This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan Foundation Don Dunstan Oral History Project interviewing Mr Bruce Guerin about his work in the Premier’s Department. This is for part two, and that time was in the latter part of the 1970s. The date today is the 25th May 2010 and the location is the Malaysian Room in the University of Adelaide.

Bruce, thanks very much for coming back and being interviewed again for part two of the oral history project as far as your time in the Premier’s Department goes. What I’d like to cover or run through today is the time from when you became Executive Assistant to the Premier and also had the role of Director of the Policy Division. Can you just outline how you got to become the Executive Assistant to the Premier and still kept the position of Director of the Policy Division?

I’m not quite sure. (laughter) Basically, what had happened was that Don had had Peter Ward as Executive Assistant and then Rob Dempsey, and the decision was made to move Rob Dempsey on, off to the Environment Department, and I don’t know quite how all that happened but it was a matter of moving him out.

And then Don wanted somebody else. And he didn’t have any specific prerequisites for the post at all, he just wanted somebody who could do the job the way he wanted it done. Partly, this was because he didn’t want to continue the sort of arrangement that he’d had with Rob Dempsey and there were various suggestions made to him, and I’d have to say I understand – I don’t know, but I understand – that there was a certain amount of lobbying and politicking within his own office and there was a certain amount of suggesting and prodding or warning or whatever from outside, like there were a number of people who would be in contact with Don and give him advice. I think they quite often thought that he took the advice, but there were a lot of these people who – not a lot, but a significant proportion of them would give advice that he had no intention of following up. And at one stage I was asking when this was going to be resolved, not because I was particularly interested in the job myself but it was one of those things that was hanging around and needing to be settled, and I was told that he was having some difficulty deciding.
And in fact Andrew Strickland, who you’ve organised for this, was on the list; and I don’t know whether he was approached or not, but I do know that there were some people who were arguing heavily against him – the arguments for him, whether he was engaged with the Labor Party in some way, I was sort of aware of but not familiar with, if I could say that; and other people were saying, ‘Well, perhaps he’s not the type’. In the end, I was approached by Steven Wright, who was Don’s private secretary at that stage, asking whether I’d be willing to consider the job, and that was a surprise to me because it’s not something that I’d thought of, and I asked, well, how did the Premier think it would operate with someone like me and what would the consequences be for the way the Department was run, the way the office was run and the way I ran myself. And I talked to a few people around the place as to what they thought, so that I’d get some sort of independent view of the situation, and some, I must say, said, ‘No, you shouldn’t do it because then you’ll be tainted with politics forever’. And another comment was, ‘Well, why would you want to? What advantage is there?’ Et cetera, et cetera.

In the end I had a talk with Don about it, which essentially resolved a lot of the issues for me. Basically, he was saying that he’d had enough of executive assistants that gave him political advice. He said, ‘I’ve been in politics quite a while now and I think I can give myself my own political advice and being second-guessed on policy – or on politics, really – is not what I need’. And I think that was basically the Dempsey part of it. Dempsey was either running lines that Don didn’t want to pursue or he was sort of making himself into some sort of alter ego, almost an incubus. Unfortunate choice of words. And so, ‘Well, what do you want, then, Premier?’ And he said essentially he wanted somebody who’d just run his office and coordinate all the things that he needed to have coordinated. And I pointed out to him that I had no involvement with the Labor Party or with any party and that dealing with the backrooms of politics wasn’t my idea of something I’d aspire to. And he basically said, ‘Well, I don’t want you to be doing that. There may be occasions when you’d be called on to do something that is on the political side, but
essentially it’s getting together the government side, the parliamentary side’ and his own office. And I’m not sure whether it was I that identified that as essentially the fairly traditional by then principal private secretary role in the Commonwealth Public Service where somebody – well, it quite regularly still happens – people’d be seconded in to a ministerial office –

From the public service.

– from the public service and carry that role on, and would be speaking on behalf of the minister and so forth, but then could return and continue on with a public service career.

Then the question came up, well, okay, if I did that, how was he proposing to have the Policy Division run, and (laughs) in a true Dunstan way he sort of looked at me, leant back in his chair and sort of, ‘What do you mean? You’d be doing that too, wouldn’t you?’ And we worked that through with Public Service Board people and so forth and identified that, although potentially it could cause conflicts, there was no legal or formal impediment; it was a behavioural impediment as much as anything else. So in the end I decided I was willing to take it on.

Did you shift to a contract –

Yes.

– or was it a separate position?

I shifted to a contract so that I was outside the public service from that point, but a lot of people aren’t or weren’t aware that you can give public responsibilities to people who are not part of the public service. I guess that’s the foundation of a lot of contract positions after that time.

After, yes. But it was a bit different at the time, I guess.

Yes, there had been odd occasions where it hadn’t really been regarded as carrying on a public service function; it was just giving somebody a task. But this was explicitly to be head of a group of people and direct them in the public sector line.
And presumably the contract included an attachment or the details of the position, and that included being Director of the Policy Division as well.

Yes.

Right, that’s interesting. And what was the overall balance, then, in the position, or initially and then as it turned out?

Oh, I see. I thought you had meant in the formal sense. I was going to say, ‘Don’t be stupid’. (laughter) It’s now, ‘You go and do the job’.

The balance – well, because the situations were so variable, you’d have to say that the balance varied a great deal. One of the things that explicitly happened was that the Policy Division had reached a stage of maturity, that there were a number of people who were quite capable of doing things on their own account. Well, an example could be that, with preparing Cabinet comments, which was a significant formal responsibility and quite a task each week – and that, interestingly, was as close as you can get to the interface between government and politics, if you like, public service and ministers – increasingly, instead of being involved in the whole lot and vetting the whole lot and being up with all the issues, it was much more a matter of, ‘Well, So-and-so has gone through that thoroughly. They’ve assured me, \textit{et cetera, et cetera}, and there it is’. And so I wouldn’t even read a lot of the comments until say the Premier had. And that meant that on occasions, if he asked me, if the Premier asked me about a certain issue, I might not be across it whereas before I would have been, but that would be on the basis that somebody that I had confidence in had gone through it.

The other part of that, of course, is that the people I also had to be confident would tell me the nuances. You might have a two-sentence or one-sentence comment, but they might be saying, ‘This is based on a judgment that So-and-so is a straight shooter and has never given us trouble in the past’, or whatever. So in many ways it could only work because of the stage that the Policy Division had reached and the stage which a whole lot of individuals had reached.
And was there an adjustment of the structure of the Policy Division? I think Andrew Strickland was – was he made Assistant Director or was that before that?

I don’t recall that.

The reason I was asking that, you mentioned earlier on some of the features of the job was the government side, and I guess that links up with the Cabinet comments and then it gets into the Premier’s Department and the policy area, the parliamentary and then the own office and then I guess subsets of that are crises and whatever else, which I’ll come to later on. How did that sort of balance out across those sort of areas?

You mean in percentages of time, or – – –?

Just roughly, yes, just what was taking up a lot of the time?

Well, running the office didn’t take much time because most of the issues that were raised there were pretty much petty, so like you’d just say, ‘Knock it off and forget it’, or whatever – although there were occasional times when people had perhaps been a bit more adventurous than you’d want them to be and so forth. But essentially it was a fairly settled office and there weren’t too many problems there. I guess, as before that time, it was a matter of what was coming on or what you were trying to do. So, for example – I’m not sure how good an example this is – John Bannon, who’d come back from Canberra and had been employed as an assistant director in the Labour Department, then ran for Parliament and was elected, and I’m not sure of the exact chronology but at a certain time Don said that he wanted to get him into the ministry. I don’t know how he went about that, because to a large extent what Don wanted at that stage Don got, but how he went through it I don’t know. But we had been running a series of policy lines about community development and community engagement and getting away from the top-down sort of approach and, as part of that, there was an inquiry that we got David Corbett to chair, and I think was serviced by the Policy Division in some way –

Yes, Dennis Ryan.
– that’s right – and that went through in its own way to options that there might be which included establishing a department – I think it was a department that they were recommending – and needing, if you like, ministerial attention. Well, Don wanted John Bannon to have a ministry and here was something new that was coming up, so I’d been given the task of looking around for what sort of thing might match up and suggested that.

Then, when Bannon was appointed to the ministry, I was given the task of, if you like, inducting him, which was interesting because Don was viewing John Bannon as a novice at this sort of thing, even though he’d had a lot of experience, and wanted to make sure that he would be picking up on the lines that we’d followed. And I was saying to Don, ‘Well, look, he’s aware, he can read the report’, and he said, ‘No, you’ve got to go and hold his hand’. Well, holding the hand of John Bannon meant that, ‘Here’s what the Premier wants you to do. Any arguments?’ And no real arguments, but pretty well from then on it was me saying, ‘If there’s anything you want by way of support, tell me’. And John’s attitude was also, ‘Okay, I’m the Minister, I know what I have to do. If I call on you, that’s it’. So it’s not a standoff, but a demarcation line. So I helped with various things, getting his office set up, da-da-da-dah, but essentially there was managing Cabinet makeup and dynamics-type things plus a line of policy that had been worked through the public service.

And what about the parliamentary side of things, what was the scope of that? You mentioned that as a component of the position.

Well, the parliamentary thing ranged from – well, basically, writing his important speeches because sometimes Mike Rann was doing them but a fair number of them I was writing, or if Mike had done an outline or a basic run-through I put more meat into it and whatever. So things like the opening of Parliament, the Governor’s speech essentially was my responsibility to write or get that together.

Had a thing (?) about the dismissal of the Police Commissioner.

Seems like a chunk is missing here and immediately below
Oh, really?

I was given the job of writing his statement to Parliament about that – in that case, with the Premier having very significant and direct input on substance, but not necessarily on the words. You know, like ‘What are you paid for?’ He’d never said anything like that, but ‘This is what I want to say’. And so there were occasions like that.

Was that checked with the legal people, that statement, at all; or the intention?

Well, I guess there were two things there: one was when the Police Commissioner was actually dismissed; and another one was when there was a commission into it and his response to the Commission and so forth.

The second one, the response to the Commission, I don’t recall there being any checking because I’d spent a fair amount of time tracking the Commission and so forth. And the first one, basically it didn’t need legal checking as a speech because any of the issues that needed to be settled legally had been dealt with before there was a decision about sacking the Police Commissioner.

Interesting. On the parliamentary side, the parliamentary tactics: were you ever involved in discussions on those? Like how to get the bills through. The Opposition might have been on about certain issues, he might have some tricky questions coming up, that sort of thing?

Yes, there were things like that. Like I spent a fair amount of hours at Parliament when Parliament was in session and sometimes that involved tactics. But again Dunstan had been around for a while and it was much more a matter of him saying that he wanted to pursue a particular line and, ‘Would you check this out?’, or, ‘So-and-so’s raised such a question; would you go and talk to him and find out what he’s on about?’ But it wasn’t a matter of going and persuading his members that they should vote this way or that way. And I think I once went and addressed Caucus, but that was specifically like a public sector, public-service-type briefing, on
legislation that was coming up. Having given the briefing and answered some questions, ‘Right, you can go and then we’ll start discussing it’.

So you weren’t seen as part of the Members’ network, if you like.

No. I had some contact with Members, but it’s not something that I sought – and, frankly, didn’t have time for, anyway.

Was there some formal process of Dunstan getting feedback on what was coming up?

In Parliament?

I know there was the speeches – yes, what was coming up in Parliament. The legislative program, I guess, was fairly formal; but the sort of issues that were going to be current.

Well, there was always a Whip and the Whip had responsibility for really organising the program. And so if something was significant, like the Premier wanted to make a ministerial statement, on occasions I might make contact but on others it was just directly telling the person, ‘Want to do this, that and the other’; and for the rest of it it was really coming from a public service angle, like, ‘Here is legislation that’s been prepared, it’s been through Cabinet. The Government wants to introduce it. What’s the process and how does it fit in?’ And that sounds all very complicated, but it becomes pretty much routine unless you’re starting to want to compress the timetable or spread it out or whatever.

And what’d happen if there was some major issue that the Government got landed with, a crisis in Parliament.

Crisis?

Yes.

What sort of crisis in Parliament?

I can’t remember any specific ones, but every now and again the Opposition will get a leak on something or get some information from the private sector or somewhere else and drop something on the Government. Did that ever come up?
Well, probably my memory would be served better if you could name a specific circumstance and say, ‘Oh, yes, that was a crisis’. But I guess in my job I wasn’t so much distinguishing between what was an Opposition vs Government issue, or the media vs the Premier issue, or the public sector wanting to get certain things done or the positive program being put through. But, for example, and not exactly a crisis, one of the issues that was running over that period was the one of uranium. And there was a fairly gung-ho attitude towards it from the Opposition and a cautious-to-opposed attitude from people in the Government; and, just dealing with the parliamentary situation there, the Premier was concerned to manage the Opposition so that they couldn’t take easy shots and wouldn’t be precluding policy options that he was quite deliberately going through with the work that you and others were involved in. And there was a – I don’t know what it was; the equivalent of an executive assistant to the Leader of the Opposition, I’ve forgotten the title now; Phil Scanlon was the person – who had a bit of American experience. I can’t remember what the experience was, but he was a bit more open in his understanding of the political process than others. So he and I would have a talk occasionally. It wasn’t sort of us going off in a backroom and conversing for three hours; it was being in contact about various things. And on the uranium one he saw that there was a problem for the Opposition if they didn’t handle it with a bit more subtlety, and he was of course trying to find out from me exactly what was going on in Government and I was doing my best to fill him with words but no information, (laughs) that was the task. But through that we thought that an excellent way of buying time so that the Premier and the Government wouldn’t be pressured into a premature decision about this was to put up a motion in Parliament that the Opposition couldn’t afford to reject, and so I put together some words that were, you know, ‘This House solemnly believes’, or whatever the formula is, ‘that no development of uranium should happen in South Australia unless’ – in shorthand form – ‘all safeguards are satisfactorily in place or until it is established that waste can be stored safely’. Now, that made it very difficult for the Opposition at that particular time because they
actually had to make a case for long-term storage of nuclear waste, *et cetera, et cetera*, which we knew was difficult. And so essentially that was put up, he checked with his Opposition Leader, obviously, and they agreed that they would argue the toss over this, that and the other but they would support it. So that was put through and that got the nuclear issue off the front burner at any rate and bought time for work to be done.

Now, one of the things that I think you probably observed was that you’d been working on a report and we were getting to the final draft of it and suddenly I descended on you and said, ‘We want this quickly’. (laughter)

**I recall that.**

And I don’t think you knew why. The reason was we needed that in place to show that the Government had credibly gone through.

**All the issues, yes.**

So that’s an interface between one of my roles and another one. I knew all the time that this was bubbling along and I wasn’t able to tell you why; was able to tell you, ‘We need it fast’.

**Fast, yes, I remember that.**

Without changing the substance.

**I guess one of the crises, the reaction to the Salisbury sacking.** I was going to ask about that later on, but just in terms of the crisis: the strong reaction and the protests and Stewart Cockburn and all the other people. I don’t know whether Don had expected that or not, that sort of reaction; but was that seen as a crisis, and how was that handled in the office?

(laughs) If it wasn’t, they must have been – – –.

**He’d made a decision about it and obviously thought he could manage it, but things did start to get pretty hot.** I wasn’t in the country at the time, but I can imagine – – –.
You left the country to avoid it. (laughter) Well, I’m not sure how much anybody really knows about all the workings-through of this. It was quite clear that the course of events that led up to the decision was almost inevitable, in the sense that – well, it went back to the existence or non-existence of a Special Branch, and then what was the Special Branch actually doing, and then was this legitimate.

Yes, plus what it had on Don and his friends as well, which is another issue.

Well, yes.

Or a subset of those issues –

Yes.

– as to why Don had reacted so strongly about it. I’m raising that because one of the other options was to have put Salisbury on leave without pay or something and have the judicial type of inquiry and then make the decision to sack him.

Well, basically what happened was that these issues were raised, the Police Commissioner responded in the way that he did and the answers were – 'Well, I can’t say anything'. But they just were not acceptable (a) in fact and (b) in law. For example, ‘No, we don’t have a Special Branch’. Well, I knew very well, because I had a lot of contact with police people just incidentally on other issues, and they told me how many people there were and where they were. And then in law he had this concept that he was answerable to the Crown, et cetera. So how do you deal with that? Well, what was set up was an inquiry under Justice Michael White. The report was presented and White – at that stage I think he was an acting judge of the Supreme Court, so he wasn’t part of the Establishment –

I see.

– he wasn’t identified – well, as far as I know, wasn’t identified in any political camp, I mean any line of thinking or whatever. My knowledge of him was that he was a fairly independent thinker, so fairly analytical. He wrote a report which was very specific and quite almost colourful in its language, if you like; it wasn’t the very
dry, dusty report that needs lots of interpretation, he was pointing things out very plainly. Given a report like that, there was no way that a government cannot actually decide about it. Like at the very least you’d have to say that the Police Commissioner was going to be sanctioned or – I don’t know what. So I can’t remember the exact beginnings of this, but I think it came up in the media somehow and it wasn’t something that was engineered within the Government.

Then when the Cabinet was considering it there were the normal preparations of material for them, like ‘Here is the report and here is a submission as to what could be done about it’. I don’t recall who wrote that submission or whatever, but there was something. And they had their Cabinet considerations. I never found out how the discussions went in Cabinet. It was quite clear that a range of views were canvassed, but Don never actually told me who was saying what, and never asked me to prepare any advice or whatever. He discussed the issues through with me quite a bit, but Cabinet was acting in cabinet. And then after that, when they’d made a decision, I had discussions with him as to whether that was the best course or not, and it was quite clear that they were settled on it and they realised the significance of what they were doing. I mean it wasn’t a casually-taken approach. As he said in public, with one of his grander displays of emotion, I guess, there were some fundamental issues at stake and principles and so forth, and it was untenable.

The other side of it, the line that was run by various commentators, was that he was totally at fault and going beyond constitutional powers and so forth. There was a lot of rubbish around at that time. In substance, this accusation that he and the Labor Party were only doing that to cover up. Politically, it could be a real question, if you want to cover it up. It could only then be based really on a Special Branch actually going well beyond its charter by (laughter) handing this information out which it hadn’t collected. So it was quite an interesting situation. So in that, once it had been decided and – we can go through some of that, I guess – was declared publicly, he consulted with Des Corcoran and others about what should happen and
this ended up in, for example, the rally in favour of the Government and other demonstrations and so forth the other way.

Interesting. And was there some plan to handle this sorted out, or was it just a moving – – –?

What do you mean, ‘plan to handle it’?

Well, there was going to be a reaction, that this had been foreseen and some issue management process set up? Or was it just handled as things occurred?

I think it was handled by somebody who’d been in politics for a long time and made judgments, or a number of them had been in politics and made judgments, in terms of principles and in terms of practical politics, and in terms of relationships with the media. And in that respect it evolved. There were interesting sidelights to this, like there was a fellow from the Nazi Party – not the Nazi Party; [National Action, Michael Brander], who was significantly on the right; he was a student at the time and he was agitating against the Government – I think it was probably precipitated by the Police Commissioner thing. I’m not sure that I’ve got the chronology of this right, but once he came to demand to see the Premier and sort of brushed past the receptionist and got into the private office part and it was quite interesting because I didn’t perpetrate too many porkies in my public life that I can recall, but I was in the process of informing him – and his mother, because mum was there with him – that he was in the wrong place and needed to go and that, whatever it was, he couldn’t see the Premier because the Premier wasn’t there. And we went through this and I eventually convinced him, at which point the Premier’s office door opened and there was the Premier reading something and he sort of wandered out and said, ‘Oh, Bruce – – –.’ (laughter) So that didn’t help. But we got rid of him then. But at another time he and his mother turned up with a hammer and they smashed the plate glass windows in the State Admin Centre, and there were other concerns about them and associates. That was mixed up, and they were appearing at this public rally in support of the dismissal, and even to the extent that I went and stood next to them in
the crowd to see what they might be up to. So that was a concern: there was awareness of extremism around the place.

**Extreme reaction, yes.**

But I guess one of the things that the Stewart Cockburn splutterings and indignation and so forth and people like McEwen and whatever wrote about this, it triggered off this ambivalence South Australia had towards Don that in one way he was the favoured son and a wonderful reformer and leader and brought in long-overdue changes, *et cetera*; the other side was – well, personally, I guess one part of it was, ‘He thinks he’s better than us’ or an air of superiority; the other one was his private life. And that was a really intense feeling in some quarters, which led, for example, when he left politics here, there was no way he could get any sort of employment in South Australia. In other circumstances you would expect him to be picked up for this, that and the other, but for a lot of people he was anathema, and that was given public expression. So when you’re talking about a ‘management plan’, the reality was there were all those unplannable elements in there.

**Interesting, yes. That sort of leads me on: you mentioned the private office – – –.**

Actually, one thing we might [add]. So obviously the Cabinet realised they were making a very significant decision, and the legal points were worked through very carefully even though Don himself with some legal background and I with no legal background were quite confident what the rights and wrongs were, and that’s what was upheld by the Royal Commission.

Having decided on this, then (laughs) it fell to my lot to write a letter for the Premier to send to Harold Salisbury. So I sat down and carefully wrote a letter – we’ve all written careful letters in our time – and made sure that the legalities were there and had legal advice on that. And then the Premier was hanging around until I’d finished this and then he signed it with his double-D, *et cetera, et cetera*, and I then said, ‘Well, what do you want to do with this?’ Because I thought what he was going to do was to summon the Police Commissioner and then hand over the letter.
Well, the Police Commissioner had made a particular point of not being contactable by the Government. His office, his officers, had been told that they weren’t allowed to give out his contact numbers, they weren’t allowed to say where he lived and they weren’t to allow phone hook-up between them; it was only if he rang the Premier would he deign to speak. This wasn’t just over that crisis, this was his running style.

Really?

And there had been difficulties in, in fact, getting in contact through there. But I had very good contact and relations with Laurie Draper, who was his deputy and a totally different character, very down-to-earth, very effective; very clear in legal terms about what the situation was. And at any rate the Premier was aware of that. ‘What do you want to do with this?’

He said, ‘Well, post it’.

I said, ‘Well, hang on. You’re sacking a police commissioner. You can’t actually post it’.

He said, ‘Well, what’s wrong with Australia Post?’ (laughter)

I said, ‘For heaven’s sake’, you know, ‘this is a big deal’.

And he said, ‘Well, what do you propose?’

And I said, ‘Well, at the very least it should be delivered to him’.

And he said, ‘Well, we wouldn’t know where he lives’.

And I said, ‘Well, I’ve known all along where he lives and I know what his phone number is’.

Interestingly, because people in his department, the sort of senior sergeant and above, who were rather disgruntled with him, not infrequently peed in my ear with information about Harold Salisbury. So one, in fact – this was going back to the days when I was a journalist – one of them had, as an act of great insubordination, invited me to have a beer at the Blackwood Hotel. I couldn’t quite work out the significance of that except he wanted to tell me this, that and the other. And he said, ‘Have you got time to just go for a spin in my car?’
And I said, ‘Well, why?’

And he said, ‘Oh, I just thought you might like to see the district’. And he took me on this little guided tour around to this house and he said, ‘There’. So this was his huge act of insubordination in telling me where the Police Commissioner lived.

At any rate, I said, ‘Look, I know where he lives. I can get there. If you won’t go, I’ll go’. So I then rang up Salisbury and I was received very politely, firstly by his wife and then him on the phone, though he did say, ‘Where did you get this number from?’ (laughter)

I just said, ‘I’ve got a letter for you from the Government’.

He said, ‘Oh, I’ve been expecting something like this’.

So I then said, ‘Well, can I come round now and deliver it?’ By this time it was sort of early evening.

And he said, ‘Yes. Now, have you got a pencil and paper out?’

I said, ‘What for?’

He said, ‘My address’.

I said, ‘No, no, I know where you live’. (laughter) So I went and drove up there, was received in fine English style, offered tea on quite nice china, and then interestingly the Salisburys sympathised with me. They said, ‘We know that you haven’t done this’, you know. ‘We realise it’s very difficult for you’, et cetera.

And I said, ‘Well, do you actually want to read the letter?’

And he said, ‘Do you want to tell me that it’s not what I’m expecting it is?’ (laughter)

I said, ‘Well, take your own pick’.

So he had a quick look and then said, ‘Well, thank you very much for coming and we’ll see you anon’, and whatever, ‘goodbye’, in fine Northumbrian style, I guess.

So to me that sort of symbolised what one of the problems was: that there was in fact a police commissioner who had been – I won’t say ‘too dumb’, but he was too lazy to find out what his powers were. He was silly enough to ignore what he’d been told within his own department and in many ways really hadn’t come to terms with
his job. Like his nickname was ‘Holiday Harold’, because he was always going on leave and he wasn’t over-active and over-energetic, and most of the policing was organised by Draper and other people underneath. But with the police lobby even then being a significant one, maybe what the Government didn’t expect quite so much was quite such a heavy reaction and almost idolisation of Salisbury from inside when before that he wasn’t regarded that way at all.

Interesting, yes. Who did the Special Branch report to, was it him directly, or do you recall that? Was it Draper or somebody else? Or Draper was, what, the deputy or assistant director or commissioner.

I don’t recall that. It’s probably covered in the report. Logically, from my recollection, it would have been reporting to the Commissioner.

The next question is ‘How was it allowed to do what it was doing if a lot of what it was doing was out of its responsibility area, which is the cause or the trigger of the events that occurred?’, if you like.

Well, if you’ve come to talk about cultural life – even when you listen to the footy commentaries it’s about culture – if you think back one before the Salisbury situation – and this is in a way saying this is a very South Australian approach, I’m not sure whether it was – but going way back we’d had a Police Commissioner who I think was Blackburn –

I don’t remember him.

– Blackburn VC, I think he won a Victoria Cross and came back from the War and ran the [police], and so it was a quasi-military appointment, if you like, and it’s fair enough; then it went on and McKinna had been the previous –

Brigadier, yes.

– Brigadier, and his style was very aloof and the conflict that he’d had with the Government was over the Vietnam Moratorium demonstrations where he said that really the police had to confront the demonstrators, at least on North Terrace and King William Street corner, because they would be preventing the free passage of
motor vehicles, which was obviously the predominant thing and it didn’t matter what they thought about the war or whatever. And that sort of confrontational style with the Government – apart from confronting demonstrators – had either continued or even accentuated a culture within the police force that they were separate and they were guardians of what was right. Like ‘We will judge whether it’s important for a car to go down King William Street; it’s not up to you’. And of course there’s the separation of power issue: you don’t want the Government telling the Police Commissioner to arrest this person or whatever. In that sort of context, plus the Cold War and aftermath context, you can understand that there would be a Special Branch; but then what was it going to be doing?

That ASIO wasn’t doing, for example.

That’s another subject. The view was that communists were a threat and socialists were much the same sort of thing, and so you had to keep an eye on these fringe people, almost. But they included in the ‘fringe’ anybody that didn’t conform with their idea so, as it turned out, they’d kept files on Labor politicians, on judges, and they had been keeping files on homosexuals – either because they were going to subvert the fabric of society or they were natural sympathisers with communists, I don’t know what the particular mentality was. But it’s understandable that that can exist. If you were, now, appointed to head of Police Department and you found a branch like that, you would instantly know that it was untenable; back in those days, you could imagine that, ‘Oh, well, it’s going there, it serves some useful functions, let’s let it keep on going’ – until you got some intervention that made it impossible to continue.

You never picked up any blackmail activities that the police might have been using on people in their files or anything like that?

I don’t recall anything like that. Yes. I think it was – I would really say this was scuttlebutt: Another cause of concern about the police and observance of the law was the Duncan drowning case where, apart from the vice squad people victimising
homosexuals and murdering – yes, murdering, I suppose, you’d throw somebody in the water – they’d also been very firm in covering it up and not having any police investigation. Now, in that context, I had heard some people say, ‘Well, this was obviously the way they managed to get the Government not to be stronger on the Duncan case because they said you did this, you did that’.

I see, yes.

Now, I would label that as scuttlebutt, but a lot of ridiculous nonsense goes under the guise of that.

Interesting. Just getting back to one of the reasons I raised the matter of ‘managing crises’, just getting back to the role of the private office, and I was interested in you mentioned it was relatively simple, people had their work to do and things like that. Did you have things like weekly strategy meetings, like, ‘Here’s the business coming up in the next week’, or anticipated events, speeches and issues that were in the media and might come up and how they might be handled?

There were regular meetings. I can’t remember whether we had them on particular days at particular times. But, for example, if Parliament was in on the Tuesday morning or maybe the day before there would be checks on what the current issues were. But in a way it was not so much needing to plan a week; it was a matter of having strategies for dealing with issues as they came along, and if you go back to the public service side, progressively after I joined the Department, Bill Voyzey got me involved in regular meetings with the Premier, which was a change because previously Bob Bakewell had prevented access, essentially. And then Bakewell decided that he was superfluous in those meetings and dropped out, so it was Bill and I; and then increasingly it was just myself there with anybody I took from the Division.

They were sort of strategy meetings, but a common thing would be to have an agenda with about 10 or a dozen items on it, and they were things that would need some action on them. Now, two or three of them might be strategy-type things, like ‘How much priority is needed for this?’ or ‘This is running late and this is running
early’, whatever. A lot of them were very quick updates, almost to keep them off the agenda. Like ‘These are the things that are happening: So-and-so has agitated about Monarto’, or whatever, ‘just telling you that’, but if the Premier had anything to say he’d say it, and in literally less than a minute you could handle that for the time being. So in a way it was a moving strategy.

On the political side, there were things like – well, Mike Rann at that stage was running the press stuff and he was very good at flagging in advance, ‘These are major speeches that are going to be made and who’s going to do them’, and so forth, but what issues have to be handled and what might be handled, and they could happen, those issues could be discussed, not on a particular meeting time but by, well, just *ad hoc* arrangement.

So the Premier’s diary was very full and getting time with him was a difficulty. We were quite severe in restricting access to him from ministerial staff and it was an art form, in fact, to be able to grab X minutes with him to deal with a particular issue or whatever; but a number of times Mike Rann and I and sometimes Steven Wright, depending on what the issue might be, would agree on his schedule or an issue that had to be handled and then one or other of us, or maybe all of us, would go and talk to him when we had a chance, which might be actually in a car between Victoria Square and Parliament, or there was a variety of circumstances, rather than ‘Here we are having our strategy meeting’.

**Right. Was there any relationship with the election promises, like the ‘program’, if you like? Like ‘How are we going on this?’ or ‘There are some things not being done that we really need to get stuck into’ or ‘The economy’s wobbling around or doing well and we ought to say something’?**

I can’t quite divide up my recollections properly here. But during election periods the Policy Division would sort of withdraw from the frame – not that it was really in the frame – but it would actually look at Opposition policies as well as Government policies, what they were saying, not asked to do that but it was something that I, as far as I know, I introduced; that you needed to be aware of what the Opposition were
doing. I was of the view that if the Opposition wanted to get a briefing from us, under the conventions they should be able to do that, that was never approved.

**Never approved, right.**

No, not in election time. And that was before the days when it became standard to get a Treasury or somebody’s independent analysis of Opposition or Government promises.

So after the election there would be a specific time when you’d go along and say, ‘Well, Premier, you know what your policies are, and what do you want to give priority to and how quickly?’ or whatever, and he would respond.

Now, that might be, ‘There are these things’.

And then we’d ask, ‘Well, what about this?’

And he’d say, ‘Well, how’s it going?’ or ‘How soon could we do it?’ or ‘Not just yet, we can’t manage that’, or whatever it might be.

And I can’t remember what the – oh, I know: I suppose a relevant thing in the context of history, that the first time I did this I said, ‘Well, Premier, it says in your platform that you’re going to amalgamate the two banks’.

And he said, ‘What do you mean?’

I said, ‘Well, it’s in your platform?’

And he said, ‘Well, we didn’t include that in the .....’

‘Well, the Labor Party platform.’

‘Oh, I don’t take any notice of that. If I want it done, I’ll tell you.’ (laughter)

So there was that. And then, progressively, like there was nothing with him every six months or whatever, but periodically I made a point of going to him and saying, ‘Well, okay, this is how we’re going at this stage; what things do you want to do differently?’ and so forth.

**Interesting. Related to that I might draw a contrast with I’m seeing, or not seeing, today with the Government that sort of landmark speeches and arguments, sort of forward-thinking arguments in favour of whatever it might be, and it seems to me that in the ’70s there was a lot more of that than there seems to be now. Like I**
don’t pick up very many, if at all, any landmark speeches where the Government now is setting the scene for something; but I recall a lot of that, and you mentioned you wrote some speeches or followed through ideas that Don wanted to put to the public, whether it was in this State or nationally he was doing a lot of that sort of work. Have you got any observation about that? Just he seemed to be a lot more active as a Premier and in the spotlight and getting out there and talking to people.

Well, I guess Dunstan was much more of a projector of ideas and possibilities than the pragmatic sort of politics you get these days, though I don’t know what Mike Rann thinks in his private moments at all, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he would say, ‘Well, we’re doing that’. Not that we might – well, the Adelaide Oval, is that one of them?

I doubt it, but yes.

We’ve got a strategic plan on everything now, and targets and so forth.

Maybe that’s a substitute.

But going back to Dunstan’s time, he did what Jeff Kennett did – before Kennett was out of short pants, probably – which was managing public expectations and dealing with public expectations by essentially summing up what could be done, what was an opportunity and what had to be done regardless. So he ran campaigns in opposition and later in government to reform the franchise, and it was a very strong thing, and he made statements about that. He made statements in opposition and going on later about Indigenous land rights, et cetera, et cetera, and he kept on saying things like that; but increasingly it was this was part of his agenda. And I guess that this was early in ’78: he felt confident enough – I think it was ’78, I’m pretty sure it was – he felt confident enough to say, ‘Well, now I think I’ve laid enough base, we’ve got enough credibility in the electorate, to push on with things that might be a bit more radical or strategic or whatever’, and he actually got his Cabinet to go to his place out at Norwood for lunch, which he of course cooked and all the rest of it, and sat around and talked through strategic things, to be quite separate from Cabinet, to be a different context, and asking people to contribute their ideas and identify the
[priorities], *et cetera, et cetera*. And until that time he hadn’t felt really that even with his party it made sense to put grander plans out there. So in a way it was his maturing as a Premier.

But the Kennett reference is Kennett was very good at managing two or three things at a time and diverting attention on others. So, for example, there was the celebrated, idiotic case of the pink taxis when Jeff Kennett declared that the Government was going to insist that all Melbourne taxis should be pink. (interviewer laughs) And I can see that your reaction is just the same as the media one. The media went berserk about this and everybody was up hill and down dale for two or three weeks. And he seemed entirely unperturbed until in the end he said, ‘Ah well, I can see that this is not something that has got public support so I won’t go ahead with it’. Meanwhile, he was busily choofing off other, less-popular things, and the media didn’t even notice.

Now, with Don it was a matter of how often can you stir them up, or how often do you need to stir them up. So in earlier stages of his Government they put through what was quite radical legislation for consumer protection on finance, bucking against the finance companies, and there were campaigns around Australia against Dunstan: ‘Can’t allow this, it will be the end of the world.’ And once he’d gutsed it through, then they all copied. And so he was conscious that in his own context there was only a limited number of things that he could get people to accept at one time, and in that he might be preparing the way.

One of the things that we might talk about, I guess, is public sector reform, public service reform.

Yes.

And that was one of the issues where I think he was quite traditional and very cautious about it – not because he couldn’t see a better way of doing it, but because he thought the reaction or the inertia that would be created would just bog down too many other things, so why bother at this stage.
Was this post the 1975-type – or was it ’73, the reforms, the Corbett reforms?

Yes.

Right, interesting. Can you remember any of the things that he might have spoken to the quasi-Cabinet meeting at his home, the sort of things – – –? I think I recall you telling me once you saw a document or he’d written something about some of his ideas if he’d stayed on as Premier and things he wanted to get through.

Your reporting’s inaccurate; I wrote the document.

Oh, you wrote the document.

(laughs) Yes, which I still haven’t dug out of my cellar or wherever it might be. No, but that was quite – – –.

What, in response to him, or a sort of interaction?

This was a, as I recall it, a post-Christmas thing. In fact, as I recall it, I went round to his place for some purpose and we just talked through what possibilities might be or what needed to be done and Cabinet in those days was not keen on anything called ‘strategic planning’, partly because they perceived that as a way of the managers taking over their prerogatives, and so calling anything a strategic plan or a strategic planning session or whatever it might be didn’t wash very well. So we talked through and, ‘Well, okay, we can get Cabinet thinking about these things’. My thought was, ‘Well, progressively we can put papers to them and they can respond’, and he was saying, ‘No, no, no, no. I’ll tell you what: I’ll cook some lunch and we’ll do it that way’. And then work through, ‘Well, what are the things you want on the list?’ And then how would he work through it with everybody.

Can you recall what some of those things were?

I would rather dig through my cellar and actually find it out.

Okay, right. Put that on notice.

Yes.
That was sort of leading to another subset of the private office; were there times he came up with some weird and wonderful ideas that you had to hose down?

Yes. (laughter)

Any examples?

Any examples? I can think of an example that came before I was in the private office, and it was quite typical in a way. Every two or three times, so it would be every two or three weeks at least, we’d have a session with him running through the Policy Division things, and he’d say, ‘Oh, by the way, somebody’s told me this’, or, ‘Somebody gave me that’, and ‘I want you to follow it up’. And he gave me a little clipping out of the wonderful Advertiser which said that in France they were well-advanced to build a city under the sea. (laughter)

And I said, ‘What do you want us to follow that up for?’

He said, ‘Well, we could do that here, couldn’t we?’

I said, ‘Well, what do you mean?’

He said, ‘Well, the Gulf waters are fairly benign and we should be able to – – –.’

And, having on the side this question of ‘Do we continue with Monarto or not?’, I said, ‘Well, do you really want to do that?’

‘Yes. Yes. Go and find out about it.’

So I thought, you know, ‘Resistance is futile’, so I toddled off and waited several weeks before responding.

‘By the way, that thing about the French project, did you check it out?’

And I think we had perfunctorily checked it out, which is more difficult without the Internet, and said, ‘Well, really it would require something like Monarto-cubed to get it organised’.

He said, ‘All right, I get the message’.

Didn’t get the Dutch involved with the experience.
No. But I guess things that were on the margin certainly of a lot of people’s expectations, I think you – I’m certain you were involved with others on ‘alternative lifestyles’.

I think I ducked that one.

Did you? Gee, you were a genius or quick-footed. Some of it was really good stuff. But he had Jim Cairns and Juni Morosi presenting themselves as advisers on that and a couple of times they turned up, at least one of them, without appointment because Jim had such status that he could walk in anywhere, of course. And I was given the task of following up on that, and he didn’t tell me anything. He said, ‘Oh, Jim’s got these wonderful ideas and we really need to get on with them’. So then I’d have a day and a half with them in one way or another and go back to him and he’d say, ‘Well, anything out of that?’

And the second time this happened I said, ‘Not really’.

He said, ‘Okay’. So we were just being used as deflectors.

Right. Interesting. I won’t ask about ideas on free love and all that sort of thing they might have been promoting.

No, they never – they demonstrated it; I don’t know about promoted it.

I think there were confessions later about some of that, but anyway. The next bit I just wanted to ask about: the relationships as Executive Assistant you had with department heads, how did that work? Were you in contact with them or was it through the Ministers’ staffs, in contact with them about what was going on around the place or what the Premier might have wanted? Just trying to work out the role of the Executive Assistant and, when it came to the public service itself, whether it was the Director Policy Division talking to them about what was going on in certain activities.

I think that could be difficult to work out. If you look at the origin of things, if it was something that Policy Division had been working on, then fairly clearly in most instances I’d be going along to – I was going to say ‘represent’ – but to deal with that in that sort of context. But there were often times when something might have arisen in Cabinet or a minister had raised it and I was told to follow it up, in which case it
was unclear whether it was something coming from governmental action or political or whatever.

But with Cabinet there was this South Australian tradition, that lasted on until shortly after Don, that you didn’t have public servants in Cabinet and you didn’t record decisions; you actually wrote on the bottom of a submission that, you know, ‘We adopt section 3 with this modification’, or if it was rejected quite often it would be ‘Refer to Minister’. The Minister would forget it. And the result of that was that quite often ministers weren’t altogether sure what exactly had been decided unless they kept very good notes. And there was a celebrated occasion – but I’ve forgotten who it was and what the issue was – but somebody was questioned by the media about a Cabinet decision, he was the minister responsible, and he said, ‘Well, I’m not too sure what Cabinet decided’.

And they said, ‘Well, what do you mean?’

And he said, ‘Well, there were the big boys up the other end’ (laughs) – which was Dunstan, Hudson and Corcoran – ‘and they were talking all about it and I couldn’t quite catch what they decided’.

‘And I didn’t ask’, yes.

And he didn’t ask.
‘Why was this?’
‘I couldn’t actually hear.’

And the immediate upshot of that was that I was commissioned to get the cabinet room airconditioning fixed so that they could hear. But the symbolism of it was there. But quite often – well, after Cabinet, the Premier would come out and either I would get a briefing straight afterwards – this happened with Policy Division before I was Executive Assistant – but he would run through what the decisions were and what the key ones were and whatever, and ‘Please talk to So-and-so’ or whatever. And then I would tend to get calls from ministers and also from heads of departments saying, ‘What did they decide?’ or ‘We’ve got this back saying “Approved”’. Does
that mean this?’, or whatever. And that to me was a very useful contact and trading point, I guess. So I was a source of information rather than necessarily an emissary from the Premier.

And it depended very much on the issue what the relationship was. And they varied. Like there were some ministers who would summon me – either in anger or for amusement – to have a big argument. (laughter)

For the sake of it, yes.

Yes. And they wouldn’t yell at Dunstan but they might yell at me. Or, you know, ‘What your boss doesn’t bloody understand is this’. There are others; I can recall several instances where I was asked to go and see a minister, no subject matter mentioned but ‘Go and see the Minister’ – like this had been set up through the office – and got there and the Minister cleared his own staff out of the office and basically said, ‘What do you reckon I ought to be doing?’ Which was slightly difficult to deal with, because (a) you might know he or she was a dead-head but you didn’t really want to confront it, and (b) if you don’t know, why don’t you know? And ‘Have you got any ideas?’ and this sort of thing.

‘What the hell are your staff doing around the place?’

Well, I could tell you a lot of the staff weren’t very wonderful.

And I guess there were pros and cons, the position you were in with department heads, they could see it as an advantage that you had an even more direct line to the Premier but at the same time they might have been a bit concerned and suspicious, I’ll call it.

Oh, never suspicious. (laughter) Yes. And it varied according to the circumstance. There were some people who thought that they – well, a bit like police commissioners – they had a separate role and they knew what was good for them, good for the State and so forth. But a lot of people would play the game, if you like, and I was always very careful not to invoke the Premier’s authority unless I’d explicitly got it or explicitly knew what was going on. So partly as a tactical thing
you don’t want to say, ‘Well, the Premier says this; now argue about it’. But some of them would – well, for example, Lindsay Bowes was head of the Department of Labour, and I think he’d been head of a department since he was in short pants or something.

**Pretty well, yes.**

And you’d have to say he was of the ‘old school’, and there were a number of things that he just didn’t want to do, and he was very effective in resisting them. But on certain things, when he realised it was really what the Government was going to proceed with, he would change his mind. So he would bargain – it was like playing poker: ‘If I do this, can you do that?’ or whatever and whatever. And I can remember on sex discrimination legislation he had huge problems about elimination of discrimination, and he had such problems that we put him on the committee to (laughter) introduce the antidiscrimination arrangements. And he’d literally walked out of a meeting that I’d organised because I arranged for a young female, who was Heather Barrett I think, to chair the meeting; and (a) he couldn’t stand the idea of having a young chair – ‘I’m a permanent head and who is this person here?’ ‘Well, she’s actually representing the Premier’s Department.’ Now, with him – – –.

**She’d been working on the area, obviously.**

Yes, she’d done a lot of the work and we were giving her the recognition.

But other people – Ian Cox in Community Welfare was always very astute at working out how his agenda and the Government’s agenda could coincide and, in a way, he was accommodating to a change because essentially, even though he’d originally been hired by a Liberal Government I understand, he was given his head by Labor Governments to create a new department and new way of doing social welfare, and essentially it was Ian Cox’s department. By the time I was on the scene we had these irritants called the ‘Policy Division’ who were asking questions like ‘Why do you do this?’ and ‘Why isn’t it better to do that?’ and he found it difficult to deal with that to some extent, but recognised that ‘If this is what’s happening, then
I’ve got to accommodate to it and get something out of it’. So he would partly come along and volunteer things that would be in accord with what the Government was trying to do or the Premier wanted and partly say, ‘Oh, that won’t work because.’ And he was an activist type for most of the time.

There were other heads of departments who were just keen to vanish into the mist; they thought if they kept their head down nothing would happen.

**Interesting. Just to round up this area of Executive Assistant and Director of the Policy Division and that role or dual roles, what insights do you think you got into the workings of the Policy Division or the Premier’s Department – that’s the public service side – and government activities that you picked up from being an Executive Assistant to the Premier? Were there any particular things – ‘Well, is this how things really work up there? And we’re trying to do that down here or across there and they’re really on about some other agenda?’ or links up with something else that’s happening?**

I’d have to say that, by the time I was in that office, the Dunstan Premiership, the Dunstan Government, had matured to a point where there was not a lot of room for that sort of thing. The sort of things that I got to see more clearly – I think I saw more clearly – were people in the public service who were doing an end run by trying to get in through the ministerial office something that they couldn’t get up through their department. Now, the difference there was that that identified as on the ministerial side rather than the public service side; but I’d come across exactly the same sort of thing at the public service level. I think last time we talked about urban development, where heads of departments had told people not to do certain things and they came and talked to Policy Division, which was not ministerial but it’s the same sort of looking for another route to get your game up.

I came across quite a lot of – well, I got different perspectives on individuals who turned up to see the Premier for political reasons rather than dealing with the Government as government. Like (laughs) one thing, a post-Cabinet schedule that the Premier had, he would debrief about Cabinet; he usually also had a meeting of half an hour to an hour of talking to business leaders or union leaders, and I think occasionally there were other groups but less often. And you would get these
business leaders coming along and they would talk to him about ‘Such-and-such is in trouble. You need to help them out’, or ‘Really we need some government assistance here’, or ‘The Government should invest in that, that and the other’, like putting a case and trying the Government on. But later on, maybe another week later, the media might talk to them and they’d mouth off rabidly about the private sector and this terrible government interference and ‘The Government should stay out of business’. And the ability of people to – well, at one level just lie, or just run different stories in different contexts, was quite vivid to me on a number of occasions.

The union people were not that so much. They were much more locked into a pattern of dealing through their own union and joint union things and labour things – I mean not Labor Party, but labour things – and they tended to put cases that were much more predictable in the sense that they were likely to say much the same sort of things, maybe modified a bit or toned down a bit, that they would privately. But it gave me more of an insight into the way their thinking went, too.

I guess the other thing is that, in that sort of situation, I had more idea of who was doing what and so I could see people who’d do the scheming in government and peddle a bit here and peddle a bit there; I had a greater chance of catching up with what they were really doing.

**Did you ever get alongside regularly any of the other ministers, like the Hudsons of the world or the Corcorans?**

Get alongside in what, a planned sort of way or – – –?

**Yes, planned, like just to get their perspectives on things, like Hudson being quite strong on the economic side of things.**

Going back a bit before that, I had a lot of regular dealings with both Hudson and Corcoran and Hopgood and I should think of others as well. It depended on the issues. But most of them were because there was a standing issue being dealt with. Like Corcoran was put in as Chair of the Urban Development Coordinating...
Committee with a particular purpose there. Now, I would meet with him to brief him about the meeting coming up and then stay on behind after the meeting and then carry through. Hudson was a bit like that with Energy and things connected with that. Hopgood was much more *ad hoc*. But I had a fair amount of contact with most of them. Given the times, the Health Ministers I probably had less to deal with, partly because Health wasn’t regarded so significantly then and partly because the worst minister got the Health Ministry.

**Gee. What about Hudson on the uranium issue, what was his view at the time? Was he with Dunstan on that or was he being egged on by his own department? I think he was Minister for Mines and Energy or whatever it was called.**

He was Minister of Mines and Energy. He was, I guess, argumentative about it in the sense that whatever you said he’d take the opposing view. That was his way of doing things. And we had had the Uranium Enrichment Advisory Committee, I think it was, which is an interesting example of Don’s method of operation, that this had been set up under the impetus of Ben Dickinson as Director of Mines way back and then had been kept on going by people, like at that time Bruce Webb, who were – I was almost going to say ‘rabidly’, but that’s a naughty word – very vigorously –

‘**Vigorously**’, yes.

– pro-uranium. Like Bruce Webb used to say, ‘Look, we used to work up there at Radium Hill and we dug the stuff up and, look, I’m alive, aren’t I?’

‘**And we could even eat it.**’

That’s right. (laughs) So there was that grand tradition. Plus one or two other people added into it, like there was a representative of the Industrial Development Division and then the Department.

**I ended up on it at one stage.**

Yes. And Don kept this going, even though he basically knew what they were going to tell him; but what he was demanding of them was that they would keep up
technically, technologically, with what was going on. And Don was by no means a non-nuclear person and he could see the value in maintaining options – this is over a couple of decades, really – by keeping them going. Now, that committee on occasions met with Hudson and Hudson would argue with anybody – like if Ben Dickinson was saying such-and-such he would take him on and argue with him, and if I said something else he’d argue with me, or if I didn’t say something he would bait me to have an argument – and I think he called that ‘Socratic dialogue’. Some called it ‘ministerial brutality’. This is getting around to saying that he was in support of keeping the options open and developing, if it was possible for development. He was concerned about environmental concerns. He was less concerned about the nuclear proliferation issues in that context.

Interesting. But he was with the Cabinet when it decided to go – or its policy not to mine, presumably.

Yes.

Okay. Just the private sector, who were the main people that Don relied on in the private sector to give him insights and advice, that you recall from seeing them at not so much these formal meetings but people he might want rung up or he’d want to talk to or he talked about regularly catching up with, or whatever?

Good question. This will not be in order of priority or in any ways complete. One of the persons he took most notice of, who was actually a parliamentarian at the time, was Don Laidlaw. From his background in business and engineering and Don’s own attitudes, he was a much more open, thoughtful, considerate type of person and a very straight shooter. And he was also respected in the business community, not for the politics but for his own standing.

There were people – have to get my timing right on this – people like John Uhrig, who at that stage hadn’t become a national figure. He was running Simpson’s or Pope’s or whatever they were. An interesting one was Norman Young, who was in many ways a limited person but very focused on his own area which was accounting-
based business, and the Premier listened to him because he represented that line of opinion rather than necessarily believing him.

Yes. He was in the banking area, I think ES&A\(^1\) (Adelaide?) or one of those banks.

Yes.

He was chair of that when it went under after a while or got taken over.

Yes, and this is really showing the vintage: there was still – I can’t even remember his name – ‘Skinny’ Giles, who was Norman Young’s associate and good friend and so forth. At another level, the Caroma man\(^2\) – I can’t remember his name.

Yes, I’ve got his name somewhere.

Another one was Roscrow, who was much involved with the development of Sola Optical. Who else?

Where did Tomkinson fit in, was he a developer-businessman, or – – –?

Well, Tomkinson was a local politician. I think he’d been Mayor of Norwood or St Peters.

St Peters, yes.

And I can’t even remember what his private occupation was, but I presume he was a very much paid-up Party member and active in that way. But he saw himself as somebody who could do practical-type things and look at opportunities and so forth. He was somebody who appeared in the ministerial office more than with government, put it that way.

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\(^1\) ES&A – English, Scottish and Australian [Bank, Limited]

\(^2\) Caroma was founded in South Australia by Charles Rothauser.
Who else was there at that time? Well, that’s really thinking in the State context. But with companies like BHP and Western Mining and so forth, so Peter Abels was another one and – oh, the Western Mining man.

**Not Morgan? Before him.**

Well, Morgan was there as a junior at that stage. But Morgan’s father had been instrumental in setting up -- --. Oh, Arvi Parbo’s the one I was thinking of. Yes, I guess that’s a reasonable rundown.

**End of part two. Thanks, Bruce.**

END OF PART 2