This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan History Project for the Don Dunstan Foundation, today the 9th March 2009, interviewing Mr Rod Hand about tourism and tourism development in the 1970s. Mr Hand was one of the original people who worked in the Premier’s Department with Len Amadio on tourism.

Rod, thanks very much for doing the interview for the Don Dunstan History Project. Can you just talk a bit about yourself so somebody reading the transcript has an idea of who you were, your education, your work, some of your work history and then how you moved into the position in the Premier’s Department at the time?

Thank you, George. Yes, I joined the public service in 1962 after doing my secondary education at Brighton High School, and I worked in the Department of Education and from there went to the Minister of Roads and Transport and Local Government’s office up until 1971. I was then appointed to the position of clerk in the Premier’s and Cabinet Office, was it?

No, just Premier’s Department.

In Premier’s Department, in the Policy Secretariat, and I was there between August ’71 and August ’73. I was then appointed a Senior Tourist Development Officer with the then Tourist Bureau and had a number of different titles over many years, finishing as Development Manager in what was then the Tourism Commission. I then went to the McLaren Vale and Freureu Visitors’ Centre at McLaren Vale as the first manager of the Visitors’ Centre.

So you’ve got a pretty broad experience in the area. Just talking about the position of clerk when you started there in the Premier’s Department, that’s working with Len Amadio in the Policy Secretariat, what was the role of the position?

Well, it’s interesting. I started on a salary of four thousand, eight hundred dollars, which was a significant increase in my pay. The position ostensibly was to do the clerical work because there were a number of project officers and yourself as research officer, and the Premier had given the Secretariat the task of implementing his manifesto on tourism, certain projects, and they required somebody to do all of
the secretarial and clerical work. I found that in fact I was doing that in the morning, or thereabouts, and spent most of my time with Len Amadio on both arts and tourism development and that developed into doing my own smaller projects. So in effect, although I was a clerical officer, it became a clerical officer/project officer in a way.

And Len, it seems, was heavily interested in the arts side. Did he leave you a lot of the work, the thinking work and the follow-up work, to do? Like you were a clerk but, as you say, you were doing a lot of project work.

Yes.

So in effect a project officer.

I think that’s true. Len certainly was heavily-involved in the arts, that was his major focus, but also he didn’t shy off on the tourism work, but certainly I did more of the smaller projects tourist work and also would follow up and do parts of projects for him, and also projects that other people were involved in, for example some of the restaurant projects and projects that some people like John Ceruto were allocated at the time.

We’ll come to that later on. Were you also working closely – this was when you started there – with the people in the Tourism Bureau?

No, not at all.

Not at all.

No. Working in the Minister of Local Government’s office as closely as I could with local government, proved over many years to be a very good starting point because a lot of the tourism development activities over the future years were actually involved with local government.

And when you worked with Len did you work closely with the Tourism Bureau people at all?

No, not particularly. I worked with a lot of different departments, and one of the benefits of working in the Policy Secretariat, which is something I’ve never forgotten, is the fact that a clerk could attend meetings and make statements and
make comments and was listened to simply because he came from the Premier’s Department and had the theoretical backing of the Premier himself. It was because of that it was an exceedingly exciting time, and I certainly got to deal with people who I would never have worked with in any other forum, and any other reason. So I was very fortunate in that way.

**Did you have any sense of people from the Tourism Bureau saying, ‘Well, what are you doing around the place?’**

Well, no, in fairness I can’t recall having a great deal to do with Tourist Bureau at all except that they did all the government ticketing, and I was involved with them in that way. There was liaison between the Premier’s office and the Tourist Bureau with quite a lot of reference to Percy Pollnitz as the head, but I wasn’t really too involved with any of the issues involved in that. Len was in constant contact.

**We’ll perhaps come back to their development, Tourist Bureau and the Tourism Commission later on –**

**Yes.**

– once we’ve talked about the time specifically you worked with Len in the Premier’s Department.

**Yes.**

**And the atmosphere and the changes that were going on we’ll pick up later on.**

**Right.**

**So what was your sense of the priority tourism was given, because seemingly there were things going on in the area but it wasn’t until Don Dunstan became Premier, particularly in 1970, that things really started to move, hence Len’s appointment and yours. Was it seen as boosting the priority in that this is a new and developing economic area?**

I think there’s absolutely no doubt about it at all. I’d suggest that in fact tourism was not seen as an economic development activity at all; and in fact one of the things I had to do when I went to the Tourism Commission (Tourism Commission) myself was to try and convince people there that in fact it was an economic activity, that
they weren’t there just to let people have fun and sell tickets; that in fact part of it was we had an economic development role to play for the State, otherwise why would we be there? And that wasn’t particularly easy because it wasn’t recognised by most of the people there, and I’d say that until Don Dunstan’s tourism manifesto and the emphasis that he put on tourism it was not seen as an economic activity or of significant importance, even though the Tourist Bureau had been around in various forms for a long time.

And do you recall the manifesto and what it had in it and how that helped things?

Only to a certain extent, in that there were a number of projects that were worked on by the Policy Secretariat, and also those that were given to the Tourist Bureau to implement. But it was a fair while ago and my detailed knowledge of it is not all that good.

If you can recall some of these projects, like the Policy Secretariat, some of the project officers were doing things and maybe you recall some of them, but particularly those you were involved with, either supporting or running with yourself?

Okay. Well, a couple that come to mind were projects involved with festivals and with the restaurants. Two of the restaurant projects were the development of Windy Point and Morialta Falls. Certainly the Windy Point Restaurant, and I was involved in looking at that and seeing what would be required for the upgrading of the facilities at Windy Point.

Was this just you or was there some extra expertise brought in to help?

Well, this was a project that John Ceruto was given to do, along with a number of other restaurant projects, and for one reason or another he wasn’t able to do it and so I was asked to finish that project off.

And do you recall what happened with it, what you recommended and what was followed through?
Yes, I recommended various upgradings and my recollection was that over time that upgrading occurred. I can’t recall whether I recommended different management or not. I did have the report – another one of those reports I’ve recently discarded.

Because it was basically a kiosk which – – –.

It was. It was well-situated and it wasn’t in particularly good condition at the time and needed to be upgraded.

I vaguely recall Don having some example in Victoria or somewhere else where there was a restaurant and he said, ‘Well, why can’t we – this is in a prime location, why can’t we do this sort of thing?’ And there was a chap called Oliver Shaul brought in from Sydney, I think, to provide a bit of a report as well.

I think he might have been brought in on a number of projects, I’m not sure, but he may well have been. I do remember that name. Another project that I was very much involved in was with festivals – the Kernewek Lowender in particular, amongst a number of others, but that’s one that I played a major role in establishing. And I hate to say it, but this is another one that John Ceruto was sent off to initiate and then upset the locals (laughter) in one way or another and I was asked to follow it up, and it was very successful. It was a matter of going to a lot of meetings, most of them out of hours, working with the committee to establish this Kernewek Lowender.

And whose idea was it in the first place?

Again, I think it was part of the manifesto.

Right, so Don’s idea or whoever advised him.

That’s right.

Did you come across Peter Ward at all?

Well, yes, I knew Peter Ward quite well. He was in the office –

Premier’s office, yes.
– Premier’s office, yes. And I’ve got actually quite a number of very nice letters of thanks, both from the Premier and from the local people for that particular project. And I’ve also got photographs. And Don dancing the Furry dance at the Kernewek Lowender with my wife Lynda and me.

**Did he have a vest and/or a hat?**

Had a vest; yes, he would have had his hat but I think it was off for the dancing.

**Oh, right, okay.**

There were only two.

**Can you talk about how you went about that project? Like you said you had meetings and whatever else –**

Yes.

– **but what did you actually explain to the locals and were they interested?**

Oh, they were, they were quite interested. I mean they had something to base the festival on, which was their Cornish heritage.

**This is around that Copper Triangle at Moonta and Wallaroo.**

Round the Copper Triangle – that’s right, exactly, yes. And there was a committee or a fledgling committee when I was involved, and it was a matter of being part of that committee, and I think it gave them a fair bit of confidence that they were getting government support, and there may well have been some funding in it, I can’t recall – probably there was some funding in it as well.

**Had they been doing anything themselves as a community, or was this a really new thing?**

I think it was new. I think it was new – yes, it was, in fact.

**Interesting.**

My involvement was a full commitment to the extent that for the first festival they had a parade and I was walking up and down the main street with a megaphone
telling people to buy tickets before they go to the gate so they can get in easily, so it was a very, very close relationship between what became – effectively, between the Government and the local community. And, interestingly, an Opposition MP, Keith Russack, was actually the head of the committee, a very, very nice gentleman.

And what was the focus of it, the festival, the Cornish festival: the music and the food, or – – –?

It was, yes, a combination of both music and food and some of the activities that the Cornish miners brought with them from Cornwall. The pasty, of course, the Cornish pasty, which is quite famous and well-known. And we also thought of a drink and decided to have an alcoholic beverage called Swanky, which came from Cornwall – I had a bottle of swanky here for many years and decided it would be undrinkable, so that eventually went out. (laughter)

What’s it made of?

I can’t remember. It was made by one of the local brewers in Adelaide to a recipe that was provided.

Interesting.

And they still have it. I haven’t been to one for a while.

Were there any other festivals you were involved with, like the Barossa?

No, not so much. I have to say that the Tourist Bureau was involved in the Barossa Festival and had been for many years. That was a well-established festival. And in fact the Barossa Valley – the Flinders Ranges and maybe somewhere else – were sort of the Tourist Bureau’s number one promotional focus. There were only two or three that they focused on, that was certainly one of them, and this was one that Ted Correll was particularly interested in. He would have mentioned that, no doubt.

And any other projects at that time end up coming out of the Premier’s Department that you might have worked on? (break in recording)
Okay, a couple of other things that I can remember was being involved with the Festival Centre. It was well-advanced by the time I was involved in it, but there were more activities. There was a lot of development along the banks of the Torrens that had to be cleared and there was a committee that was looking at further development along there, and also further development for the Playhouse.

Who was that with, the City Council as well as other departments?

Yes, City Council was on it as well. Colin Hassell was the architect of the Festival Centre so I was on the committee for quite some time with him and then extended that into the Playhouse, and I recall that both my wife and I got to the opening of the Festival Centre with Gough Whitlam and Mrs Whitlam, which was quite an event.

And what was your role, to make sure there was a channel of information going back?

Yes, I was pretty much looking after the committee and its activities and sort of as a clerical officer and executive officer.

Were there any big issues that were coming up?

Well, dealing with the unions, too, because the railways union had rowing sheds and things along the river and they had to go. So that was a major role. The designs for the Centre were, as I recall, already done and on their way so it wasn’t that; but it was the ancillary stuff around it.

I recall the acoustics were a bit of an issue at one stage.

Not that I’m aware of.

Whether there was going to be a fabulous high quality for a concert hall or what – you know, there was this whole dilemma about multipurpose versus specialisation.

You’re absolutely right. I can’t remember the details, but you’re absolutely correct.

But there was, okay.

Yes, there was, yes. And another one also, as I recall, there was a committee established to look at Moseley Square where the Glenelg Tram terminated – again, I
think prompted by the great squares elsewhere in Australia and the world, and with Glenelg being a most prominent seaside destination the thought was that Moseley Square could be redeveloped. There were a number of government buildings already and a federal building, a post office, already in Moseley Square, and there was a committee which included the Glenelg Council, the Government, and I’m not sure who else, which examined what development could take place. They made a report but I don’t think anything significant happened from that particular report and it was, as I recall, a particularly difficult issue because there were significant land issues involved.

What, just heritage – – –?

I think the idea was to try and expand the square, but that would have meant relocation of different buildings, *et cetera*, and the Town Hall of course is on the corner, so it was a fairly difficult issue; but that was one that was looked at time – again, that would have been part of the tourism push.

Was the San Francisco Fishermen’s Wharf example invoked at all? I vaguely recall something like that being raised.

I don’t think so. I mean I’ve seen Fishermen’s Wharf, as probably you have, and I think it’s a different thing altogether, so I can’t recall that.

Okay. So they were the Premier’s Department projects, if you like. Then you shifted down or across to the Tourist Bureau – was it called that then?

I think it was called Tourist Bureau then, yes.

Okay, and then became the Tourism Commission later.

Well, yes.

Or Tourism Division?

Look, it had a range of different names until it eventually became a Commission.

Right, later on.
I think Tourist Bureau, then Department of Tourism, and then South Australian Tourism Commission.

Yes. What was your role when you went down there?

My role was Senior Tourist Development Officer. Up until that stage, the Tourist Bureau had a couple of different functions: it sold tickets and provided information for people who wanted to see South Australia, domestic visitors; it had an international section which sold tickets out of South Australia for the public; but it was the place that did all the ticketing for public service; and it had a small marketing role, which was really conducted by the Director and Deputy Director of the Bureau, and that was pretty much it. And it didn’t see itself having any role in international tourism marketing.

Interstate?

Yes, it had offices interstate and did some interstate promotions. It was involved with the Adelaide Festival of Arts in terms of Flower Day, so it had an officer involved in Flower Day. It also had an officer who was looking after the tail end of the National Pleasure Resorts before they were incorporated with National Parks. And they provided assistance and significant marketing assistance to the Barossa Festival, which was seen as one of South Australia’s most marketable locations and events. A division was created which was for development.

Right. Where did that come from, was it inside or externally?

I’m not sure. I think it may have come from outside, but I don’t know where it came from. All I know is that a position was developed of Senior Tourist Development Officer and I got that position.

On appeal.

It that had three people in it at the time: it had myself, Senior Tourist Development Officer; Kent Rossiter as Research Officer; and Tony Welsh. The role was fairly limited at the time but was to provide assistance predominantly for infrastructure and
to provide advice to people who wanted to enter into the tourism industry. It also was involved somewhat in marketing. So at that stage the whole marketing part of South Australian tourism marketing and development was done in that small division with the Director and Deputy Director, and that’s now of course expanded into many, many people –

Many, many, yes.

– but it meant that the people involved in that particular section had a wide-ranging function.

Was there a management group across the various bits of the Bureau?

No, not at that time.

So you didn’t go to meet with the others as a sort of mini-executive type of thing?

No. Well, there was no mini-executive, there couldn’t be, because it was a straight-line structure: Director, Deputy Director, and under them it was the ticketing office, international office and then development office.

So what were your marching orders? There were these three functions, but were there any particular things you were asked to follow up? Or do you just wait for people to come to you?

Well, we continued doing some of the projects that came out of this manifesto and those that the Government had given to the Tourist Bureau to initiate, and they included things like continuing with the festivals, and so we got involved in continuing with the Lowender Festival and other festivals; and also with continuing on with the Festival Centre I was talking about; talking to anyone who came in looking to develop projects.

These were private sector.

These were private sector people, that’s right, seeking advice and information. Started to collect some research information – very, very, very basic and initially we collected incoming statistics from the border posts.
Visitors, right.

Yes, visitor numbers. That’s the best we could get, so it wasn’t very sophisticated but at least there was a start.

I remember a debate about how do you count them and was it visitor nights –

Yes.

– or what about people that just shot across the border and back again.

All of those sorts of issues. But it was in the teething start. Also I started to get involved in were some fledgling regional organisations. One of the first I think was in the Flinders Ranges, and I think the South-East. But they weren’t paid much attention at all within the Tourism Bureau. I drove to the Flinders Ranges on one occasion to attend a meeting to assist in their development, and was roundly told off for doing that.

By whom?

Ted Correll.

Oh, really? Why’s that?

Well, because they didn’t really believe very much in regional tourism at the time.

Really? Was that the airport issue – at one stage there was a lot of running around on getting an airport at the Flinders Ranges.

No, no, that was much, much later. But part of our role was to work with the regional associations or over time came to work with regional associations to assist them to develop. And then of course we got staff – I had a staff member under me, George Heap – firstly Tony Welsh, then George Heap – who would be going out to the Associations to assist them to develop their structures and so forth, and then after that we provided funding, then it grew into a major role in its own right with staff in the areas and a section in the Commission and so forth.

Did you look at what might have been happening interstate and like approaches to development, I’ll call them ‘plans’ broadly –
Yes.

– **like how to go about this process and helping the regions?**

As much as you could. My recollection was there was not really a great deal of information around –

**At that time.**

– and you didn’t get to talk to your contemporaries in the other states all that much, either. So I think on balance you’d probably have to say that you got the information, whatever information you could get it.

**What, ABS\(^1\) and the Economic Intelligence Unit?**

Well, those sorts of things. But you may meet people and say ‘What are you doing and how are you developing it?’ and then that would give you some information about how they were proceeding, and then you’d perhaps build on that yourself.

**Right, there was no academic sort of models at this stage?**

Not that I’m aware of.

**Later on there became a bit of a discipline in hospitality and tourism, and –**

Oh, yes.

– tourism development plans had some sort of a template to them that people – – –.

Well, there weren’t any, really, at that stage.

**Interesting. Did you develop one yourself, like, ‘You’re talking to these people and this is the sort of thing we ought to look for and talk to them about’?** Like, for example, ‘What are the key attractions around this area? Where can people stay?’

Yes, there were many and there were different types, I guess, it depends which way you look at it and who you’re actually talking to. For example, if somebody came in

\(^1\) ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics.
to see you and said, ‘I want to build a motel’ or ‘I want to build something’, then the best you can do would be to look at what trends are –

Visitor trends, yes.

– yes, trends, to the best of your knowledge and from speaking with other people and building up an expertise – what figures do you have, including occupancy figures, and numbers – if it’s an attraction, what numbers are going past – and providing them with the best sort of information that you could provide them with so that they can then make their decision on how to proceed. With particular attractions, then you would do the same thing. Like if you were working with a region then you would try and work on the same sort of process. But the development plans [that] then came out were fairly rudimentary, but at least they were a start on how do we do it, what do we need, what are our shortcomings and how do we promote it.

And these private people, were they sort of fishing around for government support, guarantees at least, and if not some equity? Because there were some related development support structures like government guarantees provided by some development committee.

There were. I can’t recall whether it was in this period or not, though, in the period we’re talking about. Certainly later we had various government guarantees. We had some direct grants and we ran infrastructure grant programs for local government. And in fact it was probably with local government where to start with we really got the most value, because local government was looking for assistance with infrastructure. There were some funds made available initially to provide grants, and that continued for pretty much the whole period that I was with the Tourist Bureau right up to the Tourism Commission, and so there was a major impact on the infrastructure. And that’s one area where this development branch was able to actually make an impact and do something positive, and that was in that infrastructure area.

What sort of infrastructure?
Oh, just tourism infrastructure. Lookouts, roads, public toilets, information bays, that whole gamut, and particularly with caravan parks.

And interpretation was an emerging thing.

Interpretive centres was emerging. I was on committees for – this was later, though – at Mount Gambier, Port Augusta. They came with the 1988 and 1986, I think – yes, ’86 and ’88 – and we got funds from the Federal Government for both those projects. But interpretation. Burra was another town I worked on for years in terms of its heritage value and trying to develop that as a heritage town.

That started back in the ’70s?

Yes, I believe so.

I have to say, though, that I thought when I started as Senior Tourist Development Officer I don’t think it was necessarily laid out all that clearly, because I had this belief that I’d be working on package tours –

Oh, I see.

– and I got quite a surprise when I turned up and found that I wasn’t actually going to be asked to look at package tours. (laughs) Yes, so that was quite interesting. And of course package tours later became a major part of the marketing push, but no, I wasn’t doing that.

Later on.

Later on, yes.

Interesting. So what were the links with the other departments, like you mentioned National Parks?

When I was with Department of Premier, the links were through the specific projects that I was doing and links at a fairly high level, which was very good. When I went then to the Tourism Bureau it was like falling into a black hole. It was absolutely horrific. No-one wanted to know you, and instead of being in the centre of the universe you were just, as I said, in a black hole, in a culture, in a public service
culture with strict lines of communication and discipline and all of those things, and it was just terrible.

So you couldn’t even ring somebody else up; you’d have to tell your boss?

Not so much that – no, no, you could ring someone up, I don’t mean that; but no-one in a way wanted to know you, really, because it didn’t have any importance. But not long after I was there, not long after I started, I think that the economic message, economic development message, started to come through and suddenly we went from someone that nobody really wanted to every department – not every department, of course, but a significant number of departments – wanted you on their committees.

Oh, yes?

And so I was on a vast number of committees to put a tourism input into those committees, and that was a major change, and rightly or wrongly I believed that it came from Don Dunstan’s tourism push, that suddenly it went from, ‘Tourism’s just there to sell tickets to people’, to, ‘Listen, this is the same as any economic development in the State’, and it was one of those things that I had to try and get through in the Department. It wasn’t easy because of the people who were in charge.

Yes. Here’s a big opportunity; now, what are we going to do about it?

Yes. But, as I said, it wasn’t easy because of the people who were already there.

This person, Ted, they didn’t really have a government-wide profile as such.

No, I think that’s true. Having said that, there were a number of international trade missions and Percy Pollnitz, who was the Director at the time, and I think Ted Correll over the years, had both gone on those, a lot with the Australian Tourism Commission [ATC], and one of those came up in I think 1972. Perc Pollnitz was unable to go and Ted Correll didn’t want to go and so I went, which was a six-week mission to the United States. For me it was a tremendous learning experience.
because it was the marketing and we didn’t have a marketing department so I learnt a lot about that. Unfortunately, there was little follow up.

No ideas being asked about?

Well, no.

Did you write a report?

Oh yes, but Ted was against me going. It was Perc Pollnitz who actually said, ‘You go and do it’. So, given that, I think Perc at least had some eyes towards the need for international marketing and I think I’m just saying that to show that Ted didn’t believe that anyone other than they could go and do a job. But a job that obviously had to be done. We had to start developing South Australia, some sort of international framework, and given the ATC it was a major trade mission, tourism mission, so it was very useful.

So how did the ATC influence – there was this trip, but were they any other influence on what was happening in SA?

Well, part of the Tourist Bureau and then Tourism Commission’s role, Department’s role, was to get the Australian Tourism Commission to promote South Australia more, and that became a major function. Then of course, over time, a Marketing Division was created that took over any of the roles that the development section did. They did have one other function when I went there, actually, in marketing: they had a film library, so they provided photographs and things to the media and they also did support media visits, I’d forgotten that.

Did they do docos, documentaries?

No, no, but they would take journalists around and invite film crews and things of that nature to get extra promotion. Very cost effective

There was a chap called John Elson or somebody –

John Elson, yes.

– did he work in there?
He did for a while. Well, he worked with the Premier’s, didn’t he?

Yes, later on. But I sort of recall he – – –.

He did work down there for a while, yes. No, in fact the familiarisation visits and the visiting journalists program has now become a major part of the Commission activities and it was a small part of it then, so they had seen the need to get free publicity in that way.

So in this time there was no government standing committee or anything that would be – you were on committees when other departments wanted you to do things –

Yes.

– but there wasn’t then like a tourism standing committee or anything like that looking at right across the board?

Not that I’m aware of, no. But it certainly was an amazing transformation in a fairly short period of time from, as I said, going from this black hole to – you know what it was like in the Policy Secretariat: you were the centre of the universe in the sense of the State Government. And then, within a short period of time, you were really in demand, significant demand.

And did you see any observable changes in culture, like one would come in with a tourism ......, ‘You’re such-and-such a person, you’re on about administration and ticket selling; well, now we’ve got to broaden our ideas. We’re not only doing these specific things but thinking about tourism opportunities, networking, getting around, you lot’. Was there any of that?

Within the – – –?

Within the Tourist Bureau. I know there was a development area, but did that sort of interact with the rest of the organisation? Like a new type of tourism officer, if you like?

No. I think that the idea that they weren’t just selling tickets – and that in a sense was a good job and the individuals worked hard and did good jobs – but I think it just took a period of time for them to understand that they were a part of the overall scene, and that would have come about progressively and not from any conflict or
anything of that nature, just probably from outside, direction from above, from the Premier, from wherever. Internally, no-one went around saying, ‘You are our economic development department’. But it was something that I said, and then others who joined understood that as well as time went by.

And you noticed or didn’t any different type of person coming in? You mentioned Kent Rossiter and he’d got an economics degree and was doing certain work.

Yes. Well, of course we got different people in, because from then on, yes, I’d be looking for people who had the expertise to do certain things. And yes, either an economics degree, for example, or planning, planner and so forth. And then after this time it became – I mean, I had a staff of ten, and all of those had degrees of some description. I also had a B.A.

So got a lot more research and evidence base.

Actually, not all of them had degrees, necessarily; some of them had very, very strong experience. But by and large they had degrees or expertise in certain areas.

And was there a view that the Government’s got a legitimate role in this area, or it’s this tension between what’s the Government expected to do by the private sector and what’s the Government asking the private sector to do – that is, certainly it was more of an interventionist government at the time and it was out there trying to initiate things –

Yes.

– and getting like the restaurant industry going, the film industry going, the arts industry going. Was there any debate about the role of government at the time?

Not that I was involved in. I mean, the projects I dealt with were projects that we were doing and that was all there was to it, so there wasn’t really much debate about it. I mean there probably was, but not in my [area].

What about trying to gee-up the private sector people, like ‘Hey, how about you lot getting your act together?’

Well, by and large people that were involved in it were either wanting to do something or keen to do, or there were incentives for them to do something. So I
don’t think that there was ever a great – I never noticed any great resistance. Look, no doubt there were plenty of criticisms of the Government, plenty of criticisms of me and what everybody else was doing, that’s the nature of every game. I didn’t really notice anything along the lines that you’re talking about, no.

And do you want to highlight any specific things? Like you were involved in the Edmund Wright House preservation, there was this development push at the time in the city.

Well, that’s right. There was a development push – this is ’72, I think. (break in recording).

Yes, as I say, a lot of the projects I was involved with Len Amadio, he was the major player and I was assisting him in some of those, the establishment of Carclew was one of the projects that we were involved in and I was assisting right from the start as secretary of the committee to establish Carclew, that beautiful old building, and then later on actually became a board member and that was the tourism input into that board, and for which I received a personal letter from the Premier saying, ‘Thank you for your involvement with that and for your membership on the board of Carclew’. And of course it’s still going today and a very successful thing.

Was that the Come Out Festival as well?

No, that’s just the establishment of Carclew itself. It had films – it had children, of course, coming during the days for various arts activities; and then it had a film festival, small film festival, each year even then, amateur films. So that was one of those sort of arts projects that I got involved in.

Was that an establishment body, like Ruby Litchfield was there.

Correct.

I know she was the Chair –

She was the Chair, yes.

– but what did she do for Carclew in the sense of profile?
Well, I think she did an enormous amount because she had a significant profile herself. She also had a lot of contacts, and in most of these type of projects contacts are absolutely crucial. She also was able to talk to the right people and get assistance, financial and otherwise. Plus she threw a great deal of personal energy into the project, really believed in the project. So no, she was terrific – as was Barbara Hardy later on.

Really?

Not in Carclew, but in the Science Centre, as the initiator and Chair of that, and I was also on that board.

When was that set up, roughly? Was it in this period?

No, it was after this period.

Okay, right.

But she had the same sort of contacts and was able to focus people’s minds on their particular project.

Was there another project you had in mind to talk about?

Well, a couple of others. You know, there’s a whole range of them I can’t recall, but one for example is the Para Hills Paddocks Project. There was a significant amount of land available at Para Hills. The local community was opting for it to be turned into open space, but of course that would have been an expensive proposition just to leave it fallow, and a committee was established to investigate the uses of the Para Hills Paddocks.

These were stock paddocks, were they, for the abattoirs, or something else?

No, I think it was just open paddocks that hadn’t been built on, so the Government had to decide what was it going to do about it and it was one of those small projects. Naracoorte Caves development was another one I was involved in, again, committees to investigate just how to develop Naracoorte Caves, how to find funding and how to
make it accessible – *more* accessible, because it was always accessible – more accessible to the public and to be more of a tourist attraction. Those sorts of projects.

**Did that get World Heritage status in your time?**

Oh, no, well after.

**Well after, right.**

Well after, yes.

**But you knew you had something special there.**

Well, we did, and had a couple of goes at it – not only this time but later on I was able to get significant funding from the Federal Government when they had financial grant schemes, and we were able to get significant money to open up the Naracoorte Caves and that fantastic array of bones. It made quite a nice attraction. But I’d left before the funding for the interpretive centre was there.

**So earlier on I just asked you about planning and whether there was some order to what was going on, and just as we had a bit of a break you discovered a piece of paper that did actually talk about planning. Do you just want to talk about that a bit and how it made you shape some of what you were doing?**

Yes. As I said, it was really only the ticket-selling and international sales, and this was the Development Branch that was established. And, as I said –

**What were the actual words?**

– the words that were there were: ‘Forward and balanced tourist planning.’ So that’s why it was established. And in reality it took into focus both some of the marketing, some of the development, some of the planning and some of the research. And, significantly, that sort of framework, except for the marketing which became a major branch and division in its own right, those three functions were retained within one section for all of the time that I was at the Commission and the Tourist Bureau. And the forward, balanced planning part of it started off by fairly new and fairly rudimentary planning for regions. The State was established, tourist regions were established, and we did some plans for those regions, and that included just doing the
research, identifying to the best of our knowledge how many people were going, what sort of people were going, looking at what the tourists developments could be developed, what accommodation needs there could be, those sorts of things. And over the years they were well and truly expanded upon and much more scientifically; but at least it was a start. Regional people had an idea of where to go and what to aim for.

And the balance meant what? Like ‘Don’t destroy your feature just to get numbers to come in and trample over everything’, or what?

Well, actually, that was never actually explained to me, but that’s how I always interpreted it: sustainable. They use the word ‘sustainable’ now, really, and that’s always the view that I took, that you needed to be able to sustain something. It’s no good developing it to the point of extinction.

Yes, or changing the character.

In South Australia there was not all that many attractions where that really became a major issue. We haven’t got millions of people tramping over one spot. But a lot of our country is also very fragile, so that had to be protected. So balanced also equates to the type of tourism: do you go for low-end tourism, high-end tourism, and what sort of attractions do you want to develop and so forth? So no, I don’t think anybody, when they wrote that, necessarily had anything too specific in their mind.

It sounded good, though.

Well, you know, ‘balanced’ is certainly good, yes.

I forget whether I asked about Edmund Wright House or not. You’ve got a story to tell about that.

I think you did ask, that’s right. Yes, you did, that’s right. Edmund Wright House. There was a lot of development in the city around this time, early ’70s, and one of the buildings that was going to be demolished was what is now Edmund Wright House, and there was a lot of public outcry about the demolition of that and the Government stepped in to save it. And they did that, to great acclamation; and then
they had to decide what they were going to call it. So I know that the Policy Secretariat and maybe other people at that stage were asked for a name for it. I recall putting up the name of Edmund Wright House, which was actually chosen as the name later on. Maybe I wasn’t the only one to put it up, but I like to think that it was me.

And was it one of the ancestors or somebody called it – was it Edmund Wright, the – – –?

Oh, he was the architect. Edmund Wright actually was a very good architect and designed a number of buildings around Adelaide.

And the person agitating for it, that was a Wright as well.

I think you’re right, I think you’re correct.

It wasn’t Edmund Wright as well, was it?

No, it certainly wasn’t. (laughs) He’d passed on.

Another Edmund Wright.

It may well have been, I can’t recall. But there was a very, very strong anti-demolition campaign and thank goodness, because it’s a beautiful building and it would have been terrible to have seen it go.

We also had a talk about the Hilton Hotel. Was that part of your portfolio? It never got built in the Dunstan time, but how did that work in?

That was, as I recall, part of the Dunstan manifesto. I had very little to do with it. There was a brochure, I remember a red brochure, produced, and the idea was to use that brochure to attract investment from overseas and Australia. It wasn’t built in that time, you’re quite right, but it certainly started the process of doing it. I’ve got an idea that the site might have actually been cleared not long after that time as a consequence of this.

There was some debate about – was the Moore’s site part of all that as well, or was that later on, the preservation of it?
No, that was later on. Look, I had some small involvement in this Hilton thing but very little and I can’t quite recall what it might have been.

**And the racing industry and gambling, was that any part of your activity at all?**

No. Nothing at all. And not in Tourism, either.

**Not the Casino – no, was that later?**

No, I had no involvement in either the ASER² project, casino or the major hotel there.

**There was some debate about should it be at Victor Harbor or in Adelaide or both.**

There was a proposal for a floating casino at Goolwa.

**Goolwa?**

Yes, and another site on land at Goolwa.

**Goolwa, right.**

One in Adelaide. There might have been another site. But certainly yes, you’re quite right, there was certainly a plan for one in the country. And at the time it seemed a logical thought that having a casino in the country was a reasonable proposition because it meant that if people wanted to gamble then they would have to leave their home and actually go to another destination and have accommodation, either on the water or around the Goolwa area. Then we could have seen a resort accommodation develop around the casino in the South. As it turned out, of course, it was built in Adelaide. It may not have been successful even then, and I think that was around this time.

**Right. What about Wirrina? That came up as well.**

I was in the Tourist Bureau at the time and I heard rumours of this development at Wirrina, I’d never heard of it in my life, and so I took a trip down there to have a

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² ASER – Adelaide Station and Environs Redevelopment.
look at it. And – lo and behold! – there was this development with accommodation and restaurant and an oval, and my first reaction was, ‘This is very interesting’, but I had grave reservations about its location because there was no beach and there were none of the characteristics that I would have expected to have seen for a resort location.

**What year was that, roughly, was it in the ’70s.**

I reckon it was late ’70s. But, as I said, I was Senior Tourist Development Officer and I’d never heard a word of it until the thing was advanced.

**And the activity with Penang, were you involved in any of that? Adelaide Week in Penang and *vice versa*. It seemed to be about, or some of it was about, tourism.**

That was more a marketing activity. I got involved only by assisting with things. I’m not sure when that was.

**Yes, that was in the Dunstan period certainly, the early bits anyway.**

No, I can say that I didn’t get involved. Driving people around, I think was about as close as I got.

**Yes, that was some of that Asia push that Don was very interested in.**

Was very interested in, yes.

**Very much before his time there.**

He was.

**We’ve covered a lot of areas, Rod, over our discussion. Was there any other things you wanted to talk about before we finish?**

Wardang Island was also one of those.

**Right, yes.**

There was some accommodation on Wardang Island already, and it was privately-owned at the time. My recollection was that the Government either took over or purchased Wardang Island, and I’m not sure if title was put in Aboriginal name at
that time or not. But certainly one of the projects was to develop Wardang Island. I went over a number of times to have a look at it; it wasn’t a major project I was responsible for, but I was obviously involved in it. And I think I told you earlier I remember walking around Wardang Island looking at it, and one of the Aboriginal fellows who was with us picked up a piece of fencing wire and just walked to the side of the pathway and, whack! And looked, he bent down and picked up the rabbit that he’d just killed, and that was going to be for tea, (laughter) which I thought was pretty – – –. I’d never seen anything like it before, having done lots of rabbiting when I was a youngster. But that was a long, long-running project and again didn’t come to anything, I think partly because of the difficulty of dealing with the Aboriginal people and their inability to maintain continuity- that was all, I suppose. And then there were a number of propositions for other people to lease and operate and for one reason or another didn’t really succeed.

**It was going to be a bit of a training centre, wasn’t it, for young Aboriginal people?**

It may have been.

**I think TAFE, or whatever the version of TAFE was, in Further Ed.**

I can’t recall. Let’s see what else we have. (break in recording) One of the major activities of the new Development Branch was the development of caravan parks in the State. I, for one, looked at how we could best influence the development of infrastructure in the State. We could do it in two different ways. One was through councils, local government authorities, with their infrastructure development, and the second was also through local government, with their accommodation developments, because most – or a significant number – of the caravan parks in South Australia were below-standard. They were a low-cost accommodation. It was quite clear that it was going to be an emerging market, and our caravan parks did not meet Eastern States standards. And so the Government provided funds for infrastructure development, of which a significant proportion was committed to caravan park development – that is, accommodation development – for quite a few years.
It was difficult for the Government or the Tourism Commission, the Department or Tourist Bureau to influence other types of accommodation; it was difficult to give grants, for example. You could give advice and assistance, you could give encouragement, you could make suggestions of where accommodation, *et cetera*, should be in the planning process, but it was difficult to actually make a practical contribution, whereas with caravan parks, through assistance to another government body – that is, local government – we could give practical assistance and actually get something done. So we probably developed about a hundred and forty caravan parks throughout the State, or redeveloped them, throughout the State.

And we were able to set our own standards, so we set the standards that we wanted them to be developed for and we wouldn’t give funding unless they were developed for that standard. We ran management seminars and conferences. We set guidelines for facility development and provided, in fact, templates for facility development – standardised site size and everything else associated with that. We also had somebody working, very significantly, on the development of these caravan parks. So that was one way in which we were able to provide a practical way of providing accommodation in the cheaper sector, whereas very difficult to do any other way without direct incentives to private sector.

*Very good. Well, Rod, thanks very much for that good description of the transition, transformation and development of the tourism development area. Thank you for doing this interview for the Foundation.*

My pleasure, George.

END OF INTERVIEW.