This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan Foundation interviewing Mr Alan Hutchings. Alan used to be one of the senior people in the planning area in the Monarto Development Commission. The date today is 12th November and the location of the interview is at the Don Dunstan Foundation.

Alan, thanks very much for being prepared to be interviewed and telling us about your experiences in planning in the Dunstan years. Can you just give us some background on how you got involved in planning?

Yes. Well, I was employed in the Lands Department, I suppose in three areas: cartography, surveying and Crown Lands administration; and somewhere along the line I discovered this strange profession called ‘town planning’ and I started to do some studies for it. Eventually I was offered a job in the State Planning Office under Stuart Hart and Doug Speechley, among others, and I went over there to the Police Building, where they were situated, in 1967. And it turned out that my timing was impeccable because the Planning and Development Act had just been promulgated and the State Planning Authority were in full flight and of course the Planning and Development Act was one of Don’s very strong initiatives, among other things to give statutory basis to the metropolitan Adelaide development plan of 1962. But I didn’t start off in the metropolitan section; the Authority was well entrenched in preparing regional plans throughout the State and I was given a possie in that particular section under a chap called Toby Hall, and these plans tried to look holistically at different regions – Kangaroo Island, the South–East, et cetera, et cetera.

It was also the era when conservation or nature conservation and environment were starting to become catchwords and I was deeply involved in preparing the Flinders Ranges plan, which was a bit of a breakthrough, because it recognised that there were areas there that should remain untouched. But from the point of view of perhaps the wider thing, looking at it from the point of view of what Don did as Premier, one has to see that in the context that he was really after total planning and sensible planning throughout the State. But it did (laughs) have some interesting sides to it.

Thinking about those days of looking at these regions and country areas, I remember going over to Eyre Peninsula to talk to people about the Eyre Peninsula
planning area development plan and some of the proposals in that plan were for setting aside some of the last untouched areas as parks. The whole of the Eyre Peninsula mainly was farming land or grazing land, but in among these were areas left. And I was at this meeting in Cummins, called by I think – whoever was the Member over there at that time in State Parliament was – – –.

Was it Blacker?

No, no, it was before that. I think he was a member of the Liberal Movement. He was a pharmacist in Port Lincoln. Anyway, he got me over there and we drove up to this meeting at Cummins where I was to talk to the locals about this Eyre Peninsula plan, and it was quite a (laughs) hostile meeting, actually, and at one stage I remember someone standing up and making a comment about whether I was ‘one of Don Dunstan’s little communists’ sent over to sort these farmers out. (laughs)

So what was your answer to that question?

Well, ‘No’. I mean, I was playing a straight public service bat, I didn’t quite know which way to answer it so I just sort of went on and said I was a professional planner and blah, blah, blah. But it turned out later that – oh, I can remember trying to appeal to them by saying that I understood their point of view: I had an uncle who had been a farmer up around Kimba. But that didn’t wash with these people because Kimba was up there and Cummins was down there and the two didn’t seem to like each other. But someone told me later that Cummins was a centre for a group that I think has now disappeared called the League of Rights –

Right, yes.

– so I walked into (laughs) one of those situations. But anyway, that was the way things went.

What happened to these plans, all these regional plans?

They were all authorised, one after the other, over perhaps a ten-year period and became the sort of foundation for council planning throughout the State, and you can still see, I suppose, archaeological vestiges of them in current council plans.

What were their main features, what were these plans trying to do?
Well, besides setting up proper plans for each of the major towns, like in this case Port Lincoln, they tried to look at the countryside from a conservation point of view and they weren’t anti-farming but they were trying to introduce that particular viewpoint because part of it related back to an economic base called ‘tourism’ and if you want tourists to appreciate the Flinders Ranges they want to see it more or less as it is.

**What were some of the planning principles that – you’d trained in planning, I assume –**

Yes.

– **what were some of the planning principles that were being picked up particularly through this legislation and that were being followed through in the regional plans?**

Well, I suppose just the basic thing of trying to tie together social, economic and what’s these days called environmental issues and put them into particular patterns of land use and zoning and what have you. But after the regional plans I was brought back into the city and I worked on updating the metro plans, and in those days there was very much a feeling of co-ordination within government, and I can remember chairing a number or being involved in working parties in the northern growth areas and the southern growth areas that, among other things, brought the Education Department into it; and I think it was Don Matters who was involved with me and we tried to pick school sites out ahead of time so the Education Department could buy these up as the suburbs grew. People are (laughs) still trying to do that sort of thing, saying that the facility should be there beforehand. And also working with Roads people and –

**Engineering and Water Supply.**

– E&WS and all of those. And this was all under the umbrella of the State Planning Authority, which had Stuart Hart as its leader and Keith Johinke, the Commissioner of Highways, Keith Lewis, the chief of Water; and Derek_scranton wasn’t in that but he would have been an influence from one side, and there were others as well. But the key thing was the way that in those days you had this approach to inter-government co-ordination being very, very strong with these ‘chiefs’, as they were
called, willing to talk to each other and sort things out. Now, I don’t know whether that was ingrained – it could have well been, it could have taken over something that moved on from the Playford Era – but it seemed to me that Dunstan and his ministry encouraged that. That was the feeling I’ve got. And Stuart, who was then my boss, seemed to feel quite strongly about that as well.

And did you ever hear Don talk at the time or meet with him?

Not in those days. It was something that tended to filter through to the people at my level, which would have been, I suppose – in old-fashioned terms, it would have been called the ‘principal officer’ level, and above that the ‘executive officer’, which I got to later. (laughs)

Did you get any sense, ‘Well, here’s this new Premier and he’s got all these good ideas on planning; we need to do things differently or think more broadly’?

Oh, yes. Yes, I think that came through, because before the Planning and Development Act, which was very much his baby, Playford, although you could say he was a planner with a different way of doing things, Don wanted the Planning and Development Act to be an encompassing act and the thing about good design was coming through all the time as well.

Had Hugh Stretton written his book around that time or was that later?

It was around about that time, yes. Because when I moved to Monarto Hugh came and laid down the law a few times. (laughs)

What was he saying?

Oh, no, he wasn’t saying things that we didn’t agree with, but just that Hugh in full flight in those days was quite forceful and put down a number of principles that are well-described in his book, very clearly; and I think we were pleased to hear that. He was one of the grand old men, as far as I was concerned.

That was the book Ideas for Australian cities.

That’s right.

Can we just go back to the years we’re talking about: this first period, what years were they?
Nineteen sixty-seven to early ’70s.

And the Whitlam Government came in in 1972.

That’s right.

Did that have any impact on what was going on?

Well, I think that Don Dunstan and we generally rather thought – I mean, the Premier never said this – he may have, he may have later, when we had one or two discussions or general flow in him walking through the Monarto process – that the Feds followed South Australia with their New Cities programs and some of the other things.

The ideas, yes.

Yes. I mean, Stretton was a South Australian; Monarto, or the idea of a separate city, was something that preceded or predated –

Murray Newtown it was first.

– the Whitlam Era. In fact, NURDA¹ was a McMahon initiative.

NURDA standing for – – –?

National Urban and Regional Development Authority.

Wouldn’t be too popular a name these days.

(laughter) So all of that was in the air, and a lot of it I think flowed from the Planning and Development Act way of looking at things.

Going back to the Planning and Development Act, the then, as it was then called, Royal Australian Planning Institute president – oh, I suddenly can’t think of his name. Jim – he was the Chief Valuer for the Commonwealth in South Australia. Jim McDonald. And he went down to the Upper House debates, I understand – this was in ’66, I suppose – and browbeat (laughs) the then conservative Opposition who were being difficult in putting it through.

In the Upper House.

¹ NURDA – National Urban and Regional Development Authority.
Yes, in the Upper House. Because I remember bumping into him or meeting him at something that morning and he was (laughs) quite tired because he’d been there all night yacking away and supporting the Premier.

Oh, very good. And when the Labor Government lost and Steele Hall came in – we’re talking about the end of the 1960s here, before Don Dunstan came back –

Yes.

– was there any discernible difference in feel or attitude when the Steele Hall Government was there?

I can’t remember it, I can’t remember it. It just seemed to me to be a continuous – – –. He must have been someone who was happy to fit into that.

Right, just follow through.

Yes.

And the Adelaide 2000 report, can you recall roughly when that was worked on? That was a bit of a landmark report as well.

Yes, that would have been around 1970. I didn’t work on it myself. That probably was when I was doing some of this country stuff. But I only dug it up recently to use it for lectures in planning history to the Planning students in Steve Hamnet’s courses at the University of South Australia, the Planning students.

What sort of things did they have in it that were quite different to – – –?

Well, in those days Adelaide was growing at three-plus per cent and the State Planning Authority were looking at where that should go and there was the idea of twin cities, with a whole new city being built down at McLaren Vale, Adelaide and that; the idea of a number of small satellites or developing country towns, quite largely; long corridor plans, you know, expanding Adelaide but on a more planned basis than they were worried about may have happened. But out of all of that what seemed to grab people was the idea of another city, and of course all we wine lovers couldn’t have d’Arenberg being wiped out so Monarto had to be the – – –. (laughter)

Right, fair enough.
Well, I’m perhaps only being half-facetious. And there was a secret committee that I think Stuart has talked about in his interviews, and Monarto grew out of that.

Yes, I remember some of the pressures on the nearby vineyards and I was involved in a study on family-owned wineries and some incentives for keeping them and trying to stop the urban encroachment, which succeeded in some respects but went through in others. We’ve talked about the planning legislation; when it came to what I call ‘planning on the ground’ – that is, decision making on long-term investments or, for that matter, if we look at micro-activities as well like approval of housing designs and where houses fitted on blocks of land and things like that – can you recollect any of the changes that were coming through as the Planning and Development Act was implemented and the more detailed controls?

Well, there were the quite detailed zoning –

Zoning.

– you know, residential zonings – and in those days even the debates on urban consolidation hadn’t gained momentum, but one of the problems was that that ’62 plan did face up to urban consolidation and it made a lot of technical sense by suggesting that Hackney and St Peters were just right for high-density development, (laughs) but other people had other ideas, didn’t they? It’s a very difficult thing to achieve.

But one of the big investments in those days, which started to become a parallel investment with Monarto later, was Noarlunga Centre; the Housing Trust in effect were building a new city there after all with Noarlunga Centre and all of the planning of housing areas, which were very nicely planned with linear parks and what have you around Morphett Vale East and Christie Downs and Hackham. People now see those as deprived areas, but that’s nothing to do with the physical plan because the same sort of principles were used later at Golden Grove; so it’s more of the income level of the people who shift in. And even the idea of coordinated centres, which we’re now seeing, especially at Golden Grove: that was very much something that the Trust were pushing.

Yes. I remember being on a committee looking at decentralising offices to metropolitan regional centres that went up and then it disappeared, but you get that sort of debate now as to the pressures on the city and traffic and all that sort of thing.

Well, they were strong recommendations in the ’91 planning review, the same thing.
And just at the micro level, there was some resolution between housing and commercial/industrial zoning, particularly in the inner and near-inner city areas where there was that conflict before I think the – particularly before the new planning legislation came in. Like in certain areas at Mile End –

Yes.

– there was industry and then there was housing, and it wasn’t until later that that sort of zoning came in to try and resolve some of those issues.

Well, that was something that resulted from the ’67 initiatives, yes.

Good. All right. Just relating to the private sector, you mentioned some of the farmers earlier on: how did they get worked into all of this planning?

Well, up in the Flinders they were worked in in an informal way but in due course there was actually a thing called the ‘North Flinders Committee’, but that was well after the Dunstan Era. But I think we were encouraged by the climate of the day to talk no-nonsense turkey, if that’s not a – that’s a terrible – – –. Oh, well, I’m being interviewed, all sorts of things pop up! (laughs)

Go for it.

But to talk turkey in a no-nonsense way to graziers up there, and to talk to them about the benefits that can flow through from planning and saying in that area, ‘Keep some of these areas as no-go; keep your stocking rates low; because in the future the tourist developments that are now starting there, if you can guide them your natural resource on your pastoral land can be an asset to you and the community at large and to the State.’ And that’s been proven. I mean, now you go up there and every grazier has got some four-wheel-drive tour on their property which means they’re able to channel people just where to go, et cetera, et cetera, and I think that in those days we may have been able to teach them some sort of basic planning process.

So it wasn’t just the straight, ‘We’re here to graze.’ There are other economic options now.

No. The attitude of, ‘We’re from town, we’re here to help you.’ We tried to be genuine about it. (laughs) And I think it was something that Don himself and his ministry, that the climate there tended to flow through and encourage us, it really did
when I think back. I’m trying not to be too nostalgic, but I really think it was something that flowed through from the centre. 

You felt that they had an appreciation of all of this –

Yes.

– and knew what they were doing.

Yes.

In all of that, there seemed to have been some special type of projects like Red Cliffs and West Lakes and even the City of Adelaide Plan. Did you do anything in those sort of areas or have any observations about those or areas taken right out of the – well, not taken right out, but put alongside the ongoing planning processes?

They seem to have been within the context of the metropolitan plan. Like if you take West Lakes, that you could say was an updated version of the old Port Adelaide proposals that the old Harbours Board were pushing, and they were incorporated in the metropolitan plan, so West Lakes flowed on from that.

The City of Adelaide Plan, City of Adelaide was always a separate thing. But the City of Adelaide Plan in 1976 was coming through and some of the detailed, technical ideas with that were – at Monarto, we’re talking to the city people because we were coming up with similar ideas about urban design, and from the point of view of urban design we knew we had the Premier right behind us, because he told us. (laughs)

Right, very good.

I wasn’t involved in Red Cliffs, that was a little bit later, but I remember it.

What about there were all these – or it seemed to me to be – new people coming in, planners, George Clarke with the City of Adelaide and his group including the chap who’s now the City Manager or chief executive of Salisbury –

Stephen Hains.

– Stephen Hains, yes: did you notice a lot more of these younger people coming in with ideas, including yourself of course?

Well, Stephen came in a bit later. I’ll come back to Stephen if you like. But I think it was around about – now, let me think: it would have been 1973 when I was
involved in these co-ordinating groups for northern growth and southern growth. And then the Monarto Development Commission Act was proclaimed – I think that was early '74 or late '73; I should know it but it’s just gone out of my head – and one thing led to another and I found myself given the job as Director of Town Planning for Monarto. And of course (laughs) that was pretty exciting. I mean, we had Adelaide growing and this was going to be to divert Adelaide’s growth; we had the New Cities programs coming in from the Whitlam Government; I was appointed and a number of other people like Hank Den Ouden as the Architecture Director, Ivan Lees as the Engineer, Joe Abrahams as our administrator, and Joe was like me from the South Australian public service. We’d applied for these jobs and were picked. In some instances we were quite flattered to find we’d beat international competition. So there was a nice mixture of local lads and people from interstate.

But somewhere along the line Pak Poy’s firm had been given the task of doing some early concepts and Pat had talked Dunstan into – I’m just trying to remember; I think Pat told me this – he was worried that he would be seen as a pedestrian engineer, so he suggested to Don that he bring in someone with a flair, a design flair. Now, I don’t know how it happened but the next thing we had Boris Kazanski, who was the man who’s alleged to have had the design flair. But Boris dragged in behind him an English planning firm called Shankland Cox, and Shankland Cox was led here by a planner called Charles Bosel. So I took on this job of planning this new city and I had two huge planning and design teams to deal with, Pak Poy’s on one side and Kazanski/Shankland Cox on the other, and they were both jealous of each other.

Oh, gosh, yes.

And Peter Harrison was involved, he had retired from the NCDC$^2$ as their chief planner, and he was the only sensible one I had to talk to, and he became a bit of a mentor and he taught me a few ways of banging heads together, but it was terribly stressful. Eventually, Tony Richardson, our general manager, went to Don and I think (laughs) laid down the law in reverse and somewhere along the line I and my

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2 NCDC – ????
then small team, with Steve Parzsit, a Hungarian planner and a brilliant designer, myself and two or three others – Geoff Sanderson, landscape architect – we then brought in our own consultants, (laughs) Lester Firth Merton – Diane Firth, landscape architect, Alf Lester and Howard Merton, who later on got out of the planning game and ran the Belair Country Club. But we formed a team. We took on board the other stuff, and I think Boris kicked up a fuss and Pat Pak Poy kicked up a fuss and all these other people kicked up a fuss and kept trying to go round behind us to the Premier, but at the end of the day he supported us.

He came around to a couple of meetings or presentations at the office and seemed to be quite happy with what we were doing and, as I think I said in a testimonial that I prepared for the Foundation a couple of years ago, we had all of our work laid out for him to look at at our office on Greenhill Road and we were quite nervous because Kazanski came up with these grand, outrageous schemes of megastructures sitting out there in the Mallee in the countryside which has just been shown recently on this show, *Rainshadow*, that’s been the site used by the people who made that TV show, and some of his stuff wiped out the bush that we’d thought was quite (laughs) valuable in the centre of the town. Anyway, we explained to the Premier the architectural approaches, the urban design approaches, the social planning approaches; the *Monarto Act* was very innovative in that it was the first time the words ‘social planning’ were used in legislation, because the Commission was charged with the social planning of the new city. And Don wandered around and looked at things and nodded and didn’t say much. In those days there weren’t strings of minders, I think there was only one. And I’ve never forgotten: he walked out after spending quite a bit of time and listening to our explanations, and Hank Den Ouden, our architect, was quite shattered because he was waiting for comments from the client, so to speak, and this minder turned around and said, ‘Thumbs up. If Don had been unhappy you would have known about it.’ (laughter)

So this planning, it was both the design – that’s the buildings –

Well, the spaces.

– and the surround, the spaces. Just the broad planning, how did that work? You were anticipating a certain number of people –
Yes.

– over a certain number of years – – –.

That’s right. Yes, there was a development program written out. It was all worked all the way through with this grand plan with – sort of reinventing the neighbourhood unit system but in a more up-to-date way, because our social planners under Bert Surmon went back and looked at the whole neighbourhood unit idea and reconfirmed it using the latest sociological techniques or whatever, or studies. And the plans we tried to tie into nature – that was in the days of design with nature being the new philosophy; it had always been around, but one that had become more overt – and we tried to tie those two things together, so that public transport would not be that far away from each house on one side and the bush not too far on the other, with the community centre in the hub of each unit.

Was that based on any overseas ideas, or – – –?

Well, these planning ideas have been around for ages, but we tried to give it a particular South Australian slant. In fact, the general planning proposals for Monarto, which were issued in 1975, tried to put Monarto within the tradition – (laughs) with conscious purpose – quite literally of Light and what Charles Reade come up with, and tried to give a distinctive South Australian flavour to these international ideas. You don’t take them on willy-nilly, you try to give them this flavour. Don himself, we used his statements about Monarto quite strongly, about ‘looking for a place in the sun’ and something would have a South Australian approach and all of that.

Who was writing that, do you know, what he was saying?

Well, who wrote it for him? I’d (laughs) like to think he wrote it himself.

Right, okay.

It was based on some of his speeches, so I don’t know.

That’s interesting. He came and had a look at the design; did you meet with him at all after that?

Yes, he came up to the site once or twice. I just can’t remember the exact occasions. Some of them are blurs in my mind. He came up, I know there was a tree-planting
ceremony, things like that. There was another time that I remember quite well because – oh, no, no, he didn’t come. That was with Mark Oliphant; he came up. I remember because there’s photos of me (laughs) pointing, doing a Colonel Light. Oh, no, that was in the Cities Commission Annual Report.

There were all these people kept coming to see – you know, flying over from Canberra, or we had people coming in from England at one stage; not the consultants but someone from one of the new towns over there who was a general manager. And of course, unfortunately, South Australia and Adelaide stopped growing so suddenly there was no need for all of this.

So what was the Canberra involvement apart from, say, the money?

Well, they tried to stick their finger in every little pie, if you know what I mean. They tried to tell us what to do, which we deeply resented. (laughs) They weren’t only trying to tell us what to do, they were trying to tell the Housing Trust what to do at Noarlunga, they were trying to tell Ken Tauber what to do in the Lands Department, where he was not only with the Lands Department, he was with the Land Commission and trying to look at some sort of leasehold rather than freehold for new properties; we were looking at that for Monarto as well. Rae Else-Mitchell, he came over, but he was more sensible. But we had all of these people coming from DURD³ and the Cities Commission trying to tell us what to do, so we’d go back to the Chief Planner’s meetings in Canberra and try to tell them what to do. (laughs)

And what was the difference in what they were saying and what you wanted to do?

It’s hard to pin it down now, George. They were just wanting to tell us what to do because that’s what they thought their job was, right down to the finest detail.

It wasn’t based on any different philosophy on planning or anything?

Well, it was hard to – no, well, their philosophy was, I suppose, making sure that any federal money that was spent was spent wisely, to give them their due, that’s what their job was. But because many of them were trained planners or
architectural engineers, they tried to stick their oar into our particular designs. I think it was just the nature of the times. You may or may not recall that in 1975 I think there was a State election and Don used the feds to his advantage by saying we didn’t want anything to do with (laughs) the way they were carrying on. So the stuff that I’m talking about may have been within that climate and context.

**And you mentioned social planning before; what was the understanding at that time about what this was going to add?**

Well, really, what that meant, what that all boiled down to was that our social planners, one of whom I still see occasionally, a chap called Olly Morozow who after Monarto left and went to work for SANTOS, those people would say, ‘All right, in a particular area you need a school and you need this and you need that.’ The facilities, they tried to codify and rationalise some of the work that was being done elsewhere but off and on not quite – work that wasn’t quite formed up. So we would not interfere with that. We’d say, ‘Okay, that’s what you want; we’ll design that in the plans and take it from there.’ So it was a nice – they were our clients, so to speak.

**And did any of these ideas get transferred, translated, to the planning that was going on for the rest of the State, or was it pretty sealed up to Monarto?**

No, we interacted a lot with the Housing Trust planners and a lot of this came from – the philosophy of it was pretty well written, in many ways, in Stretton’s book, that’s from the social side, and design with nature from the environmental side. I think there was a good interchange in those days. I can’t remember any jealousy and compartmentalising. The RDC-type people and Delfin, there was a fair bit of interchange, yes.

**And they picked up ideas – – –.**

Yes, and we picked it up from them. We would like to think – and people such as David Jones at University of Adelaide have said since – that, looking at what’s

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3 DURD – Department of Urban and Regional Development.
4 SANTOS – South Australia Northern Territory Oil Search.
5 Housing estate developers.
happened after Monarto, he’s traced influences: Seaford and Golden Grove and other places. I mean, I haven’t; that would be improper. But someone, an independent thinker like David, has written articles saying that he had traced stuff through. In fact, one of the things that he’s traced: the way our city centre was going to be planned, he’s traced that through, and if you wanted to see some of the way that the Monarto city centre could have looked you go to look at Yulara.\footnote{Tourist resort in Northern Territory, near Ayers Rock/Uluru.} Philip Cox was one of our architects and then he went on and did Yulara.

We had a very close relationship as designers between town planners as designers, architects as designers and landscape architects, and the philosophy was that if it was two-dimensional design I took responsibility and once it became three-dimensional – or more three-dimensional than two-dimensional – then Hank Den Ouden and the architects took responsibility, and that worked like a charm. You mentioned earlier the City of Adelaide: we’d say that our planning approaches were urban design-related; at the same time the City of Adelaide were coming up with their design future character statements for built-up areas, so there was a fair bit of interaction actually between the George Clarke team and us at Monarto.

**Were you involved in the planning of movement of government departments up there?**

Yes, to some extent. I can remember there was a tour around the site where there were a number of representatives from government departments, both at senior level and at staff level – a sort of informal union level, so to speak – and I can remember one officer, who shall be nameless, from – I think the planners were going up there, Agriculture, Forestry, I’ve forgotten the rest – who kept saying, ‘But why should we come up here, why, why, why?’ And all day I said, ‘It’s not my decision. You ring the Premier.’ (laughs)

**So how do you see that? Like there was a bit of a fuss about it?**

Oh, yes.

**And how do you think the general community reacted to that?**
I’ve no idea. We worked closely with the Murray Bridge people on a number of things, to involve them, because from one way of looking at it we could have started by building as an extension of Murray Bridge. In fact, at the end it came back to that. And I mentioned RDC; in the dying days, so to speak – and this was after Don had become ill and left us, gone interstate – well, gone into hospital, hadn’t he, first?

Yes, then he went off to Perugia, I think, to study Italian for a while.

Yes. But we closely looked at a new start for Monarto by it being a rural living area near Murray Bridge and Steve Parzsit and I designed and planned a rural living estate based on horses, where we used – Radburn system is where you have pedestrians separated from road traffic – and so we did this writ large where we had horse paths running through. And that really caught the imagination of some of the real estate agents in the area between Adelaide and Monarto. Then it also – talking about RDC – Tony Richardson got talking to Max Lieberman, and Max was very, very interested. Now, I don’t know how much of this would still be around or how much of my memory is good here, but I just remember Max and Tony Richardson really getting together in a huddle about this. I’m not sure about the rest of the Commission, Newelll Platten and John Mant; by this time the former Chairman had died.

Yes, I know the one you mean.

Yes. It comes.

Taylor.

Ray Taylor, yes. And a proposition was put to the then Minister for Planning, I think it would have been Hugh Hudson, but Hugh looked askance at it and said, ‘I don’t want to be involved in perpetuating one of Don Dunstan’s silly ideas.’

So what happened in the last days of the Commission, what was the lead-up to you realising this dream had ended?

Well, I suppose the big shock was November 11, the dismissal. People – I can remember the shockwave, [it] probably went through a lot of places, but we saw this as a problem. I think it put the finger on something we’d all feared. Just before that the Commission had been turned into a consulting firm and we did the first Port
Adelaide redevelopment project and we did the new plan for Leigh Creek, which was very successful – you know, the Leigh Creek as it is today, the people up there are still happy with it, it seems. But how was it handled? It was a very strong team and people were working seven days a week and very strongly committed. There were a lot of people in their early twenties through to people in their late thirties, forties, all strongly committed. Highly individualistic, and when it started to be wound down there was some people who found themselves out on a limb because of their different contracts. And because they were highly individualistic they’d never joined the union, like the PSA. But who did we have as our administrative officer or director of administration but Joe Abrahams, who had been a past president, and it was quite interesting. There we had a Labor Government who were being quite cruel, in hindsight, to some of these people; you know, they didn’t want to know about Monarto any more, either, and in fact one of our staff, young female staff, gave Hugh Hudson the rounds of the kitchen table in front of everybody –

Really? Gosh.

– at a Christmas do, really got stuck into him about the Government’s attitude to the staff, and that may have reversed the situation (laughs) more than Joe Abrahams and the union having a chat.

What Christmas is this, 1977–––?

No, it would have been later than that, perhaps ’78, I suppose. I’m not sure.

Still under Don Dunstan?

No, no. Well, Don – oh, look, my dates are getting a bit mixed up here.

He resigned in February ’79.

Yes, but probably his mind was not on because of other things in those days.

Yes, okay.

It may have been ’79, but I think it would have been ’78. But anyway, it all worked out pretty well for people at the end. This was a sort of anecdotal thing.

7 PSA – Public Service Association.
So what actually happened, who told the staff that this was it, this was the end sort of thing, or did that come later on? I know you're winding down.

No, I think that was brought out, but it was just before Christmas, actually. It would have been Tony Richardson would have called everyone together.

So what happened to you after Monarto?

I went to what was then the – John Mant, who earlier on had been one of the Commissioners and earlier on he’d been Whitlam’s Principal Private Secretary and he came over to work for Hugh Hudson, and he was given the job of heading up this new department of HURA – you know, the three wise monkeys – HUA, HURA and URA. It had three different names: Housing and Urban Affairs; Housing, Urban and Regional Affairs; and then the ‘Housing’ was dropped off and it was URA. That statement sort of came out quite inadvertently, but I remember people used to talk about it in that way. But anyway, I went to that department for a while.

And what lessons do you think you brought in from Monarto that you’d picked up in your work there, or ideas?

Yes, it was a strange time. I think it was an era where there was a bit of a retreat and I think John tried to motivate people to look at planning in a slightly different way. I’d like to think I was there to give him a bit of a hand in that. But it’s hard to say at this stage.

What was your role? You were Director of Planning at Monarto, so – – –?

Yes, I became a troubleshooter.

Troubleshooter, right.

Yes. You know, I went back up to the Flinders to solve certain problems there and there was something with the staff weren’t knowing how to handle themselves before what was then the Planning Appeal Board. There were a number of those sorts of things. And then he left and the Tonkin Government came in, the Planning Act came in.

So which Planning Act’s this?

It’s the 1982 Act, and that’s set up, it took policy responsibility away from the State Planning Authority, which was abolished, and given to the Minister. That was
Wotton, David Wotton. But there was an advisory committee that was set up and I was, I suppose, their – and there was also what was called the South Australian Planning Commission, which was mainly a development control authority. Stephen Hains came in as full-time Chairman of both of these, and I was given the job of being Stephen’s executive planner, I think they called me, to give a link between these two independent statutory authorities and the public service. And the days after Monarto in HURA were not particularly happy for me because you had one great scheme collapse; but under the Planning Act with Stephen and what have you things picked up, that was a good period, where we tried to sort of brush off some of the old ideas and give them a new lease of life, et cetera.

So what were these new ideas that led to the ‘82 Act? I know you’ve talked about the separation of policy, but what were the – – –?

Yes. It seemed to be in the air at the time that policy should be a political thing and not something where the State Planning Authority, these chiefs come up with. There was a whole change of philosophy there.

This was under the Liberal Government?

Yes, but it was something that was as much – you know, John Mant used to espouse this very strongly, and the Tonkin Government seemed to put into effect some of his ideas.

I see.

But I don’t say it was – I just say it was a new philosophy, new approach that was coming through in planning generally in those days and public administration. It’s one of those debates which I often have today. (laughs)

Who’s responsible and who’s accountable.

Yes.

So you mentioned in some of our informal discussions your role in the Tourism Development Authority or the Tourism Development Advisory Council of South Australia: can you talk about that a bit, with the dates and what your role there was?

Yes. Let me try and think back. That was something else that Don was fired up about in the early ’70s, tourism. I was in New Zealand as an ANZAC Fellow in
1971 and while I was over there I got a bit involved with national parks planning and tourist planning. Before that I had been seconded to an organisation called ANTA – Australian National Travel Association – which has disappeared but its successor has been the sort of federal tourist bodies. It used to put out a magazine that in my childhood everyone knew about called *Walkabout*. Anyway, I think it would have been in ’72 or ’73, I’ve forgotten, but Stuart Hart came in to see me and said, ‘I’ve had an interesting phone call from the Premier’s office. He wants to appoint you to a new body he’s setting up that will report to him called the Tourist Development Advisory Council [TDAC]. What’s going on, Alan?’ (laughs) He said, ‘That’s fine by me’, because he, Stuart – great mind, Stuart – he could see the connections between good planning, good physical design, good layout, *et cetera*, and attractive areas, and obviously the Premier could, too.

So the Premier set up this organisation and it was headed by a chap called Reg Rechner, who had just retired from some senior office in what was then TAA. 8 Other members besides myself were Ray Waters, who was general manager for decades of the RAA, 9 and Joe O’Sullivan, Group Captain Joe O’Sullivan, who was at that stage heading up something called the Adelaide Convention Bureau which I think grew into that great thing that we now see. And our support first up was someone whose name slips my mind but somewhere along the line I remember Rod Hand became involved with it, and I think our first meeting the Premier came along and briefed us about what we should do but from there after he tended to lose interest a bit – well, directly like that; although we were supposed to report to him I think it would have been Broomhill or one of those others, which is fair enough.

Glen Broomhill, yes.

One of those, which is fair enough – I mean, premiers can’t keep their finger on everything – as long as you feel that someone like Don had the philosophy that drove you.

So can you remember what he said that meeting?

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8 TAA – Trans–Australia Airlines.
9 RAA – Royal Automobile Association.
No, I can’t. I tried to look up some – I haven’t got any records of it and I gave it a quick Google scan but there’s nothing there. It would be in the archives of what was then the Tourist Bureau, what was then the good old Tourist Bureau, run by Perc Polnitz.

**Perc Polnitz, yes.**

Now, Perc was not happy with this TDAC idea though his offsider, Ted Correll –

**Ted Correll, yes.**

– very much was. Ted was quite a visionary, I recall.

**Did Len Amadio get involved?**

Not that I recall, no. He may have, but I can’t – – –.

**So he’d stayed with the arts.**

He may have. But I remember the Council, we probably went for about three years and then at one meeting Reg Rechner said, ‘I’ve had enough. I’m sick and tired of we being undermined by Perc Polnitz.’ And he said, ‘We’re all resigning, aren’t we?’ (laughter) So that was that. I thought it was a great job. But I think Tony Richardson at Monarto was quite pleased; he liked the kudos of us senior officers being on boards and things but we were flat out and we really couldn’t put the time into some of these other things.

**What did it achieve that you can recall?**

I don’t think it would have achieved a lot except to establish the idea of getting the industry involved and other people involved, that tourism was a bigger thing than a tourist bureau that was nothing more than a travel agency, that you had to develop policy in an overall sense for tourism as you did for industrial development, planning new cities or – – –.

**One of the things we came across in some informal discussion was the Alternative Lifestyles Project. I’m just wondering if you can talk about that, because you were involved in that somewhere too, weren’t you?**

Yes. I think in the days of troubleshooting in HURA I think the department was asked to have some senior officer sent across to Premier’s Department to become
involved in this, and somewhere among my souvenirs, George – it’ll turn up somewhere – is a report I did about certain locations and what principles should be set out. I’m trying to think back to those days. I can remember a meeting – I think it might have been Kuitpo Forest or somewhere like that – with some people who if you saw them today you’d say, ‘Gee, these old-fashioned people!’ but they had kaftans and long hair and didn’t use any underarm and things like that; they were clean but you know what I mean. We went to this meeting down there and we all sat around in a circle and I was sitting opposite Bruce, and I probably –

**Bruce – – –?**

– Guerin, who I think was chairing the group, for the Premier, of officers from other departments. We all sat down there looking what we thought was quite casual – I thought Bruce sitting there going ‘(hums) Om’ looked quite stupid, and I’m sure he thought I looked the same. (laughter) It was a strange little project, it really was. I think in hindsight something may have come of it if Don had really thought it through, but this was perhaps in the days before he took ill.

**So this was around Maslin Beach nudist beach time?**

Yes, it would have been, may have been after that. But also we were given a guru to advise us, that was Jim Cairns, and I remember having lunch with Jim and I can’t think of the name of the other fellow but he was involved with the food side of things.

**Not Graham Latham?**

Graham Latham, in fact, yes. He was from the Premier’s Department, I think. I can’t remember – no, no, it would have been – – –.

**Not Ceruto?**

No, no, no, no. I think he was from Further Education or something like that. I can’t remember now. But we had quite a strange lunch with Jim Cairns. It was an amazing lunch. I could see why people were sort of a bit overwhelmed by Jim because of these eyes that looked through you into some Utopian future.
Now, Don resigned because of ill health in ’79 and he came back to Adelaide in 1986, I think, and was at the launch of your book on the history of planning in SA. Can you talk about that a bit?

Yes. Somewhere in the early ’80s the Royal Australian Planning Institute offered Don honorary fellowship at the Institute – and we were tickled that he accepted that, because going back to the other stuff we talked about – and he was asked whether he would launch the book *With conscious purpose: a history of town planning in South Australia* at Fables Bookshop which is no longer there in a basement in Gawler Place, between Grenfell Street and the Mall, and he accepted. It was quite an event, actually, it really was. This was when he was heading up tourist development in Victoria. He came along and spoke very well, and the interesting thing was that in his talk he said it was nice to come back to South Australia, or words to this effect, and a well-planned place (laughs) that put Melbourne to shame, or words to that effect. Well, with having Don launched the book we thought, ‘Well, next day in the press there’ll be some nice words, a sort of potted review of the book and all of that.’ But no; the headlines – especially in the Melbourne papers – were along the lines of, ‘Victoria’s tourism head cans Melbourne’. (laughs)

So presumably that history would have talked about Don Dunstan and some of his legacies; what do you think those legacies were when Don Dunstan was Premier, what did he bring to planning in South Australia?

Well, I think that Don set up a structure – go back a bit. I think that Don understood what ‘town planning’, to use that old-fashioned term, is about. You know, from the public point of view it’s about pulling together urban services, infrastructure, community facilities and all of that, making sure they’re co-ordinated and in the right place at the right time and they’re there for community needs, and he was very strong on that. But he seemed to also understand the economic and environmental side of things, he really seemed to understand that. If you go back, Charles Reade said that planning was too important to have with anyone else but the Premier because of that strong co-ordination emphasis. But his feel for the aesthetics of things – it’s an old-fashioned word, sometimes people giggle about it – but urban design at the end of the day is an aesthetic thing, to make your planning product look good and work well, and he understood that. The City of Adelaide Plan I don’t
think would have come into operation, and that was a trendsetter for built-up areas, I don’t think it would have come into operation without his say-so, his enthusiasm for that sort of thing.

The way he encouraged us at Monarto: I’ve mentioned the few times we had interaction, but you knew he was behind us. Now, we mightn’t have come up with the sort of grand plans that perhaps other people hoped we would, but I just felt that he recognised that in a low-key way we were trying to do things just a bit better. Of course, the Planning and Development Act, that was the start of the modern era in planning and to me it’s sad that planning is no longer at the centre of things.

You’ve done a recent update of that book, With conscious purpose. What are the sort of conclusions coming out in that about planning these days?

Well, the last chapter that Stephen Hamnett and myself wrote, we’ve called it ‘The era of strategic planning’ and we go through all these strategic plans where people have tried to put things together and tried to look at new ways of doing this, *et cetera, et cetera*, but then we sort of relate it to what’s happened on the ground, they don’t match up that closely; whereas back in the Dunstan Era and for part of the time since you can see how things did match up. I thought that David Wotton turned out to be a very good Planning Minister, and of course after him, when the new Labor Government came in after Tonkin, we had Don Hopgood. He’s just an unassuming fellow who just got on with it, but he seemed to have that feel for things.

Coming back to the Dunstan ministry you had people like – Don Hopgood would have been pretty young then, but seeing Jay Weatherill the other night I thought, ‘Good lord!’, you know?

And you just said these days there doesn’t seem to be a match between the plan and what happens on the ground, notwithstanding all the planning that seems to be going on.

Yes.

Is there an analysis about that? What’s the reason for that?

Well, I think I’d need to give that a lot more thought before I put words to this. Stephen Hamnett and I, I think we might do something we’ve had a bit of a go at.
We’re waiting for John Spoehr’s next paper book rather than the web-based things that no-one ever really (laughs) seems to read, if you know what I mean. Perhaps they do it more than they used to. But I think that sort of analysis I would like to be very careful in the consideration of what we say.

All right. Well, thanks very much, Alan. I think we’ve covered a pretty big area here and you’ve given us a lot of information, so thanks very much.

It’s a pleasure.

It’s the end of the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW.