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Full transcript of
an interview with:

George Lewkowicz

Conducted on:

29 April 2019

Interviewer:

Allison Murchie

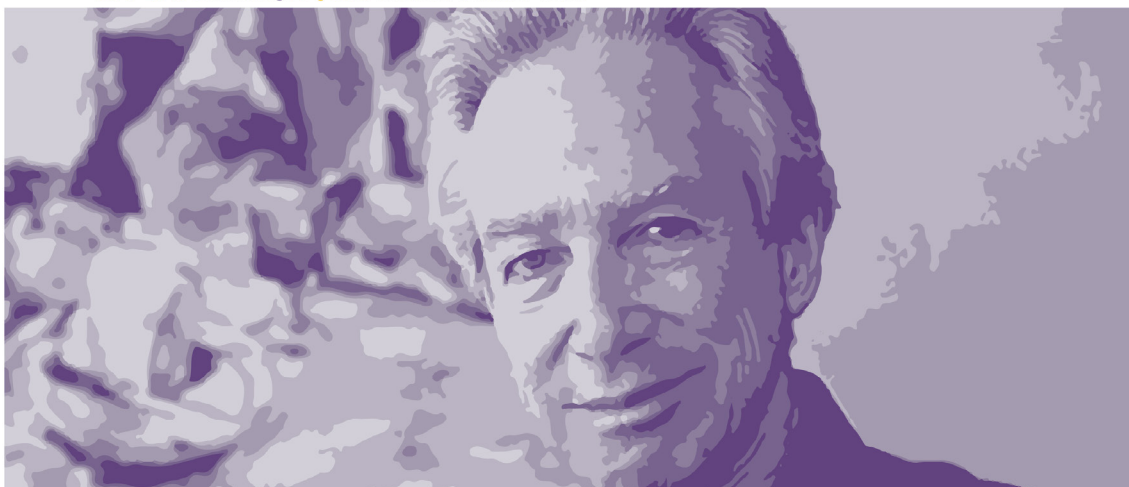
Transcribed by:

Deborah Gard

For:

The **Don Dunstan Foundation**
20th Anniversary Oral History Project

1999–2019 celebrating 20 years of action for a fairer world



DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION 20th Anniversary **ORAL HISTORY** PROJECT

NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

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Abbreviations: The interviewee's alterations may be identified by their initials in insertions in the transcript.

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A series of dots, indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

A dash, – indicates a pause or a digression as occurs in informal conversation.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -

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Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print**.

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This is Allison Murchie continuing the interview on 29th April 2019 with George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan 20th anniversary oral history project. Thank you for coming back for a second time. We just had too much material to cover last time but where we did finish, and we were just chatting afterwards, you talked about Don and how he actually did a lot of the legwork for the ALP. The phrase I think you used was, getting positive about their future. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Yes, it was one thing I wanted to emphasise a bit further, in reflection after our first meeting. One was, Don just wasn't the ideas person, or the person who got out there and sold the Labor Party's messages, and he was particularly good at that, particularly on the electronic media, but from my interviews of a number of people in the party at the time running through the party machine and the politicians, it was pretty clear that Don got out there. He not only canvassed in his own area at Norwood but all over the state, because it was important, particularly after the changes to the electoral boundaries, that the Labor Party was given the best chance to get the seat majority. He campaigned in his electorate, around the metropolitan area and also in the country areas because you needed to get out there not only for the local Lower House seats but also to get the votes in the Upper House Legislative Council, which was still pretty, I'd call, elitist and the majority LCL (Liberal and Country League Party) at the time. So that was one thing that struck me, that he was committed and got out there.

The comment you made about the Labor Party's confidence, from my discussions with people it seemed that the Labor Party under previous Labor leaders, maybe not so much Frank Walsh, who became the Labor Premier after Tom Playford, but prior to that the Labor Party seemed to be quite happy for Tom Playford and the Liberal Party to run things, especially if the Labor people had got their seats in parliament. They wouldn't have too many responsibilities and they could make 'Oppositional' comments. Don, from what I understand, thought this wasn't the best idea. He really got out there and argued pretty heavily, not only for particular policies on Indigenous people and consumer affairs and social liberalism, but also for the Labor Party to get its act together and be a competitive party, which he did, not only the arguments about the gerrymander but also to get the machine up to scratch and working hard and getting the right sort of candidates to be selected, particularly in a lot of the competitive marginal seats that the party thought they might be able to win. Particular people like Molly Byrne, who did a huge job out in her Tea Tree Gully area, and who I think was one of the key successes in getting the Labor Party over the line – I forget whether it was the first time it got into power in the 1970s or possibly the second.

She was certainly seen as a critical seat to win, wasn't she?

That's right. She was not only a competitive person – I can't recall the debates about getting more women into parliament but obviously it was quite important to get her in.

I don't think there was actually a debate on it. It was just that good candidates would come up and get elected. It was probably another 20 years before we actually had that deliberate strategy of, let's get 50% women.

That's right, yes. So that's all I wanted to say about that area but it did strike me as something that - - -

That's something that not a lot of people would know. They think of him as the salesman, the front man, the big ideas, but I know from talking to a lot of people in the Norwood electorate, he was so available and out there working with his constituents.

Yes, he not only did that, he actually opened up his home to people who were in strife. They would come in and talk and he would help them with some of their finances and things like that, which meant that he wasn't just a politician but he was a very open-minded human who felt for people.

Then it took that very sad turn of events when he got seriously ill. I believe his doctor told him he had to retire or he would die – it was that simple, wasn't it?

Yes, that's right. There's some debate about whether his illness and retirement was caused – or the link between the illness and the retirement – some people are suggesting it was all staged and sort of elegant, or an exit that there was an excusable story about, not because he was under super political pressure or anything like that. I also interviewed a medical person who was one of his doctors and it was pretty clear that Don was ill. He'd had over his time in parliament as leader trouble in sleeping, he had trouble with migraines. He'd had not only a lot of political stress but personal stress in his relationships, particularly toward the end of his political life when his second wife, Adele Koh, had died. That had caused a lot of stress for him.

One of the last things he did was to go overseas to check out the nuclear industry in Europe and he also picked up some sort of a virus in that trip. That really reduced his general health as well. So in the end he was told by his doctors that he needed to either get out for a while or resign altogether. I think one option discussed was to just take some leave but I think in the end the medical advice prevailed to just resign altogether and have a break. He was also after that resignation offered an opportunity I think to head a big international organisation. I forget – it's in the oral history project, the one it was. Again, his doctor said, 'I'm sorry, you can't do that because if you do the stress will still be there and you won't be able to recover.'

What I can picture – there was a photo of him in his dressing gown in the hospital with some of his advisors around him - - -

A very famous photo, and I think as soon as you looked at that you knew how ill he was. There was no putting it on – he was clearly very ill.

Yes. I was working in the Premier’s Department at the time and we got the message that he had resigned and we were pretty shocked. One of the things we obviously thought about was his health and that hopefully he would improve, that it wasn’t fatal. Secondly, well what happens next? That’s another story with Des Corcoran and Hugh Hudson and others.

We could probably do a whole series of interviews on Des Corcoran and the early election. Where were you when you heard about Don dying, and had you been in touch with him?

Don resigning?

No, when he got seriously ill.

No, I was not really in his inner sort of personal circle. I was a public servant but I knew his daughter fairly well so we passed on our best wishes through her. I know that there were a lot of people around him who used to help him when he was really going downhill after his throat cancer diagnosis. There were people like Mary O’Kane and John Spoehr. There were other neighbours who were there and, of course [his partner, Steven Cheng]. Steven Wright would have been there as well. Basically, I sort of kept in touch with how he was going through the connections I had but I didn’t think I’d add to the parade of people who would have been going through his place.

He had constant company, didn’t he? He invited people around too towards the end.

He was very brave about that. I remember the interview he did on the television. He was obviously ill but he was very articulate and talked about his legacy. I can’t remember his exact words, but hopefully people would think well of him in his role as leader of the Labor Party and what he had done for the state.

I think he was a class act even when he was dying. He still had that amazing presence and, as you said, very articulate.

Yes, he wasn’t there feeling sorry for himself, or coming across that he was.

No, not at all. He was still Don the leader, wasn’t he?

Yes, that’s right.

I remember those times too. Where were you when you heard that he had died?

I can't remember that. I remember getting an invitation to his funeral but I can't remember the rest.

Talk about the funeral.

There were people who had worked in the department, people he'd known personally, people from both sides of the political spectrum. Gough Whitlam came over and gave a pretty solid eulogy. I know the Leader of the Opposition [Mike Rann] – and who was the premier at the time? I think, probably John Olsen. It was either John Olsen or Dean Brown who spoke about him.

I think it might have been Olsen. I was there too but memories are fuzzy. I've got a feeling that you're right, it was John Olsen.

Yes, I was quite impressed about his eulogy as well. It was at the Festival Centre – the theatre

And that was quite fitting, wasn't it?

That's right, given Don's history of following up Steele Hall's proposition about the Festival Centre. Initially it was going to be at Carrick Hill but then I think it was Don who worked up with various people to have it located where it is now.

Yet another wonderful legacy, wasn't it?

Yes. Of course sitting there, there were memories of all the things he had done and the work I'd done in the Premier's Department – just memories of the time.

Do you think that South Australia has remembered him well?

What doesn't surprise me, but what often comes up in the media – not only remembering particular times like the Labor Party getting in – under Tom Playford, particularly the six o'clock closing – the change to pub opening hours and Don's legacy about getting South Australia up to speed more on food and wine. You can see the good things that are going on now, particularly in the wine industry, which is booming from what I understand, particularly with overseas exports. Every now and again *The Advertiser* or somebody picks up, what would have Don thought about what was going on at the moment, what sort of inspiration do we need here to get away from the humdrum of local politics, or even national politics?

I think he would be horrified.

Yes, that's right.

Everyone remembers him differently for different things but there'll never be anybody in South Australia that we can actually envisage who would even get elected – someone like him – today.

I would say so.

I was told that he and Gough wouldn't win preselection in current politics. I think that's probably right.

Probably not! He would have maybe had to have been in a union or an apparatchik as an advisor or something like that. Maybe depending on how qualified and well-known he'd be in the law area – people might have picked him up, particularly if they wanted particular expertise, but certainly with his open-mindedness and very wide range of interests in socially progressive ideas, people would think he might be a bit risky. They would rely on their focus groups and things like this to see what people thought of him.

He wouldn't have even had those, would he?

I guess particular issues – he would have been strong on climate change and workers' wages and maybe drug reform, picking up some of the current issues and certainly picking up the area of domestic violence and some of the things that the foundation is doing now: migration and attracting the right sort of people either to South Australia or back to South Australia. He'd be pretty strong on all those things and getting out there and convincing people. What we don't seem to get these days is a solid debate about policies and the pros and cons of why we ought to be doing things.

In a way, we could look at the Don Dunstan Foundation as being a big chunk of his legacy because that is what it was set up for, and particularly now when they are trying to do a few events to attract young people who say, who is Don Dunstan? It's people of our era who still think of him in awe and understand why the foundation was set up but I think they're taking a different direction under the current leadership to perhaps bring people around to knowing who the real Don was. That leads us very nicely into your role with the foundation - -

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A segue in!

A segue in – I don't usually have segues but that one was just so good! So you had a very substantial role, a few years back now, but tell me about how you got involved.

I think it was about 16 years ago, I was still working in the South Australian Public Service in the Education Department. I'd been the Director of Occupational Health and Safety in the

department and there was some restructure going on and I said, 'Look, I've had enough time in this area.' It's got its interests and challenges but it's also an area where, say, you get people on workers' compensation. I used to call it the area of last resort because when people couldn't be helped they'd go on workers' compensation. There would be the process after that. I was doing a project on – I think it was asset management in the department, and I got a phone call from Greg Crafter who was I think the chair of the management committee or a sort of chair in interim, if you like. I'll explain that a bit more in a minute. He said, 'Bill Cossey,' who I used to work with and he was, I think, head of the Courts Department at the time, or down at the Festival Centre – he said, 'We'd like to talk to you about being the director of the Don Dunstan Foundation,' because it had been in a bit of a limbo because of the lack of decisions on funding – there was a previous vice-chancellor [Cliff Blake] of the University of Adelaide who had withdrawn the university support for the foundation and - - -

Why was that withdrawn?

I think it was part of budget cuts, plus he didn't seem to be – he was from interstate somewhere [New South Wales] and maybe wasn't tuned into the whole project. The foundation had been pretty successful in having events and getting people involved and had volunteers, particularly, helping out having functions, but somewhere along the line it had just dropped its activities, possibly through the uncertainty about funding. There had been some acting-directors but they had said, well we're only here for a short time, and then they had to go back to their substantive positions and universities. So they had a talk with me, and I knew Greg in two ways, or three actually: one, because he'd worked in the Premier's Department as an enquiry officer back in the '70s. Then after that he had become a member for Norwood taking over Don's seat, as Minister of Education/Children's Services. I'd been Director of Corporate Services in Children's Services so he knew I would be interested in doing something different. Also, when he was Minister of Education I was Director of Tandanya to sort out some big problems down there back in the early '90s, so he thought I might be a useful person for the foundation, given my knowledge of what had happened under the Dunstan era, plus some of my management experience. So I agreed and went down to the foundation, which was based at the University of Adelaide - - -

That was the North Terrace one.

Yes, but also had a link with Flinders University. I had two main jobs: one was to re-activate the foundation's activities and the other one was to sort out the governance structure and the constitution. When the foundation was set up it was based on a string of – what will we call it? – principles that Don had actually listed and they are in the constitution. So we had a good idea of what we might work off of those, but the governance structure was set up in a

pretty complicated sort of way where there were a number of trustees plus a smaller management committee, if you like. The problem was a number of the trustees were sort of highly eminent busy people, including a lot of interstate people.

People like Phillip Adams and Barry Jones – a lot of those sorts of people.

Yes, and it was hard to get them not only together but really to focus on our sort of sustained effort on the sort of things the foundation ought to be doing. So my job was to work out through Greg's and others' instructions, if you like, on how to reduce the size of that governance and trustee structure, and also what sort of management committee might be set up. There was a new constitution drafted; we had an honorary lawyer [Ted Byrt] who helped us with that and we got the agreement of one of the new vice-chancellors, James McWha, who was onside, and the University of Adelaide contributed a full-time staff person to be the finance and marketing and fundraising person. The trustees were the two university vice-chancellors, the other one being Anne Edwards from Flinders University. Greg Crafter was the chair, and Bronwen Dunstan [Dohnt], to have that personal sort of family link with the foundation as well.

So that was all agreed and redrafted. Flinders University, who have got the Don Dunstan archives, wanted a bit more recognition in the constitution so that was arranged as well. James McWha was quite happy about that, notwithstanding that the University of Adelaide provided the office infrastructure and the main staffing person, other than myself, who was funded by the government.

But it was important to have both universities involved, wasn't it?

That's right. I was funded by the government and it was agreed that I would be funded for three years I think. That was the initial agreement, that I was seconded from – sort of allocated back to the Premier's Department and seconded from there. The management committee: Greg Crafter chaired that for a while and later on Bill Cossey took up the chair. That included a representative of the government, who was Warren McCann, the head of the Premier's Department at the time. Apart from the governance the challenge was, 1) sort out a couple of funding arrangements that the foundation had set up, partly which included two PhD scholarships. They hadn't really come through as finalised theses, and awards to the two people who had been awarded the scholarship, which was something Mary O'Kane, the previous Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, had set up. The two people had pulled out, didn't finish for various reasons, so we set that idea aside.

The other thing was to get some events going so the foundation would get some recognition from people who were interested in the foundation but also to get some public recognition

that it was alive again and getting things moving. When the management committee got together there were other challenges, like we had about \$350,000 in our bank – maybe a bit more than that – but also to work out how to get people involved in the fundraising. There was a group of volunteers who were quite interested to help out. They sort of continued from the previous activities of the foundation. They were pretty keen and in fact they used to organise lots of the public events through the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel down on Port Road. We let them sort out some events which were quite popular. Later on we sort of amalgamated the two sets of activities so the foundation staff really took over the organisation of all sorts of things but with the volunteer help. One of the committee members was Jim Jarvis who was a marketing person so he was quite useful in giving us ideas on fundraising which all along the way had been a bit of a challenge.

One of the things we did was to have an arrangement with EDS, the government's sort of private sector computing people. They contributed funds for a series of breakfasts – the idea was not only to get speakers there to talk about interesting progressive things which linked up with Don Dunstan's ideas that were set out into the constitution, but to help us get a network of potential supporters and people who might provide funds through various means, either just straight up or through supporting projects of social or progressive merit, and also to give us ideas about the sort of things people might be interested in hearing about.

The first event we organised after we'd got some staff in – Rosslyn Cox came in as the marketing fundraising corporate services person, and Josie Covino who was the admin person, she was part-time because she also helped out John Spoehr in his work. He was – I forget what they were called – there used to be a Labour Studies group which Don was quite active in as well. He used to come along apparently to that group and write stuff with them and give them advice on various social policy points that they might have been working on in their research. They were also involved in consulting projects as well, that group. The first event we came up with was with Barbara Pocock and some other people. Barbara was quite an expert on work-life balance. I remember organising a place and getting an alcohol licence from the police office down in Hindley Street and then advertising quite basically through word-of-mouth and hard copy advertising and through the University of Adelaide links and Flinders University links – their websites. That was about 80 to 100 people who came to that.

That's not bad for your first function.

Yes, and that was our first relaunch, if you like. The challenge after that was to work out a program of events that we might use to sustain people's interest and also to give the volunteers some link with the foundation.

Were the volunteers heavily involved in organising those functions?

They helped, yes – like if there were tickets to be received at the door or setting up – some set-ups were more involved than others but they helped with those, and also helping people to find where to go, particularly at some of the bigger events that we organised after that first event. There was the thinking about what sort of topics, and they were topics that had to be of interest to a range of people, mainly the sort of topics that were floating around the political discussion in the state and nationally and, to some extent, internationally. One of the big events was the Don Dunstan Human Rights Oration, which seems to have disappeared off the radar.

Yes, it's on the website but it sort of petered out, didn't it?

Yes, the idea there was to get a significant national or international thinker to come along and talk about what they thought was important in a national or international context. The biggest one we had was with Peter Singer, the ethics philosopher. He is Australian but - - -

I think of him as an internationalist.

Yes, based at Princeton I think. Another one we got was Martha Nussbaum, a highly important and active philosopher from Chicago University. We got very big public - - -

Did we have Julian Burnside at one of those?

Yes, Julian Burnside spoke, so they were significant people. That event was organised with Oxfam who helped with publicity and international links. Some of the other issues – there was an arrangement with Julian Disney, who was a well-known sort of social policy person. He had a position as a sort of honorary professor in one of the Sydney universities but he was ex-Adelaide and a former Rhodes Scholar. His two projects, which the foundation had agreed to fund – the first one was community links with Indonesia. One of the ideas was that there are government to government links but what was really needed to be worked up was the community links to have some sustained activity with people on the ground. The links were with the unions through the ACTU – I forget the head of that at the time [Sharan Burrow], but she was involved in the project. There was the consumer affairs area and there was an environmental area and there was a religious aspect to it as well, so people from Indonesia were from those sorts of areas. I think the union person couldn't make it to Australia but Julian also used to go over to Indonesia to try and get this sort of close involvement. Julian wrote a report about that which was published.

What seems to have happened now, that seems to have fallen away a bit because there's a bit of a lack of leadership in the universities with language with Indonesia, although there are

students coming – I met some people yesterday – there’s a revised Colombo Plan which is encouraging a lot of post-graduate students to come over as well from the developing countries, not so much the Chinese and Indian but from places like Indonesia and Sri Lanka and that. Julian did a lot of good work there, and he had meetings here and in Melbourne. He had done a report and then later on he did another project on housing affordability, which is still one of those vexed areas. He spoke to a lot of people and wrote a report and we had a seminar on that area. There were various ideas that had been brought up and he lobbied through his myriad of contacts of various politicians – not only state but also nationally because he was a well-known figure. I think he is now head of some media organisation, so that was that.

The other challenges were, we have these events and we have things like Julian’s projects but how do we demonstrate to the community that there has been some impact from these projects? Hence, the idea of having publications to have some hard copy out there, as in here’s at least a result that has been summarised. There are various papers apart from Julian’s – one was on corporate social responsibility, which was a bit of a topic then. If you take the banking royal commission, the idea of social licence has been talked about which links up with the idea of corporate social responsibility. We had a speaker from the UK out here [David Grayson] talking about that and helping out with some of the ideas. I remember a seminar we had too with various company people around Adelaide.

The other issue was how do we get out into the media even more? Let’s find a spokesperson! The trouble with that was who was going to be the spokesperson and then what would they actually be licensed to say that wouldn’t upset actual funders and potential funders? Unfortunately, or fortunately, that idea just was floated and is there still in limbo I think, because what I’ve noticed, even about the current activities, is there’s not a lot of publicity that the organisation is getting out there in the media that the general public gets to hear about and that’s one of its challenges.

Well, you know why that is – it’s a good news story. We don’t have those – we only want disasters on the front page!

The other issue is of course, and I’ve mentioned this before, is the networking and links with key bodies around the place. One of the bodies in the same sort of arena we were active in was the Hawke Centre and the Hawke Foundation. They were based at the University of [South Australia] and were very active with a good leader there. Obviously, if you’ve got an ex-Prime Minister still with it and out there chairing the foundation, that is Bob Hawke then, and various other high level people, they had a bit of a march on the Don Dunstan Foundation. Often people would get the foundation confused with the Hawke Centre and I’d

have to explain the difference and the locations and the basic structure and the sort of things we were doing. The Hawke Centre – that was the research side of the Hawke Foundation centre area which was staffed by fully-funded academics. We didn't have an equivalent there so we couldn't really compete with projects that they were doing. There wasn't a competition but we were aware of what they were doing and we didn't want to overlap and confuse people, but now and again we combined an activity with the Hawke Foundation. They are still going but, again, you don't get a lot of general publicity or awareness of what they're doing and, as I said, similarly with the Don Dunstan Foundation.

I'm a member of the Hawke Centre as well and you get a good email and good talks and stuff, but it's all publicity through emails to members or interested public. It's exactly the same as the Don Dunstan Foundation – it doesn't get any press. Even when they have outstanding speakers on really major events there's still no publicity and yet they pack their events.

Yes, one of the new events at that time, and Rosslyn Cox who I mentioned ought to be recognised for this. She made an arrangement with Lowitja O'Donoghue, a very well-known –

She organised that.

Yes – a very well-known iconic Aboriginal person, to set up a Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration, which is an event that's still happening. There's one coming up with David Rathman and they have had very significant speakers – Aboriginal speakers, and Paul Keating. They are to be congratulated on keeping that going.

And it's still doing very, very well.

Yes, and that does get publicity because the speakers are pretty well-known. Noel Pearson spoke last year, I think, or the year before [2018]. His ideas get publicity quite regularly through media like *The Australian*.

What sort of hours were you putting in? You said you were funded by the government. What you're talking about sounds like a pretty substantial job.

Yes, I was full-time and the hours would depend on what we were doing.

But substantial by the sound of it.

Yes, there were night events. My role was to just oversight the – once we got the constitution and the structure sorted out and the activities and had come up with ideas about the events, we'd check them out with not only the staff and, say, John Spoehr, who was on the management committee, but also with the management committee and some other people

we were linked up with. I would scan a lot of the international activities and what was going on. I had studied in the United Kingdom so I had some links with the London School of Economics and seen what they were doing over there in terms of some of the policy issues and these are what I call generally progressive issues, and watch out for the finances and encourage the fundraising, which Rosslyn and Greg Crafter took up the responsibility for. After a while I had a discussion with John Spoehr and some other people and we thought one of the things we ought to have a legacy of, even if we did nothing else, was to do this oral history project.

So you initiated that? I assumed so from all the work you did.

Yes, I said to Rosslyn, and then her replacement when she went working in the university and elsewhere, that I'd spend a lot of my time on the oral history project.

Was that while you were still employed by them?

Yes, while I was still there. I got a group of people together. The first thing, we thought we might get Australian Research Council funding through the university system. We put up the idea of this oral history project but they didn't seem to be that interested because it didn't seem to have an obvious book coming out of it!

Oral histories do not necessarily result in books, as we all know.

Then we revised our proposal and put it up again but it still wasn't successful. I think one of the reasons apart from the one about the book was our chief investigator – you had to have a university person to be the chief investigator. We didn't have a super-duper well-established academic with a track record of publications. I'll come back to that issue in a minute, so initially we had an agreement with the National Library and the State Library to do some preliminary interviews. The requirement there was to get one or more professional oral historians to do the interviews. There were [five] of those done. That was Bob Bakewell, who was former head of the Premier's Department, and I think Len King and Clyde Cameron and there was somebody else but I just can't remember [Don Hopgood and Elliott Johnston]. Those interviews were good but we were calculating if we were going to do a lot of people that would take a long time.

Those initial [five] were done by professional people.

Yes, they were done by professionals. One was a chap called Donovan – I can't remember the other one [Rob Linn].

Peter Donovan – yes, I’ve looked at those interviews and I was wondering why they only had a couple of interviews, and you’ve just explained that.

Yes, they were going to cost money and we calculated if we were going to fund them, if we didn’t get these research grants and the State Library pulled out because they were under financial pressure, plus they were hoping the university system would help fund this project. We also thought that while professional oral historians did quite a good job, they didn’t really have the intimate feel for what was going on in the 1970s when Don Dunstan was the Premier. So a group of us decided that we would take on the work of the oral history project.

I think that really does make sense because you need to know not just the people that knew him, you need to know your subject matter, and that clearly came out in the interviews by the type of questions that were asked.

That’s right. We got some training on how to run an oral history project.

Did you get that from here, at the State Library?

Yes, the State Library and we worked out the machines to use. I had known a lot of the people and other people in our group knew people as well, so we got a list of potential interviewees and off we went over a number of years to round people up. Some key people we couldn’t convince to talk but all in all we - - -

How many did you do?

We did about 140 in the end. Some interviewees didn’t come through on the final sign-off but that was a small number.

Why did a few say no?

I won’t mention names but one just thought he was too rambling and some of the things he had to say he didn’t want to have on the formal record.

That’s fair enough.

Another one, I just couldn’t round him up. We did quite a good interview but I just couldn’t round him up to sign-off. I have some understanding of the reasons but I won’t go into that as well.

But you got 140, so clearly people were happy to do it. I’ve listened to or read most of them and it’s an incredible cross-section of people. Again, it’s all about Don – he knows everybody. The impact he had on so many people came through very, very strongly, not just as a politician but as the person Don Dunstan, which was sometimes hard to get to. I’ll formally say on tape, I think that was a

magnificent project and that's an absolute credit not just to yourself and your group but to the foundation to have that as a permanent memorial to Don.

I'll come back to an issue on that.

Please do.

So we did these interviews but when I was director I used to get these phone calls and one was from Peter Combe, the children's entertainer – he sings songs and does all sorts of interesting things. He said, 'Where is the biography of Don Dunstan?' I'd have to explain to him and other people that nobody had really finished a [published] biography of Don Dunstan and that there had been various attempts. There was an academic, Allan Patience, who started but didn't finish for various reasons. Don had done his autobiography [*Felicia*] and that had explained a few things but, again, there wasn't a full account. There was some work going on that we came across later on – Ruth Starke was doing some work on Don Dunstan and the media. She was, or still is, based at Flinders University.

She gave a talk on that. We were all waiting for the book to come out after the talk.

Yes, that has disappeared somewhere but that got a bit of media publicity, particularly some of the stories about Don and his love life, which the media for various reasons is more interested in than substantive things. There was work being done by a chap – I forget his name [Richard Yeeles]¹, but he is now an advisor with Steven Marshall – he was doing a biography of Don Dunstan which he actually published online but none of the hard copy publishers seemed to be interested. I actually got into a copy of it and it was very critical of Don for various reasons. It's certainly worth having a read just to get another view but - - -

Where can you find that one, for people who would be interested?

If I remember his name – it's Richard somebody. He used to work in the publicity section in the Premier's Department and then he worked for BHP and then off and on he'd been an advisor to some of the Liberal Party ministers. Then I knew, and my wife knew, a person called Angela Woollacott, who is the Manning Clark Professor of History at the ANU [Australian National University]. She is an ex-Adelaide person. We were explaining to her that nobody had done a biography of Don Dunstan. Being a historian and being from Adelaide she expressed some interest in doing something so she applied for an ARC [Australian Research Council] research grant and got it based on her record of publications and, I guess, her status in one of the top universities in Australia, if not the world. She has been working on the biography and from what I understand it is coming out soon.

¹ Richard Yeeles: author of *Don't Ask. Don't Tell* and compiler of *Don Dunstan. The First 25 Years in Parliament*.

It's coming out this year.

Yes, and she's had a lot of help from Bronwen Dunstan [Dohnt] so finally we'll have - - -

We'll get the definitive.

Yes. There has been a book before on the Dunstan decade.

Yes, *The Dunstan Decade* was a very good book.

That was a bit of a roundup by Allan Patience and a Flinders person [Andrew Parkin]. Dino Hodge, he did something on Don Dunstan and the Homosexual Law Reform [*Don Dunstan, Intimacy and Liberty*], but that's not a full biography.

No, but it was very good for what it was, but it wasn't the whole story.

That's right. Another issue that we had was how far do we extend the activities of the foundation? There was activity in Victoria and New South Wales and Queensland. I went to each of the states and arranged some events but what we were finding out was that the events really had to be funded by the foundation itself. The Victorians were sort of leveraging off the foundation through, say, the University of Melbourne with Brian Howe, former Deputy Prime Minister being interested, and Race Matthews. They used to have also a sort of policy group. They used to meet in Flinders Lane at some location. We were going to link up there but after a while I thought that was going to cost us money and everybody is competing for fundraising. Similarly, in Sydney there was interest in various groups as well through some of the universities and ex-politicians. Similarly, in Brisbane the Brisbane people were planning to be very active and get into fundraising but there was some falling out up there.

Kym Mayes did a lot of work getting it established but it did run out of puff, I think, essentially.

Yes, there were some arguments as well about something. So they were some of the issues and basically we got on and did our events and our projects.

How long were you in charge?

I was there for about six years, [after the first period of three years] my arrangement got extended by the government but after that period of time I thought, I'm running out of ideas here; it's time to leave and hand over to somebody else. Claire Bossley came from the Premier's Department. I actually did a job swap with her and I went back to the Premier's Department for the third time and did some work in the Aboriginal area and then retired soon after I got there.

Let's call it quits there unless you've got something else – you've got a few notes there you might like to put on.

I've got some notes about the current activities. I don't want to talk too much about the current activities – I think they're doing quite a good job. As you said, one of the challenges is to get young people involved, so what they have set up as far as their linking infrastructure goes is they've got quite a good website, they use emails which we debated back in what I call the older days.

Everything is email now.

Yes, then they are into the social networking stuff as well, which is quite important, not that I – I refuse to go on Facebook for various reasons. I went through their website today and I couldn't get a quick link to say the oral history project - - -

It's there, I found it.

You found it after a while or - - -?

Yes, it was under Resources. I checked it last week. If you go into Resources there's a direct link, click on it and it takes you straight into the Flinders Uni, and I was able to access it easily.

I did go into it and it said they're revamping it, so hopefully it will - - -

OK, it was working last week. It's a very new website so they might have just been updating.

I mentioned the Human Rights Oration and what's happened to that. The Resources hopefully pick up the publications as well.

Yes, they are a little bit easier to find. It actually goes back and has those early Human Rights ones and a lot of the publications – papers written by Don and other people's articles, so it's actually a very good resource, both oral and written. I struggled with the old website in finding things sometimes, but this one is very good.

The other query I had was just getting a better idea of what has actually happened. When we did the newsletter it was hard copy and we used to, not struggle, but have to get people involved to organise the hard copy. Now, with using email it's a lot easier but we used to not only talk about coming events but also a summary of what had happened in previous events. Maybe that is in the Resources area but that's something I'd suggest as well if they're not into that. Then, of course, that comment I made earlier about more publicity somehow – wider publicity.

I still think that's a challenge.

Yes, so that's about it.

Thank you very much. That's absolutely wonderful. That's an excellent summary of your work, the foundation and Don all rolled into one. Thank you very much for participating.

That's all right, good.