

ANDREW ALLEN'S PODCAST INTERVIEW FOR CURIOUS CAMPBELLTOWN WITH JIM MARSDEN ON DECEMBER 19, 2022.

AA Hi everyone I'm Andrew Allen and with me today is Jim Marsden. Jim is a proud Campbelltown man and has lived in the area all of his life. He is a senior partner of Marsdens Law Group, which I'm sure most people, or all people, would be familiar with in the Macarthur area. Hello Jim and thank you for joining me today.

JM G'Day Andrew, it's a pleasure.

AA A proud Campbelltown man, I've got that right?

JM Absolutely right. One thing you didn't get right was living here all my life, my mum and dad actually moved back to Campbelltown when I was one month old. So you're one month out.

AA Ok, I was pretty close.

JM Very close.

AA What was it like growing up in Campbelltown?

JM It was like growing up in a country town, my earliest memories are probably four or five years of age, although I do have some vague ones, they may have been reconstructed, I don't know, of earlier days. But growing up in a country town the residential development that you see all around Campbelltown now just didn't exist. Bradbury didn't exist, all the other areas, Glen Alpine, just did not exist, they were farms, and I knew all the farmers that were out there. The University, where the University and the TAFE is, that was the King's farm and they were very good friends of mine, I used to go out there visiting all the time, but growing up in the town, in a country town, I loved it. I loved it as a kid and I loved it as a teenager, it was just a really good time, I had freedom beyond belief for a kid of five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten years of age. As you mentioned I was born and raised in Campbelltown and in a pub, Lacks Hotel, and my mum and dad were busy workers so I'd do what I liked. When I started school I'd come home from school of an afternoon, they wouldn't check to see whether or not I was home, then I'd go out and play with my mates, I'd go up the street, up the road and just have a good time.

AA Everyone I speak to, I guess from your generation, says how wonderful it was to grow up in the town, it's hard for me to imagine because I've only lived here for 15 years and to me it's like a city, but I guess to you, yeah, it was like a small country town.

JM Well, not like a small country town, it was a small country town. I mean the distance from the city was 50 kilometres, and that was the distance that you had to drive to be able to get a drink for example at a pub on a Sunday, a little bit ironic that you actually had to drive 50 kilometres to have half a dozen beers

and then drive back, but licencing laws were such that pubs weren't open in the city, they were only open in the country regions, so that you drove the 50 kilometres and people used to do it. Now from my point of view, on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis, Queen St, I lived on the corner of Queen and Dumaresq Street, sorry Queen and Railway Street, that's where the pub was, Lacks Hotel was. About 800 metres down the road was Queen and Dumaresq Street and there was a bakery, Warby's Bakery. I used to ride my bicycle down there every morning to collect the bread for the pub for the day. Where that bakery was, is where my office now is, exactly in that location.

And as I rode my bike down Queen Street, there was a Coles Supermarket right in the middle of town, not a modern day supermarket, it sold everything food, clothes, everything, but it was still Coles, branded as Coles. There was a couple of other buildings, the Newsagency which was owned by the Bagley's was down that end of town, so a little bit further towards Dumaresq Street, the Council Chambers were in the middle of Queen Street, the Westpac Bank came along in the early 60s, the Commonwealth Bank came along around about the same time, and otherwise there were a lot of paddocks. There was the corner opposite my office was a garage, Tripps Garage if I recall, well I do recall, I know it was Tripps Garage, and it was one of those old garages where you don't just buy petrol but you got your car repaired and did mechanicals and all that kind of stuff, but otherwise, paddocks.

AA And there was a garage on the other corner wasn't there, was it Popes Garage?

JM Yes, there was. Where Subway now is.

AA Isn't it amazing to think that there was two garages right in the centre of town, right in Queen Street.

JM Absolutely, but there was none on the outskirts, it was only just in town.

AA What about school, where did you go to school when you were a kid?

JM I was brought up as a Catholic, mum and dad were both Catholics, and I went to St Johns Primary school and really enjoyed that, walked to school every day, as early as I can remember I walked to school. I assume that my first day at school, mum probably took me up there, but after that I walked to school and walked back again, not very far, a little under a kilometre. Six years there obviously, and enjoyed it absolutely immensely, enjoyed the teachers, I remember some of the nuns that taught me, I remember my pre-school teacher was not a nun, Miss Kemp her name was and I had a crush on her when I was 6 years of age. I don't think she's around anymore god rest her soul, she ended up working at McDonalds.

5 mins

JM But yeah, I loved it. I just loved, as I said, the freedom that I enjoyed walking to school, walking home from school, going out with my mates, doing what I wanted to do, it was just a really wonderful time and I'm sure my parents had little or no fear about my safety or concern for my safety. I'd like to say it was because I was such an intelligent and smart young kid, but that's not the case,

it was because the nature of the town, there was no apparent threats, and there was no real threats for a young six, seven, eight year old walking around town to and from school and to his mates house.

AA I know a little story, because I've done a little bit of research, I want you to tell me the story of the vicious cattle dog. I know when you walked to school you would come across a vicious cattle dog didn't you? Have I got that right?

JM Well, on the way up to school, there was a vicious cattle dog, I forget who it belonged to but I know the premises where it was and it was on the right hand side as you were heading towards St Johns, it was before you got to Moore Street, it was the premises there, so opposite St Peters. Every time you would come along to those premises the little blue cattle dog would come out, teeth bared and barking and scare the hell out of us.

AA How were the nuns, did you get on well with the nuns?

JM I got on well with the nuns except for the ones that used to crack the ruler over my knuckles, I didn't like that very much, but I always got on with them. I was a friendly sort of a person and the nuns generally, were good people, well intentioned and just wanted to give you a reasonable education, but make sure they gave you a good catholic education, which later I and I presume, many others, abandoned...but it was good.

AA What was it like growing up in a pub; I guess you would've met a fair few characters.

JM Being a kid growing up in a pub, to me, was genuinely wonderful, a lot of people that have had similar circumstances wouldn't necessarily agree with it, but the freedom that I had, not only when I was out and about but the freedom I had at home was tremendous as well. I have a very vivid memory, and it may be slightly reconstructed because I was only five years of age, of my grandfather teaching me to pour a beer when I was five years of age, as I said. I also have ongoing memories of growing up working behind the bar, not obviously at the age of five, he was obviously doing a bit of a trick to show his 5 year old grandson how to pull a beer and introduce him to some of the customers, but I was pulling beers and actually helping out in the bar genuinely from about the age of probably about ten. But my memory of my grandfather Herb Lack teaching me to pull a beer was fairly vivid because he only died about two months after that particular time, he died in 1956.

AA You would've got a chance to meet a lot of the community, a lot of the people in the town, so you would've got to know them fairly well wouldn't you, by working in the pub?

JM I knew people at all levels, so the structure of the pub in those days, was that you had a public bar, and the public bar was generally the so-called workers bar, not that the professional people didn't work, but that was called the public bar, it was basically the workers bar. It was all U shaped and opposite the public bar was what we called the saloon bar and that's where the doctors and the lawyers and the professionals went, and probably people from council and stuff like that, the local pharmacist and all of those people drank in that bar. But

they all crossed over and would see each other on the other side of the bar and they'd chat to each other, but yeah I knew them, and I knew the blokes that had their particular corner. There was a bloke by the name of Joe Lloyd that sat in one corner every day, there was a couple of homeless men that would come in and go to their particular corner generally about 10.30 in the morning, wait till someone came in and bought them a couple of beers and then they'd take off a little bit later and maybe come in again later around about 5 o'clock. In the saloon bar, between the saloon bar and the public bar there was a little darts room and people obviously went in there and just played darts, behind that there was a ladies lounge and that's where only ladies went and you'd see the blokes in the bar slipping around the outside into the ladies lounge to see that their wives were okay and buy them a beer and go back to the bar. So the ladies would be sitting in the lounge and the men would be sitting at the bar, they'd be drinking and having a good time and that was the early days.

My father, Guy Marsden, he actually thought that things could change, and he probably saw a little bit of what was happening in Sydney and he established what he called the Club Bar.

10mins

JM Which was a mixed bar and it had leather and it had timber and it had carpet and it had good things on the walls, it was a really, in those days, classy bar, and another lounge next to that, with no segregation of men and women and it was just a really good place.

The blokes in the public bar, it was called the club bar, but they referred to it as the poofters bar, which these days some might find offensive, in those days, it didn't matter. That was ahead of its time, it was about 1963 it opened and it became very popular and certainly was the bar of its type outside of downtown Sydney.

AA Was it the most popular pub in Campbelltown? I believe it was from what I have heard from people?

JM Absolutely. I am obviously very biased Andrew, but absolutely. Up the other end of town where Campbelltown Mall is now was the Good Intent Hotel and that was owned by my Aunty Joy and Uncle Bill Ireland. Then down the bottom was where the land was owned by Council and it was the Railway Hotel. Council I believe still own the licence to that particular hotel and then there was the Club Hotel on the opposite corner, opposite Mawson Park. Incidentally Mawson Park was my backyard. We had a backyard at the pub which was fine- we had swings and everything but there it is there I get out of my bedroom of the morning and look over Queen Street and there is Mawson Park, about five acres of my playground, I had a ball.

AA It would have been your playground, I never thought of that.

JM It was my playground, absolutely my playground. One of the things I used to like doing was you got everybody coming up from Railway Street towards the residential areas which was close as Moore Street, Oxley Street, Broughton Street, those areas and they'd be walking through Mawson Park and there

were two poplar trees and I along with a mate Graham Simpson we used climb up those poplar trees and fill little balloons with water and chuck them out at the people walking up and got away with it most of time but not all the time.

AA You must have been pretty devastated like I know most of the town was when all the pubs disappeared around the same time period, I guess the middle 80s. So Lack's and all those pubs you mentioned.

JM Yeah not devastated, it was inevitable. When the then member for Liverpool George Paciullo brought in random breath testing and mobile random breath testing it really put a big hole in the revenue of pubs, and therefore downtown pubs, Queen St pubs really suffered. Your neighbourhood pubs, Bradbury, Raby, those kind of ones built with residential areas around them within walking distance, they became popular. Downtown pubs just lost their popularity largely because of that.

AA Was there any other buildings that have been demolished that you had a bit of a connection to or were sad to see them go?

JM Well as I said to you, most of the time it was paddocks and so I saw buildings get built rather than see them demolished. I could say the old RSL club but it was not really of any significance. The Good Intent Hotel, my auntie's pub up the end, yeah I was sad to see that go and make way for Campbelltown Mall, Lack's Hotel itself obviously, when that went I was absolutely devastated but, that's progress and it had to happen. They maintained a bar, and it was one of the bars they continued to call Lack's which was good. The building was lovely but you can't keep an old building like that in a progressive town.

AA No, I understand. You had a few in your family didn't you, was it two sisters and a brother? Am I right in saying that?

JM No, you're well and truly wrong, you're a mile out!

AA Oh am I?

JM There was six in our family. Three boys, three girls, And as I said famously at my late brother John's funeral, three boys, three girls, three gays and three straights. Highly unusual but nevertheless a really good and really enjoyable family. And my two elder brothers have both died, One in 2006, my late brother John who started our law firm died in 2006 and my good mate, my brother Pete died a couple of years later. So now it's one boy and three girls, two and two.

AA I wanted to get onto the development of the Wests Tigers and your role in that, I know you started with the Wests Magpies, can you tell me a little bit about that?

JM Yeah look, my brother John, late brother John was involved in Country Rugby League, and John had a fair bit of influence through Country Rugby League with NSW Rugby League that ran all of the league in Australia. John pushed to get a city team based in Campbelltown and the one that he was originally trying to get was Newtown and eventually Newtown got close because Newtown was likely to be kicked out but it didn't happen because Newtown got kicked out.

15 mins

JM Then John didn't give up but he was no longer involved, he got off the Country League for whatever reasons and a couple of years later, the NSW Rugby League, and I don't remember the exact year, decided to bring Wests Magpies out to Campbelltown. They became associated with Wests Leagues Club which was then the Campbelltown Kangaroos Leagues Club, which was actually started by my late brother John, and whilst they were associated with Wests Leagues Club they were strongly affiliated with Wests Ashfield Leagues Club. So they came out, and in my view they didn't attach to the town sufficiently. They said "okay, we have to be here, we didn't want to be here, but we'll play our games, do what we have to do." And then eventually it got worse so that there was a level of detachment with the town, and the crowd started to diminish, not a good look. It just wasn't working. The coach at the time, Warren Ryan, who was an excellent coach, he's still around, but Warren apparently, from my observation at least didn't seem to care about the town, and you question whether he should, he may not have to care about the town, his concern is coaching the football team, but there was no connection there either. Somebody said, I was actually on a Sydney Harbour Cruise with a group of Campbelltown business people and somebody said to me, "Look, you ought to go on that board". And I said "no, I like going to the football, Marsdens were sponsors, I enjoy doing that, but I don't want any responsibility when I go to the football". Anyway, about a week later I was approached by two Directors of the football club and said "look, we need some more local influence here, will you join the board" and I, at first reluctantly, but ultimately joined the board, and said with a great deal of enjoyment said "yeah, I'll join the board", and then about three months into being on the board they asked me would I be Chairman. And I said "yep" and I was more than happy to take that role because I didn't have a high regard for the then chair, a very nice person, but probably not appropriate for that position. So I then took on the role of Chairman of the Club. I focussed not on football, my highest level of football was playing at St Gregory's Second Grade side, so I was no expert, but I focussed on administration and I also focussed on connectivity with the town, and on the administration side, within three months it was apparent to me that the club was broke, and if the Leagues Clubs didn't feed it money on a month to month basis it should be put into administration and the Leagues Clubs said "we'll do it" and I said "well, put it in writing because otherwise I've got to put the company into administration." We eventually did go into administration deliberately, to basically wipe I think it was then about \$900,000 worth of debts, and then start it again. And that was a difficult thing to do, and I certainly didn't like doing it, but it was the only thing to do. But then we came back, and we came back strongly, but straight after that the Rugby League war happened with Super League, and so we then got flush with money provided by mainly the Packers, and Super League was funded by the Murdochs and so we were good. We came in at a relatively strong position and then we had to get a new coach, and John Singleton phoned me and said "look, have you considered Tommy Raudonikis", and I said "mate I haven't considered anyone yet, I'm just thinking about it" and he said "Tommy would be absolutely great." Now Tommy died last year, God rest his soul, Tommy was probably not the best coach available but he was the best person for

Campbelltown and Wests at that time by a mile. He was tremendous, he and I used to go up and down Queen Street in the back of a ute talking about Sunday's game or Saturday's game or whatever it was, just encouraging people to come along, and Tommy would go down to the pub every Thursday to help with the chook raffles

AA Really?

JM Absolutely! Can you imagine any of today's coaches doing that kind of thing? And it wasn't about raising money with the chook raffles because that was just for the local football club, but it was Tommy connecting with the people. He also didn't mind a beer! And I would join him mostly on those Thursdays and the occasional Fridays as well. He was absolutely fantastic. So Wests, we had limited level of success, we did get one wooden spoon, which is not part of the success, it's part of the failure on the field, but we then came up, we had two years where we made the semi-finals, and overall Tommy was fantastic. And then the war had happened, the two competitions were going, and then somehow peace had to break out. And peace broke out, but it was in the form that you had to have a ground, and I encouraged money into our ground and we got that up to the standard that it was, and you had to have crowds, and so we used to fudge our crowds just a little bit, and you had to have money, and we were okay with money but at the end of the day, the League said no, you're not going to make it, others are doing better, you're going to have to merge, and I started negotiations with Canterbury, and I had some negotiations with Penrith.

20 mins

JM Canterbury is where the League wanted us to go, and I spoke to their Chair on a couple of occasions, and my relationship with him soured when I found that he was just not honouring some of the promises that had been made at previous meetings so I eventually cut that off, and then I got a call from John Singleton again and he said "do you know you have an affiliation with Balmain?" and I said "No, I don't see how we could have an affiliation with Balmain", and he said "your old territory abuts the Balmain territory, and you're working class background and all that kind of stuff, it would be a good fit." So I then started negotiations with Balmain and myself and the Chair of Balmain, John Chalk basically did those negotiations by ourselves with the help of our boards and ultimately put it to our members, the vote at Wests was 295 in favour to 3 against, and the vote at Balmain was a lot closer, I think it was about 2 thirds 1 third of their members, they had about 400 members that voted, we had about 300 members that voted, but it got there. And within six years won a Premiership, 2005.

AA 2005, yeah it's not long is it, after I think it was 2000 that you...

JM Yeah that's right, the first game.

AA And the crowds were good too.

JM The crowds were great, yeah the crowds were great.

AA How do you feel about now, is it going to work do you think, is it still working or does it need...

JM That's up to the administration, I resigned after 2 years, I had a falling out with some people so I said I'm not going to waste my time arguing with people. I always said to them, it started off with 50 percent of the games at Leichhardt and Campbelltown. John Chalk and I both recognised that for it to flourish, it had to come, ultimately to Campbelltown and so we had our agreement, which was just a nod and a wink, that we would ultimately be playing two thirds of the games at Campbelltown with some bigger games at some of the major, like Sydney Football Stadium or whatever and at least one or two historical games at Leichhardt, now, that didn't happen and so the people of Campbelltown started to lose face with it and the club lost favour with the people of Campbelltown, whether or not they can bring it back now, I don't know, the fact that Benji Marshall is there and that Tim Sheens is there, Tim coached the Campbelltown Kangaroos and went to St Greg's College with me, he and I were great mates at school, with those blokes there, there is a possibility that it could start to come back again, I certainly hope it does.

AA Ok, might get onto your legal career then Jim, with Marsdens, you joined a little bit later didn't you, so John set it up did he, and then you joined later, am I right in saying that?

JM Yes, you're absolutely correct this time, 1968 John started the firm, 1968 I started my studies, I finished my studies a couple of years later, 4 years later and John weren't close, he was nine years older than I am and we weren't close as brothers, I was closer to my brother Peter and we were cheese and chalk in nature and I said "I going to make my own way and I don't want to join John" and so I went down and got a very good job at Wollongong, at the biggest firm in Wollongong in the day and I was really enjoying that and then one day Johns then, about to be partner, John Fahey, the former Premier of New South Wales, came down and approached me. John Marsden was overseas and he came down and approached me and said "Look, we think you'd be very good for us coming up to join the firm" and I said "who's we?" and he said "me and your brother John", I said "well, brother John's not here" and he said "don't worry Jim I have Johns blessing to do this", I said "ok, look I really don't want to go, I've bought a property in Wollongong already, I really don't want to go and I'm in a really comfortable position where I am, I'm enjoying the people I work with, I'm enjoying my employers, so I really don't want to John", that is John Fahey, and anyway to cut a very long story short, he persisted and so after another three meetings, so four meetings in all and making a couple of offers to me, the last one of which was doubling the salary I was on at the time with the Wollongong firm and then offering a car at the end, I decided that yeah, I'll do it. A lot of people ask me do I ever regret that decision and I can say that probably in the first six months I had a couple of times when I regretted it and after that, I've never regretted it, it was the best thing that I ever did. One of the factors, my father was still alive at the time, one of the factors that actually got it right over the line was that my father said to me, he'd love to see his two sons in partnership together, so that really, I'd almost forgot that, but that really sealed the deal for me, and as I was saying, the first six months,

yes I had some regrets, after that, it was the best thing I've ever done. John and I didn't become great mates but we did become good mates, we spent a lot of social time together but we also worked exceptionally well together, there's a bit of a yin and a yang with us both, with him doing certain things and me doing other things that worked very well for both of us and of course, as you can see from the results, worked very well for the firm as well.

AA Was there something you were most proud of with the firm, is there something that stands out that made you, I guess, proud or feel really good about? I'm sort of putting you on the spot there I know.

25mins

JM Look, it's difficult Andrew to say is there something that stands out that you're really proud of, like an event or something of that nature that you're looking for, or somebody that we acted for. Marsdens Law Group has always been involved in the community, and that's something that I am extremely proud of. So John, right from the very beginning, took a leaf out of the publicans' book, mum and dad's book, be involved in the community, you're taking out of the community, you're making money out of the community by your business, and they were in the pub as well, give back, you've got to give back, you've got to be a part of that community. Now John was a hundred and ten percent a part of the community, I like to think that I'm a hundred and ten percent a part of the community and that is something that I'm exceptionally proud of, that we have been able to maintain that and we do it with our other lawyers, my other partners that I work with and lawyers that work for us, we tell them how important your involvement in this, now not Campbelltown community, but South West Sydney community, how important it is, it's important not just for the firm, but it's important just to give back to the community. Another thing that I'm pretty proud of too is that we, and I don't spruik this, but I'm about to I suppose, but our pro bono work has always been at the highest level, that is, where people in need of representation but don't have the funds to pay for representation in any area, still get representation. Now, I'm not encouraging people to come along and say they're broke and we'll give you some free work, no, we scrutinise who's needy and who needs it and who it's necessary for and we've always done it and in fact about eight years ago we won, it was presented to me but it was the firm who won it effectively, we won the NSW Law Society Presidents Award for pro bono work over the previous five years.

AA So the inspiration for all this is, has come from your father, from the family background

JM Yes, the family background, living in a pub, being born and raised with mum and dad, who were also children of publicans, and they had a regard and a respect for the community and for all levels of the community and I think that was, John and I inherited that and I'm sure the rest of the family did too, but in their businesses it wasn't so relevant to them, but we inherited that and we also inherited a love for the town.

AA As I said before, I know you're a proud Campbelltonian, how do you feel about how the town has expanded?

JM Go back to the mid to late 60s and that's where the town really took off with development and Lend Lease was the primary developer that was absolutely fantastic the way that happened, the way it was planned. Along the way Macarthur Square was built and it was a great centre but if you look back in hindsight, which is the only way to look back, Macarthur Square was built in the wrong place, it should've been built where Campbelltown Mall is now because what happened when Macarthur Square was built is that it effectively slowly killed off the CBD, the town centre of Campbelltown and then Campbelltown Mall came along and that helped it a little bit but in the meantime very little has happened to help the Queen Street area, the CBD of Campbelltown. I feel terribly, terribly sad when I walk up and down Queen Street, which I do at least twice a week, I feel terribly sad that nothing is improving, that Council is doing its bit to make it look better. I have my thoughts about what should happen and Council, about 4 years ago, set out a plan called "Reimagining Campbelltown" which basically concentrated on residential and business development in the area, my sadness is exacerbated by the fact that I haven't seen anything come out of that 4 years later, now I'm not going to blame anyone for that because I don't know why it hasn't happened, I just know that it hasn't happened. I've said to people that have asked me about it that I hope that I am still in business when the CBD comes back to life again, comes back to great life again, don't know that I will be but I certainly hope that I am and I will do anything I can to assist it or facilitate it.

AA Ok, great, I guess a lot of the damage was done when a lot of those buildings we were talking about earlier were demolished, we'd love to have it looking like Windsor or Richmond or one of those places that you can go to on a weekend and look at old historical buildings.

JM Well, look Windsor and Richmond are not the right comparisons, the historical buildings, you've still got Glenalvon next to where the old RSL was, and you've got the historical buildings up opposite the Campbelltown Mall and a few others.

30 mins

JM But you were never going to retain every historical building that's a fact and you weren't going to have that sort of historical town either because the town is built on a railway station, you've got Campbelltown railway station, Leumeah railway station and now Macarthur railway station. In good development, you should have residential development all around that and if you get residential development all around that then you're going to have business development as well and you're going to have retail development and restaurants, cafes and things of that nature. Queen Street can come back to its former life, not its former self, but its former life in relative terms if that happens, and that's what Campbelltown Councils Reimagine Campbelltown plan was all about, to start bringing that out and if that happens it will come back to life again and a really good life, not the same as it was before under any circumstances, but certainly a place that people will want to go to, people will want to go and have a coffee, a meal and things like that and live there too.

AA Do you intend working for much longer, have you got plans of taking it easy?

JM Look, I take it fairly easy now to be honest with you, I don't work anywhere near as much as I used to, although at Christmas time it's very difficult, I'm very busy at the moment, but I have the occasional game of golf and I'm having a lot more holidays, I spend a lot more time with grandchildren and I still work and I'll have a look at that every year, every six months and see where I'm at, see how I'm going. I'm quite healthy, I enjoy about ninety five percent of my work which is a pretty good thing if you've got ninety five percent of your time occupied as enjoying it, so that's good but I also enjoy the other things that I'm doing so I'll continue to do the balance and review it every six months, year, two years and see how I go.

AA Ok, well Jim I really appreciate you coming on, I know how busy you are so it's been wonderful talking to you and I thank you very much for being part of Curious Campbelltown.

JM Thank you very much Andrew, it's been a pleasure coming on.

AA Thanks Jim.

32 minutes