



The Forge: Lives in Leadership Podcast - Australian Defence College

SHOW NOTES

Episode Summary, Highlights and Full Transcript

SEASON 01: EPISODE 06

Guest: Professor David Whetham (Part 1)

Host: BRIG John Fenwick



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Lives in Leadership explores leadership in demanding environments, featuring insights from experienced practitioners drawn across Defence, government, industry, and academia. Through sharing compelling stories and perspectives, the podcast explores military leadership, ethics, culture, and service in the Profession of Arms. The podcast focuses on insights in joint and integrated appointments at the operational and strategic level. It complements existing single-service professional military development platforms.



S01E06 – Professor David Whetham – Part 1 – Episode Summary

Duration: 28 minutes

Key themes: Military Ethics Education, Civil-Military Relations, Moral Injury, Professional Military Identity, Organisational Culture, Emerging Technologies, Veteran Wellbeing, Ethical Leadership

Overview: In this episode, Dr Lucas Marie and Brigadier John Fenwick welcome Professor David Whetham, Professor of Ethics and Military Profession at King's College London and Director of the King's College Centre for Military Ethics. Professor Whetham shares insights from his extensive career in military ethics education and research.

Key Discussion Topics:

Career Journey & Military Ethics Evolution Professor Whetham traces the growth of military ethics as a field from near non-existence in the 1990s to its current prominence. He describes how post-9/11 deployments drove student demand for ethics education, expanding from a 90-minute component to several weeks in the UK's staff officer curriculum.

Current Work & Research

- Organisational culture and leadership development
- Ethics of emerging technologies, including human augmentation, human-machine teaming, and RPA-enabled casualty evacuation
- Supporting the UK's Hadden Cave inquiry (parallel to Australia's Brereton inquiry)

International Military Ethics Conference (EUROISME) Discussion of civil-military relations as a central theme, addressing challenges of populism, polarisation, and the military's role in divided societies. Professor Whetham emphasises the importance of practitioner-informed academic work.



Civil-Military Relations Examination of legitimate uses of military forces within their own societies, from disaster support to more problematic internal deployments. The conversation explores the importance of understanding military oaths and what institutions actually serve beyond individual political leaders.

Moral Injury & Veteran Wellbeing Detailed discussion of moral injury as distinct from PTSD, its connection to veteran suicide, and the importance of ethical preparation. Professor Whetham praises Australia's leadership on the Royal Commission into veteran suicides and stresses the need for pre-deployment ethical armouring, particularly regarding difficult scenarios like child soldiers.

The episode concludes with a reflection on institutional responsibility to prepare service members for morally complex situations, balancing operational security concerns with the professional duty to equip personnel for realistic challenges.

Memorable Quotes

On the purpose of military ethics education: *"I'm not interested in talking to other philosophers for the sake of talking to other philosophers. If we're not providing answers or being able to explain why those answers are so difficult and then engaging properly with the military practitioner community to work out how you move forwards in the absence of a concrete answer at this point, I think we're letting down our core constituency, which is we're supposed to be useful."*

On institutional responsibility for moral injury: *"To not equip people for that in advance, that's a massive institutional failure. That's a national failure. We need to support our people. We need to let them know in advance to actually help them prepare for the potentially terrible situations that they might be faced with, because that situation is still going to be terrible, but the ability to live with it afterwards is very, very different if you've had a chance to think about it before."*



On preparing service members for moral challenges: *"If you have had a chance to think through what it is that might be required of you, you are in a better position in some cases to say no, that's not appropriate and push back. But more likely it just simply puts you into a position to be able to process and make sense of the regrettable necessity of some things that you have to do when you are wearing a military uniform."*

About the Guest

Professor David Whetham is Professor of Ethics and Military Profession in the Defence Studies Department at King's College London, where he serves as Director of the King's Centre for Military Ethics. With over two decades of experience in the field, he coordinates military ethics education for between 2,000 and 3,000 British and international officers annually at the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College.

A founding member of the European Chapter of the International Society for Military Ethics (EURO ISME), Professor Whetham has maintained extensive ties with the Australian Defence Force, most notably serving as an Assistant Inspector General for the Afghanistan inquiry into allegations of war crimes—work for which he received a Chief of Defence Force commendation. His current research spans organisational culture, leadership development, and the ethics of emerging technologies, including human augmentation, human-machine teaming, and the use of remotely piloted aircraft in casualty evacuation. Professor Whetham's career reflects a deep commitment to practitioner-focused scholarship, emphasising that academic work in military ethics must serve those who face its challenges in the field rather than existing solely within academic discourse.



Resources & References

[King's College London - Defence Studies Department](#)

[King's Centre for Military Ethics](#)

[UK Joint Services Command and Staff College](#)

[Centre for Defence Leadership and Ethics \(Australia\)](#)

[Australian Defence College](#)

[International Society for Military Ethics - European Chapter \(EuroISME\)](#)

[OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#)

[Defence Science and Technology Laboratory \(DSTL, UK\)](#)

[Brereton Report - Afghanistan Inquiry \(Australia\)](#)

[Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide \(Australia\)](#)

[EuroISME Annual Conference](#)

[McCain Institute](#)

[MERTS](#)



S01E06 – Professor David Whetham – Part 1 – Time Stamped Highlights

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S01E06 – Professor David Whetham – Part 1 – Full Transcript

[00:00:00] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Welcome to Lives in Leadership. This podcast is dedicated to promoting thoughtful and strategic conversations about military leadership, ethics, culture, and service in the profession of arms within the Australian Defence Force.

[00:00:22] **Brig John Fenwick:** Hi. Welcome to the Lives in Leadership Podcast. I'm John Fenwick, and I am a senior fellow at the Centre for Defence Leadership and Ethics. I have the real pleasure of filling in for your regular host, Dr Lucas Marie, who is on a well-earned break. Today, I have the pleasure of talking with my loyal friend of the Australian Defence College, Professor David Whetham.

David is Professor of Ethics and Military Profession in the Defence Studies Department of King's College London. He's the Director of the King's Centre for Military Ethics and delivers or coordinates the military ethics component of courses for between 2000-3000 British and international officers each year at the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College.

David is a founding member of the European Chapter of the International Society for Military Ethics and is the author of a number of publications. His connection to the Australian Defence Force has been extensive in the field of ethics. In 2020, David was appointed as an assistant inspector general of the Australian Defence Force to contribute to the Afghanistan inquiry into allegations of war crimes. For this, he was awarded a Chief of Defence Force commendation for his contributions. He's a regular visitor to our shores and a contributor to ethics and leadership development in the Australian Defence Force. David, it's a real pleasure to have you here and welcome.

[00:01:50] **Professor David Whetham:** Thank you very much, John. It's a great pleasure to be back.

[00:01:51] **Brig John Fenwick:** Yeah, lovely to see you. And, Dave, I wonder if you would mind just taking us through how you would characterise your career to date and what brings you to being at King's College these days?

[00:02:04] **Professor David Whetham:** Thank you very much. Yes, it's, it's a somewhat unusual path because military ethics didn't really exist as a subject when I was an undergraduate, so the idea of studying towards becoming a military



ethicist, just wasn't a real thing. So I was studying from the late, well, mid to late nineties and because the Cold War was over everybody thought it was pretty mad to be studying military ethics because obviously, with the end of history, if Fukuyama had it right we were no longer going to be faced with struggles and wars and basically everything was looking pretty good now that the mass confrontation between east and west was over.

And then the Balkans told us that perhaps things weren't quite that straightforward. And the subjects that I was studying started to become very pertinent once again. So I was very lucky. I, I was, um, uh, whilst I was doing my PhD, in military ethics at King's College London, I was also doing a variety of different jobs to support myself. I wasn't funded - this was the start of the cutbacks in that area. So I wasn't funded. I had to, I had to pay my own way. And I was fortunate to do a variety of different jobs. Each one of them contributed to my understanding of the world, if not military ethics.

So, I drove taxis for a significant period of time, which taught me more about life than any other job that I could imagine. But I was also an election observer in Kosovo with the OSCE and that was far more close to this kind of subject. So actually seeing, firsthand how things can go wrong, why things go wrong, um, and, and what the international community is willing to do to put it right was, was very important and formative for me.

I was fortunate that King's College London was involved with the staff education in the UK at the same time that I was doing my PhD. And in fact, King's has a link to professional military education going back to the Duke of Wellington and the end of the Napoleonic period. So, there's a strong institutional link to military education there that I was therefore tangentially involved with.



And then various opportunities came up to help out with teaching at the staff college out Shrivenham. And then eventually a position came up there. And, at that time, as I say, military ethics wasn't a huge part of the curricula. This is the early two thousands, 2001, 2002, it was there; so the entire ethics component of the Advanced Command Staff Course in the UK back then consisted of a 45-minute lecture on the just war tradition, and then a 45-minute classroom discussion about whether or not ethics, as we understood, it was still applicable or relevant to the type of warfare that we were going to be seeing in the 21st century.

I'm glad to say that having got myself a job there and being part of the growth of professional military education over that period, that military ethics contribution to those courses and all of the others is now significant. And it runs, rather than an hour and a half, it runs to several weeks of the overall package that is delivered to hundreds or thousands of staff officers per year. It's a core requirement. And that requirement hasn't all been driven from above, as in the service chiefs demanding what their curriculum should contain, it's also been driven by the realities of conflict and the students themselves who have experienced it.

Back in early 2000s, that experience was very, was relatively small, or was focused on peacekeeping or counterinsurgency or the long experience that the British Armed forces had policing Northern Ireland, for example. But from 2001 onwards, following 9-11, of course, every staff officer will have had a growing and significant deployed experience.

And it was that deployed experience from the bottom, from the students themselves that drove the growth in taking the subject of military ethics more and more seriously and equipping people with the skills and knowledge that they needed both to make sense of their previous experience, but also to improve their ability to lead going further on in their defence careers.



[00:06:52] **Brig John Fenwick:** Oh, thank you. And I think it's very interesting that the UK went through this same period of growth and development of military ethics and the developing need in much the same way as we did here in Australia, and the Centre for Defence Leadership and Ethics is now 22, 23 years old. So it's about the same period you are talking about it, raising as a profile at King's College.

[00:07:17] **Professor David Whetham:** Absolutely. I was, privileged to be here when ethics was added to the CDLE's title and there was much discussion about what the new acronym would, what order the letters would go in. But it was, yes, that was the start of my engagement with the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Defence College.

[00:07:39] **Brig John Fenwick:** Yes, and I think your observation that often, it's the sort of bottom-up that has brought this to the fore, I would say the same thing from my going through courses here myself where people who were exposed to ethical problems and wartime found themselves wanting more, wanting more guidance, and needing more upon which they can reach and, and asking more of their education institutions to help them out. So I think we've had a similar journey. So what sorts of things are you working on at the moment, David?

[00:08:19] **Professor David Whetham:** So I continue to be involved with organisational culture and leadership development, as you may or may not be aware the UK is undergoing its own investigation, the Hadden Cave Inquiry, which mirrors it's had a, it has a slightly different statutory footing, but it mirrors the Brereton Inquiry in Australia. So there's a lot of interest in that area and of course I ended up involved tangentially there. Not so much in responding to inquiries, but queries that arise, but more as part of ongoing organisational and cultural development in the armed forces, which I have to say, much like in Australia, before Brereton published the report is an ongoing thing. It's not something that comes out simply as a response to an inquiry or findings that something has gone wrong.



And one, one of the things that is constant bug bear of mine is that the media portrayal of the military institution responding to an inquiry and then trying to put things right it's not often accurate in the sense that it assumes that nothing has changed before the inquiry results come out. And, actually my experience over 23 years now of working closely with particularly the UK military, but militaries all the way around the world is that they are organisations which are trying constantly to get things right and are constantly in a state of reform and change and responding when they know that something has gone wrong, they are genuinely trying to put it right, and that process will start long before an inquiry, finishes and publishes its results. So I am involved in that in the UK.

I'm also doing a lot of work in tech, the ethics of tech. So, I've just finished a large project with DSTL, Defence Science Technology Laboratories on human augmentation and closed loop, adaptive systems or human machine teaming. And I'm doing, currently I've just started a follow-up project looking at the ethics of using RPAs and drones for CASEVAC (*Casualty Evacuation*). For example, we know that the standard of care that was provided to Coalition personnel in Afghanistan in particular with the MERTS (*Medical Emergency Response and Training Services*) the medical teams that would be able to fly in, in a Chinook meant that the standard of care that was provided to our military personnel was absolutely extraordinary.

In some cases, you had a better chance of surviving a headshot wound in Afghanistan than you did surviving a road traffic accident outside a hospital in the UK, because the standard of care that could be provided almost immediately. But recent experiences in Ukraine and elsewhere have demonstrated that the idea of flying in a fully loaded up medical Chinook into, the front line would be frankly irresponsible; It's not going to happen.



So how do we maintain or at least try and maintain the standard of care that, our service personnel rightly have come to expect? And the idea of using RPAs, is an obvious attempt, an obvious potential solution to that; and I've been looking at some of the ethical implications of that. Not as barriers, but if we can identify the ethical challenges before the technology is introduced, we have a much better chance of getting it to work appropriately and do what it's supposed to do.

[00:12:06] **Brig John Fenwick:** Yeah, indeed. So we might come back to a couple of those topics a bit later, or I wouldn't want to skip on past them because I think there's some real interest in the sorts of things you're talking about. Could you tell me just a little bit more about what's brought you to Australia on this trip?

[00:12:23] **Professor David Whetham:** Uh, yes, I've been, I am teaching with the remote course of the Australian Defence College. I'll be out at Creswell next week, and I taught it last year and it was a great privilege indeed a pleasure a fantastic group of people. I believe it's one of their rare opportunities as a reservist course to all get together as a compulsory part of their education and they do indeed make the most of it. But it's in many ways, a challenging but very rewarding, immersion for a week with defence leaders and future senior leaders, I hope.

[00:13:07] **Brig John Fenwick:** Well, I hope we can do something about the weather for you, while you're out at Creswell. So while we're recording this, there is the east coast low, punishing the east coast, and uh, I'm sure that's affecting Creswell, but by next week hopefully it'll be, it'll be lovely for you.

[00:13:22] **Professor David Whetham:** Let's hope so.

[00:13:23] **Brig John Fenwick:** So I know you've just been to the International Society for Military Ethics conference. Was that the one in Europe?

[00:13:32] **Professor David Whetham:** That was Madrid. Yes. This, this year.

[00:13:34] **Brig John Fenwick:** Yeah. What, what sorts of things did you see there and what topics particularly took your interest?

[00:13:40] **Professor David Whetham:** So, EURO ISME, is an organisation that's been going since 2011. I was one of the founding members with Henri Hude and Manfred Rosenberger back then because we realised that the different European



countries were all replicating the same capability and trying to attract the same type of people to discuss the same type of issues. So why not just do it together?

And even with the UK's somewhat fractious relationship with the EU, we still have very good relationships with our actual neighbours, whether or not it comes under that EU umbrella or not. So yeah, EURO ISME has flourished since it was established with its first conference in Paris in 2011.

This year's conference in Madrid was extremely well attended with delegates from all over the world, including Australia, and the range of topics was extremely broad, but the ones that I found particularly interesting and pressing this year were those relating to civil-military relations and what our armed forces are for, who they serve that, that founding question.

And for me, I was also, it's very hard to get into all of the sessions. There's lots of parallel sessions, lots of very interesting subjects. But for me, seeing how the emergence of AI and tech governance, ideas and practices across our international partners have started to develop. That for me was the highlights at the Madrid Conference this year.

[00:15:18] **Brig John Fenwick:** And at the conference you get a number of academics as well as militaries, a lot of military attendance, from outside Europe as well?

[00:15:26] **Professor David Whetham:** Yes. What makes the conference so important is that the conference is merely a giant networking opportunity for practitioners working in the topic areas.



So it is predominantly military personnel and those working directly with the military that come to the conference, which makes it very different from a normal civilian academic conference, which may or may not have discussions about military subjects, but they are very rarely informed by that practitioner knowledge. And that is what is so key.

You can sit in your ivory tower as an academic researching the ethics of standoff weaponry, or you can talk to somebody who's actually launched a Storm Shadow in anger. And for me, one of the reasons that I genuinely find my subject matter and my career so satisfying is because I do work directly with those practitioners and they're very good at keeping you honest. They will tell you, you know what military people are like, particularly Australian military personnel. If you're talking rubbish, you'll get told very, very fast and for me, that's very refreshing. You're not simply engaging with an academic echo chamber there.

[00:16:43] **Brig John Fenwick:** So did you find that there was a coherence between what the academics thought? Were the military ethics problems of today and what the military came with to examine at the conference?

[00:16:55] **Professor David Whetham:** There's always a slight gap and that's one of the challenges for academics working in this area is to bridge the gap between the actual practitioner needs and what academia is talking about. And that is a, a genuine challenge. There's so many different examples that I could give there, but when academics think they're doing military ethics, but in fact they're just talking to other academics about military and defence, they're not actually providing anything useful for that practitioner community and that's what I think is, is so important. I'm not interested in talking to other philosophers for the sake of talking to other philosophers.

If we're not providing answers if we can, or being able to explain why those answers are so difficult and then engaging with properly, with the military practitioner community to work out how you move forwards in the absence of a concrete answer at this point, I think we're letting down our core constituency, which is, which we're supposed to be useful. Yes. Academia for the sake of academia. I've got very little, little time for.

[00:18:16] **Brig John Fenwick:** So I'll just pull the thread on something you mentioned there that was at the EURO ISME and you talked about civil-military relations and the role of militaries in our societies and so on. Was that something



that was coming to the fore from the European community or was it a response to things that may have been seen in other countries like the US?

I note that, uh, your good friend Roger Herbert and co-author on one of your books has made a few comments, online about that and, and raised the topic for discussion. I just wonder if that was seen as a European problem as well, or if it was sparked by other things.

[00:18:59] **Professor David Whetham:** Obviously the events in the US, bring a huge amount of attention and therefore focus on this type of topic area. But civil military relations, which is the conference theme for next year for EUROISME, which will be in Amsterdam by the way, if, if anybody fancies coming up and joining us.

It's most definitely not a US only challenge or problem. It's the response of the professional military organisations around the world to growing societal challenge and that's a European challenge just as much as it is as an American one.

We are seeing the rise of Populism in the, amongst the European states, in a very similar way to what, what's happening in the United States and where that leaves our military institutions is, a challenge for us all. Not, certainly not just for the American military.

And how do you as a military profession respond to extremism from both the left and the right? How do you look after your people? How do you look after your institutions and ultimately, how do you look after your country amid a time of increasing polarisation within the very state that you're supposed to be serving. That's a profound challenge. We have history to draw on, but at the same time, we've got to be careful from simply saying, this is the 1930s, for example. It's not but it certainly can feel like it in many ways. But, the challenge for those military institutions and the members of those military institutions most definitely do need to be talked about.

[00:20:52] **Brig John Fenwick:** And I think the US experience of, or most recent US experience of the use of Marines in LA is only one aspect of a military in society. Certainly here in Australia, as you're aware, there's been a discussion during the pandemic and soon thereafter, about the use of the military and support of the population in ways that it may not be used to, and what that does that do to the military and its people; was that something that is a European experience as well?



[00:21:27] **Professor David Whetham:** Very much so, so there is a myopic tendency to think of the military as purely a lethal instrument, but the military is an instrument of the state, and its tasks are whatever the state decides is in the best interests of the country, and that may or may not involve lethality. But to think that is the military's only purpose is frankly naive and risks leaving your military enormously exposed when it's used for tasks that don't involve breaking stuff. At the same time, what the state can legitimately ask of its military institutions is, of course, right at the heart of civil-military relations as part of that Clausewitzian *wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*: The Trinity.

And it's something that people need to engage with and understand, what is it? What is legitimate for the armed forces to do? What is it legitimate to ask the armed forces to do? And if you're going to deploy them within your state, as long as it's genuinely supporting the country as a whole, then that is probably on the least problematic end of the spectrum.

Increasingly as you are being asked to deploy against parts of your society as opposed to supporting. The, your, your, your country. Um, then it becomes more and more problematic, um, and, and you start risking getting involved in a civil war ultimately at the other end of the spectrum. So being very aware of, of that spectrum of, interventions and the increasing challenge to legitimacy as you move along that spectrum is absolutely essential.

I think it's underpinned by just keeping in mind what the oath that you swear as a military officer, what it actually represents and who or what it is to, and understanding that we spend very little time talking about that. But it absolutely, it underpins everything that you are, the permissions that you are granted by society, and also the duties that you owe it in return.

You are given the permissions to do things, which nobody else is allowed to do, because of who or what you serve. But understanding genuinely that is not the prime minister. It is not the president. It is not the cabinet. It is something bigger than that is absolutely essential. So, I do think that that's a conversation that needs to be had more of, so that everybody really understands who or what it is they actually serve.

[00:24:27] **Brig John Fenwick:** I think that's a really good point and I don't think we spend enough time on it. I think it really struck me between the eyeballs when I went to the McCain conference about two years ago and the topic was the



challenges to liberal democracy and in the opening talk General Allen of the formerly of the US Marine Corps, talked quite strongly about to what they take an oath and what is their commitment and it's, you know, in the US to a set of ideals. And what does that mean to be committed to a set of ideals in a military where you might be asked to do things you're unsure of.

So I think that there's also the aspect of the societal impact, and I know that General Campbell during the pandemic, when he was talking about the military contribution, made the statement we are the nation's military, and we will do what the nation asks of us. And that brings with it both the impact of how the military sits within society, but also what impact it may have on individuals in the military. And you alluded to it, if we are using our military amongst the community, what does that do to our individuals? What does it, how do we properly prepare our military to do their ultimate task of inflicting violence on behalf of a nation, but also support the nation and protect our people.

I wonder if you've had any thoughts around moral injury and what that might mean. It's a commonly used term and I'm not sure it's well understood. I wonder if you've got any thoughts around that.



[00:26:14] **Professor David Whetham:** So I'm delighted to say that I think, Australia is well ahead of the curve in this area. The conversation that I had last year at, at Creswell demonstrated to me that this is a subject that is in, if anywhere is taking it seriously it is Australia, which is fantastic. So absolutely I think for why we must take moral injury, seriously, you have only to look at your royal commission on veteran suicides; serving and veteran suicides, which again groundbreaking. And I wish other countries would take a similar lead.

We know that there's a link between long-term mental health, and self-harm and PTSD. But what we're starting to appreciate now is also that moral injury plays a part in that. Where there's a sense of betrayal, where you've been let down by an institution where you have done something, which you were told was correct at the time, and then came to realise that actually it wasn't, or it wasn't okay, or it perhaps it fell into the "lawful but awful" category, of yes, legally that was okay, but that does not mean it was what was necessary or actually what was the right thing to do in that particular circumstance.

And, those types of situations can build up, and leave people with profound long-term challenges. And for far too many people that challenge is, is just too, it's just too great.

How do we deal with that? Well, first of all, recognising what is going on is absolutely essential. Providing support and the regimental systems are particularly good at providing that long-term support for our veterans. It could be better, of course, but it is important having that community around you.

I'm particularly worried about what is happening with our reserves, both in Australia and in the UK, increasing use of reserves and the ability to look after our people once they have left their deployment. And they go back to their civilian world. And they're surrounded by people who don't get what it is that they have done and what was required of them. And they don't have that sounding board. They don't have that ability to share their burden in the same way that people who are still on the inside do.



So I think that is a challenge. So, how do we support people after we've deployed them? But for me, of course, as an educator, I'm also very focused on how do we better prepare our people to be deployed in the first place, to help them think through the type of challenges they're going to be faced with. Because we know that this is a form of ethical armouring for our personnel. If you have had a chance to think through what it is that might, be required of you, you are in a better position in some cases to say "No, that's not appropriate" and push back.

But more likely it, it just simply puts you into a position to be able to process and make sense of the regrettable necessity of some things that you have to do when you are wearing a military uniform. Your job sometimes is to break things and kill people on behalf of your state and understanding that is important, but what that means in practice, it is far more complicated than simply just getting on with it as traditionally has been the way.

So, for example, there's a good example of the horrible situation of being faced with child soldiers, for example. I mean, absolutely horrendous situation to put anybody in and there's lots of legal rules and regulations about what we are obliged to do in such situations. But ultimately, if it comes down to a 14-year-old with an AK 47 who is going to kill you or your teammates or some innocent civilians, you may be required to shoot that child. The fact that they're 12 or look like 12 is going to be obviously absolutely horrendous.

But that is the type of situation that can leave somebody in an appalling situation for the rest of their lives that they can't process what it is that they have had to do. And it was the right thing to do in that situation. It was the absolutely the correct thing. But that doesn't stop you waking up at three o'clock in the morning and seeing that again and again and again and being put into that situation. So how do we deal with this? Far too often in preparation missions around the world that won't be part of the serials, that won't be part of the judgmental processes because there's a fear that the newspapers, the tabloids will get hold of "Australian personnel trained to kill children" or "British army trains to shoot preteens" or whatever the headline that you're worried about is. And, clearly that is not a good message. You do not want that message out there.



But the idea that the way to avoid bad optics as the PR people would say, is to not equip our people with the idea that they might be placed into a situation where this is a reality that there are children with guns and that they will be a threat to you and your personnel and to civilians, and that you may have to use lethal force as a result. To not equip people for that in advance - that's, that's a massive institutional failure. That's a national failure. And I'm not saying that happens in Australia. I just, just put the caveat, I, I have no idea whether this happens with your pre-deployment serials in Australia. I'm drawing from other experience here, but, um. To not do that, I think is professionally negligent, frankly. Because we need to support our people. We need to let them know in advance to actually help them prepare for the potentially terrible situations that they might be faced with, because that situation is still going to be terrible, but the ability to live with it afterwards is very, very different if you've had a chance to think about it before.

[00:32:50] **Brig John Fenwick:** No, very good point. And I would reflect that from my own experience.

[00:32:57] **Dr Lucas Marie:** This concludes part one of Brigadier John Fenwick interview with Professor David Whetham. Join us in the next episode as we continue the discussion in part two.

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