



The Forge: Lives in Leadership Podcast - Australian Defence College

SHOW NOTES

Episode Summary, Highlights and Full Transcript

SEASON 1: EPISODE 8

Guest: MAJGEN Andrew Hocking (Part 1)
Host: Dr Lucas Marie



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<https://theforge.defence.gov.au/lives-leadership/season-1-episode-08-majgen-andrew-hocking-part-1>

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.



S01E08 – MAJGEN Andrew Hocking – Part 1 - Episode Summary

Duration: 34 minutes

Key Themes: Adaptability, Humility, Balance, Flexibility, Self-awareness, Multi-directional leadership, Systems.

Overview: This episode explores essential qualities of military and senior leadership through Major General Hocking's extensive experience across operational deployments, defence leadership, and national disaster coordination.

Core Leadership Qualities Discussed

Adaptability. The ability to continuously evolve as a leader, recognising that "what got you here won't get you there." Leaders must remain works-in-progress rather than relying solely on past success.

Humility. Essential for truly listening to understand rather than simply waiting to speak. Enables leaders to absorb diverse perspectives across whole-of-government contexts and different stakeholder groups.

Flexibility. Accepting that senior leadership involves constant compromise and imperfection. Learning to work without holding all the levers while still making meaningful progress.

Balance. Maintaining equilibrium across five key life categories - work, play, love, health, and connection. This isn't an optional luxury but essential for providing the unique value senior leaders offer: clear thinking, guidance, and influence.

Key Insights

- Leaders become vulnerable to stagnation as they gain seniority and identity from their positions
- Military culture creates challenges around "holding on too tight", even when situations don't require battle-level intensity



- Practical systems (like diary management) matter more than aspirations under pressure
- Activities outside professional identity (surfing, hang gliding, rock climbing) serve as crucial levellers
- Processing emotional responses through structured reflection ("perspective-taking drill") prevents baggage accumulation
- Seeking objective input from trusted advisors - including former subordinates - provides essential perspective

Real-World Example

During the 2019-2020 bushfire crisis, Major General Hocking describes recognising when he'd been "sprinting too long," leading to overly aggressive communication that damaged relationships in whole-of-government settings. Taking time to fly and reset his perspective proved essential to restoring effectiveness.

The conversation emphasises that leadership excellence requires the deliberate practice of humility and self-awareness, not just their acknowledgment.

Memorable Quotes:

On the need for continuous adaptation in leadership: *"What got you to where you are is not going to get you to where you want to go as a leader."*

Advice given to Major General Hocking upon promotion to one-star rank, about the reality of senior leadership: *"You will never achieve anything you wanted to achieve again... because pretty much from that point on, everything is compromise."*

On why practical systems (like diary management) matter more than good intentions: *"Under pressure you fall to the level of your systems. You don't rise to the level of your aspirations."*



About the Guest:

Major General Andrew Hocking brings a uniquely diverse leadership perspective shaped by decades of service across operational, strategic, and whole-of-government contexts. His military career spans command positions across multiple brigades, operational deployments to East Timor and Afghanistan as both planner and battle group commander, and teaching at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Beyond traditional military roles, he has led significant defence reviews on recruiting, retention, and veteran support, and served in a secondment to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Perhaps most notably, he served as Deputy Coordinator of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency during the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic—a crucible experience that tested his leadership among military, government, and community stakeholders during one of Australia's most challenging crises. Now working as an organisational coach and mentor, Major General Hocking draws on these varied experiences to help leaders across military, public, and private sectors navigate the critical transition from tactical to strategic leadership, emphasising the importance of adaptability, humility, and sustainable balance in senior roles.

Resources & References:

National Bushfire Recovery: [National Bushfire Recovery Agency](#) (Lessons Learned)

The Vanguard Occasional Paper Series: No 2 March 2022 [“Preparing for the future – Key organisational Lessons from the Afghanistan Campaign”](#)



S01E08 – MAJGEN Andrew Hocking – Part 1 - Time Stamped Highlights

1:43 - Core Leadership Qualities. The importance of adaptability and realising you're always a work in progress

2:58 - "What Got You Here Won't Get You There". Discussion of how tactical leadership skills don't translate to senior leadership roles

4:27 - The Role of Humility. How humility enables listening to understand, not just to respond

7:10 - Living with Imperfection. Why senior leaders must accept compromise and progress over perfection

12:39 - Work-Life Balance Framework. The five categories: Work, Play, Love, Health, Connection

19:33 - Staying Grounded with Nature. How activities like hang gliding and surfing keep leaders humble

22:49 - Bushfire Crisis Leadership. Getting called to coordinate national disaster response with minimal notice

24:36 - Recognising When You're Off Balance. A critical moment where aggressive tone damaged relationships in whole-of-government meetings

28:23 - Perspective Taking Drill. Weekly "Andrew time" for processing emotions logically and learning from difficult situations

31:41 - Building Your Advisory Network. Keeping half a dozen trusted people on speed dial for objective perspective.



S01E08 – MAJGEN Andrew Hocking – 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.

My name is Dr. Lucas Marie, and in today's episode, I'm joined by Major General Andrew Hocking. During his years of service, Major General Hocking served across 1, 3 and 7 Brigades in the Australian Army, including command of the First Battalion and the Seventh Combat Brigade. His operational deployments include East Timor and Afghanistan, where he served as both a planner and as a battle group Commander.

Beyond his operational service, he has held senior leadership roles across Defence and government, including secondment to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, teaching at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and leading reviews into Defence recruiting, retention, and veteran support. He's also led the coordination of Australia's disaster response, serving as deputy coordinator at the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, during the 2019-2020 bushfires. This was further challenged with the crossing over with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Major General Hocking. Thank you for joining us today on the podcast.

[00:01:25] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Pleasure, Lucas. Thanks for the invitation.

[00:01:27] **Dr Lucas Marie:** My first question is about your experience of reflecting on your experience in the military, in government coordinating national disaster relief, and now as a mentor and organisational coach. What to you are some of the core qualities that you believe are most important in being a successful leader?

[00:01:43] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Yeah, well, I guess one of the great things about being part of something like this, is you're forced to reflect in an ongoing way and sort of doing a bit of reflection prior to coming into this session was really good for me.



Um, and perhaps that's probably the first point, is that, that quality of adaptability and realising that you never have all the answers and you are, you are a constant work in progress as a leader and the ability to constantly reflect and adapt your approach to your audience, but equally sort of refine your approach through life.

So I guess that would be my first thing is adaptability. And I do a lot of coaching now with leaders, private sector, public sector, and military, that are sort of transitioning from, I guess, what the military audience would know as tactical level leadership to more senior leadership roles, including, you know, strategic level leadership.

And one of the things that often comes up in their reflection, and indeed mine as I've just discussed, is that this idea that what got you to where you are is not going to get you to where you want to go as a leader. And I think sometimes military people struggle with that a little bit. In fact, I think all people struggle with it because at about the 15-to-20-year mark of your career, you're starting to think you're pretty good and you probably are pretty good at what you have been doing - tactical level leadership.

I mean, that's something that's worth celebrating, but you're at a phase of your life that you really, you're earning good or reasonable money, you're confident in things, so your desire to change and adapt is pretty low. So I guess that's probably the first thing that I would say is that, you know, "what got you here won't get you there".

And therefore, you know, in fact, I once did a presentation at the National Press Club, um, and I was talking about national preparedness and resilience and a range of other things. And in order to grab people's attention, I used the title "Adapt or Die", but I think that's probably the first quality is adaptability and their willingness to continue to adapt yourself, as you change the environment in which you lead.



The second thing I guess, you know, as I reflected on this, was, humility. And again, I guess without humility, you're probably not going to adapt. You probably will have the view that the way you have been doing things and you doing things is the way it should be done: It must be good - because "look at me, I'm getting promoted. I'm, you know, I'm still moving up in the system". But, so I think humility enables some of that adaptability, but I think particularly humility enables your ability to listen and not to hear, but, they're two different things, but to actually listen in order to understand.

And one of the things I learnt and continue to learn in senior leadership and different things I'm doing in life is just the beauty of listening to somebody else's perspective and really trying to understand it and I often see leaders around it, a senior leadership table that are all well briefed by their staff, they've got their talking points and it's almost like they're listening in order to work out the timing to inject their talking point and it really gets in the way of, I think this quality of humility that then enables you to listen, to understand, because the power of understanding somebody else's perspective, particularly around the whole of government table.

In my context, you know, you might be talking to a community impacted by bush fires, private sector, public sector, and the bush fires, you know, different jurisdictions. If you're not willing to understand what's going on in their shoes, what their equities are, what their pressures are, and you're not humble enough to let that in, then your pathway to senior leadership is probably already limited, and your ability to adapt is significantly curtailed.

So, adaptability, humility, whilst two others that sort of came up on my list in my reflection was, flexibility. Again, really easy to throw that out there, but perhaps I'll explain what I mean by that. A person once said to me as I was, starting to get into more senior positions, I guess, in fact it was, I think it was when I was promoted to one star and they basically said "congratulations, hocks, you will never achieve anything you wanted to achieve again" - which has been very, very true. Because pretty much from that point on, everything is compromise. You don't hold all the levers to your aspirations for your organisation. You rely on, other parts of either the Defence enterprise, the government enterprise, the national enterprise.



Um, and being able to live with imperfection, but still have progress is something that, again, in coaching, I see a lot of people struggle with that. “Wow, I’ve never had to do that. I really wanted to achieve this, but I couldn’t do that because this particular stakeholder had a different view of things” and they start digging in and getting angry and losing relationships and losing trust. Rather than, no, no, this is part of the game. Be flexible, be willing to compromise and accept imperfection as long as it’s on the right things and it’s moving you forward.

And probably the last thing that I would say, it’s more about managing yourself and this idea of, of balance, again, another easy throw away, but, you know, balance in life. But I’ve absolutely learnt and I think back to the times when I was the Deputy Chief of Staff of Army headquarters dealing with, a lot of sensitive strategic issues. Often, you know, occasionally political issues, often involving real people. Some of them in real suffering and real, families and I had two kids under two at the time. Yeah, I was tired and my ability to add value when I was not well rested, significantly declined. I lost my perspective. I didn’t have time to think, therefore, I couldn’t guide, I couldn’t influence, and I was really just caught on the treadmill.

So, balance is something that I think is, is espoused, but achieving it is often a lot more difficult to do. There are ways to do it, and I do a lot of that in my coaching, but I genuinely believe in it that achieving balance in life, you know, enough time to play, enough time with family, enough time to work ultimately enables you to serve your people better as a senior leader and offer that unique value of thinking, guiding, and influencing, rather than just being on the, “the cogs of doing”, and you need to be well rested to do that. So they’re probably the main things off the bat.

[00:10:22] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Wow. That was, I, I love those adaptability, humility, flexibility, and balance. And the kind of analogy of, you know, what runs through them to me when I was hearing you speak, was this idea about having the space or the capability to be a bit critical, a bit reflective throughout all of those, you know, um, we know under a stressful environment, you said like two kids at home, you’re coming into work quite sleep deprived or really stressed. It’s really hard to sort of be reflective of assumptions that you have, your biases to be an active listener in the room rather than just get through the meeting.



[00:11:00] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Absolutely. Again, you know, I continue to learn this in life and, and one of the reasons why I love coaching, because I learn so much from it, as I go, but just reflecting on your reflections there - this idea of just holding onto everything too tight is a necessary thing for military people sometimes. We struggle to hold onto things with a loose grip because that, in a battle type situation, that's dangerous. You, need to be razor edge focused. But not everything is a battle situation, but, it's explainable why military people are vulnerable. And it's not just military people, but we are vulnerable to not giving ourselves permission to let go, permission to achieve balance, because there's a logic in my view, flawed. In fact, evidence says it's flawed. There's a logic that says, if I do that, then I'm not going to be razor sharp at the point of battle.

Whereas of course, the opposite is true. That you don't want to be arriving in battle where you, don't have the energy reserves to be razor sharp. So we've got to learn to hold onto things with a loose grip in terms of how to do it. There's probably, again, going back to evidence and the wisdom of those I've coached without breaching their privacy - but there's a couple of things. They say there's five key categories that you want to broadly try and balance out in life.

They're titled Work: Work's really important, but so work, play, love, health and connection. Connection, being connection with friends, generally social connection. Play is the things you do just because it's fun. Yeah. You like climbing.

[00:13:14] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Yeah.

[00:13:15] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Um, and you need climbing. You don't just like climbing. You need climbing. Um, and what I often do in coaching is start with a, "let's do a quick audit of where are you at with work, play, love, health, connection" on a score of, you know, one to four. And very quickly it's that realisation moment where somebody looks at it and says, wow I'm out of whack here.



Often it's work that's really good, and everything else is being compromised for that. Um, so probably that's one of the first ways, is understanding where you are at, and putting a framework around understanding where you are at, because until you understand where you're at, or you've got a framework to assess it, it's very hard to do anything about it.

The second thing, again, through evidence and I'm, I'm still learning there, so I don't profess to be the expert doing it myself. I get things out of balance. We all do at times, but not through lack of trying now and lack of awareness now, and that's been a great revelation to me, and hopefully my family and those I lead.

But the age-old adage that “under pressure you fall to the level of your systems, you don't rise to the level of your aspirations”. So, the diary is one hell of a system. It controls your time, either in a good way or it controls your time in a bad way. Um, so I guess building those things into the diary and ensuring that they reflect the balance, understanding where you're at with the balance and then reflecting the balance in the diary.

[00:15:06] **Dr Lucas Marie:** It's making space. Yeah?

[00:15:08] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** making space. It's two easy tools, but that will get you where, if you don't truly believe that you will serve your people and your family better if you achieve that balance. Many people get to that point, but they really don't believe that will be the case.

But my lessons in more senior leadership is that without that balance and the ability to think, then you don't really add unique value to the team. Quite often, all you add is duplicative value that other people can do as opposed to the unique value that a clear minded senior leader can bring to a group.

[00:15:55] **Dr Lucas Marie:** That's really well said and I'm loving where this conversation is going. I want to ask one more question about your answer, which is about humility, which I think is interesting. Something from my experiences when I was a PhD candidate, I wasn't a doctor, I was a student researcher. I was way more able to, I had a bit more flexibility in my thoughts.



I didn't have papers published, I didn't have research that I had an identity around that was mine, you know? And so I was much more able to see different perspectives and take on those perspectives as being true rather than being critical of them.

And something you said about humility, as people become in their academic field, doctors, associate professors, professors, they start to build up, well, one, they get told, they're very, very smart people, experts, you know, is often the term used. And they have a body of research that kind of underpins who they are and what they bring to the table.

And they see the world through that sort of expertise. And it sounded like you were also saying that with military ranks - you became brigadier and it's a body of work that you contribute to and then maybe you move up the ranks. You are a major general.

Is it hard in the military as well, in the same way that it's hard in maybe in other kind of bureaucratic, whether it's government, academia, or industry, to sort of at that higher leadership level, still have that sort of growth mindset that curiosity that you had as a young soldier that's learning about the world and, and kind of taking it in and really being aware of one's biases or other people's, you know that rather than saying, oh, I'm the expert, or I'm the major general and this is how, from what I know, this is how it should be done? You spoke about that really beautifully. I wonder if you could.

[00:17:39] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Look, I think you've, um, a great question. Obviously with your, uh, cultural anthropology background it's a really insightful question. Yeah, absolutely. Um, the, the more powerful you get, um, I'm not sure if power is the right word, but the more senior you get, um, the more identity you get from that seniority, whether it's military seniority or academic seniority or recognition. Well then, the more vulnerable you get to not letting other things in or, or indeed not adapting because hey, why would I want to adapt? It's, it's got me here, but this is the tricky bit with senior leadership and, some people realise it, that, "hey, I am really vulnerable to this dynamic" that you beautifully described and hey, the environment is changing around me. Um, it's not just me at the top of a triangle anymore leading my tactical group. I've got to lead sideways, I've got to lead up there, there this multi-directional.



[00:18:44] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Yes.

[00:18:45] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Those that, um, recognise those dynamics and then take some practical steps to counter them are really the ones that continue to succeed and continue to succeed in life. Um, yeah, not just in their line of work, that do go hand in hand.

What do you do? I mean, I'm assuming you're going to ask me the question. Well, what, what can you do to, you know, retain your humility? I don't know. I mean, one of the simple things for me, and I've heard other people say similar. I mean, kids are great. Because they give you an unfiltered view of how arrogant and pompous you've been. And my, my kids are unreal with that. They are the masters at it. But, but again, it's like, it's, I think.

[00:19:33] **Dr Lucas Marie:** it's healthy.

[00:19:33] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Yeah. They don't care. Um, and I, I do, for years I flew hand gliders and about 10 years ago I fell in love with surfing. And it's funny how nature is a real leveller. Yeah. And I always found when, and, and of course I'm in, in those communities.

I'm not General Hocking, I'm just Hocks. So finding ways, and this is the play part of balance that can help you, finding ways where you're not as drunk or not as vulnerable to your seniority. Um, by being in different groups where it's not really recognised and in these two examples that I give, being with nature that does not care who you are, to me is just a, a great leveller.

[00:20:32] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Yeah. I love that. 'Because I personally, I feel that when I go rock climbing it doesn't matter that I'm, you know, a Doctor in Anthropology, I bring nothing of that to the table on the cliff. You know, it's just, it's just yourself, um, and your abilities in that space and the social capital or cultural capital that you've earned in that community, you know, and I, I think that, that there is a sort of humbling effect that that gives you.



[00:21:00] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** so I mean, is there a logic here, you know, as we talk about it right then, that a, a logic that a leader's almost got to say, that say to themselves regularly, how, how do I, how do I retain my humility? Um, because I haven't come across many leaders that don't want to be humble. You know, I think most, and there's the odd exception where people get a little bit caught up on their ego, but it's rare. But not wanting to be caught up on your ego and wanting to be humble and actually being it, and, and genuinely letting stuff in. Um, they're two different things.

[00:21:37] **Dr Lucas Marie:** I agree. There's something about talking about being humble. But there's another thing about practicing it.

[00:21:42] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Right

[00:21:42] **Dr Lucas Marie:** And how do you...

[00:21:43] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** ...how do you bring it into action. And again, with sort of the examples that we are talking about is again, another reason to give yourself permission to play.

[00:21:55] **Dr Lucas Marie:** I think you're right. I think balance is one way. To perhaps, um, provide that sort of perspective and to ground you in different sorts of ways, not just through play and not just through love and connection or through kids or, but engaging in other, like, you know, when you're moving from say, a Defence environment into a national disaster relief environment, that even though that's work, that's still a different sort of communication. There's a different sort of, maybe even leadership style.

[00:22:26] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Yeah. Oh, totally. Yeah. There's this, yeah. And when you're, you're holding on too tight and you're not having that outlet, you can very quickly not notice that your style is changing. Um, in fact, in the early parts of the 19-20 Bush fires, so just by way of background, I was Commander Seven Brigade. I was pushing two battle groups down south to support the bush fires. So I was preparing them and then they, I was pushing them out and then I got a phone call. Uh, I was in a back brief from one of the battle group commanders, uh, who was about to leave, and I had a phone call that the Chief of Army, uh, wanted to talk to me.



Of course, you know, I, I left my conference room and gave him a call. He said to me, look, you know, you got to be in Canberra this afternoon at five o'clock to interview for this particular role at Prime Minister and Cabinet was where I was being interviewed. Um, anyway. So I literally had like half an hour's notice, packed my bags, flew to Canberra, said goodbye to the family, two kids under two, although probably three and five at that time and then I was in Canberra. There was smoke over the top of Canberra. So it was Armageddon feeling that was queuing the politics. It was queuing the media, it was queuing the population. So you, you knew something big was going down.

I got selected for the role, obviously, and then I, I necessarily, so I got out of balance for about six weeks. Had to, my family wasn't there, they were back in Brisbane. I was traveling the country along with my colleagues. Um, you know, we're dealing with the politics of it. A lot of media. And I, I remember I was in a meeting probably about the four-week mark at Prime Minister and Cabinet in a whole of government setting, and I got my tone wrong.

And, and again, reflection. We, we are not all perfect, but I, I realised it after the event that I, I could just tell what I, I was starting to sound a little bit like the "holding on type military leader".

[00:24:52] **Dr Lucas Marie:** So by tone you had a more aggressive tone?

[00:24:55] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** More aggressive tone. Okay. More forceful tone.

[00:24:57] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Right, right.

[00:24:58] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** I stopped listening. I was doing more talking, and that's queuing the stereotypes that everybody expects of a military leader, that that didn't necessarily cue cooperation within the whole of government setting. But again, I look back on it and even just talking about it in this conversation. I needed to sprint in the early parts of the bushfire recovery because the nation was in crisis.



But I wasn't smart enough to realise when I had been sprinting too long and I needed to just slow myself down a little bit to get perspective back, my ability to listen and understand back, um, all that type of stuff. And it, it cost me a little bit, you know, I had to rebuild some relationships in that whole of government setting.

So, yeah, but you know, you do get it out of balance sometimes. Um, but trying to check it before it manifests itself in your behaviour is really key. Um, what did I do about it? I went flying. Um, literally went flying and I said to my boss, I'm going flying for the morning. Um, Saturday morning, um, we, we were working seven days a week.

He said, I'm going, I just, I'm going to just go clear my head. Um, same thing. The humility came back, perspective came back and I was ready to. Hopefully add some unique value as a leader after I'd done that.

[00:26:23] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Right.

[00:26:24] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Um, but perhaps I should have done that a little bit earlier.

[00:26:26] **Dr Lucas Marie:** But Hocks, you seem really good at being aware of sort of some of your actions you know, not everyone is so able to. You know, people can be for all sorts of reasons, embarrassed or maybe I overreacted there, or maybe I spoke a bit aggressively then that didn't work, but I'm just going to, I need to move on to the next day. Like, um, do you surround yourself with people that can also call you out or you're able to, you know, um, you've got people to lean on in that, in that way, so it's not all on you. Is that, is that important in leadership as well or?



[00:26:58] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** I think it definitely is. Um. Uh, you know, you've, up until often, maybe 15-year mark of a career, most of the things you've achieved has been head down, bum up, just working hard on your own, and then you get pretty good at what you're doing in that particular environment. But from that point on, you can't do it alone. You know, you, you got to let other people in to criticise you to. Um, but to answer your question, way too late. I, I realise this way too late. In fact, most of the realisation has occurred through my coaching over the last two or three years where I'm realising the importance of having people around you that can, you know, uh, let you know that some of the indicators and warnings that you're starting to hold on a little bit too tight, you're not quite getting the balance.

Now I'm surrounded by those people now, which is, is good. Uh, did I do it deliberately? Not necessarily, but I do encourage people to do that earlier rather than later. I would say though, um, you know, there are ways, and I teach it in coaching, they call it perspective taking drill. It's pretty simple.

What I now do is once a week in my diary, and I started to do this as a more senior leader, but once a week in my diary, I just had "Andrew time" and my ADCs and my staff knew that it's not Andrew time, as in, oh yeah, that's flexible. We can put stuff in there. It's the most important meeting of the day or of the week. Do, do not disturb Andrew time unless it's the Prime Minister type thing.

And in that Andrew time, um, I would process some of the things that had occurred through the week, um, including, you know, gee, I, I didn't do well in that meeting. Now I'm, sometimes you don't have time to process it on the spot. You move to the next thing, you're standing in front of a camera 10 minutes later. You're in senate estimates two hours later. Now you're in front of a community town hall half an hour later. But you got to at some stage process it so that you're not carrying it around with you. Because that builds up after 15 years and, and after 30 it builds up even more. That's a lot of baggage to be dragging around, so you've got to, so you got to work out a way to make it smaller.



You've also got to work out a way to learn from it. And, and what I use now is this perspective taking drill, which basically is left hand side, is what, what are all the emotional negatives that came out of that meeting? So, you know, post senate estimates, gee, I, I totally got grilled by, um, you know, Senator Wong. Um, you, gee, I didn't answer that question well. Yeah, a lot of stuff that's loud and negative in your head. Normally got 10 times the volume of your logical side of your brain, the, so get it all out. - that's probably the first thing. Just get it all out. Don't just drag it around with you.

And then the second side is the logical side, and you just, my drill is take a break and then I come back and go, "actually Andrew, it wasn't that bad. Senator Wong was going to come at you anyway". It didn't matter what you said, but you get my point. It's starting to bring some balance into it and give some volume to logic, not just the alarm. Sort of emotion and negative type. Anyway, at the end of it, I now stop and I think, so what is that telling me? And it might tell me I've got to adapt something, or sometimes it'll tell me nothing other than that's just a fact of life. But it feels a lot smaller now and I'm ready to move on.

[00:30:52] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Yeah, it's a great way to process it. Um, the act of writing, I mean, someone who's done a bit of writing in the past, sometimes when there's a complicated idea it's not dealing with. Getting grilled by Penny Wong. But, uh, just the, the fact of writing it down does something I think to, all right. I'm sure there's some science around there is around that. Yes.

[00:31:09] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** absolutely. Well, it's, it's above the detectable threshold, right? In the military parlance, it's real when you write it down, it's not just, and, and by writing it down, you've got to be a little bit more precise in your thoughts. It's not just a vague emotion that's pulling you down. So, yeah, there is a power in writing. And to your question before about surrounding yourself with objective people, often in the second part of that drill, you know, in Andrew time I would call people and I've got, you know, half a dozen people on speed dial.



Um, one is an ex-corporal of mine, but he was always just really insightful and direct. And I say, "Hey mate. I just need your, your common-sense check on this, blah, blah happened, blah, blah, blah. What, what do you think?" And it's just sometimes a you can only form your own perspective to a certain point. It's, I think you brought it up before. It's shaped by years of, uh, institutionalisation habits, your own journey. But it is so easy to reach out and let another perspective in. And if you've got a bit of humility and adapt adaptability with it, that's a huge power for a senior leader.

[00:32:20] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Yeah, wonderful. And that's great that you are, um, well, one, surrounding yourself with those sorts of people, but also that, you know, um, I'm, I'm sure that's a lovely relationship to have where someone can, they want to lean on me and they want to know that sort of information.

Um, yeah. I think that can be really hard to build those relationships with people and that might be part of like, um, I don't know, a, a sort of leadership training journey that the ADF or something I do find lovely about the ADF is the role that warrant officer actually play in this regard. You know, um, it's a wonderful sort of, um, institutional sort of practice that you don't see in academia and you don't see.

You know, in other sorts of industries. But, you know, not saying that it works beautifully every time, but it is lovely to have this role of someone being, you know, a bit of your ear in the room. Yeah. A bit of speaking truth to power, a bit of having those hard conversations and sort of making it their role to do so.

[00:33:13] **MAJGEN Andrew Hocking:** Totally. Yeah. It's structured into the organisation in some way. Yeah. But I do say to people in my own personal view, don't just rely on that. There, there's some downsides to that as well, and how power flows, who writes whose report. All, all that stuff is real. Um, so, so go to the people that connect with you and offer the difference to you, and you can find them anywhere. It just depends on you.



[00:33:47] **Dr Lucas Marie:** Thank you for listening to Part one of the Lives and Leadership Conversation with Major General Andrew Hocking. Join us in the next episode as we continue the discussion in part two.

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