This is Bruce Guerin for the Don Dunstan Foundation Don Dunstan History Project interviewing Mr George Lewkowicz about his work in the Premier’s Department in the 1970s in particular. The date today is the 22nd March 2011, the location is the Don Dunstan Foundation and, George, thanks very much for doing this interview for the project after having been on the other side of the desk –

Right, yes.

– for so many. I’d like to cover a certain amount of material about yourself and your background, and then talk about some of the issues and projects that you got involved in.

Sure.

But I wonder, just as a starting point, why did you join the South Australian public service in the first place?

Right. Well, basically, (laughs) the answer to that is I’d graduated in Economics from the University of Adelaide and I was looking for employment, and a couple of opportunities came up. One was the Education Department: they offered me a job teaching Economics at Urrbrae High School, so I thought that sounded interesting.

Without teacher training?

Without teacher training, yes. (laughs) That’s what happened in those days, no DipEd required or whatever else; there was a shortage of particularly young people going into teaching and particularly probably a shortage of people with economics degrees that were interested in potentially going into teaching, because generally the economists would go into the private sector or, as I did soon after that offer, into the public service. So I’d applied for a job in the public service. The public service at the time was switching from the old seniority process of things – that is, the longer you were there the more likelihood you had of promotion – to more of a merit-based process. Plus there were people in the Public Service Board, and probably more widely, looking for young graduates to come in – that is, graduates who weren’t the ‘professional-based’ graduates, I’ll call them, the engineers, the architects, the surveyors and so on; they wanted to broaden the recruitment. Whilst economics was – I’ll call it a ‘semi-professional’ thing, they were looking for graduates, I think,
across the board to get in and renew the public service. So that was possibly – not possibly; probably – picked up after the Don Dunstan or Frank Walsh/Don Dunstan Governments in the mid to latter part of the 1960s, and then Steele Hall and a number of the reviews going on, and then I think the imminent arrival of a new Don Dunstan Government, given some of the political issues of the time, that things were in flux.

**Did you then see it as a positive place to seek employment in, or like previously for a lot of people it had almost been employer of last resort.**

Well, I’d have to go back to my university background. Whilst I applied for some jobs in the private sector, I wasn’t that comfortable about wanting to join the private sector, (laughs) so I was more interested in joining the public sector. So it wasn’t a matter of last resort; it was probably a thinking process of I was reasonably interested in politics, I’d been involved in some student politics at the University of Adelaide, and I guess my predilection was to get into the public sector. There seemed to be a fairly wide range of opportunities there.

**So you saw that as actual opportunities that you were aware of. Like you were saying that the old seniority-based approach was going; you were aware of that, and you saw opportunities within that?**

I probably picked up more of that when I got to know a bit more about the public service as such; but, given what I’d said before about the public service wanting to recruit young graduates – because I wasn’t the only one; there were a number of – there’d been, I think, a cohort about a year or two before me, one of whom was Graham Foreman, and I’d picked that up and the fact that the public service was interested in getting people and giving them opportunities.

I initially joined the E&WS\(^1\) Department, because I think they were interested in getting a graduate economist to look at pricing policies and working out (laughs) whether the prices that were being charged for water were high enough or low enough or needed to be revamped. I don’t think there was a big pressure on to change but, well, at one stage there was a drought, and I remember a ‘Shower with a friend’ program, so there were probably pressures on water supply.

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\(^1\) E&WS – Engineering and Water Supply.
Well, of course, the Steele Hall/Don Dunstan election was fought out over the Chowilla Dam and whether that would happen.

Chowilla/Dartmouth, yes. That’s right. So there was a matter, you know, an issue around water supply. And I remember Bob Bakewell, and there was Max Meth, who was the Secretary of the E&WS, which was a fairly senior position, and another one, Maurice Toohey, he was the assistant: I was recruited to join that area. That was initially, after my first day (laughs) of, ‘Well, what do I do here?’ and I was allocated to file correspondence that had come in to put in the pigeonholes from A–Z, and I wondered about all of this and thought what the hell I’d done.

‘One must absorb the cultural traditions.’

Yes. The other struggle we had early on, and this continued for some while, was, whilst these graduates were being recruited and the advantages seen by a number of us, the graduates got together – I’d say informally – and started to put pressure on the Public Service Board to actually have a formal graduate recruitment program and training program, so there was some training about, you know, like, ‘What is the public service?’, ‘What are the processes of government?’

And this was after you’d been recruited, or – – –?

This was after. And there was no formal program set up until probably the year after I’d been recruited or the year after that. I recall going to some training sessions but later cohorts of graduates were involved in a much more formal program. So, getting back to your question how and why did I join the public service: well, (1) an interest in public service; and (2) an opportunity that came up initially in Engineering and Water Supply. And then, when Don Dunstan came back as Premier after the election caused by the vote of, I guess, the Speaker, Tom Stott, on the Chowilla/Dartmouth debate, the Policy Secretariat was set up in the Premier’s Department and I applied to go into that.

So what was your perception of the Policy Secretariat – whose was it? Was it Don Dunstan’s or somebody else’s or – – –?

I don’t recall the precise details. One, my experience in E&WS was a bit mixed, I was quite keen to get into some policy work; there was, I think it was a three-person Policy Secretariat and again, because of my interest in politics and interest in what
Don Dunstan had been doing probably in the mid-’60s and beyond that, opening up the minds, opening and closing hours, to be able to go to pubs and things like that at convenient times plus the big campaign about the needed electoral changes and eliminating the gerrymander. A lot of us students got involved in that. But the Policy Secretariat position was seen as a public service position and the unit a public service unit but there was always that issue of ‘Is it Don Dunstan’s unit?’ There has always been debate on the shifting boundary between politics, policy and administration. Sometimes, depending on a government’s style it could get blurred in the eyes of a lot of others. State and Commonwealth systems differ for example, where in the Commonwealth, often senior public services become members of the Prime Minister’s or other ministers’ offices whereas in South Australia, that was seen to be unusual. But I guess at the time I was just mainly interested in the unit because it sounded interesting and it was going to get involved in a lot of policy thinking and work. Some of that awareness came from reading the newspapers and during the 1970 campaign there was a pretty seminal 1970 main policy speech where Dunstan outlined the basis of his thinking at the time the and the items he wanted to pursue. The range of potential activity provided scope for interesting research and project work.

The head of the Policy Secretariat, Bill Voyzey, was a very interesting character because he’d actually been, I think, private secretary to Steele Hall when Hall had been Leader of the Opposition and I’m not sure how he got to be the head of the Policy Secretariat but he had been, I think, Chief Recruiting and Training Officer in the Public Service Board after Steele Hall. Bob Bakewell had been brought in as a commissioner, so Bob Bakewell knew Bill and Bill was probably asked or he applied and was the best person – probably a combination – to be head of the policy unit because he seemed to have an awareness of the interface between the public service and the more political side of things. I was told many years after my work in the Premiers Department that there was some suspicion in the Labor Government at the time about Bill because he had worked for Steele Hall. But what I found was that Bill while certainly well aware of the argy bargy and jockeying involved in public service work, he was very straight up and down and very keen to make sure that we were following through the proper public service role (laughs) and not
getting explicitly involved in the politics of things. Sure, we had to have awareness of the interaction of politics and policy and its implementation but we needed to establish clear boundaries. I think right throughout the time he was head of the Policy Secretariat and Policy Division, I could never pick whether he was a supporter of Labor or a supporter of the Liberals or whatever else, because he was very keen to stay right down the line there.

What did you see his role as formally, and also the way he worked? Was he there as the traditionalist guardian of public service values to keep the lid on young people, or was he there as somebody to be involved in policy considerations and development of workable policies?

I don’t think it was one or the other; it was a combination. Well, it was a new area, so we were all trying to work through how best to approach these jobs we’d been given, and there were a number of things picked up from the 1970 policy speech and related speeches, like there was an agricultural policy that Brian Chatterton had done, and there was a proposal to set up rural machinery cooperatives, so, you know, ‘How do we work that sort of thing through?’ Maybe I’ll come back to that later on.

So Bob Bakewell was pretty actively involved as well, because he was not formally the head of that unit but next door in the Public Service Board as one of the commissioners for a while, and he used to...-

It’s interesting you say he wasn’t ‘formally’ the head of that.

No. That’s right, yes. (laughs) But he used to come over a lot and he’d have discussions with Bill Voyzey and almost certainly (1) pass down what the Premier was wanting on whatever the issue was, and probably talking to Bill about how best to address things. Bill, being the most senior person, would pick up the most senior roles – that is, chairing things or being a member of what I’d call a high-level committee, whatever those committees were. One at one stage he was on, I think fairly early, was the looking at transport and the MATS Plan and all that sort of thing. I remember Carl Breuning, a short dapper person brought in from the United

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2 MATS – Metropolitan Adelaide Transportation Study.
States to advise on transport options for Adelaide. Bill was a member of the Committee supervising Breuning’s work.

Yes.

And others of us – David Rodway was there; he was the middle-level person who’d had some experience in Highways and was very interested in management, so he’d go and do some of the management review-type things; and I’d pick up either being secretary or having a look at – one project I looked at was the setting up a third university at the northern suburbs, particularly around Gawler, which involved some I’d call fairly ‘basic’ research work, and coming back with a report on that which then would have been developed into a Cabinet submission to report back on whether such a thing was justified or not and whatever else, and I can come back to some detail on that later on as well.

Bill was also – his role was a mentor to myself and David Rodway and anybody else who (laughs) came across his path, because later on, notwithstanding Brian Hill was set up as, I think, one of the senior people in the – what was it called? – the Committee Secretariat, Bill would mentor some of that activity as well, given his involvement in some of those committees. And I can certainly remember (1) he would probably suppress some of my more radical enthusiasms (laughs) – – –

Radical?

Yes.

Radical in what sense?

At the time. I’ll come back to that in a minute. But one of the big roles he did was to actually get me to write good public service stuff, because I was fairly raw, having come from the university, and hadn’t been around as long as him, and I remember a lot of the editing he did of the work I put up: partly structurally, you know, the sort of broad formatting of whatever arguments ought to be put in where, but certainly a lot of the grammar and the tightness and the use of appropriate wording.

The more radical side of, I guess, some of my thinking at the time would flow back to some of my activities at the University of Adelaide, and I won’t go through
them in great detail but I was involved in the Labour Club initially but found that a bit boring because it was more involved in organising speakers and being more inclined to be gradualist Fabians. So a group of us set up the Socialist Club, which was seen to be a bit more radical and more active and, theoretically, revolutionary. Some of the people involved in that were involved in discussion groups about the application of Marxist-Leninism to Australian society and were concerned that things changes weren’t happening fast enough around the place.

This was also a time when the Politics Department at Adelaide had people – I might have the chronology wrong, but people like Graham Duncan and so forth –

Yes.

– and it was a much more publicly active group.

Yes. Yes, that’s right. Graham Duncan, Bob Catley, Bruce McFarlane and Brian Abbey, so they were more of the – I’d call them the – coming from the more radical, revolutionary approach to things rather than just this incrementalist, gradualist approach that some of us at the time lamented Don Dunstan was following. And I guess later on we can talk about some of that and how it might have – well, (1) be seen today, and (2) affected whatever policy thinking was going on at the time. So, given that background, I’d also linked up with a few of what I’d call the citizen participation groups around the place, and there was an activity in the Hackney Redevelopment area going on – that’s, Hackney was going to be redeveloped to have high-rise, and there was an architect, Rolf Jensen at the University who was promoting that, and high-rise meant pretty big, at least 10 storeys if not higher; so there were a lot of people in that area very active wanting to stop that whole project. So I knew them and while I didn’t get involved in the campaign so much, I was telling Bill that, ‘Look, this isn’t going to go anywhere, this project.’ (laughs) I think he was the Policy Secretariat’s formal link, working to whatever instructions Don Dunstan was giving him, and in a sense – well, in one way I was getting into conflict with Bill on that one saying, ‘Look, this is a problem,’ that he obviously was working through what the Premier wanted so he wasn’t listening to me that much – initially, anyway; and later on, as it turned out, the Premier thought it was all a bit too much trouble (laughs) and came to a compromise with the local
activists, and there was some minor redevelopment that happened there but certainly the high-rise didn’t get followed through.

And the result or lack of result of that compromise is still there for all to see.

Yes, true, yes.

Coming back into the organisational side of it, there’s Bill Voyzey doing that sort of thing; there’s Bob Bakewell drifting in from outside; and there was also a head of the Premier’s Department.

John White, yes. (laughs) Yes, that would have been rather complicated – probably for John White more than anybody else. I thought John – John White, I thought – not that I thought about it that much, because certainly the way I viewed it Bob Bakewell was calling the shots on this policy work and that was because he was also seen to be pretty close to the Premier, who’d obviously asked him to pick up this and develop the Policy Secretariat; and John White was seen more as an administrative-type person, and there are various stories I’ve picked up in the interviews that I’ve done about his role, and it would basically be the Premier would want something and John would take some notes and then either do it himself or get others to do it; was, I would say – what were they called at the time? They weren’t called ‘secretaries’, but they were ‘permanent heads’, but if you were called a ‘secretary’ and then if you took that word literally, I guess that’s what he was, just at the senior executive level. I don’t know whether he gave any high-level policy advice, but he probably was quite good on how the public service worked and what the Premier might want to do or not want to do on certain things. But I don’t recall him featuring a lot in the policy work that was going on.

But it’s an interesting formula, or at least situation, that you’ve got a self-declared reformer as Premier – not terribly radical, but viewed by some as radical; then a traditionalist head of his department, which was not a large department, anyway.

True, yes.

Then somebody brought in from Canberra, who is not noticeably radical, in Bob Bakewell, but given an administrative and other reform-type job; and then an old hand, Bill Voyzey; and then all these young people of different persuasions.

Yes, you’ve got an interesting mix there. (laughs)
But it was not sociologically uniform.

No. No, certainly not, no. My reading of a lot of that was, well, if you take John White, Don Dunstan could have shifted him on notwithstanding he was so-called ‘permanent head’. Those titles have changed now to ‘chief executives’ on contracts; but at that time I remember Bob Bakewell being very keen to be called a ‘permanent head’, and I think some of the signature blocks had been done wrongly and he kept insisting, ‘It’s “permanent head”’. But, for whatever reason, John White was kept there for a while and then Bob Bakewell came in as head of the Premier’s Department. The Cabinet can appoint heads of departments without going to advertising if they want to, so legally that was all possible, no big issues there apart from people’s personal feelings, I guess, about being shifted around and then a good reason for them to go, to be found another position or otherwise.

So, still working through this microcosm, there were other established – you might call them ‘powers’ – in the public service set-up, for example the Public Service Board itself and Treasury, and some other major departments that had a lot of practical power like E&WS. What was your perception of the relationships between your tasks in Premier’s Department and those other bodies?

The primary one was – well, it gets back to the role of the Premier’s Department, and there are a number of roles there, just dependent on what was being asked to be done. But I’ll come back to some of that later on. But with Treasury, they were seen to be more as interested in the financial accounting side of things, so even at that time in looking at proposals I don’t recall a lot of work being done to cost things in detail because the general environment, particularly in the early ’70s, was that there was a reasonable amount of money around and there were even processes like not only look at savings but being encouraged to think of expansionary items, (laughs) things that ought to be identified that are going to cost extra money. So there seemed to be a budget process where the amount of moneys involved always went up – that’s on extra things, extra initiatives, largely linked to what the policy statements had promised or at least things that had been looked at and then been agreed to be followed through. So Treasury didn’t, in my view, come into it a lot unless we wanted to check out maybe some Commonwealth/State financial relations-type things, although I wasn’t involved in a lot of that; and even a process
of working through, say, the land prices area, the Land Commission and some of those areas, I don’t recall Treasury being that heavily involved in some of those initial discussions. They certainly would have been later on, when the actual formal agreements were being structured and worked through.

**So was that because it wasn’t considered particularly relevant, or because Policy Secretariat or Premier’s Department was starting to emerge as a rival?**

I just don’t think they were thought of. I don’t – because, for example, there was a Land Prices Stabilisation Working Party set up, and there was no Treasury representative on that. I guess if you were doing that these days you’d almost certainly have a Treasury person on it, at least just to (1) understand what was going on and (2) be able to provide some inputs on some of the financial implications. But there wasn’t one there, and it was either we didn’t think of them or they weren’t interested, because they were quite clear that they were more interested in the accounting side of things.

With the Public Service Board, they were certainly a very powerful outfit and they had their what I call ‘continuing’ process-type things industrial relations, establishment, classification; but there was, I think, some group called the ‘organisational review’ or something area that I think were always pretty heavily involved in whatever major structural or organisational reviews might be going along.

**Organisation and Methods.**

Yes, methods, that’s right. There was a review of the Housing Trust, I recall, at the time that David Rodway was on.

**And that was required under the ..... .....**

Yes, that was a statutory – I think it was an every-three-year-type review. And there was a review of ETSA,[^3] I don’t recall the specific people on it apart from I think there was somebody from the Auditor-General’s Department on the Housing Trust one, and maybe the Board wasn’t in there – if it wasn’t – because it was a statutory authority rather than a public service department. But I certainly remember that we

[^3]: ETSA – Electricity Trust of South Australia.
were aware of the Board people and on certain things, particularly organisational implications of things, they would be consulted if they were not on a review group. But again they weren’t – if you went through a lot of the projects that were done, they wouldn’t have been involved directly apart from maybe being asked about some of the organisational implications.

But were there particular people that you recall having been significant in the Board in relation to the sorts of things that you were doing, or were they just an undifferentiated mass?

Probably not on – if I went through the list, I would – because I wasn’t involved so much in organisational reviews, I would have had less to do with them than others who were. But we were certainly aware of powerful figures like – these are apart from the commissioners – John Burdett and David Mitchell, particularly Burdett in that organisational review area; and Mike Schilling as well; and David Mitchell on the training side of things. But again that might have been linked with some of the graduate stirrings (laughs) that were going on, or some of the work being done on industrial democracy or joint consultation in the public service, where the Public Service Board actually picked up the unit that was specifically working on public service industrial democracy.

The other departments: Highways and E&WS were very big at the time and I would say pretty powerful, and the Commissioner for Highways was seen as – well, he thought of himself as being pretty independent, (laughs) given he was a commissioner, so there was always that struggle if we wanted to get information or do something about some of those areas to actually (1) get a leg in and (2) get information and then (3) get cooperation on whatever proposals were being worked up. But again I didn’t work, I recall, that much on any transport-type things, apart from there was a proposal to do inspections on second-hand motor vehicles when they – well, regular inspections; and I think it was more the Minister’s office, Geoff Virgo’s office, was fairly keen on that, and the Policy Division or Secretariat – I forget the exact timing; might have been Secretariat – was involved to have an independent look, and that comes back to some of these roles of the Premier’s Department and the policy units, and we recommended it was all too hard, I think. And Virgo, I remember I went and briefed him about it and he said something like,
'Don’t confuse me with the facts.’ (laughs) Because he was quite keen on this, if I’m getting it all right, and I gave him what I thought were the pros and cons and the fact that we’d concluded that it wasn’t really a goer, and of ducked out the door. (laughs)

In the pre-mellow days.

Pre-mellow, yes. Yes, they were – certainly Highways and E&WS. E&WS had its big program, and of course they had – that’s sewerage and water supply were their big weekly paid workforce at that time; and they had the Deputy Premier there as well, Des Corcoran, so they were seen as pretty strong. But, again, I found them – there was a project we did on looking at something to do with the River Murray and I think I found and whoever else was involved, found them pretty cooperative in what they were doing. So that sort of looks at the relationships with some of the key departments.

As I said earlier on, the Premier’s Department had various roles, and sometimes they either got misunderstood or (laughs) a bit mixed up, but – – –.

Or perceived fairly clearly.

That’s right, yes. One was just there was this capacity there on policy work – not that I think any of us had been to any training on policy development, like the specialised courses that people go to these days, so it was more of an awareness, intuition and working through things. But we were there to pick up projects that either Bob Bakewell had thought of with the Premier, or the Premier or – probably to a lesser extent – one of the other Ministers had thought that ought to be looked at either fairly quickly or in some detail in cooperation with other agencies and sometimes outside, and sometimes using consultants, so that was more of a – you know, these were people with the background, the capacity, they were working up their skills so they ought to be able to look at something. Some of that’s related to, ‘Well, we want an independent view on this,’ so not getting captured by the corporate history and whatever ambitions and agendas people from individual departments might have on whatever the issue was, so an independent view.

At the time also there wasn’t a lot of what I’d call ‘policy capacity’ in the individual departments – that’s the other departments – like the health area didn’t
seem to have one. Later on they developed capacity, a lot greater capacity, under the Health Commission. The Education Department had an education policy unit, which was more staffed by education professionals, so they were doing interesting things there. But again sometimes you needed an independent or external person or people to look at what was going on in there, particularly on organisational-type things. Often we’d get involved because there was a cross – I’ll call them ‘agency’, because it was either public service department or statutory authority – area of activity involved. Sometimes we’d be there because we were there as a neutral sort of conciliator or arbiter on whatever issue it was. One of the roles was the Cabinet comment process, which came a bit later on, and that was to, initially for the Premier only, have a look at what was going on and give –

**That was quite a bit later on.**

– yes – give, again, what I’d call an ‘independent’ view of whatever a department was proposing or pointing out some deficiencies in the logic of the argument because of our experience (laughs) in these sort of policy processes. I don’t know about any specific agendas, but also pointing out, ‘Well, look,’ something was happening in this area being proposed but it didn’t quite match up with whatever else was being proposed or being implemented by another agency or had been done in one or more of the other agencies. So the role depended on what was happening on, as you mentioned before, the conveyor belt of the issues, some short-term and others more longer-term.

**Well, even though there wasn’t particularly a policy analysis methodology or whatever, this unit, even when it was quite small, was regarded by people – for example in other states, in other governments – as quite innovative and almost revolutionary.**

Mm.

**Was there within that, though, in – I guess, internationally, the policy analysis movement was quite young; were there any methodologies that you were expected to follow within the Secretariat?**

These days you can pick up a template and follow particular ones or, at its basic level – although it’s quite complicated again, these days – there’s the Cabinet Handbook that lays out in great detail what Cabinet submissions ought to contain,
plus the process that’s involved in even getting something to Cabinet and that involves a lot of consultation with people and getting financial implications sorted out and equal opportunity implications, family statements, you name it, probably environmental sustainability statements now; but at that time there was a broad structure to a submission, a proposal: what are we looking at and very briefly what are we aiming to end up with; then some background on why we’re actually looking at something; then a discussion – sometimes a longish discussion, other times not so much – about some of the details or introducing more or fleshing out more whatever proposal was being looked at, adding in some data, adding in some views about or a synthesis or a summary of what people thought about the proposal. This is in – I’m just talking about the Cabinet submissions at the moment. Sometimes we’d just go for what we thought ought to happen in those discussions, that’s sort of an argument leading to a conclusion (laughs) rather than having three or four or five different options. I don’t think options were big at that stage; that came in later on, probably in the latter time of the Policy Division or even after that, from my recollection. And then coming to a set of conclusions about – a summary of what we thought ought to happen- and then quite specific recommendations, so basically they could get ticked off by the Premier as Chair of Cabinet, being the main sponsor of the Cabinet submission, taking into account there were other Cabinet submissions coming in from other ministers. And even with the other Cabinet submissions, I guess, I don’t recall a process of a draft coming in and us commenting on drafts; but I guess if a department was wanting to put something up and they were wanting to have a fairly fast process, they would have discussed it with somebody who was working in that area or that they knew of. Because another feature of our work was, whilst this wasn’t a fixed sort of thing, we generally had portfolios of policy areas that we were reading about and working on and developing expertise and knowledge about, a subject matter, and who was involved in those areas not only in the state but nationally and sometimes internationally.

We’ve also got to remember at the time there was no internet, so most of the information we got was through reports, sometimes information from the press, the reports often – sometimes being in the Premier’s Department, but we had to choof down to the Parliamentary Library, which was helpful, and other libraries – State
Library and the Barr Smith Library – that’s those people who had been involved in the South Australian scene; others who’d come in from interstate sometimes weren’t so aware of those things – and discussions with people, experts, people with direct interest in things, and trying to get whatever data was available. And some of that was from the Australian Bureau of Statistics – I remember going down there a fair bit, getting data from them; others from departments. But one of the things that I found, say with the university study, the third university, was nobody really had a decent set of data on age cohorts that were coming through the education system and were likely – you know, what was the demand for a third university. Very difficult to do.

But that was a time also when, for example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics was just starting –

Right.

– to develop stats that were directed at public issues, I guess.

Yes.

And there were people there who were very good at stats but were able to provide information for the first time that could feed in.

Yes. That’s right.

Just in terms of other areas, expertise, within the government, at a certain point the Economic Intelligence Unit was established. Can you say how you saw that happening and how its role developed?

Well, there was this – within the Premier’s – well, the Treasury had been seen as the economists and the accountants, but I recall Milton Smith had been brought in from Chrysler, I think his last port of call was, to head up the Economic Intelligence Unit, and he got in, again, fairly young graduates to work with him, some males – Robert Ruse, Ross Harding, later on I think Jeff Byrne – and these were – probably not Ross so much, although he’d had some experience in the private sector; but certainly Robert Ruse and Jeff Byrne had been – honours, I think, first-class graduates in Economics, so Milton had got together a pretty highly-educated group, and in those days honours was seen as quite significant. Some people had gone on to masters’ but not that many, and PhDs were way out there, (laughs) it was more of if you
wanted to get into academia rather than into the public service – because, just on
that, if you had a PhD you were often seen as an ‘egghead’ and not terribly
practical; it was more appropriate to get your honours if you could and get into the
public service that way. I forget when Barry Hughes came in, but Don – he was
Don’s economic adviser, so –

**And on the ministerial staff.**

– yes, on the ministerial staff. But there was also a project that I think Don Dunstan
wanted on the promotion of South Australia and around some of the economic
features of it, linking with other things like tourism and broad marketing, and he,
Milton, recruited two young more arts graduates but again with high credentials in
English, I think, to write this up: Margie Wallace and Cecily Basham. So Milton
had this group of young people working in there; (1) apart from the promotional
book that was being worked on there was data and other information being collected
on the state of the State for promotional and analytical purposes- just getting basic
data by surveys or re-assembling data from the ABS\(^4\) plus from industry on what
was happening in the economy. Prior to that, whilst there was some data around –
and I think we had to rely a lot on the ABS’s Year Book, you almost had to wait for
that to come out to get some basic information about not only the economy but lots
of other areas – so the Premier and, I guess, Bob Bakewell had worked out that they
needed this capacity just to get a lot more information about what was happening in
the State economy. Then, there was no data rounding up key information like the
State’s domestic product. I also – well, Robert Ruse worked with me on a study of
the restaurant industry and the wine industry, so they were available for more
detailed work on whatever issues the Premier wanted followed through, and
someone like Robert would work more on the economic side in that matter; what
was called the ‘microeconomic’ side of things- the structure of an industry- and
working out from the data what that on the current and future profile of an industry,
given trends. The EIU, worked, I think, on a lot of Commonwealth-initiated
reviews, say like the tariff on cars and the proposals to reduce tariffs; issues like the
taxation implications of a wine tax; certainly the Commonwealth/State financial

\(^4\) ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics.
relations area when those discussions came up, either with the Loan Council or I forget what it was – the Premiers’ Conference, I think it was called then, things that might have some economic implications when the Premier was needing to go to some of those meetings, particularly in Canberra, but they might have been held anywhere in Australia; and certainly the budget, the state budget process. I don’t know how much they got involved in detail, but they would have had a look at the implications of a state budget on the local economy and when the Commonwealth budget was announced, I think in September or whenever it was in those days, certainly the Economic Intelligence would look at the implications of Commonwealth moves on whatever the state finances might be or their economic impacts on the state. So they did a fairly wide range of things.

That was a complementary thing to Treasury.

Yes.

So that was probably feeding more into policy areas than straight financial areas.

Yes, true, yes.

Okay. Well, just before we get into particular areas, more in this earlier stage of your involvement, in the early ’70s, Dunstan had developed a fair spread of initiatives that he saw fit to pursue. There are other ways that he tackled some of them – for example, there were consultants brought in from outside, or you might say ‘consultants’ in quotes: people with expertise who were employed for particular purposes, to push or analyse certain things. Or, as for the example of Community Welfare, there was a head of department, a Minister appointed and given a certain charter. How did those sort of people relate to the Policy Secretariat work, Premier’s Department work, and vice versa?

The consultants I’ll do first. Often, somebody – the Premier or Bob Bakewell – would propose something to be looked at and we would probably do an initial, ‘Well, can we do this or do we need some outside help?’ And certainly in those days the briefs weren’t as detailed as they are now on the processes – I think there were tenders at the time, but certainly you didn’t go into the detail then as you do now – but we would have developed the broad terms of reference for whatever review was being looked at, and that would probably have gone initially, depending on what it was, up to Cabinet to endorse, particularly if it involved a fair amount of money. So we’d work on a brief and, depending again on what the topic was, we’d
either do that ourselves or one of us would do it or a combination and then go through the processes of working through with Bill or yourself or somebody else to endorse what was being proposed. Then there would be some sort of a steering group set up; my recollection is it usually involved a range of people – again, depending on the topic – those with interest from other agencies to keep an eye on the work of the consultants. The consultants would be selected and then do their work and report back through a steering committee on progress. Eventually they would do a penultimate report for us to have a look at and then, taking account the comments, the consultants would do their final report. That would be analysed and whatever the policy group and steering committee thought ought to be taken from it sent on by way of a Cabinet submission for Cabinet endorsement of whatever proposals warranted follow through.  

Now, some of that was done, as I said, because of expertise; some of it was because of, ‘Well, we want this independent view of what some of these experts think.’ In the scheme of things, I can’t recall any specific ones, but something might have been done just to take the heat off (laughs) an area for a while, and whoever’s stirring up about whatever the area is would have forgotten about it or be less stirred up. But I don’t recall a lot of those.  

But with someone like Ian Cox, a relationship – I didn’t have any direct ones with him, but he was certainly pretty well-known as somebody who was doing a lot of good things in the community welfare area, but there were some projects that were being followed through either state-wise or with the Commonwealth, like the establishment of The Parks centre, and I’m pretty sure some of his staff like Michael Court were involved in major cross agency projects– there was a committee set up to look at redevelopment areas around Adelaide and upgrading some of those areas. I recall somebody from Community Welfare being on those committees. There was certainly a lot of work being done on community development, but that was probably later in the 1970s and some of that was based on what Ian Cox had done in his own department about setting up I think it was area or regional structures and getting more community involvement in policy development and service delivery. So (1) there was direct involvement and (2) taking some of that and he was seen to be progressive and probably using it to say, well, you know, ‘Let’s do some of this
stuff with some of the other departments,’ that is, get agencies involved a lot more in consulting people, getting people to say what they think ought to happen with services and whatever else.

I’m just trying to think of other departments – depending again on what area it was, you would pick out people from other departments, often – well, some not so senior, because they were seen as doing some work in an area or might be interested or be seen to be expert in that area, or they were seen to have the respect of other people – well, someone like Ken Tauber, having the respect of other quite senior public service people, so you would get them involved in a project; and other times you would get people who may be not so progressive but expose them, I guess, to whatever was being looked at to (1) either get to commit to a proposed change or to be exposed to wider thinking on an issue of reform. I know some examples people have told me about, but I won’t go into the detail – like equal opportunity, and getting at least one of the agency heads to be involved in a committee and to be exposed to whatever was being required in that area. That’s equal opportunity particularly for women at the time, but also disability.

Other people and agencies promoting significant change in their areas, included John Mant and many of his staff on urban and regional planning and the environmental scientists in the new Environment and Conservation department.

A lot of what you’ve said about process or general approach could almost come over as a methodology of preparing things for practical decision rather than any particular analytical method, and in a way that’s putting things not into preconceived moulds but getting them to fit in with existing structures or ways of decision-making – even, if you like, the basic one of Cabinet decision-making, the ultimate authorising authority. What about the question of risk-taking: some people talk about particularly the earlier Dunstan years as ‘adventurous’ or taking risk, whether politically or not; but also within the government’s own operations? Did you have the feeling that there was risk-taking or adventurous stuff being done?

There was – looking from where we are now to what had been done then, I’d say definitely. (laughs) I think at the time – and it gets back to one of the comments I made about some of us, the younger people, thought there wasn’t enough risk being taken on certain things – but, looking back, I’d say there was, you know, there were all these new things happening: consumer protection; getting Ian Cox to really kick
up the whole community welfare area, notwithstanding all the problems that would have still occurred in that area, given the clientele there: Aboriginal affairs, land rights; you name it. I won’t go through the whole list, but some of the riskier areas, like industrial democracy, I would have said on the face of it that was a big risk. Initially, however, given the way it was panning out, it was more of a – I call a ‘gradualist’ approach to the conclusions of the two committees established to recommend action: that is, there were various options in that area and Don Dunstan, the Premier, had this high ideal about not only having democracy in the electoral area but also the workers in the workplace having a lot more power and influence on what was happening to them, let alone the way the whole businesses were being conducted. But, given the structure of some of these committees and the background of the people involved, it was almost inevitable that the solutions or actions being assessed were what I’d call gradualist, that is joint consultation (laughs) which maintains the power of the management and picks up areas people want to talk about within the frame of reference of the management retaining ultimate authority. Say, in the public service, there were certain things you wouldn’t talk about, like secretive budgetary decision processes, although people would have the option of putting up ideas for budgets and things like that.

It wasn’t until the unions – again, they were in two minds: one was, ‘We wish all of this would go away, because we’ve got a certain role and that’s in relation to wages and conditions, and we’re not really interested in all this other stuff about strategy and corporate directions and all that, let alone the financial results, until things really go bad and there’s unemployment or layoffs and whatever else’; but another group of more left, AWU and metal works unionists took the more radical step of, ‘If you want to be serious about this, we want people on boards and joint management, you name it,’ and that pushed Don into a fairly risky idea of having legislation, and what I think again was a compromise, a person or people on boards that were sort of public directors, so it wasn’t necessarily a union official or even somebody from the union membership in an industry.

The nonexecutive ..... ..... .....
Yes, nonexecutive, public-interest-type person, which is a reasonable idea. But that whole idea of industrial democracy then fell over, largely following Don’s retirement, lack of interest by Des Corcoran, the economic circumstances at the time and the negative reaction by the captains of industry to the more radical proposals. So certainly the idea was risky but its practical impact was initially, I’d say, limited; but I think it set the scene for things later on like recruitment and selection processes in the public service where there are staff reps; and the occupational health and safety area got kicked up and there are formal legislative-based consultative committees that have significant roles and the health and safety reps that have significant powers. And then you have the quality movement linked with job enrichment, so it wasn’t, I don’t think, a futile exercise, so maybe some of these ‘risky’ type of things do have beneficial impacts over the medium to longer term.

I was wondering if, before we talk about some specific projects, we could move on to maybe the second part or the next stage of the Dunstan decade, when the Premier’s Department had in fact grown larger with various accretions. The role of the head of department, Bakewell, had developed quite a lot. And also the Policy Secretariat, the numbers had grown and eventually it turned into a – or was turned into a division. Was there anything particularly different about that second period, or was it just an extension and growth of what was started in the early ’70s?

Personally, Bill Voyzey – well, there was a Policy Secretariat with three plus the secretary, and then I think Graham Foreman came in and maybe one or two others, so it was quite small and we used to have a lot of interaction with Bill Voyzey. And then, when the Policy Division was set up, the Policy Secretariat disappeared, but there were I think initially at least three subsets of that: one was like a program or projects-type area, that’s the investigations and policy development, one was a coordination area – that is, what’s going on around the place and getting reports back through the Premier’s Department to I think it was the caucus and the Premier and the Cabinet on progress of implementation of policy promises, what was happening to them, whether initiated in the Premiers Department or elsewhere. Another branch – I don’t think it lasted that long – was more of a program analysis/review-type area that Graham Maguire was recruited to set up with I think it was Anne Hooper and Geoff Stokes. Geoff didn’t stay that long and went into academia. Later on there was an Intergovernmental Relations Unit headed by
Andrew Strickland, who was recruited from Canberra, given his experience in the Commonwealth Department of Urban and Regional Development, so somebody with some good academic qualifications and experience in Commonwealth matters.

So the impact on me was that I’d lost a direct link with as he became the head of the Policy Division. Then there were the various branch heads, so people like me worked directly to those branch heads, and I think that was when you came in. (laughs)

Yes. It was in flux – – –.

Yes, in flux somewhere – yes, right. I think it was related to that new structure and things became a bit more channelled through the branches. The Division was getting bigger and we developed a quite long project list so we’d all be aware of the projects that were going on and by way of comment each, if interested, being able to contribute to other areas or being aware of what was going on a bit more that might help out each individual’s work or the work individuals were doing with either other people in the Policy Division or on working parties and committees that we were involved with.

Certainly the Cabinet submission development process got ramped up and became more formal in the sense that, instead of going into Bill’s office, for example and discussion an issue with him, we did a draft, which went to the branch head, and most often needing redrafting for sending off to Bill as Division head and then to Bob Bakewell for the Premier; notwithstanding that, I still thought it was what I’d call a reasonably freewheeling sort of division – that is, there were things coming in and people had their areas of expertise but some of what people were picking up depended on their workload; some of it related to workload but also depended on how long a particular project was going to involve; and, given the larger size of the Division and the wider expertise of the people that were coming, like Bob Smith, Dr Bob Smith from Canberra, who’d been involved in observing I think it was a royal commission into government administration in Canberra –

Coombs Commission.

– the Coombs Commission, he was doing a lot of writing with other people like Geoff Hawker and – I forget the chap up in Queensland – on public policy, so – – –.
Coaldrake, wasn’t it?

One was Peter Coaldrake but there was the other one who’s written about prime ministers.

Oh, Weller.

Yes, Pat Weller. So people like Bob coming in would have ramped up our broad knowledge of public policy processes, if you like, a comparative understanding of them and what was going on particularly in the Commonwealth but also in some of the other states although we were keeping track of some of these things, like the work Peter Wilenski was doing on the NSW system of government. So it became, whilst reasonably freewheeling, a bit more formal and structured, but that didn’t mean the flow stopped, although it was a question of how many new ideas people above had or whether the Premier had something he wanted to be looked at. There were quite major things like the Royal Commission into the Non-medical Use of Drugs, which we didn’t have a direct involvement in but our role had been to set it up by way of drafting terms of reference and proposing a list of members.

I think also at the time there was this whole thing about – you mentioned the words pragmatism and the practicality. Some of us were aware of our limitations. While there were people coming in from other departments many of those people weren’t actually the hands-on managers, so there was an awareness that went to a certain point in our work and once directions had been approved we had to hand over to the people who had to do the follow-up of decisions. Implementation was in the hands of the relevant government agencies. Our role then, through the coordination exercise and just keeping track of things, was to see broadly how decisions were progressing. But I think a number of us were aware, and I guess I was getting a bit frustrated, that what we did was this front-end work and then the monitoring work and some of reviews, we weren’t in there getting our hands on whatever we’d helped to set up. The decisions for us were made quite starkly when there was a new Liberal government, and a lot of us had to leave (laughs) the Premier’s Department, but I think beyond a certain number of years some of us were beginning to want to get into the more practical side of things; management and implementation.
The other thing that was starting to build up – I mentioned the review process, the analysis and review – while I don’t think Graham Maguire’s branch or sub-unit lasted that long – there was a lot more thinking about review methodology, efficiency and effectiveness and the role of social indicators in the monitoring process and more detailed formal reviews, indeed perhaps of a cycle of ongoing reviews of what departments were doing. There was a build-up of thinking- I’d done some studying in London and picked up some of that thinking about program budgeting and review and the work of central policy units. While the Labor Government didn’t bring it in – later on the Liberal Government brought in ‘program budgeting’, as it was called – we were starting to be a lot more aware of the need to connect policy and budgets more closely. This was partly because of the budget situation, that is, cuts being required rather than expansions. There was also a move overseas to do much more systematic continuing and detailed analysis of what agencies were doing not only in relation to the ongoing functions but also to review the impact of new policies. So some of us were starting to develop an awareness and expertise in those areas. That happened more so toward the end of Don Dunstan’s time as Premier and certainly Des Corcoran was interested. And, getting back to Ian Cox, he was doing a lot of this work in his department, and he had – I forget the timing – a chap called Dr Andrew Duguid, who was an expert on social indicators. It was a whole new area: outcomes, outputs, how you think through and categorise and make use of all this type of thing; and I guess that was a bit of the forerunner of the big new phase in the ’80s of what’s called broadly the ‘managerialisation’ of the public service.

Which is a great confusion of ideologies, maybe.

That’s right, yes.

But also the appearance of people like Duguid in other departments indicated that somewhat parallel – not necessarily absolutely parallel – things were developing within departments.

Yes.

There had been the perception that Dunstan wanted to centralise all the policymaking, and this was departments fighting back against it. Do you think that was the case, or was it that in fact the Policy Secretariat and the Division had
developed so that policy thinking could be introduced and established and then, as time went on, there were more options and better ways of doing it, including out in the operational departments?

Yes. I think it was a bit of a combination. There was some shifting going on. I think – well, there were people like Ian Cox who’d got in young graduates. They weren’t the social workers so much, although some of them were trained in social work, and he got them in as regional directors and he set up his policy areas, and there were people like Michael Court who got into things even beyond a lot of that, like he did a PhD on planning and social planning, which was again a new thing, and he’d picked that up from I think the United States. There were people like Wendy Sarkissian who’d come in, and she’d been into urban sociology, and there were people like John Byrne in the Housing Trust, who was an architect by training but also very interested in broader matters of urban and regional planning. So some of it was progressive department heads like Ian Cox and John Mant getting in people and letting them run, some of that was them coming up with ideas on what I’d call a freewheeling basis, and some of it was linked to quite specific initiatives like the community development exercise, and some of it was their own initiative of picking up ideas and studying them and not only getting things done in their own departments but also talking about in whatever committees they and the Policy Division people were on – you know, ‘Well, this is going on,’ or, ‘We’re hearing something from the Commonwealth.’ The Department of Labour and Industry’s role, for example, had been very specific: you know, boiler inspections, the broad industrial relations-type wages and conditions monitoring and whatever else. They were – I’d call it broadly ‘rattled around’ because they’d scored this unit for quality of work life with people like Phil Bentley. And Phil was a bit of a mover and shaker, and he had his pretty highly-qualified group of people in there, notwithstanding what I said earlier about industrial democracy and its travails. But there were those sort of people, and after a while people like John Bannon came in with his interests in broad industrial relations-type matters, I guess initially parked in there before he became a member of parliament and then minister. So there were all these – – –.

Should we explore that set of reasons?
(laughs) So people like Lindsay Bowes were being challenged by these sorts of people coming in – he probably had to take them in; but there were others coming in like in the area of ‘manpower planning’ as it was called at the time; later became ‘workforce planning’. And you could go through others – well, the Health Commission was another one where there were these disparate agencies with their various responsibilities, and then there was the review, the Charles Bright review, with his committee, and after the new body was established, the Commission developed a fairly significant policy and planning area. The main aim of this was to improve planning and coordination of activity across the health sector.

The agencies picked up all the various areas of policy, (laughs)-policy under a Labor Government wasn’t a dirty word, that is public servants thinking about policy. I say that because when the Tonkin Government came in there was quite an explicit view from it that ‘Politicians think about policy; public servants think about administration’, because of the Liberal’s misinterpretations of the various layers and types of policies that can exist. And just to top that off, I think the Policy Division – linking up with what I said before about analysis – was getting into another phase of ‘We’re going to get into this analysis a lot more’, and I know that under Des Corcoran, when he took over from Don Dunstan, policy and program review was going to be a big area. But action never really emerged that way given what happened historically there – that is, Corcoran lost government after not too long. More intense policy and program review occurred in the Bannon era.

**Could you enlarge on what you see is the significance of Corcoran in that?**

*In?*

**Well, you said it was going to be a big area.**

Yes. Well, that was a bit of a paradox, because we talked earlier about Cabinet comments and I think it was him – it might have been – probably not Hugh Hudson – when Cabinet comments were made they just went to the Premier, that’s submissions would come in and the Policy Division would have a look at them and make quite brief comments to the Premier along the lines of: ‘Well, why don’t you ask about this?’ Or, ‘Here’s a bit of a flaw in that.’ And he only would have these; and up in Cabinet, whenever a matter came up and there was a comment, if he
wanted to follow it through, from my understanding, he would read his comment, ‘Well, what about this?’ So the ministers often, I imagine, would be either embarrassed or would want to argue or whatever else, but I think Des Corcoran was the one who titled, because of that, the Policy Division as ‘the Gestapo’. So when he became Premier – well, I forget the exact timing, but later on the Cabinet comments were opened up to the other ministers.

Yes. That was well before Corcoran, actually.

Yes, well before Corcoran. But when Corcoran came in he certainly didn’t abolish the Cabinet comment process.

He used them more

Yes. (laughs) And he certainly – yes, well, from my understanding, he found them very useful, and I can only speculate why.

And he asked for more.

Yes, and he asked for more, from what I gather– yes. And then he was leaning to increasing oversight of the public sector through reviews – whether this was because somebody was briefing him or whether it was his idea or a bit of both, he wanted even more information about what was going on around the government.

It hadn’t occurred to me that this was connected with analysis until you mentioned it.

Yes. But certainly there was going to be a very strong analysis and review process. The process would have been selective; you pick out these areas; but it would have ramped up whatever reviews were being done under the previous processes.

Just taking a different perspective on this, more external, over this latter part of the ’70s there were – well, there was a lot of interest in other Australian governments and by a lot of people working in governments about what was happening in the Dunstan period. Some of this quite specifically was the refugees from the Whitlam years either abandoning the ship in advance –

Yes.

– or wanting a job after it. But a lot of it was from governments of either persuasion in different states, and even a number of people from overseas who were wanting to get involved. So when you went off to study in England, what
sort of perspective did that give you; what different sort of ideas and thoughts about policy processes or government did you get at that stage?

We looked at France, the United States, certainly the UK; and in the UK there was a Central Policy Review Staff unit under the Harold Wilson Government – I forget what happened under Heath, which was a bit earlier – and I was there I think when the Harold Wilson Government was there, or Callaghan, it might have been in his time, just before Margaret Thatcher. So the big area, as I mentioned earlier, was I’d studied different ways of looking at the development and being aware of what policy work was going on and the different ways being approached in that work. There were gradualist approaches relating to this term called ‘incrementalism’ put forward by Charles Lindblom, that is, taking small steps in effecting policy change. There was ‘satisficing’, ‘Well, let’s do the best we can given the circumstances, including consideration of the availability of money and the satisfying of the various pressure groups. There was the “systems approach” propounded by Easton, that is, analysing what the main players in the system were pushing and the ability of the organisations to accommodate a change or policy proposal. Then there was another thinker called Etzioni, who talked about ‘mixed scanning’, and that was looking broadly about what was going on and picking out certain areas that ought to be looked at and pursued in a bit more detail, a version of strategic planning and taking strategic opportunities. There was also the ‘rational’ approach attempting to measure the costs and benefits of a proposal, a process taken over by the economists. And then, the Wildavsky-type thinker, looking at the politics of the budgetary process. A combination of these latter approaches emerged in program budgeting and what Robert McNamara had done in Defence when trying to measure the success of military action in Vietnam; and zero-based budgeting, which wanted to start anew in each budgetary cycle. Over all that, there was Dror, who talked about meta-thinking, about thinking broadly about how to assess and establish the best policy processes. So that made me aware of the different ways of looking at how policy was being developed. This study overseas built on the reading and writing I had done in my politics honours year.

We also had senior public servants coming in from particularly the British system, talking about what they were doing; one in particular, John Bourne, I think
became very senior in the government. We had urgers like our main professor, Peter Self, who made us think critically about what we were reading and writing – he’d written a book, *Administrative theories and policies* – so that gave a pretty broad perspective, just questioning what was being done and why. I’d become a big sceptic about cost–benefit analysis, partly because of him and his antipathy to them because of the difficulty of quantifying particularly social type of impacts on the advantages and disadvantages of the components being analysed in any decision making process. There was William Robson, who gave lectures on statutory authorities. So that gave me a better idea of the different types of non departmental bodies, like, qangos, quagos and rationale or lack of it in their establishment. (laughs) A key thread that emerged from those lectures was the issue of the nature and degree of ministerial responsibility and accountability for the actions of the various bodies. I gained a better insight into the nature and structures of the bodies we had in SA. It actually helped me feed into some work I had to do – I think could have been initially under Don Dunstan, but certainly under Corcoran – about collapsing a lot of statutory authorities and understanding why certain bodies were or weren’t statutory authorities and there need to continue to exist under a government umbrella.

And just interaction with some of the other students from around the world and getting their thinking about how government actually worked practically in their countries.

**Did that give you the idea that South Australia was different, doing innovative things, behind the pace, following one model or another, or what sort of perspective?**

I would have said generally from that the perspective that we were on the pace with some of the things that were happening, given SA is a state and we were mainly looking at national operations. I think where the deficiencies were in SA was just our thinking about, reflecting on what we were doing and how. I held a seminar for the Division on my observations of the work of CPRS in the UK, the Prime Ministers Department in Australia and ours and I think we would have discussed those sort of issues. Certainly the perspective was that we were deficient or a bit behind on some of the managerial-type things and the examination of alternative
methodologies, and certainly on the training that wasn’t going on to gear up public servants in this new world of things. A lot of what we did stemmed from mentoring, the examples we got from the more senior people, by observing and by gaining experience but not through any disciplined reflection and analysis. I’m talking from the perspective of a more junior person like myself although Bob Bakewell gave some talks about the role of policy divisions and things like that. But the methodologies weren’t advanced, like, you know, we weren’t involved in the whole financial budgeting process. The links between policy and budgeting were deficient; the issue of ‘Well, there’s the policy work being done here and here’s all that Treasury accounting-type work being done over there,’ and the two not getting linked enough, until into the Bannon years. Sometimes the issues got dragged together for the Premiers’ Conference briefings, particularly on matters of funding under Section 90-type discussions: ‘The money’s coming from the Commonwealth, and what does this not only mean for how it fits into the whole policy thinking and framework, but also what are the short-term or long-term financial implications?’ And then, ‘Is this a priority, compared with something else?’ And I guess that was the whole tricky bit, you know, how do you actually compare different areas and how do you get some sort of a bottom line to compare. I guess that gets back into cost–benefit and rates of return and that, but that was just, I think, starting up and we were just thinking about that; later on, it came.

Well, Treasury didn’t formally adopt any involvement – I shouldn’t say ‘formally’; they didn’t have any involvement with cost–benefit until on into the next decade –

Yes.

– when it was a novelty for them.

Yes.

Okay.

Certainly the idea was there, and I’m pretty sure we would have talked about these things, but I guess it was a matter of being swamped by the conveyor belt as much as getting into new things.
Yes. Then I guess one of the reasons for having people like you go away was particularly to have the opportunity to look back in –

Yes.

– and see how some of the things that had been written up by academics were or were not being put into practice or – – –.

Yes.

Are there any other more – oh, you’d like to have a break? (break in recording)

Okay, resuming that: one of the things that was often said about the Premier’s Department in the Dunstan days was that it was there to do Dunstan’s bidding and to work on his behalf. To what extent did you feel that you were part of an organisation that was doing that?

I think that was the primary feeling I had. Just broadly, the general feeling I had at the time was partly, I guess, because I was fairly young and impressionable, was that this was an exciting department, (laughs) it was all happening, it was a bit like what I imagined the Kennedy and the Camelot sort of environment in SA was like, on a much smaller, microscopic scale, given South Australia and where it sits in the world. So, notwithstanding I said earlier about being a public servant and the role of a public servant was to give fearless and frank advice (laughs) – and I think that was done at the time and appreciated; sometimes not, but I haven’t heard many examples of the Premier not appreciating it – was to pick up what the Premier was wanting to happen, and that was partly specific things that would have come down from the Premier by way of correspondence – sometimes he or he or whoever was expanding things for him, although I’m pretty sure he had the initial idea and impetus, or he’d picked up an idea that he was wanting to follow through – was to pick up whatever it was and work out how to have a think about it – or (1), sorry, to interpret what he was wanting – sometimes that was easy; other times it wasn’t so easy, you know, some of that correspondence might have been what were called ‘minutes’ and I think still are, because it was an internal correspondence; sometimes it was that a submission had been done, had gone to Cabinet and the Premier had acknowledged it and then we had to work out what the acknowledgment or the approval had actually meant by way of further action on something, or new action on whatever was being proposed. So there was discussion within the Policy Division or some
clarification through the more senior ranks and then getting on with it – well, that was partly linked up with whatever the Premier might be saying but also partly trying to get an awareness of how that sat in a broader background of one’s awareness of what was happening around the community and nationally and sometimes internationally – and (2) what the Labor Party itself was talking about: that’s either broadly through their platform or more specifically when it came down to some election policy statements. So the Premier might say something and we’d say to ourselves, ‘Well, what does this mean?’, so ‘Does the party platform say something about that, or the policy platform?’ – the statement that gets picked up on the electoral campaign cycle at whatever time it was – or sometimes getting clarification from an adviser, although I don’t recall any specific ones, except for some reactions about some work that was being done from people like Peter Ward or, to a lesser extent, the press people. But again the Premier had given speeches, so one would have a look at them, and say ‘How does this expand on a particular item being looked at?’

But, on the other hand, did you have the experience of your words or your content that you’d been working on appearing as reports of what the Premier had said? I mean, he’d actually – or his staff had – picked it up and he was making pronouncements?

I don’t recall any specific instances, but I’m pretty sure that happened, and that was done in various ways. Sometimes it might be from a submission, other times from detail of a report. But often there were sort of drafts or points, notes, sent up through the system to the people who were working on speeches or press statements; or sometimes the Premier, having read something, recalling that – and he had a very good recall – and saying whatever it might be. I would say probably the closest area would have been the industrial democracy one initially and the land prices area later on, but I don’t recall any specifics.

The other, the next part of what you asked, was about, well, following through on what the Premier’s request had been about, and that was sometimes, as I said before, a solitary type of exercise – that is, I would have been working on something and interpreting it in discussion – well, doing it either by myself or in discussion with others. In a lot of other cases, it was being on a working group or going to talk to
somebody in another agency about what the Premier wanted or getting clarification with them and having various roles. One was to – well, whenever there was a working party set up or a committee there’d be a run-through of, ‘Well, what’s our role here?’ And, most of the time, if I was there as a member or secretary of a group or even, to a bigger extent, a chair, I’d be using what the request from the Premier was, flowing through the terms of reference to explain what the intention of whatever was being set up was about, and hopefully – well, that was open to discussion and sometimes clarification might have been required-settling on the next steps of work. So that was the initial process. And then, as things went along, just seeing that – well, there were judgments being made by me about how things were going; so it wasn’t always sort of referring – you know, what made good logical sense or how did this fit with whatever else was going on around the place, or was there a concern about somebody or their views being taken on too much or not enough, or a pressure group along those lines, whether it’s an industrial lobby, including uranium or an individual company or whatever else. Sometimes there was debate, argument-I don’t recall any specific examples, but, ‘Well, this is what the Premier’s on about and this is the way I suggest this ought to go now,’ depending on my particular role.

Sometimes – I remember one committee I was on, the East End area redevelopment one, where I got an instruction to – that wasn’t from the Premier; it was – I forget who, but certainly Bill was involved; I think you were involved too – that we ought to – that I needed to go to this committee and rein in some of the fancy ideas people were having about spending lots of money and the role of a certain consultant to that committee. (laughs) So my role there was to, amongst all these pretty senior sort of people, to spell out, ‘Well, look, here’s what’ – I forget whether it was the Premier or the Department, but it certainly would have been the Department at least – you know, ‘this is what we think ought to be taken into account, and let’s just get sort of realistic about all of this.’ So it was a sort of – I’ll call it broadly a ‘regulatory’ or a – I won’t call it a ‘policing role’, because these weren’t heading into illegal activities, but –

Sheepdog.
– yes, sometimes a sheepdog; sometimes something a bit more severe, but depending on what was going on, yes.

**Blue heeler.**

Yes. (laughter) And then, yes, following through and, as I said, seeing how this linked and whether an idea made good policy sense; and then, as I said, in a practical way but not in the context of a hell of a lot of what I’d call implementation awareness and detail. I think that’s another big area that needs to be picked up at some stage and thought about.

**Did you ever find the need for or the tempting opportunity to subvert the Premier by – I should put that in quotes – but by putting back what you would regard as a proper analytical case, including things that you knew he wouldn’t particularly want to hear?**

Yes. Some I got into trouble on one in particular. The Premier had an idea about a restaurant corporation. So we had a look at that and, for whatever reasons – and I think it was the role of government and why is the government really involved – we knew the Premier was (laughs) interested in advancing tourism and food quality and things related to that, but why have a restaurant corporation with the government being involved and all this sort of stuff? And that was partly influenced by the study Robert Ruse and I had done on the restaurant industry because the complaints were coming the other way that government restaurants like Ayers House were having unfair advantages because of government support – I forget whether there was a guarantee or not, but, you know, just having inside running with the government on all sorts of things, including leases and the costs of those, I don’t think they were that high. So there were complaints. Overall, we had to send a message– that’s initially myself writing a report saying, ‘Well, look, this is not practical,’ and I think Bill was pretty much onside and if you were involved you almost certainly would have been. So the Premier left aside the idea.

The other area related to that was the restaurant study where we’d looked at restaurants and spoken to people and just thought, ‘Well, look, the government really shouldn’t be in this area as actively as it was getting’, again because of those complaints – unfair competition and that. So that’s what we said in our – Robert Ruse and my – report, and the press got onto it and asked me – you know, they
hadn’t got a copy of the report but they were saying, ‘Well, how’s this study going and what’s the drift of it?’ and whatever else, so I think I dissembled a bit, but Peter Ward—there was a story in the paper—Peter Ward had read this and whether it was his initiative or the Premier telling him, Peter rang me up and said, ‘Look, the only people who comment publicly about these sort of things is the Premier or the ministers or the spokespeople at the time. I don’t think then there were spokespeople as much as there are now.

No, not so much then.

The Premier seemed to be open to be more being up-front than current politicians, but anyway. So I got into trouble there, and the Premier said, ‘This report’s not getting released. We don’t want to know anything about it.’ So that sank without trace. So they were the two I recall.

The others, I forget—like the Hackney thing, I just forget whether I mentioned something formally, but certainly, as I said before, I was briefing Bill on that one, given my discussions I was having informally with that local lobby group. That was the one campaigning against the Hackney redevelopment. Others, well, ‘Here’s something that needs to be followed through, so I’m doing this professionally, I’ve given my advice.’ But I don’t recall others that I was very upset about or stuck out on a limb or be prepared to resign on.

So you would have felt somewhat gratified when you read in Dunstan’s Felicia that he valued the Department’s advice, particularly when he had been told by them not to do things, whether he took the advice or not.

Right. Yes, yes, of course, yes. Well, that was—I think the general view around the place was, well, we sort of said it or wrote it as we saw it, notwithstanding whatever pressures might be coming from either the Government or the private advisers and from other areas like lobby groups. Now, you’d have to go into a sort of psychological/sociological study on each individual or their motivations and whatever but I guess people who didn’t like that sort of thing and the ambiguities and complexities of working in the Division didn’t stay there; they went off somewhere else where things were a bit more

Just on a slightly different tack from that question but going back to representing the Premier, did you have difficult moments when you were dealing with
ministers or departmental reps when the Premier was quite clearly keen on something or even that Cabinet wanted to do it and they were not wanting to comply or go along with it, or do their own version of independent thinking?

I don’t recall. There’s one committee I chaired was to look at the rationalisation of commercial tribunals, which got disbanded because of the change of government, and people like Toby Gordon, the head of – I think it was Attorney-General’s at the time- you know, that’s all changed now – was on it, but they were very receptive, but I was always mindful these were very senior public servants and so I had to be very careful about what I said and how I was playing that role of being chair.

Probably the trickiest area, but again it was a matter of just doing the job, was the study on the hazards of the nuclear energy cycle. Without going into all the details there, there was certainly a lot of pressure to come out with an answer from the pro-uranium people that were talking to me and whatever structures were around that. And I was also a member for a short time of the Uranium Enrichment Committee, and it was quite clear the way they wanted to go, but I saw my role as just wanting to keep the thing open for a while and possibly – I don’t recall the detail – linking it up with whatever conclusions were going to come out of the broader study of the nuclear energy fuel cycle. But otherwise no examples of disagreement or railing against anything or undermining, sabotaging. If anything, it was, ‘Well, look, I’ve got a broad awareness of what is being wanted to be thought through here,’ and just keeping others on the sort of straight and narrow, (laughs) to make sure that an argument’s being pursued properly; or if somebody’s a free-market person, well, okay, we’d take those views into account, but, ‘This is broadly my understanding of what the government’s very broad views of their role and the private sector’s role and how they might be brought together and things like that, so let’s not close off too many options and head off in one particular direction.’

Yes. Are you happy now for general observations about the role of the Premier’s Department or Policy Division or whatever?

Not at this stage. I might have it later on, but I’ll do some thinking about what I’ve said –

Something to look forward to.

– so far. Yes, okay.
That doesn’t herald some revisionism coming up, does it?


That’s good.

END OF FILE 1: FILE 2

This is Bruce Guerin for the Don Dunstan Foundation Don Dunstan History Project interviewing Mr George Lewkowicz about his work in the Premier’s Department in the 1970s. The date today is 29th March 2011; the location is the Don Dunstan Foundation.

Now, George, I omitted to find out more about you in part one, so to start off part two can you tell us a bit more about yourself?

Sure. I was born in Germany as a refugee. I guess at a very young age I wasn’t aware of that status until much later on. I was not only a refugee but I was called formally, on the papers that involved the United Nations refugee organisation getting people out of Europe or helping people to get out of Europe, we were called ‘displaced people’, DPs. So how that happened was that my father had left Poland and ended up working in – this is during the Second World War – working in Germany, and from what I understand from what my mother tells me he did something wrong and ended up in a concentration camp under the Germans in France. He was there for at least three years, and as the Germans were retreating he and his fellow concentration camp inmates had to walk back into Germany – I think it must have been a camp near Münich – and, as the Americans came and liberated them, they set up accommodation and food supplies and things like that for former inmates, and I guess a lot of ex-Polish army people as well that had been captured and released. The town where my father ended up in was one called Murnau, so that’s where he was. And my mother had left what is now South-West Ukraine but at the time was part of Czechoslovakia, a place called Dombo then and now Dubove, and by various routes, being from actually an Austrian family whose ancestors had located in that area, I think since the late 19th century there was a bit of an enclave of all these Austrian high-German speakers, and she came to Germany via Hungary. Some of it, I think, were with the retreating German army as the Russians were coming, because her mother had told her to get out of the place. So I
was born after they’d met there. We came to Australia in 1950 and ended up in Gawler via Bonegilla and went into the Gawler Migrant Camp.

My first language was Polish, but I was more interested, I think, in picking up my English, so I used to speak in English to my parents and they’d speak in Polish, so I was a bit of a hybrid. My father was a labourer working in foundries. I guess, by way of summary I was a working-class immigrant. I went to Gawler Primary School and then Gawler High School. I was interested in reading and studying – that’s apart from playing a lot of sport, more so in my latter teens – and Gawler was a sort of place where there wasn’t much discrimination – there were lots of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, various backgrounds, there and whilst they mixed together, Gawler was a place that I think accepted the migrants not only in the workplaces but also in the community, particularly if in my case you played sport. So that was a bit different, I think, from some of the areas in Adelaide where there were quite large immigrant communities like Royal Park and whatever, and they were people who mixed a lot more closely together through their clubs and did all sorts of social things; but that was less so in Gawler.

I think what got me into going to university and studying Economics was quite a strange thing in one way. We all – I forget whether it was in third year or fourth year – did IQ tests. I don’t know exactly why. But from that apparently I was quite good at arithmetic or fast calculations, and the person giving me feedback said, ‘Well, you ought to do something with those skills,’ and I said, ‘Well, what sort of thing should I do?’ And he said, ‘Well, why not think about something like economics?’ So Gawler High School didn’t have Leaving Honours and certainly didn’t teach Economics, but all the Gawler kids who wanted to go on further in their studies went down to Elizabeth High School. So being from a smaller cohort of the Gawler High students, when I went to Elizabeth High School I think I was quite amazed at the number of students with high level matriculation results. Many were from mainly English and United Kingdom background; I think a lot of them had come from England and their fathers had worked in the weapons research area and related industries, there were a lot of very clever people, so that made me raise my standards and get more into study. I did Economics at Elizabeth High School. I must say my results were mediocre, but having passed Economics and the
requirements to get into university after finishing my four years of Latin, which was one of the alternative requirements at the time for matriculation, I ended up doing Economics at university. So that links back with, I think, where we started when you asked me, Bruce, about how I got into the public service, but from that Economics degree and activities at the university I ended up in the public service.

Well, coming back into your role in the Premier’s Department, to what extent do you feel that you had the opportunity to put your hand up to do various projects, to what extent were the projects generated by the Department, and to what extent did they appear to come from Don Dunstan as Premier?

That’s a hard one. (laughs) The opportunities – I think, as I said in the first interview related to– as time went on we sort of specialised, got our portfolios-dependent on what the particular topic was and the workload we had there were general allocations that way. But I think there was quite an opportunity for people, if there was a project coming up that they had a particular interest in or they were seen to be people who were appropriate either to – well, either/and a secretarial role/research, because the role of the secretary wasn’t just to take the minutes and organise things, but actually do a lot of backup research. And that also relates to who else was involved around the public service who might be brought in to do whatever work it was. And as a member of a committee the idea there, of course, was you were there to not only put the overall government point of view to things but also contribute as somebody who knew about the topic or, if you didn’t, you could quickly pick up the substance of whatever policy topic it was.

For example, on the project on industrial democracy, there were two committees, and that was partly – I was the secretary of both- because there were other people in the public service who might have done it but I was available and interested in the topic, having done Politics at university.

The generation of projects by the Department, I don’t recall a lot of specific instances, but I’m pretty sure that where we might have been doing some projects that were either areas for further work or there were spinoffs from observations we were making on what was happening, like the whole planning area, there was a lot of cross referencing going on. Land prices were also linked to speeding up land development so there was a particular project that spun off from that to try and
streamline the whole area of land development. Because I’d worked on the land prices issue I also worked on that streamlining project. A lot of the backdrop, from my recollection, was of course the policy statements, and depending on what particular period of the electoral cycle – like, early on, one would look at them and see what needed to be followed through as a priority- but then, as time went on, there’d be a check-through of progress on the implementation of some of those policy promises and some additional projects would come out of that. So I’d have to sort of pass a bit on origins from the Department, but sure, as the intelligence was fairly widespread about what was happening, not only in the state but also nationally and internationally, I’m pretty sure that ideas would have been coming back on not only policy statements that were out there but also from people’s reading and conversations and ideas being sent back through the system and to the head of the Premier’s Department.

On the origin of projects from the Premier himself, I recall a lot of memos that he would have written on whatever he wanted to be looked at, and that was both from very broad ideas he had on the way he would like to have seen South Australia develop – like a diverse economy; a high-technology, I think value-added type of economy; an economy that had a – I think he talked about design a lot; and, more broadly, a community that was interested in the arts and developing culture and – related to that, linking back to the economy – development of a better lifestyle and tourism. So out of that we could see a lot of things like the licensing laws, the upgrading of the restaurants, the provision of more tourist-type facilities. And he was very interested in bringing in the Aboriginal communities as well, and I recall one project on a Coorong cultural centre – I think in the end that didn’t go terribly far, but there was a lot of work done on that; let alone the Jam Factory that was set up and linked back with the whole idea of diversification. So I guess from that there were a lot of projects coming out of those broad ideas. And things like the restaurant study he certainly had initiated, the Restaurant Corporation idea – as I mentioned last time, he initiated the work on food, the development of more interesting and exotic foods; he would have initiated that. Certainly he would have picked up concerns around the place on land prices, so that would have flowed back
down through the Policy Division and the work to be done on that, which I can talk about later on. So there was a bit of a two-way process, I think.

But you weren’t so conscious of things that came directly from the Premier saying, ‘I want the Policy Secretariat or the Department to do this or that’?

Not in any specific way – well, certainly a project, and these memos I mentioned would have explained, whoever wrote them – whether it was Don dictating them or (laughs) whoever drafted it-

Or you.

– I might have written some, but I don’t recall (laughs) any specific details.

I certainly remember Don’s memos with his very open Don Dunstan signatures or in other cases, his DAD abbreviated signature.

But in many ways it was – at different stages in different ways, perhaps – but a working example of a reasonably complex working environment where ideas from below were endorsed and authorised and sent back down, if you like, and other things came from above and quite a mix.

Yes. Maybe because I was more of a junior officer for a while and then, I guess as I got up to be a more senior officer, I was certainly aware of missives coming down.

I don’t actually recall things that I’d written, except as a result of a process of - there’d be a request for a briefing on a particular topic and then we had to develop the broader Cabinet proposals that would go back up to the Premier. Or do summaries of whatever reports had been done by way of, again, requests from the Premier or via Bob Bakewell or Bill Voyzey or yourself.

But there was – again, in different ways at different times – quite a focus on what you might call proper authorisation of projects. So it might not be clear where it came from absolutely originally, but it was a fairly normal thing for the Premier to endorse with some sort of direction what might have been introduced from outside government or by the head of the department or whatever.

Yes. Well, of course, there were ideas – like I remember there was a project I was involved in before the Royal Commission into the Nonmedical Use of Drugs, and that was to look at setting up an inquiry into marijuana laws- I can’t recall of the details of where that actually came from, but I’m pretty sure it would have come from the Premier either directly or he’d spoken to somebody who’d drafted
something for him. I think it was about halfway through that project we were asked to broaden the whole exercise and what we would do is, ‘Well, there’s an idea; now let’s develop some terms of reference,’ or tease out the sort of things that might be looked at by way of a project and, as you say, get that endorsement from him before we went too far. The whole uranium one, which I can go into in a bit more detail later on, but from the papers that I’ve had another look at it seems that he had a specific request for that to be a pretty wide-ranging study of the whole aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle. I don’t recall whether there was a specific memo and then we expanded on it or there was a very broad request and then we just got on with it and did the work on it. Well, that gets back to – I think on that project it was partly workload and partly interest: ‘Well, here’s quite a big project, it’s going to take a while. Your workload, George – you’ve got some space there,’ if you like, ‘and are you interested?’

That sounds a polite version of ‘You’re slacking, George.’

Yes. (laughter) Oh, well, I’m sure some large projects would have been finished and there was a temporary capacity there to be filled, yes.

Can I go back to some of the earlier times and some of these land issues, as that was an area in which the Premier had considerable interest? In terms of quality of development and the nature of the city, he’d been very much involved in opposing the MATS transport plan and its effect on suburbs and so forth. He was very conscious of the need for areas for new development. But also it was a national set of issues or a running set of issues that might have had particular application in South Australia or not. But on the question of land prices, in some ways Dunstan would be seen as perpetuating the Playford tradition, which was essentially cheap land, cheap housing and jobs that didn’t necessarily give the wages of other states; but also there was cheap education and cheap health services and not much development of the social sector. Dunstan came to power partly by rejecting the cheapskate approach, if you like, to health, education and the social side; but he was also concerned about availability of land and pricing of land. Now, can you tell us how you got involved and what happened with land pricing to begin with?

Yes. Just on the broad question, this is an area that might be linked – land prices and their increases – back to, I guess, general Labor ideology, and that’s to give a fair go to the battlers, if you like, fair distribution of wealth, and there was concern that not only land prices were going up but the beneficiaries of those land prices
were the few, the people with money – and, I guess, some fortunate people who’d got land in the early days and benefited from the price increases which were caused by, very broadly, the progress of the community. So the idea, very generally, was to look at how – well, (1) the land prices might be stabilised; but (2) if they were to go up, the community ought to get the benefit of those prices rather than just the few. What I recall is there was this concern, as there’s concern these days as well, about land prices, and there was the issue of supply and demand: the supply of land wasn’t keeping up with the demand – now, I don’t recall whether the demand was what I’d call a ‘natural’ demand or a ‘speculative’ demand, but I guess as prices go up there’s a bit of both going on – and the idea of, well, if the prices were going up, to have a look at how the community could benefit from that. And I was asked as a research officer, I think pretty early on in my term of employment in the Premier’s Department through the ’70s, to have a look at the idea of land betterment taxes which would take a certain proportion of the profits, the community benefit increase – community benefit in the sense, ‘Well, this is the progress of the community leading to some of these land price increases as well.’ And I think there were figures like 30 to 40 per cent of a land betterment tax being talked about.

What I did was to – I think somebody gave me an article about this or some articles-scratch around looking for others, either – as I said last time, there was no internet so you went down to the library, that’s the Barr Smith or the State Library, and I think the Planning Authority had a bit of a library as well – and there was an Australian Institute of Urban Studies. I think they’d been looking at the issue and there were people in Canberra in the Australian National University – Max Neutze I remember because of the unusual name and because Graham Maguire put me on to Neutze’s work. At some stage I went and spoke to Dr Brian Bentick at the University of Adelaide, because he was seen as the local urban economist. There was a bit of a strange categorisation at the time. So I got these articles and read them and followed through some of the general arguments, and there was concern about the land betterment tax. If it was brought in, would it lead to the addition to prices because the developers and people wanting to make the profits on the land development would just add the tax, particularly if there’s still a shortage of land? That’s supply not keeping up with the demand.
So what I recall doing is writing not a terribly sophisticated report, mainly a sort of list of all these options that could be looked at, including the land betterment tax and withholding taxes to discourage the hoarding of land; but also planning controls; land banks were being talked about at the time and actually in South Australia there was an organisation that in one way had a land bank and had experience in land development but didn’t have the terms of reference to get involved beyond public housing and providing land also for industry: that was the South Australian Housing Trust. So, whilst it didn’t have a very broad remit to get directly involved at that stage in increasing the supply of land, there was certainly experience that could have been drawn on at the time and, to some extent, was. The idea of a land commission was also in those reports, articles and papers I’d read. There were other ideas like land price control – that’s a pretty direct way of controlling the increase in prices. I guess, while you can do that, the concerns are if the prices are set too low nobody’ll want to get in and do the development so you’ll get back to the old problem of the whole thing just building up and at some stage blowing apart if there’s no incentives for developers.

So I don’t recall the specifics, but it was decided to set up a much broader inquiry picking up a lot of those components and a fairly extensive terms of reference were sorted through to -- --.

By?

I think I developed the terms of reference and probably with Graham Maguire. I forget the full process-- well, certainly other people would have looked at them and commented, and we probably spoke to people in the State Planning Authority like Doug Speechley, because he ended up being the chair, and I may have spoken to Brian Bentick, because he ended up as a member of the Land Prices Stabilisation Working Party.

But is it correct that you were given a project to begin with.

Yes.

As a result of that, there were proposals that you were involved with and others within the Premier’s Department to do a more fundamental and more widespread job?
Yes, that’s correct, yes.

Can you tell us what the timing of this was?

It’s a pity I haven’t got the report here. Well, it certainly was before the Whitlam Government came in, so it would have been either late ’71 or early ’72; the Whitlam Government came in in 1972. And I think we’d completed our report in 1972; it took, I think, at least about six months because it involved a lot of consultations with all sorts of people, including a number of developers; it was a very interesting series of discussions we had with the developers. In all of it there was this ‘Well, what’s the role of the government, the public sector, and what’s the role of private industry?’ And, depending on who you talked to, on one side the developers wanted less involvement of government, but what they were mainly interested in was having a guaranteed supply of land, and in one way if the public sector was buying up land and providing broad acres to be developed with the appropriate planning approvals, that’s in the first stages; that meant less work for developers and less risk, so they were happy about some of that front-end work being public. They certainly weren’t happy to see the public sector get into the next stage, lide say the Housing Trust in its public housing activities – that’s actually developing the land – I don’t think there was any proposal for public sector broadening of housing development, but there was an argument, ‘Well, where does the boundary actually stop, or begin and stop?’

But the Housing Trust had been well-established and well-regarded from going back into the late ’30s, I think it was, as you mentioned, for industrial land development, but particularly for public housing, and there was a relationship between the housing component of development, the Housing Trust, where there were I suppose you’d call them track developers, people who were used to using the Housing Trust as a countercyclical approach, so they were quite happy with that as a groundwork; but they weren’t so keen, you are saying, on any extension.

Yes. That’s right, yes. And I’ll come to that. There are several stages of activity here. One was the working party’s activities, and Brian Bentick, for example, was more inclined to support the role of the private sector with improvements in areas like speed up the whole planning process and approvals, including requirements like the allocation of a certain proportion of land to open space and the costs of sewerage and water supply and the local road system and all that sort of thing, let alone better
coordination of the different agencies’ activity. This discussion canvassed the time being spent on taking broad acres to allotments for housing, let alone the building time. Some of us, including myself and Graham Maguire, were also interested in promoting the public sector side of things, because we were (1) going back to the original idea, ‘Well, look, if community progress and demand is leading to the price increases, the community ought to benefit from that, not just a range of rich individuals,’ notwithstanding that they were taking risks on the sales of their development.

So, Doug Speechley did quite a good job of balancing these particular views, and in the end there were a series of recommendations. The main ones were – and I think, as the project went on, we picked up what was happening in Canberra about the Whitlam Government’s ideas – or it before the Government was elected, some of the Labor Party’s thinking. There was an increased awareness of the potential role of a land commission, that’s a land bank, it buying up and consolidation of broad acres and the providing them to developers in the private sector. The other major recommendation was to endorse the idea of a land price control, which in one sense was radical; in another sense, because South Australia had had somebody called the Prices Commissioner and price control on what had been seen as essential items like bread and petrol, for some time – I think as a result of the War and shortages of various things – it was not outlandish to expand the general notion of controls although in the end the Prices Commissioner wasn’t the one to do the land price control. There was a small special unit set up in the Department of Lands after land prices control legislation had got through to administer the process. And I guess it’s surprising it actually did get through the Upper House, where I think the Liberal and Country League at the time had the majority. I guess it was all part of the wheeling and dealing in the committee stages of discussion.

But by this time Whitlam had been elected and established the national policies for land banking, and they were promising money.

Yes.

And some of that was actual expenditure; other was loan money.
Yes. What I recall is because of this work we were well prepared for the Commonwealth’s proposals. I can’t remember the dates and how they overlapped, but certainly there were a lot of DURD – that’s Department of Urban and Regional Development – people visiting South Australia and talking about this, and I remember quite long discussions and all the DURD people – I wondered whether it was a tendency of theirs – taking lots of notes. (laughs) Generally, we’d take quite brief notes, but they were scribbling down everything that was being said and obviously reporting back to the senior people in their department.

I also recall going to interstate meetings where there were people from all over Australia and DURD and the Minister of Urban and Regional Development, Tom Uren, talking about their ideas on land commissions and the whole area of decentralisation, particularly in the eastern states – it was Albury–Wodonga and Bathurst–Orange; I don’t think Queensland was involved because the Premier at the time, John Bjelke-Petersen, wasn’t terribly interested in helping out on anything.

Except beef roads.

Yes, that’s right, beef roads. And, well, Western Australia wasn’t – maybe there was some work being done over there and it might have been – I can’t again remember the dates – but more private sector work, say through Alan Bond. I think there was a Sun City-type exercise going over there. I don’t know how far from Perth that was.

It was further up the coast.

– further up the coast, yes. Certainly South Australia was interested, that’s the message we were putting in, Graham Maguire and myself, and as it all worked up I recall the briefings that we were doing for – I forget whether it was a Premiers’ Conference or a special meeting on specific-purpose grants picking up the land commission and tradeoffs: the other states getting sewerage moneys, and because South Australia had virtually completed its sewerage program we plugged in the idea of getting moneys for water treatment, maybe some other things as well.

I think it was just called ‘water’.
Water, right, okay. The LPSWP Report was provided to the government with an accompanying Cabinet submission. My recollection is that the main recommendations were endorsed, and that was helped by the discussions we had been having with the Commonwealth. The main issue was the scale of money involved in buying lots of broad acres? Well, the state could have done it to a certain extent, but if there’s lots of Commonwealth money coming in, well, that’s all the better. And with land price control, as I said, there was a unit set up and there had to be legislation to underpin the controls. There was a chap called Maurice Toohey who did a lot of the work on it. I remember briefing him on the broad ideas on the area from the report we had done but I am not sure with whom else he spoke to. Basically, apart from working on the broad recommendations of the report, attending meetings with Commonwealth officers and assisting in briefings on the Premiers’ conferences and ministerial discussion my job had been done. I think the general oversight of both items of legislation, that is, land prices and the establishment of the land commission went over to Ken Taeuber. I’m not sure whether he worked up the instructions for the legislation or he was brought in later on once the whole framework had been sorted out, but he was Director-General of Lands at the time, a highly respected senior public servant and well known to the industry.

From recollection and some of the notes I’ve taken, the legislation on the Land Commission side was slightly compromised because of Upper House resistance. The conferences between the parties led to the agreement that the Land Commission, by way of its powers, wouldn’t get involved in housing development. Their buying up of broad acres was endorsed and their development of the land before the stage of the actual housing building was endorsed, but beyond that I think the Commission was limited in its activities.

The other idea that was floating around was that the state ought to keep the ownership of the land and the land ought to be leased, but that was also thrown out in those conferences, the idea of the lease being, ‘Well, in the end, the public, the community, should benefit from whatever land price increases there are,’ but that’s in 50 or 100 years’ time.
Yes. And there were some overseas examples used for that, but also the model of Canberra, which had developed on leasehold.....

Right.

**But just in terms of the overall development here, one of the options was for the Housing Trust to continue what had been its land banking role for public purposes and industrial purposes for several decades already, and that model wasn’t followed. Do you know why that wasn’t proceeded with, that there was a separate Land Commission instead of building on Ramsay’s Housing Trust?**

I don’t recollect the detail. I’m fairly sure I would have known at the time, but I just don’t recollect it apart from it may have been – well, just going back one step. If the federal government hadn’t been there, Whitlam, DURD and others promoting the idea of a land commission – I’m still sure that there would have been some form of a broader public supplier or organiser and supplier of land brought in in South Australia. The scale of it I’m not so sure about – that is, that would have been subject to the amount of money the state government would have had to do that, and it would needed to have been fairly substantial, although you could do it in a strategic way as well, that is picking out areas under the greatest pressure. Maybe it was because Alec Ramsay wasn’t especially favoured by the government and the government didn’t want to expand the Trust’s role. I think Ramsay was a general supporter of the Commission although I only speculate that he may not have wanted a competitor in the land market and especially one potentially getting into housing development-although as we now know that didn’t happen. There would have been a discussion about, ‘Well, what’s the role of the Housing Trust here?’ And that’s slightly confusing because on the one hand it was there for public housing and the provision of low-cost, I think mostly at the time rental housing, although people got into rental purchase arrangements with the Housing Trust; and the Trust did provide land for industry; so there’s some confusion of role there. But I think it was basically the government didn’t want the role of the Housing Trust expanding. But subject to the moneys available, I’m sure that may have been a practicable approach adopted if a state-only type follow up was needed.

**But to some extent, because – well, to some extent, the work that you’d been doing in two stages showed the state focus, even though there were parallel national**
interests as well. You talked about the establishment of DURD and the eager note-takers coming there.

Yes.

To some extent that was a type of approach that was seen quite commonly with the Whitlam Government: they were very keen to get examples, literally on the ground, and I think they weren’t very happy to do anything except establish land commissions, so you could have a land commission in this state and in that state and the other.

Yes.

And they were dictating the terms on which the money would be made available, in fact in a model which perhaps, later on, was the doom of land commissions: that it was so much based on debt and without a real strategy for how to pay the debt.

Yes, how to pay it and use the money to make – I’ll call them ‘profits’ – for the community. Yes. From the early discussions with the DURD people, notwithstanding there were these interstate conferences and that, South Australia seemed to be the only one playing the quite clear ball of setting up a Land Commission, because, as I said, Queensland wasn’t interested; New South Wales and Victoria were, I think, under conservative governments and they weren’t that interested either, tied up in their limited view of the role of government vis a vis the role of the private sector. They were certainly interested in getting moneys for urban things, and the regional decentralisation thrust was also part of the discussion with the Commonwealth. Certainly New South Wales and Victoria came in on the Albury–Wodonga and the Bathurst–Orange buying up of land and getting that land available for expansion of those cities; and that gets back to the pressures on the big cities and how do you get in a bit of a safety valve or an escape valve to get back to that original question of land prices and keeping them down.

And there were discussions of decentralising activities, for example –

Yes.

– government activities from, say, Sydney or Melbourne, to those so-called growth centres.
Yes. Well, not only the growth centres, but Canberra was, I think, consolidating certain officers in Melbourne and Sydney and relocating some to Canberra. Then there’s that whole issue which Monarto got caught up in – ‘Well, who’s wanting to go to these areas if they’ve invested in housing in the bigger cities’ – which is an interesting other topic of where Monarto was and wasn’t going and how it was actually going to be brought together if the money and the population had been there to provide the rationale for it. It is interesting to note too, that when the government nominated some state departments to relocate to Monarto, there was a hue and cry from a number of those departments’ employees.

**Within that, maybe a step to one side a little, but the whole idea of relocating departments or activities to growth centres to take the pressure off the cities, was that because there wasn’t really a perception that you could change the model within cities and make it more dense development, either the fabled ‘medium-density’ or mixed densities or whatever, or did it just make economic sense, or apparent economic sense, at that time?**

The cities are different in Melbourne and Sydney, there seems to be higher-density development there than say in Adelaide and Brisbane, in any event. There were a few things going on, I think, at the time. One was the whole development of I’ll call it the ‘freeway system’, and that was taking out a lot of land that might have been available for higher-density development in the inner areas – or just taking housing out, anyway, let alone land available for higher-density development – in particularly Sydney and, to a lesser extent, Melbourne. There seems to have been a general antipathy from Australians to get into American high-rise or European high-rise development the way the cities had been established historically. This led to a lack of good spread of facilities to provide the good social support for high-rise development.

**Well, I think that also was the time when the books were starting to be written about new high rise estates and the social problems of developments like that.**

Yes. Well, Victoria had its go with housing high-rise development, you know, the two towers just to the – I forget which direction it is – one in the Fitzroy/Collingwood area and the other one just a bit further out, which just look aesthetically ridiculous, let alone being seen as just centres for transient people going through rather than being there as an example of what ought to happen for
permanent residency. And I think as, say, Adelaide people, if they went to Melbourne, saw that, they thought, ‘Well, why in the hell would we do this sort of thing in Adelaide?’

And they saw that prominently, driving in from the airport, the towers standing up there.

Yes, in Melbourne. That’s notwithstanding Don’s idea about Hackney redevelopment. But I think one of the factors in him deciding not to press ahead on that, let alone the pressures being put on him potentially, was just these developments that had happened in Melbourne as examples of not how to do things – particularly if it’s public housing, anyway.

The other thing that was going on, I recall, at the time was Adelaide was looking at taking some of these areas that needed redevelopment, like Bowden–Brompton and Mile End–Thebarton, and getting some higher-density development, but there didn’t seem to be any consistent push. I don’t know whether it gets back to a lack of government push or just the market at the time. The developers didn’t see it as something that they wanted to follow through, or the cost of remediation of land may have been too high given that areas like that had been full of industrial activity at one stage. As it turns out, these days there’s still only partial redevelopment in those areas and there’s still all this land available– I see them as a goldmine for some people to get in there and do something. The old Clipsal factory is going to be housing; hopefully that gets going as a good example of redevelopment and high-density development that will work its way right through the inner areas.

But it was a time of mixed attitudes towards high-rise. There were the horror stories about low-income dogboxes all piled on top of one another, whether in inner-city Chicago or wherever else; but not too much later than that people like Delfin were, without embarrassment, putting forward ideas of reasonably-intense development around places like West Lakes and the AMP development at North Haven was being based – well, the designs were being based on Southern France maritime developments, which had not very high-rise, but higher-rise developments, but they were essentially seen for wealthier people.

Yes, that’s right, yes.

At least the fabled ‘middle-income’ people.
Yes. I recall policies on social mix, but I think that was more related to public housing – well, obviously public housing locating in certain areas. I don’t recall whether West Lakes has any public housing or North Haven; I doubt very much whether it has; but that was the, if anything, the only thinking that might have been going on about locating a wider range of price alternatives. But I guess basically it got back to, again, the market and the profits that were going to be made by people.

But in academic and critical circles, I suppose you could call it, the ideas of social mix had been raised and debated a certain amount, and there were common examples brought up. Some of the Housing Trust activities were pushed in that direction – they were somewhat reluctant – the Margaret Street development at North Adelaide, but then a step further on, Golden Grove, there was explicit sharing and mixing of Housing Trust and other. I’m not sure whether that was a government policy or just an aspiration that was part of the policymaking context.

I don’t recall. I know there were people like Wendy Sarkissian pushing this; I think she worked in the Housing Trust for a while –

She did.

– if not the state planning area. And people like Michael Court, who’d worked in Community Welfare, were pushing this sort of thing, too, in his thinking about social planning, and some of that would have been either developed further or coming out of the work being done in the Monarto Commission. There was Bert Surmon and some others working on that sort of thinking.

Yes.

Now, the other thing I was going to mention was even in Adelaide itself there was thinking about ‘How do we decentralise office activity so we haven’t got this overwhelming attraction of employment in the CBD?’ – and we thought at that stage there were pressures on transport and we had to wait for two or three minutes at traffic lights and things like that – but how to get offices out into the suburbs, particularly some of the larger suburban centres. And I remember a working party that was set up and Alec Ramsay was on that, and we I think recommended that there ought to be more government offices out in Marion and Elizabeth. I think Marion might have been just being thought of at the time or some early work was being done there. If you think of Adelaide’s spread, the north–south spread –
including down to the Noarlunga area, those metropolitan regional centres were the ones. The regionalisation of government administration led to some decentralisation to those areas but no central offices were relocated.

But Noarlunga was another period later again.

Yes, true.

I guess there was a ragtime manifestation of it with the ABC Building at Collinswood –

Collinswood, yes.

– like literally the building at Collinswood – and the Highways Building at Gilberton, which were regarded as actually something advantageous for the workers because they would be less hassled by the stresses of city life.

Yes. (laughter)

I was wondering if we could move on to another topic now –

Yes.

– which in many people’s eyes is much more related to Dunstan’s personal preoccupations ......, which is the area of restaurants and food. You were involved in a couple of projects early on in the Dunstan decade on restaurants; can you tell us about that?

Yes. One was a restaurant study in which Robert Ruse and I were asked – or the Premier wanted a look at or how South Australian restaurants were faring and how the government might provide extra support for the restaurants. Now, I don’t recall that being a very broad study in the sense of, ‘Well, let’s expand it into looking at the tourist industry and getting more tourists in and all that sort of thing’; it was more related to, I think, a survey we were doing on who was around and how they were going – I think we got some financial information from them. I think too, to get an idea of the spread of type of restaurants. He was very interested in two aspects, very broad aspects: one was developing the quality of restaurants – and again that’s related to tourism; the other area was broadening, I think, the number of restaurants or the range of restaurants. He was very interested in the Italian and Greek restaurant area. There were others like the Chinese ones, a few Spanish ones, there were some of the ethnic clubs, and there were some Lebanese ones, but he was
interested mainly in Italian and Greek ones. Plus, of course, the quality of the higher end restaurants like the Magic Flute, Enzos, Sorrento, Asio and so on. I think the Hotel Adelaide was in the mix too. There was, as I might have mentioned earlier, the need for a look at what was actually happening in the restaurants that the government was supporting, like Ayers House, and how the two strands of thinking related.

Can we go back one step: why was there a need to look at restaurants? Was that just that the Premier decided he wanted to know more, or was the restaurant industry under pressure, or was there any observable prompt for this?

It gets back, I think, to his very broad idea of wanting to provide opportunities for an improved lifestyle in South Australia. That links up with his arts and related lifestyle ideas. And as part of that he wanted to, as I said, upgrade the quality of what was being provided in restaurants and I think widen the range, although it was probably more the quality when I think about what was going on. I don’t recall a crisis in the industry pushing the study, although we quickly learnt from our study that running a restaurant successful was a precarious business, given the large turnover that occurred. Many people seemed to have been caught up in the glamour of running a restaurant but were then overwhelmed by the need to have consistently good quality, good service, retaining customers and watching carefully the profit margins, let alone the long hours of many restaurants. There might have been complaints from some restaurants about the government coming in and providing support to certain ones like Ayers House and maybe the Coalyard, although that may have been later. I recall that the Restaurant Association, led by a Reg or Rex Tillbrook, who ran Whalers Haven at Victor Harbour was involved.

So, just for the record, Ayers House was established as a government provision when?

Well, certainly before this study. It would have been in the early ’70s.

And you’re talking about the Coalyard: what was that?

That was linked up with, I think, Don Dunstan wanting to provide an opportunity for his friend, John Ceruto, to have a restaurant where he could demonstrate, with the support/advice/ideas from Don on how a quality restaurant should be run.
But again, the Coalyard, was that a private restaurant or was it a publicly-owned facility or what?

It wasn’t public but, from my recollection of some of the details, for it to be supported financially by suppliers of finance, as a private venture, it needed government guarantees, so I’d call it a bit of a hybrid because it was a bit unusual having that arrangement for a high risk area like a restaurant.

And then, going back to Ayers House, there was the project to preserve and restore Ayers House as an historic thing –

Historic, yes. It had National Trust endorsement.

– and then the business within it was a private business?

Yes. The lessee was Phil Cramey. He’d been I think a chef or something like that up in Broken Hill, where Don had come across him, or after that, but he’d had some experience. I don’t know how he came to Ayers House but he was seen to be somebody who it was thought knew about food and could provide quality food. But I do recall that the lease was quite a peppercorn or very advantageous type of lease, and whether there were any reduced land tax and whatever advantages I don’t specifically recall, but, as I said, there were complaints from the private sector people about him getting inside running, not only by way of indirect financial support but public servants going there, partly because it was seen as somewhere to go and partly because I think the government was promoting Ayers House as a place to go.

But they were also, as a government in its various forms, were customers by holding events there of different kinds.

Yes, events as well, yes. There were also a couple of other restaurant activities – and I’ll come back to the restaurant study in a minute – but Don was very keen on Windy Point being developed as a major tourist site and upgrading that. There was a chap called Oliver Shaul brought in to provide advice on that, and I remember Len Amadio to a lesser extent but certainly John Ceruto being sent to work with Oliver Shaul.

But again was that public land, public building or private?
That one, I think that was public land and it would have been a facility set up to provide a leasehold for whoever might want to go in there and run the restaurant on whatever arrangements there were. But whether there was going to again be these advantages, concessions, I don’t recall. The other one was Waterfall Gully, which was being looked at to be upgraded as a quality restaurant and tourist facility linking up with that area, and I remember Rod Hand and maybe Ceruto having a look at that one.

**So Rod Hand was in tourism?**

He was in Len’s area. Later on he went into tourism, the ongoing tourism agency, but he was working with Len, because Len used to be arts and tourism development in those early days.

**So that was an example of – it was in a national park and it was an existing facility, but somebody had – – –.**

Yes, there was a leaseholder, and they’d been there for a long time, from my recollection, and there was a whole move to upgrade it all. So in that sort of environment Don was very interested in what was going on in the restaurant industry. He had good links with people like Primo and Secundo Caon: they were running quite a good bistro down at Port Road in Hindmarsh, Billy Bunters and they were also cited as examples of good-quality food at reasonable prices. Asio and Chesser Cellar were ones; good place to go to for food and emulate if you were going to establish a restaurant. There was Horst Salomon’s sort of café-type place in Grenfell Street and then Rigoni’s in Leigh Street, which Primo Caon established after selling Asio.

**These are examples of developments at that time that the government had some interest in.**

Yes – well, some through direct support others through publicising ‘Well, these are the sort of restaurants we should have more of’ On reflection, they weren’t that super-duper, but they were the better of what was around. And I forget – I think Enzo’s was on the eastern side at that stage, and there were two up in Stirling: one was a French-based one that we knew about and used to go to to have a look at what was going on. Swains was around too, with a reputation for good seafood.
The other thing that was coming out of the survey, from recollection, was the big turnover in restaurants, and that’s not unusual in small business anyway because there’s usually a very high turnover. There was this thinking going on about what sort of restaurants ought there really to be. There’s the high-end ones and then there’s the ones that rely on turnover, that’s getting people in, having their meal and getting them out again; so things were being thought through more broadly. It’s not going to a restaurant, sit down for three or four hours – there were certain ones of them – but how to broaden that range of restaurants. So some of these that were on the edge were thinking more clearly about how best they might make their money through higher turnover. I guess we would have thought about what was happening in Melbourne, where there seemed to be more of a viable restaurant community, notwithstanding that they had bring-your-own-wine laws back then. We wondered how they could make profits if they weren’t taking in a large mark up on wine? And I’m pretty sure there would have been a bit of a debate about that, and the solution there was, ‘Well, you increase your turnover in whatever period of the day it is’ – lunch and/or in the evening.

There was opportunity too, as the licensing laws were changing and the bistro style was followed, that is you could now drink wine without needing to order a substantial meal.

I think, as I said last time, we did this study; we had the support of the industry to have a look at what was going on and suggest improvements. They were quite keen to get the results. Partly because of work pressures and partly because of some of the sort of discussions and thinking we had to do about the role of government here, the report was a bit slow in coming, but in the end it went up and Don didn’t like the recommendations about government restaurants and squashed the release of the report.

**The recommendations were?**

It was an industry relying on long hours provided by individuals, partnerships and families; often untrained people coming in and spending a lot of time and effort in keeping their place running. We felt that there should not be unfair competition, unless there were highly strategic reasons for them getting assistance, say like
Windy Point. Maybe Ayers House might have been justified by way of making use of a historic asset and its high infrastructure cost.

If I could just move a bit more broadly there was the work going on down in Regency to set up a School of Food and Catering, which gets back to Don’s interest in – – –.

Just before you get onto that –

Yes, sorry.

– can we just – so the Premier didn’t like the report and he suppressed it.

Yes.

Was there no more restaurant-specific activity by the government or the department or whatever – – –?

Well, there was the other one I mentioned about a restaurant corporation. That was canvassed in the first part of our discussion. And that was really taking this idea of the government role and expanding it and probably getting in people to think about what was happening in trends around the place and getting much more involved in picking and supporting financially or more broadly the whole restaurant scene.

There was also his promotion of sidewalk cafes. I remember a glossy pamphlet about it. But the idea wasn’t follow up much at the time. Of course, you can now see that everyone’s into it.

So does that show Dunstan up as pragmatic, in the sense that the government might have more power and more ability to do things; ideological, because there would be a – in quotes – ‘socialist restaurant corporation’; or just what?

Yes. Well, I guess that partly gets back to its role and what it might have done and what others couldn’t have done, and he probably had frustrations about the tourism area and he just wanted to focus on restaurants and get something really moving there. I don’t think there was anything ideological about it, but I think it gets back to his own personal interests in food and promoting food, hospitality, let alone, as I said before, what he saw it as a pivotal component of two things: general lifestyle and economic development and diversification.

Okay.
And I guess, as part of that lifestyle, if you, well, (1) don’t know (laughs) what good food is and can’t go to somewhere where they make good food, and (2) can’t learn and make it yourself, you’re really behind the eight-ball. (laughs) The corporation I’ve talked about; there was the other – the School of Food and Catering, initially at Pennington and then at Regency.

Yes.

He was very keen on that, and there’s a bit of debate about who actually followed it through, but it was either people like Derrick Casey and I think others in the TAFE\(^5\) system or an external person brought in like Grahame Latham, but we’ve got some details on that in other interviews; in the end there was a school of food and catering set up, which idea was to train – well, (1) again link up with the promotion of better food and hospitality, and (2) providing the training for people to be able to follow through, I guess directly in South Australia, but a lot of these people will have gone to other states as well, and some, after a lot of good work going overseas and establishing reputations there.

**Can you tell us about your role in those early days of setting that exercise up, or your awareness?**

I was certainly aware of it, because given I was doing this work on restaurants and the other one, the wine industry – and I’m pretty sure that in some of that I’d spoken to Grahame Latham, because I recall meeting him and knowing him at that time, amongst various other people in the restaurant industry – but I don’t recall a lot of direct involvement in setting it up. I remember going down to Pennington, (laughs) seeing what they were doing down there in the Nissan Huts, and him talking about what was happening and what’s good food and what’s not good food and how restaurants should operate.

**So this was the early days of his setting up a training facility –**

Yes.

– **in the old DPs\(^6\) camp.**

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\(^5\) TAFE – Technical and Further Education.

\(^6\) DP – displaced person.
Yes, the migrant huts, yes. (laughter) The DPs.

Which had various uses. But, apart from the mechanics of all that, it appeared over that period that Latham was a significant adviser to/influence on the Premier, wasn’t he?

Oh, yes, I’m pretty sure, yes. I think it was a bit of a two-way process. Don would give him ideas, he would give Don ideas and they’d bounce things around a bit. There was also that work – I wasn’t involved on it; Graham Foreman was. The exercise was about getting people thinking about a wider range of foods, and I think this was the exotic vegetables and something or other fruit inquiry.

What was meant by ‘exotic’?

Who knows? (laughs) Exotic in the Oriental sense of ‘get them in from’ – because I think Don was interested in Asian food as well – – –.

But I do recall that some of the things Graham was seeing to the planting of were things like snow peas and sugar snap peas and baby carrots.

Yes.

Not all that exotic, except for Adelaide at that time, I guess.

Yes, that’s right, yes. The other part of ‘exotic’ is just something different. So yes, certainly snow peas and mini-carrots and other things like that. I think they were looking at fruits as well, and they were doing it through the prison system and trying things out at Cadell. Now, whether there was – I forget what fruits, but –

Well, there were avocados.

– avocado was one, yes, true.

And I think there were others that were tried. But it’s interesting in this wider context that either having failed to get private interest or willingness to grow snow peas or whatever there was a link into the work program at the prison, which was regarded as quite positive. But also the Cadell thing was regarded as quite experimental, but a use of public facilities for these purposes, if the private sector didn’t do it.

That’s right, yes. Certainly it was experimental, and there’s the whole idea of, ‘How do you continue this if others aren’t picking it up?’
Well, I do recall lots of guffaws about the whole idea and the ridiculous idea of growing avocados in South Australia; you just couldn’t do that.

That’s right, yes. Now they’re up at the Riverland and other places, yes.

Well, the Adelaide area. So are there other aspects of the food initiatives or food interest that are significant?

Not that I recall. I think they’re the main ones, yes.

Okay. Well, another quite significant area that we’ve been referring to is the ongoing one of development of uranium deposits in South Australia and all the related connections with nuclear power.

That’s right. I don’t recall how I got involved in this. I don’t recall whether I’d been interested in the area before the request had come from the Premier to have a look at the whole industry.

You were walking past an open door and – – –?

No. I think again it might have been one of those rare moments that I might have had some capacity to do a major study (laughs) and I was asked whether I was interested, because there was quite a lot to be looked at and it was going to take some time to do. But probably I would have been aware of, like, in the UK there’d been the antinuclear protests and things like that which had come through on the television and the newspapers. Again, I can’t remember the timing on that, but that’s partly about nuclear plants and partly about nuclear proliferation and the British Government’s activities there at the time. Certainly, the Cuban Missile Crisis would have raised our awareness of nuclear proliferation and the potential extermination of most of us if that had led to a nuclear exchange by the Americans and the Soviets at the time. And I think, periodically, radiation issues might have come up as well before that. The context was there were a couple of large inquiries, one on the nuclear fuel cycle – that’s the Fox Inquiry, the Ranger Uranium Inquiry in Australia and the Fowler Commission in the United Kingdom The Ranger one was linked to, ‘Well, are we going to mine uranium up at the Ranger site?’ I forget exactly where that is – in the Northern Territory?

Up in Arnhem Land.
Arnhem Land, right. So there was a very broad inquiry into the implications of mining — that’s the safety of mining and the environmental impacts, including disposal of mining waste. And there was also — I forget how early this was—the deposits were being discovered in South Australia. The whole issue of uranium mining and whether the Australian Labor Party ought to support it came up, and I certainly recall the activity in the Labor Party in — it was either the executive or the conference — about this, and in the Whitlam Government the Mines Minister, Connor, wanting to do all sorts of things, and I think Paul Keating was known to be a supporter of mining as well; (laughs) and then Don’s positioning on that.

There was also a Uranium Enrichment Committee that had been going for some time, looking at — I think it was URENCO wanting to take whatever uranium was available and enriching it. In one sense that was quite a rational thing to do, if you had uranium, to enrich it. In another sense, though, what were the implications of all this? Well, (1) where are we going to get this uranium from, or should it be a South Australian source, anyway? And then (2) what does it actually mean if you’ve got uranium enrichment going on in your state. That’s the broader implications of the whole nuclear energy industry cycle. But, in any event, the notes I’ve got as a sequel to the first report — so there must have been another one — of the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry, the Premier requested the Policy Division to examine and assess the relevant evidence and publish material and prepare a report on hazards associated with nuclear energy, including aspects of safety associated with the uranium enrichment and subsequent processes. That was the broad terms of reference. The specifics involved looking at uranium mining and whether there were dangers, and that related to the mining: specifically, (1) radioactivity and (2) just the whole, through the cycle, the dangers of radioactive material — the management and disposal of wastes, the feasibility and the consequences of reprocessing spent fuel, and that of developing fast-breeder reactors. I think that came up because this was being discussed, I think partly in the context of ‘What do you do with spent fuel?’ One way to use it is to process it to feed into fast-breeder reactors, which was another type of nuclear reactor at the time, but I don’t know where they sit now.

Going strong in France.
Right. The study was also to examine the adequacy of safeguard measures, including international safeguards; and technological development, such as nuclear fusion, which if viable would release countries from relying on uranium in one of its developed forms, plutonium. Plutonium was seen as being a highly dangerous product, (1) because you can use it for nuclear missiles, bombs, and (2) apparently small specks of it, if they got on your lungs, was pretty deadly. So there was a bit of discussion about that at the time, I recall.

What the investigation also included – which I recall, Bruce, you wrote a very elegant chapter on – was the moral and political issues which arise in connection with decisions on production, use and export of material.

I wrote a chapter on it?

Yes, you did. I recall that, yes.

I don’t want to interrupt your flow, but I was going to ask you did you actually write the terms of reference?

I don’t recall whether I did or I didn’t, but maybe I did.

I think you actually did.

Yes. (laughs)

But, apart from the huge historical significance of that, it indicates the sort of process that was going on, that there were issues raised and the government or the Premier was wanting to look at it, but there was upstairs-and-downstairs-type toing and froing to work through what would be the terms of reference.

Yes.

As I recall it, you basically settled them.

Right, okay. Well, I must have done some reading (laughs) and then – well, I would have had to have got a lot of those components to just work out, ‘Well, what should we really look at?’ There were three main people involved initially – that was myself, Pru Archer and you – and then later on Bob Smith, but I think he came in after the report had been done and the Cabinet submission drafted and sent on. So, in my usual – if it was me, in my style I would have wanted to have covered lots of (laughs) specifics there.
But again I think the point there is that you weren’t a specialist, but you were regarded as a thorough, persistent type and you’d do the job, rather than the head of the Department or a political adviser or somebody ..... ..... 

Yes, consultant type.

That was the role of a senior officer in that group.

Yes. The other context was that I mentioned the Uranium Enrichment Committee - but the Department of Mines and Energy were obviously pretty interested in what was going on, and I think internally and externally – externally being – I forget what arrangement they had with Ben Dickinson but he’d been a Director of Mines and he certainly was active in promoting, uranium with the Mines Department and whoever else he knew – not only in South Australia, but I think he was pretty well-known nationally and internationally. He would have been keeping track of what was happening in the industry, keeping track of the Fox Inquiry plus the UK work that was going on, and sending things on to the Uranium Enrichment Committee – I think he was a member of that –

Yes.

– plus he would have been getting the minister – I think it was Hugh Hudson at the time – to talk to the Premier about all of this stuff as well.

I think it’s worth noting that we weren’t asked to look at broader things like energy consumption and where nuclear power sat in relation to that. It was probably a big issue at the time, but certainly not as big an issue now, given all the debates on climate change and the role of nuclear power and energy. So I don’t think there was the idea of tradeoffs going on.

No; it was a more focused thing.

Yes.

Can we just have a break for a minute?

Yes, sure. (break in recording) Just by way of that involvement of Ben Dickinson, he was quite good in lots of senses on the work that we were doing.

Just clarifying that Bruce Webb was the Director of Mines at the time.

Yes, head of Mines.
– or Director of Mines, and Ben Dickinson had been a previous one.

Yes, that’s right, yes. But I certainly recall Ben Dickinson being very interested in the work we were doing and providing us with a range of material he had as part of the bank of information we were trying to get on all the aspects we were being asked to look at.

One thing I didn’t talk about in all of this was why was it the Policy Division got this project to have a look at in the first place. I can’t recall the specifics but it gets back to one of those broader categorisations that I’d spoken about in the first interview, the role of the Policy Division generally, or the roles, and one of those roles was to take an independent look as much as we could on various issues. And I think the Premier, well, (1) because of work we’d done on all sorts of things, he had confidence in us, and (2) who else was he going to ask on this sort of project, anyway? He couldn’t got to the Mines Department because they had an interest; he couldn’t go to Economic Development. He might have got in a consultant on some sort of a basis who would have had to have been carefully checked out, or an academic – and/or an academic. But he did ask the Policy Division to follow it through.

But there was – the more specific practical reason was that the deposit at Honeymoon –

Right.

– had been discovered and people wanted to develop that, and there were prospective other deposits which have since been identified. But also the discovery of the Olympic Dam deposit, which had been regarded as a huge geological investigation coup to actually discover that there was an ore body.

Right.

And then it emerged that it was a huge uranium body, and the Mines Department and others were urging that this would be the economic future of the state.

Yes.

They advised Cabinet. Cabinet said, ‘Well, what about the environmental aspects?’ ‘Oh, we don’t speak to them.’ So Environment were asked –

Right, okay.
– ‘What should we do?’ And I think this process was repeated: one said, ‘Dig it up straight away’; the other one said, ‘Keep it in the ground.’ Cabinet said, ‘What do we do?’ And then it was decided to get the Policy Division.

Yes, yes. I guess the other thing was – just going on from what you said – the various aspects could have been farmed out, like environment gone to Environment and all the benefits of development looked at by Economic Development and the health issues of radiation to the Health people or Public Health people. But in the end it was decided it wouldn’t be a working party, it wouldn’t be a committee of inquiry into all of this; ‘Let’s just keep it in-house, fairly low-key.’ Whether there was broader politics involved – – –. I guess the more and larger exercise you do the more people want to clamour around and have their piece. I don’t recall, but that might have been part of the reason as well. But certainly it was a small, in-house unit that worked on this. And we got what material we could – the two major Commission reports, plus all sorts of articles and reports and probably bits from books and whatever else, plus there was a record of political and public discussion – there would have been media around at the time, particularly the newspapers and to some extent television, partly because of the work of the Ranger Inquiry and partly because there were certainly quite forceful antinuclear people around. I’ve mentioned the activities in Britain, there were people like Helen Caldicott and others who were very anti-uranium mining and were seen in some quarters as experts on the effects of radiation and whether the world health standards and there operation were adequate in that area or not.

So there was a good bit of material around – I think the research went on for several months, and Pru and I and you were working through this. I don’t think there was any specific deadline, but suddenly there was an instruction to get it all together – and I think you talked about this in your interview, Bruce – so that was to get the whole report together. There was a summary of the report done. I haven’t read the report again in any detail, but I think, just from a brief look at it, it was basically a statement of, ‘Well, here are the arguments for or against,’ rather than coming out strongly one way or the other or ‘do it’ or ‘don’t do it’. It was basically going to be a political assessment and judgment on a lot of those issues, because they were all pretty contentious one way or the other and it depends on your...
background and where you’re coming from and the broad context on whether you agreed or disagreed with whatever proposals were being made on components being looked at. If you go back to those components (mining, mining safety, mining waste, enrichment, nuclear power, disposal of waste, proliferation), some people have no tolerance of the whole idea of radioactivity, you know, let alone ‘Well, yes, it’s okay to mine this stuff because the radioactivity dangers are quite low.’ And I remember Ben Dickinson talking about— I forget whether it was a Uranium Enrichment Committee meeting or to myself and maybe, later on, you and Bob Smith— you could take this clump of yellowcake and actually eat it, (laughs) and it wouldn’t harm you. Now, he might have been prepared to do that, but I wasn’t certainly willing to try that, (laughs) just in case.

Or like Barry Coulter, the Northern Territory Chief Minister, who swam in a dam afterwards to prove how safe it was.

Yes. And these days – well, right now – radioactivity getting into water, that somebody’s saying, I think the head of the electricity company or somebody, saying he’d be quite happy to drink the water (laughs) with this radioactivity in it, but I guess a lot of other people were not being even too willing to try. So it gets back to one’s level of sensitivity and perspective on the various arguments in the mix.

So the report was provided. There was some toing and froing. I don’t think we provided a draft for any wide discussion. The Mines Department people got a copy for comment. There was quite an extensive response, called ‘Comments on the Policy Division’s Report of March 1977 on Hazards of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle.’ That’s quite a thick report and we would have gone through that and fixed up our draft in the sense of, if there were typos or certain arguments being followed through or information being provided that wasn’t quite right, we would have addressed that, but, again, sticking to a ‘Well, here are the pros and cons’ and explanations of people’s concerns one way or the other.

Some of the areas it was very hard to make any sort of judgments on because there was a lot of work in progress and the industry itself, particularly nuclear plants, electricity-generating plants, were in a fairly early stage. I don’t recall the major incidents. I think Three Mile Island had occurred, and there was some
concern about what happened there. Certainly Chernobyl hadn’t occurred in a major blowout.

But Windscale in Britain –

Oh, Windscale, right, yes.

– which had led to their inquiry.

Yes – leakage and that, yes. Things like ‘Well, should we mine it?’, that again gets back to (laughs) the environmental versus the economic. ‘Should we use uranium to generate energy through a nuclear plant?’, to me that gets back to ‘Well, what risk are you prepared to take on all this?’, provided there’s enough information around to be able to make judgments about that and, again, what level of tolerance should you have if 51 per cent of the people – if there were a referendum, for example – wanted it and 49 per cent didn’t; and then it’s a matter of whether you want it in your backyard or not as well. On the waste disposal process, there was work in progress on what was seen as the final solution on this – that’s vitrification – but that was in its early days and, as far as I know, there’s still a lot of debate about how and where to put high-level waste, let alone low-level waste, whether to store it, bury it or whatever else.

Then there’s the whole issue of safeguards and what are enough safeguards. Those days, there wasn’t the sort of terror alert as there is now. And that relates to access to materials and the more you export and the more people have access to it, the higher potential for diversions – that’s let alone the – I think there was some discussion about the International Atomic Energy Agency’s ability to supervise and control a lot of the official movements, let alone any unofficial, anyway.

So, given all that work, the report was done, a summary was done, and then I think there was another instruction to get a Cabinet submission done quite quickly, and I recall – and it would have been based on the summary – working pretty long hours (laughs) to get the Cabinet submission up. That was discussed in Cabinet and the recommendations broadly endorsed, then, if I’ve got the recollection right, the reports were printed and I think probably at about 1.30 in the afternoon, whatever day it was – it might have been the first day of the parliamentary sitting for that particular week – we were required to get it to the Premier by 2 o’clock or
something like that for Question Time or time for him to make a parliamentary statement after Question Time. In the Parliament, the caucus members in the House of Assembly were given the report, with a buff cover. I recall somebody telling me that the Opposition was looking at what was going on, somewhat bemused.

The events after that I think have been covered pretty widely by yourself and Bob Smith, because soon after I’d done the report I went overseas for a year.

I must put on the record that you had the idea ‘Well, you’ve done all the work; when the report goes to the Premier, you ought to sign, George, the covering note.’ It says:

To the Premier:
Forwarded is the Policy Division’s report on hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle.

And I signed it ‘for Policy Division’ on the 28th March 1977. And I think – I don’t know exactly why you’d done that, basically it was ‘You’ve done most of the work so you sign that.’

Yes.

I’m raising that because, when the Government changed in 1979, one of the early matters that was revived was this whole area of uranium mining and I remember probably Roger Goldsworthy – and it’s in the Parliamentary Debates – bringing up this report and my name getting mentioned. (laughs) There was a newspaper article about that and Ben Dickinson being quoted as saying something like, ‘Well, the report’s full of holes and not worth the paper it’s written on.’ I don’t think he said those words specifically, but something like that. And I went to a lawyer and said, ‘Is this slanderous from Ben and libellous from the newspaper article?’ and the lawyer said, ‘Probably, yes, but is it worth your career in the public service to make a big song and dance about it?’ So I had a chat with Ron Barnes as I was then in Treasury. He was probably aghast at any idea of legal action being taken by one of his staff on this matter, so I let it ride; but I do recall that and the link with the signature. (laughs) I think it was actually called the ‘Lewkowicz Report’ in the parliamentary statement.
My apologies for putting you through such turmoil.

No, no, it was interesting, because I think there was a debate around the time whether primary authors of reports and submission should sign them on.

Yes. Well, it’s interesting, because I think we’ve talked earlier about Bill Voyzey advising to get everybody to sign on the line when you had a committee, just so they couldn’t welch on it. But we’d developed by that time in Policy Division, as far as possible, that where people had done the work for submissions going to the Premier or wherever they might be that they would sign rather than being signed off by the head of the Division or whoever. And, although access was always limited to some extent, wherever possible the people who had done the work on a significant thing talked to the Premier as well. So that was an unintended hit in the back of the neck.

(laughter) Yes. Well, it was interesting, in hindsight.

Yes.

Well, as it turned out, notwithstanding this work and the Premier’s, the Cabinet’s decision and your work and Bob Smith’s work, after the government had changed, with the help of Stormy Normie Foster, the new Liberal government endorsed the mining of uranium.

Quite a significant series of events.

Yes.

Though I guess it is interesting, looking back on it, with the change of public opinion these days, that the report said, ‘Here are arguments for and against,’ but, as I recall it, ‘If you’re going to get into this, then the logic is that you should be prepared to take responsibility all the way through, to the extent of uranium enrichment; if you like, reprocessing; and ultimate disposal. If you are happy for other people to be at risk from this, you ought to be happy to be at risk yourself.’

Yes. Plus all the broader implications, for the world generally, if this material’s around, either in its raw form or enriched or reprocessed.

So the work you were involved in ranged quite widely from minor town planning things to promoting more interesting food to –

That’s right, yes.

– saving the world stuff.
Saving the world, yes. Yes, it was – to go right back to the start of the first interview, I think I talked about it being Camelotish and exciting, and certainly there were periods of heavy workload and wondering how long you could keep up the pace on all these new things and wanting to get more into implementation and management in another department-see the fruition of your front end work. As people looking at the time would see, there was a very wide range of activity going on. You can partly see that from the media, what was being talked about in the newspapers; you can look at the Parliamentary Debates; you can look at the high volume of legislation going through; but certainly it was exciting and innovative; I guess, in the end, risky for a number of us, given what happened when governments changed and the dispersion of the Policy Division. But I wouldn’t refuse an offer to do it all over again because I think it was one of the most exciting periods of my 39 years in government.

Thirty-nine years?
That’s right, yes. (laughter)

You must have started very young.
I did, yes. Think I was about 20 or 21, yes. You want to finish off? (break in recording)

Well, thank you very much, George, for baring your soul in such a way –

Right.

– and racking your memory. But apart from your own recollections and these interviews, I’d like to thank you on behalf of the whole project for the enormous amount of work you’ve put in – not just in direct interviewing, but also the management of the project over this time. It’s an invaluable asset.

Good. Thanks very much, Bruce.

END OF FILE 2: FILE 3 – ADDENDUM

[Introduction spoken by George Lewkowicz] This is an addendum to the two interviews George Lewkowicz did with Bruce Guerin. The addendum covers a number of projects on which George worked. The date today is the 29th April 2011, and the interview is for the Don Dunstan Oral History Project for the Don Dunstan Foundation.
Rural Machinery Cooperatives

The first project George will speak about is the Rural Machinery Co-ops exercise, which was set up following the 1970 election which Don Dunstan won and then formed a government. There was a major policy speech, but there was also a separate rural policy speech, which I think was mainly thought through and drafted by Brian Chatterton. Brian, I think, became a member of the Legislative Council early in the 1970s; it may have even been at the 1970 election; and, being from a farming background and having studied Agricultural Economics, he did a lot of work in the rural areas and helped to frame or lead the framing of the rural policy speech.

The idea of the Rural Machinery Co-ops or Cooperatives was to help farming communities, individual farmers and their potential cooperative partners, in being able to buy more expensive and productive machinery and work out some sort of program with their cooperative partners to use the machinery and generate cost savings. The exercise was conducted by a committee that comprised Peter Barrow as Chairman; there was Grant Andrews as a member, he was from the United Farmers and Graziers; there was a person from the Stockowners’ Association. The two groups there were quite different in the 1970s. The UF&G I think covered the smaller grain-producing farmers and the Stockowners’ Association represented the people – farmers, the graziers- with probably larger holdings of cattle and sheep. What the politics there were I’m not too sure about.

I was the Secretary of the Committee, and it was the first committee that I was involved with. The Committee did its work by (1) getting some more information, I think, from Brian Chatterton on some of his views, (2) doing some basic research on cooperative schemes that were operating in Australia – probably not that many – and overseas, and (3) undertaking a pretty extensive exercise to promote and survey farmers who may or may not be interested in the idea of the cooperatives. Certainly, the Committee travelled in South Australia, and I recall the Committee chartering a small plane and travelling to Victoria. I think the town was Nhill, where it had a meeting with Victorian farmers who’d had some experience in cooperative ventures.

There was some interest. The scheme was to be voluntary. The report that was drafted promoted the idea of education and publicity. The banks were broadly
interested but preferred to support individual members of any potential syndicates, so if they were to be established the finances would go to individuals rather than any formal legal organisation or body set up to operate these syndicates. The ongoing support was to be provided by the Department of Agriculture, which was quite a large department at the time and had widespread ‘extension services’ all over the State of South Australia. From what I recall, after the report was written and published – the Minister I think at the time was Casey – accepted it. There would have been a report to Cabinet and then some follow-up might have been done by the Department of Agriculture, but I don’t recall any formal follow-up by the Premier’s Department there.

Uniform Regional Boundaries

The next project which I’ll talk about is the Committee on Uniform Regional Boundaries. That was a quite interesting exercise, the members being Peter Agars from the Public Service Board, he was the Chair; Don Aitchison was the South Australian Commonwealth Statistician and State Statistician, because the position covered both the Commonwealth and the State; Phil Cooper from the Planning Department; myself; Michael Williams, who was a Reader at the University of Adelaide in Geography; the secretariat comprised of Brian Hill, Christine Elstob and one other person from the Committee Secretariat.

The Committee did a lot of research on ways regional boundaries might be studied and some common set of boundaries determined. That was through particularly the work of Michael Williams, who did a lot of the drafting of the report. The ideas were to identify where there might be communities of interest and rationalising the separate and different boundaries being used by the Commonwealth and State departments. The various departments, for their different reasons, had set up regions, regional offices and regional workshops to extend their services throughout South Australia, but the problem there was that the boundaries were quite different. They didn’t help in getting uniformity of statistics for the various government planning requirements – especially state-wide planning and strategic planning; probably not so much Treasury planning – and the state statistical areas for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, whilst being the core of the regional entities,
weren’t mirrored by the various departments and statutory authorities. So the idea was if there were uniform regional boundaries that would help in generating common statistical frameworks that might be used by the various organisations, particularly where coordination of services was needed. The private sector would benefit too. There were also advantages of cost rationalisation through regional offices being established in common areas, and sharing of regional workshop resources.

The Committee provided a quite detailed report. As far as I can recall, the Cabinet accepted that there ought to be uniform regional boundaries. But many years later, when the Rann Government set up its Public Service Commission to look at various improvements in the provision of government services, one project picked up by the Commission was that of another look at the idea of uniform regional boundaries. They claim in that work the policy established in the 1970s was never actually formally followed through by a number of the departments. I certainly recall there were a number of departments which adopted the various common boundaries that were established, but maybe when the Corcoran Government was defeated by the Tonkin-led Liberal Party, the policy of uniform regional boundaries was not pursued.

Iron/Green/Orange Triangles

The next project to be covered is the development of the Iron and Green Triangles. I think this exercise was discussed in some of the interviews I did with people like Barry Orr and others who worked in the Department of Economic Development. I was a member of a working party chaired by a chap called Ray Taylor who was or who had been the Chair of the Monarto Development Commission. We travelled to the regional areas, the Iron Triangle covering cities of Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla, and the Green Triangle covering mainly Mount Gambier but also taking in Penola, Millicent and Naracoorte.

The idea there was – particularly, say, in the Iron Triangle, piggybacking on the potential big Redcliffs project and working out how the government might support accelerated development in what was seen, particularly in Whyalla and Port Pirie, as heavy industry areas and potentially areas that might be under threat, say, in the
shipping industry at Whyalla. The Green Triangle was more related to the idea of improving the tourism infrastructure and developing further any support that might be given to the growing wine areas. The other area that was looked at was the Orange Triangle. That covered the cities of Renmark, Waikerie and Berri. We had discussions with some of the major cooperatives, particularly the Berri Cooperative.

In the end, I think, whilst the establishment of these identities – the Iron, Green and Orange Triangles – helped to focus government and public organisations’ attention on these areas- some of that thinking being linked to the work of the Committee on Uniform Regional Boundaries to pick up and help develop some government nodes in those three identified triangles- there was some development of tourism, particularly in Port Augusta and its links with the Flinders Ranges, and similarly down in the Orange and Green Triangles. I’m not sure thought that there was a major boost to the industries in those areas. Notwithstanding that, it’s probably fair to say that the identification of those areas as ‘Triangles’ helped in some respects to diversify the concentration of activity in what, in South Australia, is often seen as a city-state situation where Adelaide has the major population and most of the policy thinking and development relates to activities in Adelaide.

Animal Welfare

Another project, which may not be considered that important but certainly developed and generated a lot of interest and aggravation, particularly from dog owners, was the committee I chaired on Animal Welfare. I don’t recall the origin of this committee, but there must have been some concerns about the large number of dogs – lesser so, cats – that were running around Adelaide under limited control.

The committee I chaired mainly comprised myself and two vets, and I think one other person, and we looked at the legislation on dog control and worked through whether the process of registering dogs was adequate, particularly where there were stray dogs when people hadn’t registered or re-registered them and what forms of identification might be better-used – for example, the tagging of ears rather than using collars. I think these days those registration systems are used, but in those days it was seen as rather draconian to tag ears. The other idea I think we had, or
major idea, was to up the registration fees so people took their ownership of dogs more seriously.

I left for overseas soon after the committee report was tabled in the Cabinet, which I understood approved the recommendations to tighten up on dog control, but from reports I got from people in Adelaide the recommendations caused quite a stir and there were demonstrations in Victoria Square against what was seen as the draconian control of dogs and dog owners. I think some of the recommendations and approvals by Cabinet were toned down a bit so people weren’t so upset, but it led to the, I think, in the longer term, the tightening of controls on dogs, particularly by local councils.

_East End Market Relocation/East End Redevelopment_

Two major projects I was also involved with were the East End Market Relocation Committee exercise and the East End Area Redevelopment Committee. These two committees covered the idea of the old wholesale markets which were located in the East End of Rundle Street being relocated out of the city centre because I think (1) they were rundown, notwithstanding the interesting character of the area, and (2) they were starting to cause congestion in that eastern area of the city. The traffic planners, with their ever-interest in sorting out more efficient transport systems, wanted to get the truck traffic out of those areas, particularly in that period of commuting to offices into the city between 7.30 and 9 o’clock in the morning.

Related to that was the idea, well, if the markets were to be relocated, there was quite a large area that would be available for the redevelopment of the South Australian Institute of Technology (now the University of South Australia, East Campus), which would be taken from where it is now – Frome Street and North Terrace – and set up in the East End area. That would also provide opportunities for student accommodation. The vacation of the South Australian Institute of Technology space would then be available for an expansion of the University of Adelaide. So the members of the Committee, which I think was chaired by Doug Anders from the South Australian Education and Planning Council, were quite happy to see the redevelopment because it provided many opportunities (1) to
revitalise the East End area – which rundown – and (2) provide considerable space for their plans for expansion.

The membership of that committee, apart from Doug Anders, was Judith Brine, who was from the School of Architecture at the University of Adelaide, Eric Mills, Deputy Director of the Institute of Technology; Lyall Braddock, Chair of the Board of Advanced Education, which was in place then – later on it got abolished; I was a member representing the Premier’s Department; Kevin Gilding Director, Adelaide College of Advanced Education; and I think there were some other members which I don’t recall. A key person assisting the Committee was Laurie Curtis, who’d done a lot of work on the West Lakes development for Delfin.

The Committee got quite excited about the possibilities of the east area being redeveloped and came up with ambitious proposals which were going to be costly. I think the Commonwealth Government was supportive, but there were some concerns being expressed by my superiors that things were starting to get out of hand, and I remember being instructed before one of the committee meetings to try and rein in some of the ideas and the suspicions, I think, that Laurie Curtis was getting a bit too involved in the project and saw himself as the grand master, probably, of the next stage of the planning and building and sorting out of the various allotments down there for major redevelopment.

The related committee, as I said, was the East End Market Relocation Committee. We did a lot of work travelling around all of the states that had wholesale markets and studied the ways they operated. The most interesting thing there was that each of the market authorities seemed to have these little empires where they were very involved in all of the activities of the markets, the markets being operating in different ways, some of them being new facilities, some of them a mixed- new and old- some of them being highly geared to working with what were called the ‘merchants’ rather than the growers, and others being a bit more friendly to the growers – that being one of the major points of discussion: which balance do you give to one of these markets when they’re set up? Do you operate mainly through the merchants or mainly through the growers, or do you give equal weight to each of them or each grouping? The Committee was chaired by Tom Miller from the Department of Agriculture, and his chairing gave me an insight into how the
Department of Agriculture people worked, particularly the more senior echelons, where there didn’t seem to be any problems in the staff of the Department of Agriculture being multiple members of various agricultural committees and seemingly flying all over the country to their various meetings and consultations.

The Committee was made up of Tom; myself; Rod Elleway from the South Australian Housing Trust to give us some input on the costs and the logistics of the relocation of the market and where it might be best located; and there was a person from the Committee Secretariat, Vicki Lainson, who was the Secretary of the Committee and I think she was also the Secretary of the East End Area Redevelopment Committee with Andrew Bishop.

The Market Committee recommended that the Market be relocated to, I think, the Hillcrest area, where there was some land available. When the report was presented it was accepted by Minister Casey, but then the ministry changed and Brian Chatterton came in as Minister of Agriculture. David Harvey, who was an agricultural economist and one of Brian’s advisers, joined the Committee. We were asked to go back through the work we’d done and look at a better balance of how the market might be operated—through the merchants and the growers. I think the first committee report favoured the merchants, because we’d been advised fairly heavily by – I think it was George Joseph, who was one of the bigwigs in the East End Market—he introduced us to a lot of the merchants and the growers. I remember getting up very early one morning to go into the operations of the Market and seeing how it worked in its old way of doing so.

David Harvey, under, I think, the instructions of Brian, said that he wasn’t so much in favour of giving the power to the merchants; he wanted to see a better balance and the role of the growers enhanced. The growers were seen to be the ones who produced the goods and would be interested in producing good quality products, particularly if they saw themselves as being the primary beneficiaries of the goods – that is, being able to sell them directly through the market rather than having to go through the merchants. This approach was also seen to promote competition.

Unfortunately, enthusiasm from the Commonwealth funding bodies for the SAIT development waned when the Whitlam Government lost power. That meant that the
Board of Advanced Education was unable to support the relocation and the redevelopment through any major finances. The State Government I think was less enthusiastic about putting in its contribution as most of the funding responsibility for tertiary education was in hands of the Commonwealth. So the Institute of Technology stayed where it was and the University of Adelaide had to work out other ways to increase its space.

What also happened was that the Market stayed where it was for a while, but I think it was in the Dean Brown Premiership era of the early '90s that it finally got relocated down to Pooraka, where there was good land for a wholesale market near a railway line and near major road transport facilities.

Other projects

There were a number of projects that I won’t go through in any detail, but I’ll list for interest. There was one on anti-litter legislation, which did result in legislation to help local government identify and fine litterers.

Related to that was the beverage deposits legislation, which I recall doing a fair amount of work on and discussing its development with Geoff Inglis from the new Department of the Environment.

There was work on the preservation of historic buildings, where I recall being asked through Peter Ward to look at what was happening overseas, particularly Germany, and working with a senior Parliamentary Counsel Geoffrey Hacket-Jones. He took the German legislation which was in German and translated it for us. I think that helped to provide a core of the content for local State Heritage legislation, which came through in the later part of the '70s.

There was a related Grants Commission Regions Working Party link with the work of the Committee on Uniform Regional Boundaries.

There was some work on tourism development and assistance, including an investigation of the Tourist Bureau, particularly its need to expand its thinking about marketing and promotion rather than just being an information office.

There was the development of the River Torrens Valley. Some of that was related to the idea of developing a linear park and looking at the definition of what was the River Torrens Valley, given the riverbanks get extended when there are floods.
Another one involved membership of the Interdepartmental Parks and Thebarton Community Centres Committee: that was largely worked through by the planning people and the Department for Community Welfare, but it also had members from the Education Department. The committee’s role was to picking up Commonwealth initiatives to establish multi-service nodes for city areas. The Parks came through in quite a big way – education services, health services, community welfare services sharing the one set of offices plus community facilities like sporting and meeting places. In 2010, the State Government was talking about ceasing or reducing quite heavily funding for The Parks.

An interesting diversion came in the form of a project on replacing the imperial system of awards with a state system. Don was keen on this as I suspect he wanted to put his stamp on and have more control over the system of recognition of outstanding service to the community. I had to research publications covering the mundane to the exotic names and classifications of awards. Names like The Order of the Star of South Australia, The Order of the Wombat or the Piping Shrike were being bandied about. I think I drafted a submission recommending a 3 level system of the Order of South Australia. We were saved in the end when the Commonwealth Government abolished the national imperial awards and brought in the various levels of the Order of Australia.

Conclusion

I think that completes the list, so hopefully this account will provide information to people looking at the times on some of the projects that were undertaken in the Policy Division and that may not received attention in the other interviews. End of discussion on those projects.

END OF INTERVIEW