

THE BIG SMOKE.

[Gillian Hunt's journey from corporate to community impact.](#)

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Known primarily for her work in the NFP and SME sectors, Gillian Hunt shares what drives her professional, social, and community impact.

Recently, we had the pleasure of meeting Gillian Hunt, a dynamic leader and advocate in governance and mental health. Recognising a critical need for governance support in the non-profit and SME sectors, Gillian founded **Boardium** to streamline processes and enable leaders to focus on strategy and risk management.

With over 20 years of experience, Gillian's background spans business, marketing, startups, operations, and leadership in both the commercial and non-profit sectors. Outside of Boardium, she is currently Deputy Chair of **Freedom Solutions Australia**, and President of the **Australian Men's Health Forum**. Gillian is also a fellow of the **Governance Institute of Australia** and a graduate of the **Australian Institute of Company Directors**.

Gillian is committed to addressing vital issues like suicide prevention, mental health,

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domestic violence, and social justice, driven by a passion for both community impact and robust governance practices.

In our interview, Gillian generously shares her journey, the challenges she has faced, and her vision for leveraging technology to support social causes. It's a story of insight and the profound impact of her work.

How did your early career and life experience shape what you do today? Is there a story behind championing the marginalised that you'd like to share?

From a young age, I've felt a strong pull towards supporting those less fortunate. Built into my DNA really through watching my mum support abused women, orphanages, and other deeply important work, it is just what we did. This intrinsic drive has been a guiding force throughout my life and career. My early work in corporate affairs, marketing, and regulatory compliance provided me with essential skills and insights, but it was a profound personal loss that redirected my focus.

How did your work in suicide prevention and mental health advocacy inform your approach to governance and leadership in the non-profit sector?

The tragic and unexpected death of my brother Keith to suicide was a defining moment. I regard my life as two distinct phases – Before Keith and After Keith.

His tragic passing was not just a personal heartbreak but a wakeup call that revealed just how awfully prevalent suicide is – both here in Australia as well as internationally – and also the gaps in mental health support and the challenges faced by marginalised communities. Out of this loss grew a new thing for me. It took a long time for me to process that grief, and many things changed in my life as a result of the internal work that I did with the help of a really wonderful grief counsellor.

As a business leader and governance professional, what are the key principles that you believe are essential for effective governance in non-profit organisations?

My role at Boardium allows me to leverage my corporate background to help not-for-profit boards navigate the complexities of governance. As a fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, I bring a wealth of knowledge to support these organisations. My work isn't just about compliance and structure; it's about ensuring that these organisations can focus on their vital missions without being bogged down by governance issues.

What is your vision for leveraging technology, particularly AI, to support social impact, and what are the challenges and benefits that come with it?

Looking ahead, I see both tremendous opportunities and significant risks in leveraging technology and AI within the not-for-profit sector. On one hand, AI can enhance efficiency by automating routine tasks, providing data-driven insights to inform strategic decisions, and offering personalised services to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. These tools have the potential to amplify the impact of NFPs,

However, there are also significant challenges to manage. These include data privacy concerns, the potential for bias in AI systems, and the need to ensure transparency and accountability. It's crucial for NFPs to develop a robust framework for adopting these technologies, grounded in ethical principles and a commitment to safeguarding the interests of those they serve.

What has been, or is, your greatest challenge – either personally or professionally?

Moving to a new country mid-career with two young children was one of the toughest challenges I've faced. Relocating meant rebuilding my professional network from scratch, adapting to a new business culture, and learning the intricacies of a different regulatory environment. It was a daunting task, balancing these demands while also supporting my children through their own adjustment to a new life. I had to navigate the complexities of parenting while also managing a career and dealing with the grief of losing my brother. These experiences tested my resilience and forced me to confront my own vulnerabilities.

And your greatest achievement?

My greatest achievement isn't marked by accolades but by the resilience I've developed through these personal and professional trials. Surviving and finding purpose amidst grief and major life changes has fortified my commitment to making a positive impact. It's this resilience that fuels my work with not-for-profits and drives me to advocate for mental health and well-being.

Who inspires you and why?

I draw immense inspiration from my father, whose values of integrity, perseverance, and compassion have always guided me. He taught me the importance of fairness and making a meaningful impact, with his mantra "Never give up!" being drilled into me for years.

Personally, what are you passionate about and what makes you happy?

Whilst I am gregarious and outgoing professionally, outside of work I lead a quieter, calmer life. The ocean, with its calming presence, regularly exercising, reading, or with family and friends is where you'll find me.

If you're interested in working with Gillian or want to connect with her through aligned interests and expertise, contact her via her [LinkedIn](#).