid of them.

David Pembroke: Just a final question on this particular issue. How important was your credibility, your individual credibility, the person who was on the other end of the phone talking to the journalists? How much of a success factor was it that they knew who you were and perhaps they trusted you to tell them the truth?

Alison Wright: Trust is only earned in these situations. It wasn't given at the outset, and a lot of the criticism that we were receiving was as a result of some broken trust relationships. I had to earn that back on behalf of the organisation. I'm a very straight shooter, so I deliver, and those people got to learn that I do that, and that meant something.

David Pembroke: Now those individual channels, those face to face channels, those relationships and other things, I think I got that in my head how that was managing, but how then did you use the other channels? The offline channels of perhaps events, public relations, maybe even some advertising, the social channels. What was the other mix of channels and content that you were moving out to start to move the story on to resolution?

Alison Wright: Well, I suppose the strategy wasn't to spend a whole lot of time doing lots of positive stories. One of my least favourite strategies that I see from communication managers across the country is that they're facing an issue but there might be board involvement, or executive involvement. They feel the pressure to then push out across whatever channel it is, a series of positive stories. What we did was recognise that the first quarter of this tenure for the new director, but also for me, that the first quarter was going to be...

David Pembroke: Ugly.

Alison Wright: ... knee deep in it. Actual fact, by February, so this was December, by February, we had announced that we had got a 1.1 million dollar refund of a work from a dealer. We're pretty sure it's a precedent in Australia. We were ready to return two other works, we had completed the research on that. We'd established an investigation team. Everything was on the website. I think for us, we're not seeing that a positive message. We're seeing those as actions. What we then did was focus on exhibitions and at the time, there was a great, fantastic exhibition called James Turrell, so it's business as usual. Just keep focused on business as usual.

David Pembroke: But interestingly I think also, though, the key to your success was around the management of expectations, of all of the stakeholders, around this. I'm sure you were communicating very clearly that, "This is going to be difficult, but this is how we're going to get to the end point" and as soon as everyone knew and understood that that was what the case was, then okay, as long as that was managed through and you were delivering at the various milestones, then the confidence would come in that, "Okay, Alison's got this under control."

Alison Wright: Stakeholder management's completely key. I am very bossy, so as far as-

David Pembroke: "You will sit down and listen and I will tell you."

Alison Wright: Well, great crisis managers will also tell you that if they're not taking your counsel, your ability to influence that crisis is limited.

David Pembroke: You're toast, yeah. Very true.

Alison Wright: Yeah. It's not a comms issue. It's an all of organisation issue. This is not the comms person walking in and saying, "How do we create this content?" This is about an executive shaping the actions of the organisation. If you don't have it

that way, and you've just got somebody in your media department trying to influence it, it doesn't work.

David Pembroke: Yeah. No, I completely agree with that. Now listen, we've only got a few minutes left but I do want to look to the future. I do want to understand-

Alison Wright: Because the future is bright.

David Pembroke: The future is bright. The future is fantastic, but I think from a ... The story of the National Gallery of Australia, the art collections are stories. There is a story in every piece, in every tile, in every brush stroke. There's something there to get out. How are you taking advantage of the fact that you are sitting on this reservoir of stories that you are hoping to use and influence? What's the story of the National Gallery to get out there and get people to engage around the histories and the stories of not only Australia, but other cultures that are part of the fabric of the National Gallery?

Alison Wright: Great question. I mean, so much has changed in the last two and a half years for the NGA. I think its brand is evolving in a way that is truly spectacular, and a lot of that is based in a strategy around change. The idea that we would have the same works on the wall at all times, and I'm a lover of change, so we now have regular changeovers of permanent collection. We're looking, we market the whole gallery experience, and I suppose we're also creating content and looking forward at what our online and digital space means. Because really, that's where the growth in audience is going to be.

David Pembroke: How well are you doing that at the moment?

Alison Wright: Well, I think there's some great questions being asked. I think we're formulating really good strategies around. I think we're getting much better at selling the whole proposition. We are moving towards being a content driven organisation. We are not quite there yet. The whole of the gallery is actually content making and getting everybody to understand that, and drive that.

David Pembroke: That's exciting. That must be a wonderful journey to be able to get everyone involved, because that to me, is the key. Everyone has to be a part of it.

Alison Wright: Completely and empowered to create content.

David Pembroke: Yeah, that's right. Exactly.

Alison Wright: And get it out there and show different things.

David Pembroke: Well, you think of how many smart people and talented people and great storytellers who are sitting there, and this sense of, oh the communications department is like, "Forget the communications department. It's everybody's

responsibility. We now have this ability and we really have to empower everybody to get out there and communicate because they can do it."

Alison Wright: The NGA's greatest asset is actually not its art. It's its people.

David Pembroke: Sure.

Alison Wright: Without a doubt. The true great brains and thought leaders and people who've got amazing ideas and are delivering public programmes and festivals. I mean, the question that we face I suppose as a really macro level on an industry wide, is what is the museum of the future? I definitely don't have that answer today, but I think we're asking ourselves, "What is the museum of the future? What is it going to look like? How do we adapt and be nimble enough to work with consumer trends around technology, around funding, around partnerships and galleries and collaborations?"

It's a very exciting time to be working in an organisation that is content rich, and we've seen that with the Netflixes of the world. We know, where you own content, you've actually got the power to garner an enormous amount of support in the community and across Australia, and globally as well. We know that, and I think we're somewhere to getting to where we want to be.

David Pembroke: Indeed, but I'm sure that through making this change, and I can feel the momentum, I can feel the change. I can feel that intentional movement towards greater action and activity, but in that, there are going to be mistakes. People are going to make missteps, they're going to make wrong calculations. How do you manage that and do you have permission to fail? People often say, we hear from great, "Yes, get out there, experiment, test, learn" but the reality sometimes in organisations is well, "It's great. You can experiment until you make a mistake and then we're going to smash you at senate estimates, and you're going to have to answer all these questions."

Alison Wright: I often use the senate estimates question as to whether or not I can hand on heart say, "This is worth it." You've got to be able to empower your people to make mistakes. We just did an evaluation with an organisation that we partnered with, and while I don't think it was a mistake, we didn't necessarily get the objective that we wanted out of it, but could we pivot and change and do something even more valuable? Yes, we can. I have a real philosophy across the portfolio, particularly in the area that we're working in, marketing, communications, membership. If you are not trying to do new things and different things, you're not actually doing the right thing.

David Pembroke: No, and if you don't, very soon you will be resigned to irrelevance, because you'll be static. Static is death.

Alison Wright: Static is no good.

David Pembroke: All right, Alison. Thank you so much for finding your way to our offices here in the heart of the Australian capital, Canberra. A little bit hard to find contentgroup sometimes, but if you're ever in the neighbourhood, come and see us. Level three. Level three of 2 Mort St, so yeah, just come by and say hello. But thanks very much for telling your story. It was a great story, a really interesting story, and I think that journalism piece, it's a heritage that I share as well. Coming from a different background into journalism, out of journalism, into storytelling of all sorts of different types.

I think I, well, everyone knows who listens to this podcast, I'm an absolute massive enthusiast for the fact that we now, this ability that technology gives us to create, to curate, to distribute, to really take hold, and of the stories that we've got to tell, to reach out to those audiences directly, to create that sort of compelling content. It is really such an exciting time.

Alison Wright: It's amazing power.

David Pembroke: For people who are in the comms business, our time has come. We've gone from the colouring in department, or the carwash, or whatever you want to call it. We're now getting much more centrally located into the strategic heart of the organisations, and as you very articulately expressed there, particularly in a crisis, comms must be right at the heart of the organisation with the trust of the senior leadership, because if you don't have it there, they're not going to go get the value and you're not going to be able to enjoy your job and be able to create that value that you're there for.

Thanks very much for coming in, and to you, the audience, thank you very much for joining us once again. Fantastic interview there with Alison Wright from the National Gallery of Australia. Much to be taken out of that, everyone, so go away, have a listen, and apply some of that attitude and skill, and knowledge that we've just acquired there from Alison. So thank you very much for tuning in again this week, and we'll be back at the same time again next week, so thank you very much, and it's bye for now.