



Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Hello and welcome to “Unstress” My name is Dr. Ron Ehrlich. I don't know whether you think about this much if you listen to this podcast you probably do, but have you noticed how we are consistently encouraged to be good consumers, not just by advertising but by governments and banks. If consumer confidence is high, then apparently that's an indicator of a healthy economy.

Well, what about being a good citizen? And rather than celebrating consumer confidence we actually celebrate consumer consciousness. There are so many things to consider. The lifecycle of a product, a circular or collaborative economy, supply chain issues, modern slavery, sustainable development goals and much more.

Well, my guest today is Kate Harris who is CEO of an organisation that we should all become a lot more familiar with GECA - G E C A which stands for Good Environmental Choices Australia. Now importantly GECA is an organisation and an eco-label which is Australia's only and this is really important independent not-for-profit multisector sustainability and environmental certification program. Independent not-for-profit really important. I hope you enjoy this conversation I had with Kate Harris.

Welcome to the show, Kate.

Kate Harris: Thanks Ron. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Now Kate you're CEO of GECA, can you share with our listener... I know you were a few other different hats there; can you share with our listener a bit about your journey and how you got to this point?

Kate Harris: Yes, my journey is not a linear one so it's always an interesting story, I guess. I started off singing and nursing and then selling off the not-for-profit sector by combining those things like a clown doctor. So, I'm definitely not a linear trajectory to a CEO but all of the things I have done along the way are things that I'm really passionate about and it's always been about making a difference in being a service.

And now through that journey whilst I was managing the clown doctor program, I had a son who was quite sick with and affected by things in the environment and that really took me on a new professional journey and a personal one in looking at environmental sustainability, social change and how all of those things are interconnected. So, I did a Master of Social Ecology and really fell in love with no supporting leadership and systems change for making the world a better place for humanity and all actually.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Just tell us a little bit about GECA. It's an acronym for...

Kate Harris: It is a Good Environmental Choices Australia and so that's the acronym. I mean although we're going to start dropping the E and just make it about food choices because we also do social components as well as environment and health and some people don't see beyond when we're talking about GECA. Essentially, GECA is a not-for-profit organisation,



is eighteen years old this year and we're an eco-label independent not-for-profit eco-label and as well as that we look at good choices and best practice for products and services so that consumers or procurers can actually choose things that are yeah good for people on the planet.

So, a lot of it is standard development as well as managing eco-label and working with manufacturers. It's also understanding the materiality of products what things cause harm or two people to the shore of a corner and making sure that we're really driving and optimising and rewarding people who are doing the right thing, who are making good products and it is about the care of people and not just profit.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yes, well, I heard you recently that at the Australian society of building biologists conference and there were just so many things you mentioned that I really wanted to ask you about and expand on and that's why I'm really glad you've joined me today. Can we start with the economy? Because there were two terms you use that that really fascinated me. One was called the circular economy, the other a collaborative economy. Can you explain those to our listener?

Kate Harris: Yeah, the circular economy is something you've been around for a while, but we really haven't actualised it and it really is coming from the philosophy that resources are limited, it's one planet living and so really, we need to reuse but also starting at the point of the design. So, designing with the end in mind and seeing the end of the beginning and a closed loop system for reuse and renewal. And so, that's really come to a head in Australia of it. It's that slightly more advanced in Europe and Australia just recently with the China hoard and China now not taking our recycling suddenly waste and output is piling up and with something going okay this is why you do what happens if we don't have a circular economy. We just have all this stuff, we have all this waste as well as the fact that we need to acknowledge the decline of resources.

So, how do we actually see waste as an opportunity? And I think that your economy is really exciting actually because it is creative thinking, it is about beauty and design and creative consciousness about the whole lifecycle of a product. And that's exactly opportunity I think through.

And actually, we're really good at that industry there's a churning India called frugal innovation or Dugard which I like in it. If you don't have something you have to make do will be really creative even in a frugal way to be able to have something that you didn't before and from apply me in perspective from rural strands perspective we also see frizzle innovation but actually something that we're naturally good at but I think we've got a bit lazy on we just go down to the shops and buy the next thing.

So, now is a real opportunity to think really strategically and creatively about whole clothes like the cycle of a product or a service. And that's where also service you see is changing a lot of people are encouraging us a service economy like go get or just use a car when you want you don't always need a car, we really have to buy everything how can we be conscious consumers in another way and so that takes us to collaborative and economy which is well, how we actually get to know our neighbours and stop sharing but do we all need a



lawnmower is in the same street or could that actually sharing a lawn mower or a particular tool or something else or even a swimming pool actually create new neighbourhood connections and relationships. What if one had a trampoline one had a forward and suddenly all the kids are hanging out and everyone's backyard. That's looking something you've not talked about money and consumption comes the collaborative economy either. It's also about relationship, connection and community.

So, those both two movements are certainly growing and starting to be on board and even at a political level which is exciting.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yes, because it's interesting we've referenced this study for many, many times and it keeps coming back in different forms and that was the Harvard study on health and wellness and longevity found that the biggest predictor of all of those things was our relationships. And this idea of connecting with the community – Wow, what a novel idea who were ever thought of that.

Kate Harris: It's so true. It's something we think you'd be leaving in a way and I know the younger generations like before getting cars running the centre for sustainability leadership and working with a lot of young and emerging leaders and one of them were quite distressed about this. It was [08:53 Inaudible] became the only place that they thought they had really meaningful connections because everything is virtual more online distance. We also have vertical using and vertical communities that increase multi-residential and how do we... there are facts about usually the closer you live together with the further apart your relationship start because if the feeling or fear of being too known or seen. So, how do we actually bridge that and create community in different ways? Because I think actually, we can look and see that we are suffering in some ways from a lack of truth. You have a true connection and meaning and some of those broader relationships.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Okay. Well, one of the things that intrigue me is we are constantly, constantly being encouraged to be good consumers, not good citizens. And after all, consumptions what seems to keep this modern economy going but I love this term you used a conscious consumption. How do we become conscious consumers?

Kate Harris: I think it leads to being conscious in all things we do actually and it's certainly not my term, I'd like to on a Ban Ki-Moon on that and his word he really understood the problem and if you look at it globally and from an economic perspective you're absolutely right. We've been driven and pushed to consume. But I think it comes to being able to be conscious and aware in all things we do and being present and then that step change to be able to look at that when we're buying and consuming. And I think that conscious consumption is the hardest battle of being present and conscious while we are consuming because we're absolutely being sabotaged and bombarded deliberately.

I heard his presentation the other day from a former Facebook manager and it was all about buying your eyeball time. And I thought wow, for the first time I really got how much of that I'm a commodity to them. I'm all about a sale and how do I really feel about that. And so, I think there are a real reflection and understanding around the fact people actually wanted to show you stuff. It is not often care about who you are, or your well-being and I certainly see



that in manufacturing. There's those who do care about it and then there's those who don't and it's just about the profit.

And so, we need to do the work as consumers and advocates and governments to call that out and work together and have really clear messaging, so people can make conscious choices. And I think that's the challenge too is unless you have that awareness of what's good or bad, how do you know? Like I find that very much with for instance foam mattresses or furnishings. Most people don't know the difference between and it's not necessarily priced actually but as an example of it's a really cheap capture, the expensive capture so they really understand what those differences in or what's in their mattress they're sleeping in.

Some of the manufacturers don't want you to know what that's doing to your body, your health, mind and spirit. So, we really do have to work together to sort of fight that together and have that information clear and doesn't mean that people then need to make those choices but at least they have the awareness and understanding to choose consciously. And I think that's a human rights issue actually that we're really fighting against the marketing dollar right now.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yes, it almost leads been to a question. It wasn't going to be my next one but are you an optimist or do you subscribe yourself as an optimist Kate? Because these market forces are very powerful, aren't they?

Kate Harris: They are very powerful, and I've worked with a lot of advertising successful advertising agents actually who've got on to the other side and said they couldn't live with themselves anymore. One in particular who was driving a billboard and he looked up and he knew that he designed it and he thought "I'm really, really truly manipulating people in that and I can't do it anymore" and pretty much resigned as the next day and now still works and sustainability. And so, optimism – pessimism, yeah, look I fluctuate between the two.

I used to be very much an optimist and I think most of the time I am, but I get frustrated. I'm not pessimistic, I just get frustrated and because for me I see it as common sense and I see human right from what passing, and I go "Gosh, why aren't more people aware of this or having this conversation?" Or a lot of people say to me, "But surely our government wouldn't let that happen" and it's like well, there are minimum standards but sometimes that's not enforced, it's not just their responsibility.

This stuff is happening even in Australia. But where I am optimistic about human potential, I absolutely have faced in beauty and people and connectivity and their ability to make a difference together. I do think that that connection to our soul to our environment and to each other remains and will be rekindled with a lot of people in sustainability say it'll come at the end sour and we all can't take anymore. I think that would be shared if we had to wait to that so I don't think we have to do but if we do get to that point, I do have faith that we will come through and humanity will prevail.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yeah, I share that view too. And I think here if knowledge is power then empowering people with knowledge about how and what they are consuming is a very big part of that because seems like consumption is such a huge part of our lives.



Kate Harris: Absolutely, and so, I guess it's the fight on greenwash is how to really clearly communicate and that's a challenge. Most people in the general consumer market don't know yet and that is because we very much have been in the built environment because that's where it's been valued by procures and consumers for green building screens. I mean that's fantastic but we all have a role to broaden that to general consumer information and have very clear credible standards and mechanisms for people to go look. I don't need to know I don't need to be a scientist, I don't need to know everything about that because if stuff is really complex but I do know that someone who is trusted, who's in the tenant, who transparent around it has given that a label.

And so, okay, I'm going to go with that because, in the complexity of the world on all of that consumption and decision, we do need shortcuts and we do need trust and guided bodies to help. That's where our role is and it's an ongoing challenge, but we want to work with consumers to take that out and communicate that, so it is clear. And I also want to reward the manufacturers that stand by that and our licensees that they don't have to. There's a lot of people who have cheaper products, there's a lot of people who don't care and they just want the best profit margin but we have licensees who are committed to doing the right things and we're wanting to reward them and connects them with consumers so at least I have the choice from the awareness to be able to make that informed decision.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yes. And I think that's part of the problem is this kind of assumption that people make and I can rightly or wrongly they make the assumption that if it's out on the market if it's on the supermarket shelf then it's been tested, it's gone through the tests, they wouldn't put it out there if it didn't. And it comes as it's a very it's a story that's very easy to miss but once you hear it, it's very difficult to ignore that is not the case.

Kate Harris: Right, no, that's not the case and the other challenge is if supply chains are getting really complex. Manufacturers really even struggle for them to know where all their stuff come from or what's in it to the full detail. And I guess what was also different is the difference between minimum standards even in Australia which of course that very robust but also best practice standards and that upper echelon. And the upper echelon is about precautionary principle and it's also knowing and looking and seeing what causes damage and making sure that they're not in those products where is in terms of minimum compliance is more around what's acceptable or what the majority are able to achieve in a manufacturing frame. It doesn't mean that it's optimal health and wellness for anyone.

It is really I guess that again thinking of the design principle of being precautionary and doing the right thing from the beginning. How do we drive everyone to do that and in some ways that role? If I label, we keep upping our requirements so as best practice gets easier and the sort of the lower hanging fruit start to improve, and new technology comes to the fore we will keep increasing this practice. That's part of our mechanism around driving change for people as well.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Now another thing you mentioned was the challenges of a supply chain. And do you talk about the lifecycle of product analysis? And the design is obviously one thing but what are some of the other challenges that people face in their supply chain? What are the alarm bells or what should they be looking out for?



Kate Harris: I think the challenges it depends on what kind of product and that's where our partner's label or label the iso 14000 24 is important because it's not generic. So, what I think people need to look out for actually is something specific to the product or service. There's a lot of things right now that there's like about like an organisational level or we do good healthy CSR reporter but actually that might not be what core to your impact or what impact you're having actually by buying that. So, it can be material. I think the biggest thing is asking what is material to this product or service I'm buying? Service of foam mattress - What do I know about what's in it? Where has it come from? What is the biggest thing that's as relevant in terms of where these things come from and all the some of the materials that have gone into it? And that's very different to that to a car or a piece of chocolate. And then there's the balancing environmental and social good. And when we have modern slavery certainly coming to our shores in Australia.

Again, is it about local, is it of our environment, is it about health and safety, is it about making sure that people here are fine that made it? Or is it actually knowing that the whole supply chain and people who've made it even in developing countries have not been harmed or in the making of something just, so you can have a slight discount in your product or a cheaper t-shirt? I think we really need to ask its own selves around our values as well and start to question the supply chain to make that decision. And actually, look at the specific product maybe dig deeper than just the actual company that's selling it.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Because I mean there are some real, huge challenges there in our global economy, isn't there? Because regulations across borders vary so much.

Kate Harris: They do and it's something that our eco-labels are really trying to work with. So, there's an organisation called the global week a labelling Network and which were a member and I'm on the board and there are many countries with the national eco-label and there were a lot of them government owned and run and where we all have our own standards and they're all of the same height and they're very similar but of course, is those some differences around thresholds or acceptability of a VOC or type of dye in a material. And so, how do we work with that and negotiate that? Because this is a huge trade issue and we do have global supply chains now. It touches often 15-20 countries before you hold in your hands.

So, to actually even access that information we're looking at how do we have more transparent and true knowledge through things like blockchain how do we share that data and actually how do we fight the fight together like there might need to even be a bit of compromise between acceptance and working together within all of our standards so that we can kind of move towards a more transferable equal global eco-label level. And I think because we are a global consumer these days, we are moving towards that and there's a lot of United Nations Environment are working with us to help that harmonisation of schemes as it's known. But it's not easy and of course, we all have our own national concerns and also differences. Even up working with the New Zealand eco-label. For New Zealand water is not an issue so it doesn't usually come up in these standards as whereas for Australia in a large part of our manufacturing and as we very well know at the moment, water is a huge issue. So, they are part of our standards where it's impactful. It is really complex and we're trying to make it simple, but we do absolutely need to work together on a global level to coordinate and systemized it.



Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Because these environmental issues actually while we are starting to think a little bit more nationalistically recently, the problems don't just stop at borders, do they? I mean pollutants don't go oh this was created in this country let's just stop right here. Doesn't quite work like that.

Kate Harris: No, certainly it doesn't, and I think we also had that problem where some people, we're looking at it with monthly as well or something about generalising and think well, a lot of people will say to me why anything out of China is crap like. The quote on quote will be really blunt about it and I think well actually that's not true, that's really actually not true. And we have manufacturers and licensees here who manufacture in China as well they might so, they'll do here and in China and they'll do it to the level here. China is doing the government is mandating eco-label and that's a game-changer.

As soon as your own government goes you know what? We need you their own eco-label why because we know that buying this practice and reducing environmental ends and tilts and harm to our people is going to number one be the right thing but also number two, economically save us money and the lot on the mid to long term. So, some of us about long term thinking and carbon and climate change commitments which very much in product manufacturing as well. There's some great leadership in some of these countries but I think we're sometimes assumed in Australia but they're not doing such a good job and it's just not the case.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Now I heard you say that at that conference and I was really encouraged by that then you've seen some very positive things come out of China which stereotypically as you say gets a bad rap.

Kate Harris: Yeah, that's right. And I mean that everything that comes out of there is these of that quality but there is certainly a very strong government mandate and we've got your countries like, so we represent with a department of foreign affairs to represent that APEC in a green supply chain to work. And that's about those large and countries and economies within APEC working together to try and harmonise that very thing that's a green and salty supply chain. And so, China and Korea are very much part of that and their governments are fully committed to ensuring that happens and where other problems happen is things like there is corruption or areas where there's less control sometimes can be more of an issue, but they are also on to that and aware of that and committed to that.

But I think also committing to your own equal label or procurement of best practice if it's an eco-level or a full knowing some data and impacts of a product like the lifecycle analysis means in some level if a government is a conscious consumer it really is a game changer and how do we then demonstrate that leadership is like a role model for the general consumer as well to then go right, okay, well, it makes it more accessible, more affordable, more products come on to the market, it's easier to identify. And then everyone has, and everyone should have the right to be able to choose something that's healthy each for themselves and their family.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: And in your dealings with governments both federal and state in Australia, are they coming on board?



Kate Harris: I think there are some challenges and there's also some optimistic groups. The government has committed to the SDGs the sustainable development goals which are great, and we are reporting on that. I think there's a lot of delegations in civil society mark ourselves to do this for them and I would like a more coordinated, cooperative way to work with them because I think it actually needs to have some level of partnership rather than some delegation. So, I think there's an opportunity for improvement now that's probably at a federal level and circular economy in the New South Wales is just releasing a policy on that and really taking that seriously.

So, that's great to see to the state level is a different matter. It's probably in Australia still quite dominated at the moment, maybe we're just a bit behind but we're still on that about energy and energy efficiency and some of those broader conversations whereas I think we also need to dig a little deeper into materiality as well. But we are doing well on being the modern slavery reporting that that's fantastic, indigenous procurement I think it's really important, the challenges we need to do it all and we need to do it all in all stand I know that sounds that's the difficult thing and that that's the challenge we need to hold all of it and we need to find the best way to transition this and it needs to be at all local, government levels, all state levels and a federal level and then we need to cooperate and work for all the International and into government like the UN and APEC and other groups to actually coordinate because it's not just a national problem and it's not just the national supply chain and we will need to coordinate and work together.

It can maybe lower as sort of barriers on certainly we can't be protectionist around trade or we have to find ways to do this will because environmental and health situations whether it's air pollution or water toxicity, looking at our ocean, water. One country affects the other as you say it's not a closed border, we're not all safe from just what we do within our own country so ultimately, we are going to have to come up with a global situation and all take responsibility. So, that's where I'd like to see more action.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. You've mentioned it a couple of times in passing modern slavery and I just wonder if you could share with our listener way how big a problem is this? How does it manifest itself?

Kate Harris: It's a far bigger problem than we think and I think it's something usually has that sort of image of slaves or people tied up and it always being offshore but it's actually, it's not the case it does happen here in Australia number one. Sometimes it's just bonded labour, sometimes it's through our supply chains but there are people in Australia we've seen it with some other issues, seven or lemon would just be one example but how businesses with use of contractors can suddenly discover that people either aren't being treated properly or they're being forced to stay in some way.

And then if you look at offshore and our supply chains it's a huge economy. Like there are people out in the world that doesn't want us to start looking at where there's unfair treatment of people to make us stuff because someone's profiting from it and the more we look at it and dig on it and take responsibility for it then the more we're going to find it. So, the more that we can all commit as consumers and businesses to do the right thing it means little just have to start shopping, but we also need to take great care.



The New South Wales legislation has passed, we're still waiting for the federal level but we're expecting it to come shortly. We will also need to take care this isn't about pressing alarm bells we have to work again with people so that they're not left in a worse situation. And we have had this happen with GECA and manufacturers going through their audit we have had the occasion we're going to that on-site order to check the manufacturing of their product and interviewing the employees. I've met with people who had their passports locked up and weren't allowed to leave. And so, situations like that, if we were to suddenly turn around and go, you're doing this, you've got employees locked up they could be in a worse situation.

So, we actually need to encourage a supplier wherever they are in the world to stop not working with a clear expectation to say, this isn't going to it, what we want is moving forward not even an accurate activation level but we're starting to look through our supply chains, this is what's going to be acceptable and so we're going to expect you to be able to demonstrate for us to meet with your employees that everyone is being fairly and safely treated and from there making sure that those communities have ongoing work but in a fair way rather than if we suddenly stop buying those products then those communities will also greatly soften. Which takes us back to the community conversation that we've started with. Is our community just in the street where we live or is a community and data global community that we also have a responsibility and we're responsible for? I think it's the latter and I think how we hold all of that and care in a very considerate way through the transition to be able to make sure that everyone is treated fairly in this process just because we're wanting to buy more stuff. Let's make sure we do it well.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: I often think that it's part of what is the tension for us at the moment globally is that at the end of the day, we are kind of still a hunter-gatherer with our tribe of 150s about all we can cope with and yet we're being asked to think globally about and it's undeniable we are globally connected. And it's almost too much so we have to think nationally. Let's get nationalistic about it. It's kind of this route this tension that goes on between acting locally and being in the community and tribe and yet having to think globally and we have to.

Kate Harris: Yeah and I think over at local approach is a good motto for that. I think it is something we challenge, and I think 150 is something with more is about to you actually. I think fear comes and our own pace of life and expectation and some of that goes back to marketing and humourism and size of house, what we should all be providing as well as being we are a global community anyway because a lot of people move around and don't use where their parents or grandparents are anymore but I think as all of those pressures come somehow that sense of need to protect self-system together is becoming stronger. And I think that what I am seeing and maybe is the more the concern for me is we have to look after than more than ourselves as well as hold the fact that it's challenging that there are huge expectations, there are economic challenges are environmental challenges, there are work challenges as family pressures as you name it.

We all know that life's getting faster and more stressful more so that it feels but how do we also... Well, I'll tell you that either I'm also on the boards of living teacher Institute of Australia and they just had a beautiful symposium and they have a lovely speaker and kick off the event and she said to sum it up was keep calm and be generous. That's kind of all we



can do, and I think there's something really in that just amongst all of you how do we become and continue it every challenge to continue to be generous and care for others as well as their shelves. We're going to have to find a way to do that because otherwise it's dog-eat-dog and I don't want to live there.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: What was the organisation living future?

Kate Harris: Institute of Australia.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Wow, fantastic. There's another Institute you mentioned and I'm not sure whether you're on the board of it or connected with it but that was the International Well Building Institute. Is GECA just collaborate with that or are you connected with that as well? Tell us a bit about that in what that is.

Kate Harris: Yeah, it's a wonderful building scheme essentially and they really are thriving health and wellness mainly in commercial buildings but with looking for out for staff and employees, the people who work in those buildings for so many hours of their life. And I'm not on the board but I am very connected to it that we've got one of our employees over there in meetings in New York at the moment and so, they have a wonderful scheme. Eco-labels go into that scheme, so it looks at things like the importance of air quality or furniture. And so, for instance, their furniture with the GECA ecolabel will get points if they use that in that good scheme. And why is because it's purely around the health of the people in it they know that some of those products are some other stuff that gets shoved in these

buildings can make us sick, it's volatile organic compounds, there are carcinogenic materials of formaldehyde and it becomes like a toxic soup that we sit in and think oh this is lovely furnishings. Do we really understand what it might be doing? And then we keep coming in with cleaners and putting in new toxic chemicals to make it clean and good for us. Again, are we really looking at what this stuff is doing to us? And that's what's fantastic about the [inaudible 00:38:10] is that it's going you know what? The health of people in these buildings matter and we – large organisations [inaudible 00:38:20] here in Sydney and that is [inaudible 00:38:24] we care about our people we want to make sure that the building in that space we create where you work for us and with us is looking after you as well. And there are fantastic stats.

I mean it's well known there's been some information about 30 percent more productivity of people in these buildings but it's also about health and well-being. And for me, it's also about the right thing to do it's not just making them more productive obviously. And then we go to looking at New South Wales and doing a lot of building for them for their schools and in the Education Department I'm sure and many other states around Australia. So, imagine if we had well buildings within our education department fresh schools and our students. And then you could take it into a living building which is the living future Institute of Australia and has it has a Living Building Challenge which is all about biophilia and justice as well as health and energy, water and all being about rejuvenation and renewal. And it actually being a very aspirational but achievable building where we actually do thrive, we are healthy but even better aware, we're really nurtured in who we are and how we can connect together and yeah, and nature.



Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Now another organisation, Kate you're an absolute God, when I heard your CV and all the things you were connected to but here's another organisation that I do know about and that's the One Million Women. You're an ambassador for that. Share with our listener what One Million Women are all about.

Kate Harris: It's such a lovely initiative and it's such a privilege. Natalie has created such a beautiful organisation which really just came about with women creating change, that women caring about this. And I have to say I've been in sustainability a long time now and there's a lot of women in it and where it gets more technical there's a lot of men and sometimes, we struggle to even employee to find men who are willing to be in this place. I really find that bizarre actually and if there's sort of like you're saying the hum together and it's more the female role, she sorts of look out for community I don't know but I think it takes all of us and I'm very passionate about that.

So, this is about bringing together women but not just women, there are many men who contribute to this. But it is about us coming together as a force and knowing that through that and creating a movement we really can create a significant difference and it has created a global movement and a commitment to things like climate change and to creating a better future and it's one of those groups where wherever you're amongst at a gathering and you just feel it. It's the heart of it but it's also about the doing of it and coming together as a force. So, it's such it is such a wonderful group to be a part of and it really is getting global traction. And of course, it's going to take more than women but we're a pretty powerful force to be reckoned with too. So, yes, it's an honour to be a part of it.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yes, well, I admire tremendously, and I think the sooner we let women take over and care for the planet and just get mental we've got a lot to learn. I do think it's gone back to those very primitive instincts that translate into some very aggressive behaviour and not very caring. And anyway, we could talk at length about that one. Listen, if you had to leave our listener with a few tips for becoming more conscious consumers, how would we get people's that I think a lot of my listeners are tuned into this message but if they would if they were just joining us and they wanted to get going on it, what would be a couple of tips you you'd give to get them going?

Kate Harris: I think to find out what things to care about first, the low-hanging fruit. Good to go to our website [www.geca.uk](http://www.geca.uk) because we choose standards that matter. We don't choose standards that are easy. So, if you go on and look at our standards all of our standards are you can download and have a look at but it's things like furniture, paint, flooring, there are the mattresses. They're just some examples but they are the things that you'd start to think about all your insulation or your panelling board, if you're renovating cleaning products and you're cleaning your house but look at them and say okay well if I'm building a new house, I can keep this in mind what materials am I going to be around 12-18 hours a day. If I'm renovating what can I do? If I'm not what can I do right now in terms of my surround in my environment and start to learn about what things might matter will be most impactful right now and what you can do about it in terms of consuming better?

I think the second thing is to start asking the questions. Ask in your shop, go to them and say, do you have an eco-label product? It says low VOCs and how much VOCs is in that? How do



you know that? Do you work with a third party? And start to educate and know where the hotspots, we call it a hotspot but when a concern area is a concern and start speaking to your manufacturer or your salesperson. Most likely they're not going to know and that's another challenge, but you asking them does have an impact. They start to come back and speak to the manufacturer and say actually we need to start having this information.

I have a board director on that GECA board who's lovely. She had a group of women that once a month that all go out into the shop and all ask for things like a six-star fridge but it'll last for the same thing on the same day and it was perfect, it will get recorded and the fact that all go out and business buyers but they got the message gossip because suddenly they were using some support guess what? It's always playing the marketing game back to them. You're saying as a consumer we're going to coordinate and tell you what we want and if you think we want it then you'll start doing it and then we actually can get it.

So, it's taking back the power and also knowing we talked about purchasing power. So, to know that when I heard about people wanting to buy my eyeballs. Like my eyeball, I thought wow, I really have started to think about my purchasing power and how my purchasing power can align with my values. So, values are important to me but to spend and if I can do it consciously really does make a difference even at an individual level and even if it's about just sending a message. So, I really encourage people to take that ride and enjoy that privilege and then use it consciously and know that you are making a difference.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Those are great things and I think a great starting point for people. Listen let's just finally I want to ask you one more question and taking a step back from your role as a CEO and involved in all of these different organisations because we're all on a health journey in our own lives, what do you think the biggest challenges for people on their health journey through life in our modern world?

Kate Harris: Wow, I think it is creating change and establishing that. It's a personal challenge for me as well. I have that challenge between easy life and trying to be out there creating change for the things I'm passionate about which feels like I'm running around the world is really busy. But how do I also have that calm and present and insight? I used it many moons ago I used to teach meditation and be a meditation teacher and now I struggle to get my 5 or 10 minutes in a day and I'm very conscious of that. And so, I think that's the biggest challenge, how do we still be present amongst the busyness? How do we still care and connect amongst it and not let it control us either?

I think that's a challenge and our opportunity because the power of being present actually will be required for us to achieve and overcome all of these other broader challenges we've talked about today. And also caring for ourselves in working in sustainability we often talk about the aeroplane. But when the aeroplane has dropped an altitude and the mask come down you have to put your own on before your child and it seems illogical for a parent or a carer, it's a full contradictory.

The first instinct would be to put on your own child, but you have to put on your own because if you pass out you are not going to be able to help your child anyway or even to be able to get off the plane. And then take overhead I say that I think we do need to balance the



being and the doing and bring in order for us to take care of our own health and well-being, to be conscious and then to be able to take that consciousness out into the world to help others and support others in their consciousness and for our community.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Well, Kate thank you for being present with me today and I really appreciate you sharing your time.

Kate Harris: Thanks very much, Ron. I really appreciate the questions and I'm glad to share some stories. There are lots of lots to be done in this space, lots of opportunities for people in their purchasing and consumption and I really think we can fight the good wash, the good fight against greenwash. We can really do that together and it's coming actually. So, yeah, I think good things are ahead.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Thanks, Kate.

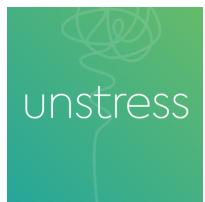
Kate Harris: Thanks very much, Ron.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: The whole issue of environmental toxins is a huge one. We are literally exposed to thousands of chemicals each and every day. They're in our air, in our water, food, personal care and household cleaning products, clothes and furniture and again much more. Go back and listen to my interviews with professor Mark Cohen on the ten toxic truths and the two episodes I did with Nicole Bijlsma, an absolute legend Australia's leading building biologist. And of course, the one with Alex Stewart, Australia's leading champion of low tox living.

Look, we assumed these chemicals that we were exposed to in millions of products have all been tested and are safe. But the reality is that the vast majority have actually not been tested and if they have been, it's in isolation one at a time not in the way we are exposed to them and that is in multiple combinations for years on end. The good news is that by making informed decisions and the GECA ecolabel is one way to help then you can reduce you and your family's toxic load by 80 to 90 percent.

The other thing that Kate mentioned was to ask questions. Now I recently reflected on this in my local shops. About 15 it may have been more years ago I walked into my local butcher shop for some beef and I asked whether the beef had been grass-fed or grain fed. Well, the butcher's turned and looked at me as though I was crazy, what was I asking such a silly question for they politely ignored me, it's fine I don't usually shop there but in the last few months I noticed each week they have their specials painted up on the window and they are now proudly spooking their grass-fed beef. So, questions make a difference.

Look we vote once every few years and we could debate how powerful that is, but we vote every day with how we spend our money. Are we just good consumers or aren't we conscious consumers and in the process good citizens not just for our local community but for the world? Mark Koehn said we are all connected so we are all affected, and we could go on to say by every decision we all make. Remember both Kate and I said we were optimists and we're mostly are. In planning nowadays also, we hear about the triple bottom line that usually means social environmental and financial factors need to be considered in good planning but



I would argue that there is actually a quadruple bottom line adding one other very important factor in fact, I you could argue this really is just the bottom line and that factor is health. Not just our individual health but the health of the planet the two are inseparable. We will have links to the GECA's site and also to the One Million Women which I'm really keen to explore in another episode.

So, until next time, this is Dr. Ron Ehrlich. Be well.

*This podcast provides general information and discussion about medicine, health and related subjects. The content is not intended and should not be construed as medical advice or as a substitute for care by a qualified medical practitioner. If you or any other person has a medical concern, he or she should consult with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner. Guests who speak in this podcast express their own opinions, experiences and conclusions.*