

Advocates for Change

Jane Needham SC

In conversation with Stephen Free SC



On 14 August 2018, Stephen Free¹ (SF) sat down with Jane Needham SC (JN) to discuss the Advocates for Change role and the importance of the role and women and diversity at the NSW Bar.

Set out below is their conversation.

SF: *I have the interesting challenge and privilege tonight of interviewing Jane Needham in her capacity as an advocate for change. Jane joined the Bar in 1990 and took silk fourteen years later. She has served on the Bar Council and on various committees since 1993. Jane was the President of the Bar Association in 2014 and 2015. She has a keen interest in the welfare and future of the Bar. If I could start Jane by asking what did you understand to be involved in the role of 'advocate for change' and why did you accept it?*

JN: I did ask the rhetorical question when I was asked to be an advocate for change, well if we're looking at diversity, which is one of the aspects of that, why should a privately educated WASPy daughter of a judge and a solicitor be appointed as an advocate for diversity? I think it comes down to using positions of privilege to assist those who aren't as lucky. Certainly my interests at the Bar are around gender diversity and also flexible practice, and the way that I encapsulated that when I was President was 'making the Bar a better place to work for everyone.' That is what I'm hoping to achieve.

SF: *What are the forums in which you see yourself advocating for change?*

JN: Now that I'm not in a formal capacity with the Bar, I find that it's very much one-on-one. I do quite a lot of – mentoring is the wrong word – people come to me with problems. I probably have breakfast once or twice or a month with people who have specific issues that they would like to see changed at the Bar Association. They can range from concerns with individual chambers, ideas for taking flexible practice forward, ideas for running complaints without actually running a complaint, those kind of things. With the appointment as advocate for change I find that people whom I don't know are ringing me up and saying can you help with this particular issue, whether it's a personal issue or a structural issue. More broadly I'm often asked to speak and I have spoken at the ABA in London and Dublin on issues of diversity and the future of the Bar. I found that really interesting, meeting people from England and Wales and from the Irish Bar, who have all the same issues that we do.

SF: *I want to get onto issues of diversity and some of the experiences locally*



and internationally. But I'd also like to get a sense of your views about the public perception of the Bar and its position in the broader community, on issues of diversity but also on other issues. Firstly from your own time as President what conclusions did you draw about the way the Bar is perceived?

JN: Well it's interesting because I came into the Presidency at a time of quite focussed public interest in the Bar. There was the corporatisation debate and the beginnings of the QC issue which had been bubbling away and came to a head under Phillip Boulten's Presidency, and those got a lot of media interest. So when I was elected to the position I found that there was a real drive for change, people were very interested in change and how the Bar was structured and how it could change. But I found that there was a real dichotomy in the way people viewed it. There is a significant portion of the world that sees the Bar as completely anachronistic, and to that extent the fact that only slightly over twenty-one percent of the Bar is female feeds into that. It's very hard to shift that opinion. Wigs and gowns and 'my learned friend'-ing don't help. But then we have the perception, which is gaining ground, that we are being innovative and we are trying our hardest and we are trying to adopt structures which will assist people. That effort, as against the background of the very ancient tradition of the Bar, is seen as quite unusual.

SF: *Are there ways that the Bar, either through the Association or just as a community, can engage with the community to shift some of those perceptions?*

JN: I think they are doing that. The way in which (the immediate past president) Arthur Moses dealt with public issues and was very vocal in calling out what he sees as injustices and difficult circumstances is very helpful. Because people do listen. When the President of the Bar says something people listen. Whether they like it or not is another question. There is a perception now that the Bar does speak for a viewpoint which is not necessarily what people would normally have thought it was, which is the old fashioned traditionalist male bastion. And that is very helpful. The Bar does hold a position in the public eye as being an important organisation, rightly or wrongly. But there certainly is that perception. Changes in structure and changes in approach at this level can be very helpful when other people, for example the Law Society and smaller Bars, see what we are doing.

SF: *What about presenting the Bar as a workplace either to prospective barristers or to the community – are there things that can be done to educate people about changes at the Bar and better present the Bar?*

JN: Definitely. One of the most common breakfast requests I have is from young women or recent graduates who want to come to the Bar but don't feel confident that they can have the kind of life that they would like, which involves flexible work, being able to have children, having a partner which will be effective for their family situation. A lot of work has been done over the last five years with the equitable briefing policy, the childcare places, and the ways in which we've engaged with the Courts about recognition of caring responsibilities. All of those things bear more focus and more emphasis. Each of those is a really useful thing to present to people to say, 'yes, it can change.' However, on the other hand a number of the people who feed me breakfast have the most terrible workplace stories. It really is a different world for women and I'm very sad to hear, even after my unconscionably long time at the Bar, women are still having the same kind of experiences that were common when I came to the Bar.

SF: *Is your general message over breakfast an encouraging one?*

JN: Absolutely. I think the Bar is a fantastic way to practise. And, again, I say that with a huge amount of privilege because I came straight to the Bar when doing that was an easier thing to do. When I say young, I was twenty-seven, but even so. By the time I had my first child, I was thirty-nine, I'd had twelve years of practice at the Bar and I could pretty much say to my clerk and to my solicitors, 'look, I'll be away for a while, I'll come back, I'll be part-time.' And I had my first child just when it was becoming okay to practise by email, to correspond by email, and that was hugely significant. If I'd done it two years before it would have been much harder to do. I had probably one of the first virtual, portable practices when I practised part-time after the birth of my first child. Then I had the twins after I had taken silk and that was just crazy.

SF: *I'm interested in the perspective you got as the President of the Bar. What was your diagnosis when you took the pulse of the Bar?*

JN: I was really taken aback, coming from a commercial equity background, how many barristers really struggle, how many barristers don't earn the kind of money that people think all barristers do. There are a lot of people out there who are putting in enormous hours for average weekly earnings, carrying chambers expenses, carrying clients' expectations. I was particularly struck by how hard the Legal Aid Criminal Bar and portions of the Personal Injury Bar were doing, and it was a real eye opener. When we did the 2014 Practising Certificate Survey about the way in which people worked, we had stats on hours of work, kind of work, what people were earning, and the gender pay gap was what really kicked me in the teeth. I thought that was extraordinary. And it really is. I was told that we actually had achieved something

really special in having a greater gender pay gap than the mining industry. So that was something that I found really concerning, and the equitable briefing policy was very much a response to that.

SF: *Were they the first statistics of that kind? Were there any analogous statistics that you could use to compare with the past?*

JN: No, nothing so solid. And that was done before I came into the Presidency. I think that was an initiative of the Practice Development Committee. It didn't start as a health of the Bar poll, but other committees said 'can you ask this?', 'can you ask that?'. It became a really interesting broad assessment of what the Bar was like. It also showed, as was shown on a national level by the National Attrition and Re-Engagement Study, that sexual harassment and bullying is rife. Judicial bullying is a real problem, and women, as usual, get the hard end of all of that. Although of course with the bullying it is not quite gender blind, and a significant portion of men also complained of being bullied at work.

SF: *Did you think before you had seen those figures that things were on the improve or that the difference wasn't that stark?*

JN: I did not think that there would be a gender pay gap in the high thirties or forties. I thought it would be there, because of a number of reasons. One of which is that women tend to cluster in the more junior realms of the Bar, that there aren't that many women silks. I think we're around ten percent. One person gets appointed, one person leaves, it's a shift of the percentages because there are so few. But it was a real surprise to me that the gender pay gap started around the second year of practice at all levels and was maintained. And some of the criticism of the focus on the gender pay gap was that women, 'choose' to have babies, look after children, have a more relaxed or flexible life. But another stark aspect of that was that I think fifty percent of women at the Bar don't have children. Annabel Crabb wrote a really good book with a terrible title called 'The Wife Drought', about the politician's child penalty. Women in politics have fewer children than men in politics. And women at the Bar have fewer children than men at the Bar. So when you look at that in the context of income, it isn't necessarily what people put as a choice, which is of course also partly structural, that women in Australia tend to do the child caring, the house minding, the dentist appointments and the like.

SF: *What about measures to address it – what have you seen so far in terms of successes, failures?*

JN: It's a little early to tell because the Law Council brought in the Equitable Briefing Policy which has reporting guidelines for women at the Bar. I know the first tranche of figures was reasonably good but I expected them to be reasonably good because the people who adopt the gender Equitable Briefing Policy are going to be briefing women. That policy was very firmly set with a view to trying to address that balance. The Government briefing has been very successful in getting women up in front of courts. Still, even though the number of briefs is similar or represents the percentage of women at the Bar, the days in court do not. So the men are still getting the big briefs and the women are getting the shorter briefs. There needs to be a lot of work done. One of the interesting things we did in relation to that was, instead of having barristers sit down and go 'well what can we do?', the committee, which was headed by Kate Eastman and Arthur Moses, brought in solicitors, clerks, and people from government, such as the Attorney-General's Chief of Staff. We had representatives of large law firms. We had someone from Legal Aid. And we tried really hard to get a policy that everyone would sign up to and that was the basis of the policy that went up to the ABA and then LCA. But it's early days.

SF: *What is your sense of the support for it among commercial solicitors, for instance?*

JN: Well I'm having lunch with one of the women on the committee, and I'll talk to her about that in a couple of weeks. Most of the things I do are over meals I'm afraid. The large firms certainly have adopted it, and whether they're paying lip service or whether they are actually pulling their weight, it's too early to tell. There is that recognition that there is an issue. But when you come down to the briefs from the large law firms I would be surprised if there has been an immediate bump in numbers.

SF: *Do you get the sense that there is an appetite for change or for formal policies?*

JN: I do. And I think the policies reflect the requirements of the clients. The clients require that there be some sort of equitable approach to their work. They ask their solicitors to do the same and the solicitors should then turn to the Bar to do that. So maybe there is a bit of a trickle down effect and we'll see it more later. I don't think policies can do it all. I think we need continued focus on the problem. I would like to see another broad survey along the lines of the 2014 survey. That would be a really interesting point in time comparison. The first survey suffered, understandably, from being put together by well intentioned people who weren't expert survey designers. There were some questions that were a little either ambiguous or not particularly relevant. If we asked again we'd need to be very careful both to reflect the first survey but also ask better questions.

SF: *Another finding of that survey was that, leaving aside gender issues and diversity issues, there was a fairly stark indication that a lot of barristers struggle with the demands of the job, in varying degrees, in some cases quite profoundly. Was that a surprise to you?*

JN: No, it wasn't. I'd been on the Bar Council under Anna Katzmann who put in place a lot of the current strategies that we have. BarCare in particular I've been quite interested in. I'd also been, again in my sort of unofficial shoulder of the Bar role, aware of people who had suffered very badly. One of the really difficult moments of my Presidency was the Lindt Siege. And you may recall, I think that happened on the Monday, and on the Wednesday afternoon after Phillip Street reopened we had a gathering here where we opened up the common room, had some catering, and we had about two hundred people through the door, which is a significant portion of the Bar. The social worker who triaged the BarCare approaches, and I tried to get around to every person, and every one of those people we spoke to was significantly hurt and suffering from the event. Looking at the BarCare figures showing how many people they picked up as clients after that it was quite a lot. It was a quite significant portion of their work after that. They're still actually getting approaches from people who cite the siege as one of the reasons they go to BarCare. So it wasn't a surprise, it was a sad realisation that people are now able to say 'yes I'm having problems', and that really is one of the first steps we need for people to put their hand up to be helped. And, of course, all of you probably know that you can yourself contact BarCare about a colleague if you're worried about that colleague. A number of a referrals come through chambers colleagues or partners or friends.

SF: *From your own sense of practice, thinking back to when you started and comparing it to now, do you think that level of stress and anxiety was always there in similar levels and it's just a question of appreciation and awareness of it, or do you think the job has got harder?*

JN: I think it has always been there. It was much more acceptable to self-medicate in those days. There are a number of people who, in



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the chambers where I started, who routinely were drinking by four thirty, who were on their third wives, who had money problems and were hiding it by silly spending. That's much rarer now I think. People understand that that is not a very healthy way to deal with stress. One of the things the Association does really well is it puts out all its health and wellness programmes so that people are aware. You can't read a brief for a week without being exhorted to do yoga. Yoga is not for everyone. But it's great that it's there for people who want it. There was a walking group for a while. And there's the knitting group and all sorts of things. But if you need support you can get it. Of course you can do it in your own life as well. But it is nice now, as opposed to back when I started where there was really nothing. I started right at the tail end of the Naval Officers being the Registrar of the Bar Association. I don't know about you but it's very difficult to think of going to a Naval Officer and saying 'look, I'm having a real problem with stress and I keep bursting into tears whenever I walk into the court'. There was a bar in the Bar Association Common Room and there were regulars there every night. It's a very different world now. Having said that, there are still significant levels of stress that need to be acknowledged and looked after.

SF: *You mentioned judicial bullying before. Is there a dialogue, in your experience, between the Bench and the Bar about the welfare of barristers?*

JN: There is dialogue. It's fair to say that judicial bullying is a bit of a delicate subject with the Bench. But there is dialogue, yes. I remember a CPD discussion where a judge was having a general talk on relations with the judge and how to run a case properly. One person kept saying

'I keep getting bullied' and the judge said 'if it keeps happening then you just need to change what you're doing'. And at this point I put my hand up and I said 'you do know that the statistics say that women get bullied a lot more than men and what do you do if you're a woman?' And that's the problem. He looked horrified at the thought that it was a legitimate complaint. But it is true. What can you do? Again a complaint that's often brought to me is I can't appear before this particular judge because he's so much meaner to me than he is to my male colleagues. And it's really unfortunate because that's something you can't change. It's difficult to say to a client 'well I can do it but not if it's in front of Justice Free', for example.

SF: *Can I bring you back to managing your own work life balance and the challenges of having children. Can you just talk us through your own experience?*

JN: Well, as I say, I was very lucky in the timing when I had my first child. I remember being on one of those then newfangled mobile phones down at Rushcutters Bay Park feeling terribly modern and chatting to the solicitor with a child in a pram. I was able to work part-time for a couple of years and the way my chambers treated me and my part-time work formed the basis for my enthusiasm about the best practice guidelines because they picked up, in a parallel process, pretty much everything my chambers had done for me right at the outset. We negotiated that I would be not there but they wouldn't say 'she's on a couch somewhere with a baby'. They would treat it professionally. They would provide me with support remotely. And they were terrific. I ended up with a working chambers at home. It was before cloud computing and the like so there was a quite a lot of running into town to pick things up or drop things off. But that was great and that was in 2002. When my twin boys were born in 2006, things had really

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moved on. It was much easier to transfer documents at that point. And I think we even had wireless which was amazing. But I was silk by then, and I found that easier than being junior counsel. Now it's totally impractical to say to women 'it'll be much easier if you wait until you get silk to have babies' because there is that slight restriction. A fertility doctor to whom I was chatting once said to me 'you need to tell all your colleagues that they need to have children between twenty-five and twenty-nine because that's best for mother and best for baby'. I said 'well, then I won't have any female colleagues'. But it really is a question of what do you do that's most important at the time. It's amazing how much you can get away with texting under the table these days. When I first had kids I'd keep my phone in my pocket and if it rang at 3.15 I'd think 'oh, it's the school someone's not picked them up'. And there was that terrible 'what do I do?'. But it always worked out. They always got home eventually. I find that it's better to be open with people than not, and say 'I can't do that, I've got parent teacher night'. I did have one judge tell me that I just needed to try a little harder. And I said 'you can't move parent teacher night, sorry it's absolutely inflexible'.

SF: *That leads to a question which I came pre-armed with from an anonymous junior. Is having a flexible working practice something a junior should share with their solicitors, or senior counsel that they are working with, or is it something that they should be quietly maintaining as much as possible?*

JN: I don't think there's an inflexible rule. Some senior counsel will be more understanding than others. Fiona McLeod, whom most of you will either know or know of, once had job sharing juniors. She had two women who each had young families and they job shared the

junior role. Fiona said it took quite a bit of work on her part and their part, but it enabled them to get a big brief, have roles where they could stand up in Court and actually get their faces before judges. And she took the initiative to do that. I think that's great. Whereas, going back to when I first came to the Bar, I'd been at the Bar for six months and a silk on my floor offered a second junior role in the High Court. And I said 'I can't do it'. He said 'what's more important than that?' I said, 'my brother's getting married in Queensland.' He was speechless with shock that I would even consider going to my brother's wedding. It depends on the person with whom you're dealing. You should always let your clerk know, and if your clerk doesn't support you, you should take that up with the chambers management, particularly if your chambers has signed up to best practice guidelines which reflect flexible practice and chambers giving support to people who don't practise twenty-four-seven. If the chambers haven't signed up to that, what you can do is perhaps approach the President or a member of Bar Council and have a chat. I've spent eighteen months having unofficial chats with people. I can tell you sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I do think you need to engage with your clerk and if you have an assistant they definitely need to know what's on your schedule and what is inflexible and what is not.

SF: *I take your point about having to choose your audience, but do you get a sense that there is a greater acceptance of being open about that now than there was previously?*

JN: Yes. One of the tiny steps that I'm trying to take, to make things easier for people who come after me, is be really frank with everybody and just say 'I won't be in tomorrow, I'm taking a kid to a specialist appointment, and they're harder to get than appointments with me so you can find another one'. The more people who do it, and the more men that do it the better. Things catch on when they become normalised. While it's seen as a bit of ghetto female thing to look after your kids and be there, once the guys start doing it and once they're open about it, that will change. I know a lot of them do it, but if they don't talk about it then it's not going to be normalised. It will stay as a 'female problem' and it will be used as one of the reasons to justify why women don't earn as much because they're not 'serious' about their work.

SF: *Was that part of the intention behind establishing the Bar Association childcare places? That is, that it's partly about the symbolism of it as well as the practicality of it?*

JN: Absolutely. We find it's being used by male barristers a lot. People assumed it would be a service for women but a lot of fathers use it. But the symbolism of this, as one way we can make your working life easier, is really important. Some of you may remember in the very exciting election that happened a few years ago, there was a letter which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* picking on childcare as one of the issues that the Bar was indulging in rather than substantive issues. And that letter came out on the same day that I got a letter from a junior counsel who wrote to me and said 'the Bar childcare is the only one that came through for us, that's the reason I'm back at work, thank you'. And I thought well that is substantial, that is really important. We're not just a trade union in the sense of let's get barristers more work and more money. We are a professional organisation that should be there for everybody including the people who would like to have their children close to them in the city.

SF: *At the chambers level you've mentioned clerks and adoption of the guidelines. Are there other measures that you consider can be done at the chambers level that will really help people with the demands of balancing young families?*

JN: Yes. For a while we had so many people on our floor with young children, we actually looked at whether it would be feasible to have some sort of group child minding. No was the answer. It's a very regulated profession. When you start looking at clerks and at chambers staff, and also when working out who runs chambers, it's really important to look at the kind of things that they're interested in. There are some chambers where women are still not welcome, and they haven't adopted best practice guidelines. One of the things I asked to be done was for the readers website, which we set up with all of the readers' accommodation, to indicate in one of the columns whether the chambers had adopted best practice guidelines and a link to the guidelines. So juniors coming to the Bar who are concerned about the workplace practices and the attitudes of chambers can check to see whether they have been adopted. A couple of the people I've been speaking to over the years have complained that while best practice guidelines have been adopted, they haven't been actually implemented. Again we come back to that issue of policies are great, work on the ground is better.

SF: *What about other issues of diversity at the Bar? We've spoken about the issues facing women coming to the Bar and staying at the Bar. What about ethnic diversity – there's still a strong sense that the Bar doesn't reflect the mix of society or even law schools?*

JN: That's right. I really don't know what to do about that, but I think the recent applications for Practising Certificates had a question on that. Until we know how our members categorise themselves we can't do anything about that makeup. Measuring it comes first. This is something that came out of a discussion with the recently departed Race Discrimination Commissioner who suggested we really need to measure both issues of cultural and ethnic diversity as well as sexual orientation. We haven't got that far yet but one day we should.

SF: *Do you get a sense, either from your work when you were the President or from any other involvement, that there are perceived barriers in particular parts of the community to coming to the Bar?*

JN: I think there are. There must be if we don't reflect society as a whole. There must be perceptions that we're not welcoming enough or we're not accommodating enough or we're not open enough. It's a really difficult conversation to have because people almost always get it wrong. What we need to do, and what we were starting to do at the end of my Presidency, was to take those steps to try to see how we can get it right. We have law student days, and as much as you can tell from looking out at faces on those law student days certainly there's a real interest in coming to the Bar among the Bar's non-traditional cultural groups. The question is whether that actually translates into people stepping up. Hament Dhanji is another advocate for change and I'd be really interested to hear his take on that.

SF: *What about financial barriers to entry? Do you see that there's either a perception of financial barriers or a reality?*

JN: When I first started at the Bar it was before the legal district had really expanded, and there were very few options apart from spending the money to get chambers in the Selborne/Wentworth building or a couple of other chambers which were around. It was very difficult in those days to even get readers' rooms and the like. Once you were over your free or subsidised six or twelve months you were expected to buy in and if you couldn't buy in or you didn't buy in there were very few other options. Things have changed on those fronts. I'm not really au fait with what it's like to be a reader, and I would love to know how that goes. I understand from talking to people who want to become barristers that they're told you need to have a year's worth of living expenses ready to go because that's what it takes. It wasn't like that



when I came to the Bar in 1990. But that's a concern. I don't know many other jobs where you have to support yourself for a year before you can actually earn any money.

It's really starting a new business. But the Bar in England has that very interesting system of paid pupillages, and that's something we may want to look at. It's a big change for us though.

SF: *That one seems a massive change. Are there other more realistic aspects of practice you've seen in other jurisdictions, either Australia or overseas, that you think could help with flexibility here?*

JN: People may want to look at more flexible ways of practice, rather than bricks and mortar chambers. There is room to embed flexibility in the general sense, and not only having chambers and ducking out early to pick up the kids, but flexible practice in the real sense of travelling with your brief on your tablet and you can work from home and you can work from shared offices. You don't really need chambers but we are still stuck in that system. So I'd really like to see some more work put into enabling barristers to practise more flexibly in that way. I haven't seen much in the way of that. One of the benefits of the Victorian system is that they are able, because the Bar owns most of the chambers, to provide what is really a corporate parental leave system where you have a rebate of your fees. We have an option for support through the best practice guidelines but we can't provide that in a more corporate way. The Victorian model is a good way to do it. Then again that would involve a really massive change in the way in which we do business. But our attachment to bricks and mortar chambers might have to shift a bit. Still, it's a great way to work. I love my chambers. I love the collegiality of it. There's a number of people I can just go and moan at when I need to. And that's great because we can be quite isolated and the iPad and

the room at home is not a very collegiate way to practise. We need something that bridges the gap there.

SF: *I wanted to ask about collegiality. You mentioned the bar which I gather used to be in the common room and people often talk about the dining arrangements that used to apply down here. Were you a regular at those?*

JN: No I wasn't. One of my colleagues and I used to come down here when I was a relatively young women at the Bar. We kept being told we've got to have lunch at the Bar Association. It was just gruesome. I know a lot of people used it. But you'd come down here and it smelled of cabbage. The food did get better, but in the early days, there was a rule, an absolutely inflexible rule that you had to sit at the first available table. You couldn't form your own table or sit on your own you had to go and join a table that was there. And it was always men. There were almost never any women there. Janet Coombs used to take us each out to lunch in the Bar Association as a new woman barrister and now we have the Janet Coombs lunch which has sometimes twenty-five new women barristers. But then it was a one on one thing. The regular lunches were just terrible because you'd come down, and occasionally you'd be lucky enough to sit with someone friendly, but it would always be the crankiest old judge or the bloke who'd sort of waddled over from the bar and sat down and breathed Scotch over you and it was just terrible. But I still have people say to me, we should have never closed down the bar and the common room. We had to, because it was losing so much money. What the Bar does now for collegiality is much better. I was talking about the knitting club, and that's fantastic. The book club fills a need. The yoga fills a need. These CPD's, the one's that aren't necessarily the kind of things you need to get your points for, but people do come to them. I think it's terrific that we can offer that kind of collegiality without forcing you to eat boarding school food.

SF: *Do you think, as far as collegiality goes, that the Bar is doing a reasonably good job at maintaining the tradition?*

JN: I think they're doing the right things. I know that for some the tradition will always be the tradition. But I don't see the people who complain about the closure of the dining room attending the lunches that the Bar Association does organise. That's interesting to me.

SF: *I'll got to a couple of final questions that are again pre-armed questions from an anonymous junior. If you could go back and tell Reader Jane three tips about longevity at the Bar what would they be?*

JN: Well I suppose I've got longevity at the Bar already. Reader Jane, that's a really hard question because I love what I do.

SF: *Where there times when you didn't?*

JN: Yes.

SF: *Where there times you had to endure?*

JN: Yes there were. This is what I would say. When you start swearing when the phone rings, take a bit of time off. I took a job lecturing for a year, two days a week, and I rented a house in Berry. I would spend four or five days in the country and then I'd come up and teach, and then I'd do chambers work at home or in Berry. And it was terrific. It was a wonderful year of my life, and it made me realise I was not going to be great as an academic and I should come back to the Bar full-time. But you've really got to listen to yourself, for when you need a break.

ENDNOTES

¹ Stephen Free SC was appointed Silk in October 2018. At the time of the *In Conversation with Jane Needham SC* he was not yet a Silk.



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