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Transcript of an interview with

KAY HALLAHAN

1941 -

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INTRODUCTION

An interview was conducted with the Hon. Kay Hallahan for the Parliament of Western Australia and the J S Battye Library of West Australian history between August 2011 and May 2012. The interviewer was Ronda Jamieson.

Born Elsie Kay Downing in 1941, Kay Hallahan attended Perth Girls High School and then did office work. She joined the Police Force in 1969, but had to leave when she married Pat Hallahan in May 1972. She completed a degree in Social Work at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (later Curtin University) in 1980 and was a part-time real estate salesperson from 1979-1980. From 1981, she was a social worker at the Lockridge Community Health Centre, the Melville Rehabilitation Centre and for the Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority.

A member of the Labor Party from 1976, Kay Hallahan won South-East Metropolitan Province in the Legislative Council in 1983. In 1986, she became a minister in the government of Brian Burke, joining Pam Beggs as the first Labor female members to do so. This also meant Kay Hallahan was the first female Member of the Legislative Council to hold a ministerial post. Her portfolios were Community Services, the Family, Youth, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and the Aged. She was also the Minister assisting the Premier as Minister for Women's Interests, a position she held until 1990. She served in similar portfolios in the ministry of Peter Dowding, Premier from 1988 until 1990, and was Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council from March 1987 until February 1993.

At the 1989 election Kay Hallahan transferred to the East Metropolitan Region and when Carmen Lawrence became Premier in February 1990, became Minister for Planning, Lands and Heritage with the Arts added later that year. From February 1991 her portfolios were Education, Employment (until September 1992), Training and the Arts.

Among many achievements in her portfolios was the introduction of the Seniors Card, an initiative that was eventually followed by all other States and Territories.

At the 1993 election, Kay Hallahan won the Legislative Assembly seat of Armadale becoming the first woman in Western Australia to serve in both houses. The 1993 election also saw the defeat of the Labor government and she served as Deputy Opposition Leader to Ian Taylor from February until October 1994. She retired from parliament at the 1996 election.

In 2004, following the death of a preselected candidate and the resignation of her replacement, Kay Hallahan unsuccessfully stood for the federal seat of Canning.

In 2002, Kay Hallahan was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for "service to the community, particularly as an advocate for the needs of

children, women and the elderly, in matters of social justice, and to the Parliament of Western Australia." She became chairperson of Save The Children Australia in 1998, one of several leadership positions she held in community organisations and as director of a number of not-for-profit boards. She was a member of the Gordon Inquiry into response by government agencies to allegations of family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal Communities and Chairman of the Child Death Review Committee in 2003. That same year she was awarded an Hon. Doctorate by Curtin University and was among the first 100 women inducted into the Western Australia Women's Hall of Fame in 2011.

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Elsie Kay Hallahan was born to Jessie and Eric Stanley on 4 Nov 1941 at St David's Hospital in Mt Lawley. The family resided at Tullis a small timber mill 13 miles from Boddington. The area has now become part of a gold mine. She recently (2011) re-established contact with her godmother, now 95 years old. Her parents married in 1938. A brother, Rodney, born in 1946 died in 2003 of lung cancer – as did their father, both being heavy smokers.	1
Her mother attended Perth Girls' High School and then worked in an office at Economic Stores. She believed her father may have lost a farm due to the Great Depression and commenced work in the timber industry with Bunnings for 30 years. She thinks her father was akin to the timber mill manager. Tullis had 8 to 10 small houses and single men's quarters.	2
When the timber supply was exhausted the family moved to Muchea, then Toodyay Road and later to the Fremantle and West Perth yards. Her father retired when he was ill with lung cancer. She attended a one room school early in order to keep up numbers.	3
Hallahan moved to Muchea Primary School in approximately 1948. After one year at Bullsbrook District High School the family moved to Perth. By registering under her aunt's Inglewood address she was able to attend the same school as her mother – Perth Girls' High School. This involved extensive daily travelling on public transport so she was unable to make friends locally. She arrived at this school two weeks before exams .	4
She got low scores in algebra and geometry, subject she had not previously done, and was placed in the general education stream. Her brother's premature birth and being 4 years younger meant he became family favourite. Subjects such as sex, religion and politics were never discussed but the family voted Labor.	5
Her parents were hospitable people and hosted many functions. Her father had been president of Muchea football club and her mother president of the basketball club and home was a place where people could always drop in. When her father retired he built a beach house at Waikiki. She was not overly interested in sport but did enjoy art and music.	6
She was in the Perth Ladies Highland Pipe Band for a number of years and became drum major. Hallahan had always wanted to be a nurse but interest had waned after getting her Junior Certificate in 1956. Family advised she attend Burroughs to learn office machines such as adding and ledger and attend tech in the afternoon for shorthand and typing.	7
After some temporary jobs she worked as a calculator operator at Midland Junction Abattoir Board for 10 years. She was involved with the Anglican youth fellowship at the Church of Ascension. At 17 or 18 years she attended Holy Communion and taught Sunday School and also attend evensong. She resented the fact that the church being in a working class area had insufficient funds to attract another rector. She became leader of the youth club.	8
Hallahan was eventually appointed as the part time district youth officer which was a paid position. She did a lot of committee organisational work which included liaising with the local Catholic parish. She had only a couple of boyfriends during those years.	9
Lacking qualifications to work in the welfare area Hallahan joined WA Police Force in 1969. Women constables were plain clothed but were required to wear hats, bags and gloves even when chasing absconding girls They liaised with Department for Child Welfare.	10

Women police were primarily involved in the wellbeing of women and children. This involved considerable liaison with foster parents and care groups although there were no stores of institutional abuse then. On rare reporting of rape cases they would assist CIB. She felt the system in place at the time was not in favour of the victim. Domestic violence was another field of involvement.	11
Hallahan was grateful to have joined at an older age of 27. Training was on the job and after studying statutes and passing exams recruits accompanied senior female officers. Females had to leave on marrying. During her time female police numbered no more than 38. She resigned in 1972 when she left to get married.	12
Hallahan had met her husband Pat when president of the Anglican youth fellowship in Midland. Some students from Governor Stirling High School suggested a teacher, Pat Hallahan, would teach the group debating which he did. The friendship evolved over time. They were together for 8 years. Although from a Liberal background he had strong socialist leanings and expressed his views strongly.	13
Their association helped enhance her political awareness as her husband would discuss politics vigorously and regularly.	14
At 26, and still unmarried, Hallahan made the then "bold" move of moving into a flat on her own. She did this while her parents were at the beach house and it caused great upset in the family. She later bought a one bedroom unit in Inglewood; unusually at the time not requiring a male guarantor.	15
She married Pat Hallahan in 1972. They'd had a relationship for 8 years but never lived together as it was not the norm for the time. He was on a teacher exchange programme in UK and sent a telegram with a formal marriage proposal. She flew to England to marry him.	16
Her widowed mother attended the ceremony and friends resident in the UK attended. Not being able to work was a difficult concept for Hallahan. She returned a month early at the end of that year as her mother died. Her husband was posted to Mt Barker and Kalgoorlie the following year. In Mt Barker she did voluntary on the Aboriginal reserve and worked part time in an office in Kalgoorlie.	17
After a year in Kalgoorlie her husband Pat utilized long service leave and they travelled for 12 months in UK and Europe in a van. When travelling by coach from London to Kathmandu on the way home she realized the only difference between her and the group of professionally qualified people they were with was her lack of higher level formal education. On her return she completed the mature age entrance exam halfway through that year.	18
She commenced full time study in 1977 with the support of her husband Pat. It was a 4 year course completed in 1980 at WAIT which later became Curtin University.	19
She gained a Bachelor of Applied Science (Social Work).	20
One position she held at Lockridge Community Health Centre and she lent money to some of her clients but was always repaid. She later had a job with the Drug and Alcohol Authority and while in that position got elected to Parliament. While at Lockridge Health Centre she was interviewed by a local paper and reported that 3 women from the same Housing Commission flat had been raped and received a strong reprimand from a senior social worker at the Health Dept. She contacted Michelle Scott (now Commissioner for Children and Young People) who was, at that time, working at a refuge in Fremantle. Hallahan was impressed with what she did and when Hallahan was a Minister she was employed twice as her Chief of Staff. The problem had partially because the flats	21

didn't have locks and separate keys. She later accepted the position at Alcohol and Drug Authority as she would be working directly for a woman in an administrative position and thought it would be a good experience (which it was.	
It helped her gain an insight into why people get addicted. She felt one of the "simple causations" was that addicts lacked self respect. Her marriage ended in 1985. Although Hallahan grew up in family where politics, amongst other things, was not discussed it was felt	22
the family would vote Labor. Although her former husband was from a conservative background he was a committed social democrat who talked freely about matters.	
When they were travelling by coach from London to Katmandu in 1975 news reached them of Gough Whitlam's dismissal. This caused a political divide amongst the bus passengers. She told her husband when they reached Kabul they should either join the Labor Party or never discuss politics again. They joined the Labor Party on return amidst a large swell of public concern from those not conservatively minded.	23
When they first joined she just joined the local branch and observed proceedings but her husband quickly achieved an office bearing position. However, over the next 2 to 3 years she became more involved in branch activities and her husband moved further back. She became president of the local branch and increased membership. She sold real estate part time while studying at WAIT and used that to determine possible membership. When Hallahan joined the Labor Party in 1975 Sir Charles Court was Premier. She was extremely critical of him in those days in terms of a class divide and his handling of the Noonkanbah dispute although she later felt he provided leadership for mineral development in the north of the state.	24
She also felt very strongly about section 54B of Police Act preventing protests and the issue of electoral reform. As president of Darling Range ALP branch she felt obliged to contest the seat of Kalamunda as there was very little interest in running a campaign against the incumbent member Ian Thompson even though there was little prospect of winning.	25
Her campaign was enlivened by a volunteer who set up a PA system on his ute and proceeded to spruik about voting for her on the main street in Kalamunda. She held progressive dinners and did a lot of doorknocking. Her opponent, Ian Thompson, called in to see her which she thought was a "gentlemanly" thing to do. Things she learned from that campaign helped to organise the campaign for Jim Hansen when he ran for the Federal seat of Canning.	26
Fundraising was at a very basic community level although the Party assisted with how-to-vote cards but the resources were concentrated on winnable seats. In 1983 she won the upper house seat of South East Metropolitan Province which brought – the election which brought the Burke Labor government to power. In 1977 while taking part in a pro-choice outside a venue for people meeting Mother Teresa Hallahan declared the federal seat of Canning was winnable. This inspired Wendy Fatin and she became the first woman elected for the Labor Party to the House of Representatives. Further attention was brought to Hallahan when there was a boundary change.	27
She was contacted by State Secretary Gordon Hill who asked her to consider running for the Upper House after she had turned down standing for pre-selection for the seat of Gosnells. She was not then a very confident person and felt it wouldn't be as critical if she stood for an Upper House seat. There was a very large swing to Labor and she was elected. Brian Burke had a strong positive profile and he had good relationships with all the Labor candidates. Ray O'Connor was the former premier at that time.	28
Hallahan felt it some ways the 1983 election was partly "governments lose" but	29

also felt that Labor rang a very strong campaign. Door knocking was, again, a large part of her campaign strategy. There was a 10.5% swing to Labor in her province. She was heavily involved on election day visiting booths and sorting out administration problems.	
Pre-selection for contesting the seat pitted her against 4 male candidates. This involved extensive presentations to electorate councils but she won on an absolute majority. On election day Hallahan felt she had worked hard to get there but did not what was in front of her.	30
Two weeks before Labor won the state election Labor had also won the federal election so she felt it was the best combination for the social reform agenda. Her term began on 22 May 1983.	31
Hallahan had been on leave during the campaign but returned to work until May when she resigned to join Parliament.	
Hallahan felt training for new Members was inadequate. There was only a cursory introduction and learning was mostly on the job. When she was elected there were 91 members of Parliament; of these there were 4 women in the Assembly and 3 women in the Legislative Council. Lyla Elliott, also a Labor member, acted as a mentor. In the Legislative Assembly at that time there were no female conservative members.	32
At the time of her election Hallahan and others were pressing the Party to adopt greater representation for women. She feels however at certain levels male domination is still strongly part of the culture and will be an ongoing challenge for a long time. She felt then, as she does now, that parliament runs on the very much the same procedures as any community based meeting but at a much more formal level. Her dominant impulse was to make the state a better and fairer place.	33
Having had leadership roles at branch level and community based organisations speaking in Parliament wasn't an ordeal but she had to think on her feet when asked by Peter Dowding to adlib for 10 minutes when he was absent from the Chamber. Clive Griffiths was President of the Legislative Council when she joined. Hallahan felt he was a bit like a high school principal but was a good man who took his role seriously.	34
Hallahan's maiden speech on 27 July 1983 reflected her concerns about unemployment, alcohol dependence, adequate housing, community-police relations, women's refuges and the need for electoral reform. She sat next to Bob Hetherington, which was very helpful to her, as he was an experienced member. Although they had different interests they cooperated well. She eventually established the south east local authorities group to enable local government representatives to discuss matters of mutual interest. She continued to work her seat as would be expected of a lower house member.	35
Her work schedule was heavy. On parliamentary sitting weeks Hallahan would be in meetings on Monday, party meeting prior to Tuesday afternoon sittings and Parliament would sit late on Tuesday and Wednesday nights at rise at 6.00pm on Thursday. Fridays were normally spent in the electoral office. Hallahan found this overwhelming at times. She believed that in a Labor electorate people had few places to go to seek assistance in regard to health, housing and legal problems in addition to several other issues. This was time consuming but helped hone systems to get the best outcome. Her electoral office was at first in Parliament House but later on Albany Highway in Cannington and still later a couple of locations in Armadale. She developed a strong friendship with an Italian lady, secretary of a club in Wattle Grove.	36
Hallahan had a full time electoral officer, Sue Howard-Smith, for the first 5 years.	37
As a "backbencher" in the Upper House for the first three years of the Burke	38

government she felt the abolition of capital punishment was a major achievement. The Opposition had the majority in the Upper House during that time. Getting legislation through Council was therefore never easy and the first foray was usually made through the National Party which, although conservative, was community based in its outlook.	
It required a great deal of negotiation to have legislation passed and because of the Opposition majority in the Legislative Council amendments often had to be accepted. Hallahan felt that was in part due to an unfair electoral system. From 1984 to 1986 Hallahan felt the Burke government made changes left dormant under the Liberal government such as the reopening of the Fremantle railway line. She also felt positives were achieved in community services, health and education portfolios.	39
Since leaving Parliament Hallahan has met the former Opposition Leader Bill Hassell in the community sector and is quite appreciative of him but did not feel that way when he was in Opposition to Brian Burke. She felt he was a bit "Hitler-esque". Although not facing reelection herself in 1986 Hallahan worked hard in the four Lower House seats being contested in her region. She felt she was not overly-ambitious for a Ministerial position.	40
In 1986 she was appointed Minister for Community for Services, Family and Youth. In May 1986 Aged was added and she also Minister Assisting the Minister for Women's Interests. Brian Burke was that Minister. This was in line with her previous employment as a youth worker, police officer and social worker. As a Minister pressure of work was even more intense. The relinquishment of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs which she held from February to July in 1986 was at her request.	41
Hallahan felt this portfolio's policy issues were already dealt with in larger portfolios and the portfolio itself demanded attendance at many social functions which interfered with the workload of her other responsibilities. Although essentially running the Women's Interests portfolio she had considerable support from Premier Burke and would fully discuss any contentious issues with him. Pam Beggs was appointed Minister for Tourism, Racing and Gaming at the same time. They were then the only female Ministers in the Burke government. They were the first Labor females to hold cabinet positions. She felt no particular attitudes from male colleagues but welcomed the support of Pam Beggs.	42
Beggs was particularly close to Brian Burke then so discussions with her before cabinet meetings were helpful. She was aided by very competent staff who liaised with other ministers' staff to ensure quicker processing of matters during cabinet discussions. It was noted, however, that even currently (2012) representation of females at Cabinet level had only increased by one.	43
Although involved with more than one department Hallahan operated from a central Ministerial office which maintained a separate entity. Brian Burke resigned in February 1988 but Hallahan felt an excellent job was done in those portfolios. From 1986 to 1989 spending was doubled. She also felt she learnt a salutatory lesson in not resting on her laurels. The Hawke government came to power federally in 1983 which enabled coinciding policy position. Home and Community Care programme was established for provision of health related services. A childcare agreement enabled the establishment of childcare centres. The supported accommodation assistance was a jointly funded programme to provide refuges for people in crisis.	44
In March 1987 Hallahan became Deputy Leader of Government in the Legislative Council – the first female to hold this position. Des Dans was retiring and Peter Dowding left to join the Lower House. An upper house minister was required to attend to the portfolios of approximately 15 lower house ministers.	45
She regarded Joe Berinson as an excellent leader in the upper house. He was a	46

<p>fine parliamentary performer with an excellent legal brain so did not feel Deputy Leader was particularly onerous for her. In a 1988 publication Burke identified responsible social reform as being cautiously implemented. Hallahan felt this was necessary as every measure taken required legislation and the Opposition had the majority in the Legislative Council. The Family portfolio was introduced by the Burke government which identified a continuing trend of young people returning to the parental home in greater numbers.</p>	
<p>Other significant measures that were introduced were the bicycle rebate scheme, the poverty package which was geared towards families in need and the Seniors Card which acknowledged retirees in the community who were not receiving pension assistance. The government also established Seniors Week to acknowledge the contributions of older citizens.</p>	47
<p>Hallahan indicated to her staff and to Dr Trevor Lee, the then head of the Bureau of the Aged, that she felt that the introduction of this card would not be a difficulty. A small group decided on its implementation but she failed to notify Cabinet of her intentions which, in any event, supported the idea. There was a huge community response which involved a lot of volunteer processing. On 18 Feb 1988 Brian Burke and Mal Bryce resigned. Hallahan believed that the unfortunate circumstances surrounding that regrettably overshadowed some of the good things achieved.</p>	48
<p>Hallahan believes that the years of inquiries took their toll not only those being investigated but also their families and felt that there was a distorted representation. She always felt positively about Mal Bryce as a passionate member of the Cabinet with a strong interest in technology. As she was extremely busy implementing programmes of her Department she could make no comments on policy breaches as acknowledged by Brian Burke in 1987.</p>	49
<p>Bob Pearce also resigned his portfolios but remained as an MP. In 1987 Brian Burke also said in an article in the West Australian (16 Feb 1987) that he considered his most notable achievement was to enable greater understanding between people with less aggressive and less confrontationist behavior within the community. Hallahan believed Burke to be an amazing communicator. At his resignation Burke nominated four possible successors; Peter Dowding, David Parker, Bob Pearce and Ian Taylor.</p>	50
<p>Hallahan a great regard for all of them and was happy with Peter Dowding as Premier. There were no changes to Hallahan's portfolios but cannot recall a difference in leadership style. The Weekend Australian commented at the time, "under Premier Dowding Ministers are going to find little opportunity to follow an independent line". Hallahan did not recall this as being a factor as she considered people should work as part of a collegiate team. She also believed in the dynamics of situation changed the Minister and staff to change to enable the most effective outcomes.</p>	51
<p>Hallahan did not feel Dowding necessarily had a stronger personality but more of a different style of operation. She felt Dowding needed to make his mark but both (Dowding and Burke) were capable of "cracking heads" when required. She received strong support from Dowding when a significant citizen made derogatory remarks about her and was thus not appointed to a significant Board under her portfolio. Dowding, like Burke, let Hallahan have the majority running of Women's Interests. Major achievements from this area were equal opportunity legislation, establishment of Women's Information Referral Exchange and Women's Advisory Council. This also meant policy changes in other areas such as Health and Education.</p>	52
<p>Hallahan could not recall in detail cabinet discussion on Dowding's decision to buy 43% of petrochemical project due to its financial straits. With a year of being Premier Dowding established a Commission on Accountability. An article in the</p>	53

West Australian reported the Commission headed by Sir Francis Burt was “an admission of the need for changing the way things had been done”. David Black called it “well written...but little political impact” There was criticism of the way in which agencies set up by Brian Burke were allowed to operate without ministerial direction and therefore not responsible to Parliament.	
Hallahan, being intensively involved in social policy portfolios, believed other ministerial colleagues had more to do with these agencies. She cannot recall specific Cabinet discussions about these bodies. During the February 1989 her province became East Metropolitan when Council changed the proportional system of election. Hallahan felt it was one step towards a fairer electoral system. The new regions represented larger areas and upper house members concentrated effort on particular parts. She continued with the south east corridor.	54
She felt Peter Dowding provided amazing leadership during that campaign and Labor won against the odds.	55
Hallahan could not recall any major changes being instituted by Dowding after the election. In November 1989 the Australian Railways Union severed ties with the ALP claiming the state government had lost touch with its roots and accusing Dowding of arrogance. Hallahan does not have a recall of the circumstances. Also at that time there was an article in the West Australian quoting of Dowding by senior colleagues. Hallahan does not remember but states she was not in favour of public comment on internal party workings. An article in The West Australian on 6 February 1990 it was suggested Dowding had been asked to stand down on his return from overseas.	56
Hallahan was part of a small team that believed a change of leadership was necessary but cannot recall precise details of the time.	57
Hallahan cannot recall having a specific person in mind for the job but felt whoever was elected needed to have the input of and the confidence of the team. Hallahan was not a member of the Left and cannot comment on moves to remove Dowding but keep Parker and Grill. When interviewed in December 2011 by ABC Dowding asserted Burke orchestrated his downfall but Hallahan claims to have no knowledge of this nor of David Parker’s aspirations to be Premier.	58
Hallahan has no recollection of speeches or moves made by Dowding to keep his position. Dowding resigned on 112 February 1990 as Premier and Julian Grill also resigned from Cabinet. Hallahan believed Dowding would have been a competent Minister but lacked the wherewithal to draw out the best in team members and dealing with the stresses and strains of leadership.	59
Hallahan felt Burke put a lot of time and effort into all levels of community as well as parliamentary and cabinet colleagues but felt Dowding would not have allocated the same time to that process. She felt that with his legal background Dowding was an extremely talented performer in Parliament who could be very charming if he had time. Carmen Lawrence was elected Premier on 12 February 1990 but cannot recall specific details of that. Ian Taylor was appointed Deputy Premier.	60
Hallahan felt Carme Lawrence was a very competentable woman and briefly held Planning, Lands and Heritage as part of her portfolio. She became Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council which she held for the time of the Lawrence government. Arts was added to her portfolios. By September 1991 these portfolios, with the exception of Arts, were transferred and Hallahan had Education, Employment and Training.	61
Hallahan felt overwhelmed and asked her former Chief of Staff , Michelle Scott, under Community Services to rejoin her in that capacity for the new responsibility. (As at 2012 Scott was inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People)	62

In September Employment was transferred to another Minister.	
In discussing portfolios she had held since 1986 Hallahan recalled with Arts funding was directed from Lotterywest. It was significant coup for that particular area. Another major achievement was successful passage of the state first Heritage legislation in 1990. Planning for the Future was a very busy. In Education the government introduced voluntary pre-primary 5 year old programme and attempted the lift the status of TAFE training. Lands required a big legislative change due to the amount of documentation. The Planning portfolio required significant work to cater for future needs. The Local Government portfolio meant extensive travel throughout the state and attendance at International Union of Local Authorities in Oslo where a campaign to have the next conference in Perth was successful. Pauline Basdonavicius was her Chief of Staff at that time.	63
Lands Department had old legislation governing the issue of titles and legislation took some time to effect t and continued after she left the portfolio. Hallahan regarded the land registration system used in Western Australia was very advanced and was looked at some by some Asian countries as a model. Discussions for updating it were underway during her time as Minister. In Education the government set up state training boards to enhance the status of career paths other than university and there was considerable to the pre-primary programme. In the Arts portfolio Hallahan that Arts underpinned our culture and should have increased support.	64
Hallahan believes a community can be judged on its support for the disadvantaged and elderly as well as support accorded to the Arts from the public purse. Hallahan is credited with saving Araluen by persuading the government to buy it. It was done within the portfolio and had been intended for subdivision.	65
Hallahan was under pressure to safeguard and a metropolitan regional improvement fund was earmarked as a legitimate source of financing. In May 1992 the Western Women episode reached crisis point. Robyn Greenburg, its founder, was later found guilty of embezzling nearly \$3 million and investors lost nearly \$6 million. A parliamentary found many women had placed their entire savings with the group on the advice of WIRE. Hallahan helped set it up by feels its good work was derailed by its association with Greenberg.	66
Hallahan was not the Minister Assisting when the decision was made to delay determining liability. Eventually the WA government, NAB and R& I Bank offered a \$3.6 million compensation package. In January 1991 the royal commission into WA Inc was established by the Lawrence government. It reported in November 1992 at a cost of \$30.4 million. Hallahan cannot recall discussions regarding the establishment of the royal commission.	67
Hallahan felt negative impact on the whole government of the royal commission report entirely negated worthwhile achievements of the period. She felt as a result of the findings Burke had been seduced by the power of the position. Peter Dowding was left with a legacy of problems which added to the tensions of the job and his relationships with cabinet, caucus and community. Julian Grill, when writing of this time, disagreed with the commissioners that cabinet was not fully informed and that some financial-technical were beyond the understanding of some ministers and relied too much on the opinion of premier and deputy premier. Hallahan disagrees with his view of certain ministers' abilities to comprehend.	68
Matt Birney, as WA opposition leader in 2006, estimated WA Inc dealings cost taxpayers in excess of \$1.5 billion – approximately \$3,500 per family. Hallahan the worst impact would have been on low income and disadvantaged families. Allan Peachment in his book The Years of Scandal maintained the government not only maintained secrecy from the public but the premier and deputy premier	69

<p>maintained secrecy from cabinet colleagues and actively misled them. Parker defended this action by claiming “government worldwide is built upon the basis of concealment”. The commissioners concluded this to be a profound misconception of the role of government. Hallahan believes concealment is never justified but suggested Parker may have been referring to the mass of information received .</p>	
<p>Peachment further wrote that followers of the royal commission may “have been startled to hear the views of senior members of former governments who testified they did not believe they had a duty to tell the media the truth”. Hallahan’s personal view is there is an obligation to tell the truth in answering question. However she feels that so much information goes with every answer it could be construed as not telling everything.</p>	70
<p>Hallahan felt the election of 5 February 1993 was almost impossible for Labor to win. She ran for the lower house seat of Armadale and achieved a good result and she had a strong team. Bob Pearce was retiring and had asked her to contest the seat. She already had an office in Armadale and had built up a lot of contacts in the area. She had the optimistic view she help re-elect Carmen Lawrence. It was thought that WA Royal Commission had effectively ended Pearce’s career even though he had been a respected minister.</p>	71
<p>Alannah MacTiernan succeeded Hallahan in the East Metropolitan seat. Hallahan strongly encouraged her to run for the seat to the extent of suggesting she would reconsider creating the vacancy if MacTiernan were not endorsed. Hallahan was the first woman in Western Australia to sit in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. Carmen Lawrence remained opposition leader for a year resigning on 7 February 1994. In opposition there is no longer the responsibility of decision making and the requirement to be aware of all the necessary information.</p>	72
<p>However she also missed the lack of support from staff and the ability to call on that expertise. However her view is that if the job is taken seriously there is always a huge workload. Opposition meant not having access to all the considered positions. Hallahan disagreed with the comment in the West Australian on 17 March 1994 which suggested Lawrence had been a one woman show. Hallahan believed she did a very good job of restoring public confidence and she did the role admirably.</p>	73
<p>Peachment quoted Lawrence of being critical of the low standard of debate in the Western Australian Parliament. Hallahan cannot specifically recall that but felt Lawrence as a “highly intelligent, verbally skilled individual” may have felt comfortable in that situation rather than social conversation. Peachment in his book The Years of Scandal quoted former deputy premier Parker on Lawrence as “the most ambitious and ruthless politician I have ever met”. Hallahan does not share this view. Lawrence was critical of big donations from both corporations and trade unions.</p>	74
<p>Hallahan believes fundraising has to be underpinned by those with the most wealth in the community. At a community level it is done by quiz nights and dinner with a speaker. She doubts the electorate would be prepared to pay the money required for election campaigns. She is “disquieted” by the “inordinate balance that there is in the amount of support that goes to the two major political parties”. She also believes with media owned by wealth corporations and individuals that media exposure is very unbalanced. There is a lack of clear presentation of party policies.</p>	75
<p>Hallahan was unable comment on the short tenure of Ian Taylor as Opposition Leader (7 February to 12 October) but felt she, herself, was not in the best position as Deputy Leader suffering as she was from total exhaustion.</p>	76
<p>She felt Ian Taylor was well liked and respected but took on the leadership</p>	77

<p>without any particular enthusiasm. Being on a defeated side is a “fragmenting experience” and while seemingly inevitable still comes as a shock. The next wave of leadership is more ambitious and more open to the task ahead. Jim McGinty succeeded Ian Taylor and Geoff Gallop became Deputy Leader. Hallahan felt she was not fulfilling her role as deputy and did not stand for re-election.</p>	
<p>She felt McGinty to be a competent person who “had difficulty resonating through the media” but had some initial difficulties with team building skills. It was good training for Geoff Gallop who was clearly emerging as a future leader. In opposition Hallahan held shadow portfolios in education and training, arts and media under Lawrence; deputy leader, federal affairs, tourism, racing and gaming under Taylor; tourism and transport with McGinty. She found it challenging particularly in areas she had not previously experienced. Hallahan did not contest 1996 election. A decision she had made early in that year. She felt she no longer had a personal life.</p>	78
<p>Hallahan took time for medical assessment and was found to be suffering from three chronic but non-life threatening complaints. She believed she was young enough to enjoy another career. She felt that personally she had worked so hard in social policy and education areas which had resulted in real constructive difference but it was totally overshadowed by the problems of WA Inc. She no longer wanted a public persona which invited personal criticism. She found working in a voluntary capacity in the not-for-profit sector very worthwhile. As a member of Joint House Committee, Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Select Committee on Fruit and Vegetable Industry, Aboriginal Poverty and Heavy Transport she felt committee work to be important. It mean making contributions with reports and suggestions for the future and also working with and learning from colleagues from all sides of Parliament.</p>	79
<p>Ruby Hutchinson ,Labor, the first elected to the Legislative Council in 1954 remained a member until 1971. She spoke on the disenfranchisement of women and Aboriginals and always believed the Upper House should be abolished. Hallahan believed it to be a scandal that conservative governments prevented “one vote, one value for so long. She further felt that the Upper House acted as a “rubber stamp while for Labor it was a house of review. She still thinks that if a lower house is excessive an upper house prevents legislation being rushed through and is has a serious role in scrutiny. And observed the Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland as an argument against a one house party parliament.</p>	80
<p>She has no clear views of Richard Court as Premier but felt there was an advantage in being the son of Charles Court. She also thought “reprehensible” an appeal to the High Court on land rights and 1995 Royal Commission in Use of Executive Power involving Carmen Lawrence. She believed Clive Griffiths thoroughly enjoyed his role as President. She has no clear view of James Clarko as Speaker of the Lower House but had amicable relationships with both men. She enjoyed the freedom of interjection in the Legislative Assembly when she had responsibility as a Minister. She regarded Joe Berinson as an outstanding parliamentary performer.</p>	81
<p>Peter Dowding was able and competent while Des Dans, a colourful character would probably not be accepted today. She recalls having to remain on her feet at Peter Dowding’s request when he was absent from the chamber briefly. She was never approached during her time as a politician with a bribe. She had in 2012 little contact with the lay party.</p>	82
<p>During her time as MP she had constant contact particularly with the branches in her electorate. She found good community leaders at Labor Party branch level. She felt her greatest achievements in her time parliament were; community</p>	83

services doubling funding in three years, increased funding for emergency relief, the Commonwealth –state agreement on childcare, supported accommodation assistance scheme, HACC scheme. In addition, the creation of a portfolio to focus on youth affairs and family which had not previously existed.	
In education Labor brought in the voluntary pre-primary program. When Minister, in the Planning portfolio, the creation of East Perth Redevelopment Authority and similar in Subiaco; also the emphasis on developing TAFE qualifications as a viable alternative to tertiary education.	84
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INTRODUCTION

An interview was conducted with the Hon. Kay Hallahan for the Parliament of Western Australia and the J S Battye Library of West Australian history between August 2011 and May 2012. The interviewer was Ronda Jamieson.

Born Elsie Kay Downing in 1941, Kay Hallahan attended Perth Girls High School and then did office work. She joined the Police Force in 1969, but had to leave when she married Pat Hallahan in May 1972. She completed a degree in Social Work at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (later Curtin University) in 1980 and was a part-time real estate salesperson from 1979-1980. From 1981, she was a social worker at the Lockridge Community Health Centre, the Melville Rehabilitation Centre and for the Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority.

A member of the Labor Party from 1976, Kay Hallahan won South-East Metropolitan Province in the Legislative Council in 1983. In 1986, she became a minister in the government of Brian Burke, joining Pam Beggs as the first Labor female members to do so. This also meant Kay Hallahan was the first female Member of the Legislative Council to hold a ministerial post. Her portfolios were Community Services, the Family, Youth, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and the Aged. She was also the Minister assisting the Premier as Minister for Women's Interests, a position she held until 1990. She served in similar portfolios in the ministry of Peter Dowding, Premier from 1988 until 1990, and was Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council from March 1987 until February 1993.

At the 1989 election Kay Hallahan transferred to the East Metropolitan Region and when Carmen Lawrence became Premier in February 1990, became Minister for Planning, Lands and Heritage with the Arts added later that year. From February 1991 her portfolios were Education, Employment (until September 1992), Training and the Arts.

Among many achievements in her portfolios was the introduction of the Seniors Card, an initiative that was eventually followed by all other States and Territories.

At the 1993 election, Kay Hallahan won the Legislative Assembly seat of Armadale becoming the first woman in Western Australia to serve in both houses. The 1993 election also saw the defeat of the Labor government and she served as Deputy Opposition Leader to Ian Taylor from February until October 1994. She retired from parliament at the 1996 election.

In 2004, following the death of a preselected candidate and the resignation of her replacement, Kay Hallahan unsuccessfully stood for the federal seat of Canning.

In 2002, Kay Hallahan was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for "service to the community, particularly as an advocate for the needs of children, women and the elderly, in matters of social justice, and to the Parliament of Western Australia." She became chairperson of Save The Children Australia in 1998, one of several leadership positions she held in community organisations and as director of a number of not-for-profit boards. She was a member of the Gordon Inquiry into response by government agencies to allegations of family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal Communities and Chairman of the Child Death Review Committee in 2003. That same year she was awarded an Hon. Doctorate by Curtin University and was among the first 100 women inducted into the Western Australia Women's Hall of Fame in 2011.

INTERVIEW ONE

RJ This is an interview with Kay Hallahan for the Parliamentary History Project being recorded on 16 August 2011.

Kay, could we start off by you giving us your full name and where and when you were born please.

HALLAHAN My full name is Elsie, E-L-S-I-E (not Elise), Elsie Kay Hallahan, and I was born on 4 November 1941 at St David's Hospital in Mount Lawley.

RJ And who were your parents?

HALLAHAN My mother was Jessie Elsie Downing and my father was Eric Stanley Downing, and I have no idea why I was born at St David's Hospital in Mount Lawley. I probably did question it later on [laughter] but I've never understood the connection.

RJ So where were your family living at the time?

HALLAHAN We were living at a place called Tullis, which was a very small timber mill. In those days it was 13 miles on a very windy, narrow road through the trees from Boddington to Tullis. Tullis Bridge does still exist, apparently, and the train, one of those heritage trains from Pinjarra, goes up to Tullis Bridge, I understand, or certainly did until recent years. But apparently the whole area, the Tullis timber mill, has now been churned up into that enormous goldmine outside Boddington.

RJ Right. And when did your parents marry?

HALLAHAN They married in 1938. A wonderful part of my life just at present is that I'm back in touch, after many decades not being in touch, with my godmother, who is 95. She was in their bridal party in 1938.

RJ Right. Do you have any siblings?

HALLAHAN No, I don't now, sadly, but I did have one brother. It's interesting, I don't think childbirth and rearing ... rearing probably okay ... [I don't think] childbirth came very easily. I think there was one child lost between myself and my brother, and he was born in February 1946.

RJ His name?

HALLAHAN His name was Rodney Wilfred Downing. It was interesting that tradition, that his name Wilfred came from both grandparents; one was Will and one was Fred so they carried that line on. They couldn't apparently do that with me, because I didn't seem to have names that came through the family. But they were intent on doing that with the boy in the family. He sadly died ... well, this morning I'm thinking it was 2003, and he died of lung cancer, which was interesting because my father also had died of lung cancer and they were both heavy smokers.

If I may digress, it was very sad ... just social history in a way ... that my brother saved someone, when he was a teenager, from drowning in the river at West Midland, and by way of recognition of this extraordinary feat, my father lit a cigarette and handed it to him when he was about 15. That was his way of saying, you know, "Well done. It was a man-sized thing to do." And I thought, really, he'd introduced him

to the means of his death, you know, all quite, quite unintentional.

RJ But it was also at a time when no-one realised the implication of smoking. It took many, many years after that for us to know.

HALLAHAN No, and the other interesting implication of smoking was that women who smoked in my mother's culture were regarded as cheap. So "nice" women, "good" women, did not smoke and neither did they have pierced ears, [laughter] so I haven't ever smoked except on odd trips to Bali when I've had a clove cigarette [laughter] and I've certainly never had pierced ears, because nice women didn't do it!

RJ So before your parents married, what was your mother's working life?

HALLAHAN Well, it's an interesting one, really, because the godmother that I mentioned, her name is Dorothy Snow, and she now lives at the RAAFA estate in Mandurah. She and my mother went to Perth Girls' High School, which of course was down there in James Street, and my mother insisted, as it happens later on, that I should also go there when an opportunity arose. I think that my godmother's father had a managerial position in Economic Stores (which later I think became Cox Brothers Economic Stores, on the corner of Hay Street and William Street) so I think it was through that connection that an office job was arranged for my mother. My godmother just recently said to me, "You know, your mother was very intelligent, Kay, and very beautiful as well." And it's just very lovely to hear these things said about one's parents when I've never reflected particularly on either thing, in all the years. So that probably fits with her, though, going into office work; she was very good with maths and arithmetic and [spelling and grammar].

RJ And your father?

HALLAHAN I just wanted to say about my mother, I suspect that that's the only job that she had prior to marrying. My father, I don't know what he did earlier. I know he and some friends took up farming at Koorda and lost that farm in the Depression, and then all I knew of him was in the timber industry as were my mother's brothers. I don't know whether that was a post-Depression phenomenon; I don't know whether the timber industry grew in that period. It's not something I've applied my mind to, but I think that's highly likely. So my father actually worked for Bunning Bros for about 30 years, but after Tullis, we were all in this very tiny community; there were probably eight or 10 houses. My father built the house that my parents moved into on marriage. It was all just timber on the outside and lined with timber on the inside, calcimine walls, and it was regarded that he'd done very well by my mother. The house had two bedrooms. We had a kitchen and a back verandah; the bathroom came off the back verandah; and two bedrooms and a lounge room and a front verandah. They made a sleepout on the front verandah; that was always my brother's bedroom. But that was a very usual thing for families in those days.

RJ What did your father do for Bunning Bros?

HALLAHAN Well, he was on the mill at Tullis. It was like the overall mill [manager]. I've been trying to think of his title, because I have a feeling my father was the mill manager but there was a person above him. But there were only about eight or ten houses and then a number of single men's quarters. My oldest friend now (and she's actually coming to have soup for lunch, like you've been invited to do today[laughs]) she was the daughter of the people who ran the boarding house. That was on the other side of the railway line, because the train used to come in and take out the timber and trucks used to bring the logs [into the mill].

When the timber cut out, all the Tullis timber mill crew moved and opened up what was then regarded as the new, beaut, state-of-the-art timber mill at Tone River [near Manjimup]. My father didn't go with that crew. He was apparently asked to take up a timber mill at Muchea, north of Pearce **RAAF** station, just off the Great Northern Highway, and so we moved there. Ultimately that closed, then he took up another timber mill off the Toodyay Road. Then that timber cut out, then he went, I think, into the Fremantle yard and the West Perth yard. They were very big; there's no evidence of them at all around now, but they were very big activity centres in those times. He retired ... well, he didn't retire, he got ill with lung cancer and went out of the work force with that.

RJ The memories of you growing up, right from ... What is your earliest memory, for example?

HALLAHAN My earliest memory?

RJ Your very earliest memory. What occurs to you?

HALLAHAN I shouldn't reveal too much about myself, but apparently the person who was in charge of the whole Tullis timber mill, his name was Arthur Apps. We called him Uncle Arthur – and Auntie Ena. Apparently on a Sunday, I think it was, he would walk up the hill. It was very gravelly country, and he would walk up with a bottle of beer to have with my father. Apparently I would run in and say, "Here comes Uncle Arthur with a 'bockle'", and I'd get out three glasses, one for him, one for my father and one for me, because my mother didn't drink; good women didn't drink either!) [laughs] I then got a terrible bout of boils on my bottom. People thought it was probably too much yeast or something or other, I don't know. Anyway, that's put me off beer for the rest of my life! [laughter]

RJ I love it!

HALLAHAN That stayed with me. There's all these varieties of beers these days; I don't know what to go and buy people. I want to buy some for my godmother, for example, who enjoys a beer but I get so confused about all the different brands. So that's one memory.

The other memory is the Tullis [house], the verandah that I referred to and on our birthdays we would have a table set up and all the children, which was a very small community, everybody would come. There was another boy, and his birthday – he was younger than me, but his was on 3 November, mine was on 4 November. So he and I always had a joint birthday party on the front verandah. We used to look over the verandah at people coming, because we were just on a slight rise, watching the people to see what they had in their hands bringing presents for us. [laughs]

RJ Tell me about your education.

HALLAHAN Well, because we were at Tullis, there was no purpose-built building for a school. There was one community building and that was the hall, so the school met in that; every class was in that. I was sent to school earlier than I [normally] would have been because they needed the numbers to keep the ratio up to have a schoolteacher. If we dropped by one, we wouldn't have had a schoolteacher, apparently, at Tullis. I remember that story. So I was sent off to school early. But I enjoyed it.

I can remember the schoolteacher giving me a little blackboard and putting me out the front to teach the other little ones, so I was very full of my own self-importance [chuckles] and I enjoyed that. I was only there, I would think, for a year or two. I think it was probably 1948 that the timber mill at Tullis closed and the whole thing was dissembled and we went to Muchea.

So then I went to the Muchea Primary School, and that was a one-room school building and all the classes were in that from beginnings, and in those days up to what was called the junior certificate, or year 10, I guess we'd say now. [...] I think there we had one teacher. We had Mr Earp there, and he played a saxophone. That was always very memorable, because at the community dances there'd be somebody who'd play piano, saxophone and drums. We always had very good community dances because there was a hall there as well.

Then they closed all the smaller schools in that area and brought us all by bus to the newly-constructed Bullsbrook District High School. So that was my first year in high school. [...] No, no, no, that's not true. I had gone there earlier. I left there when I was in first year at high school [in 1954]. I don't know what year Bullsbrook opened. I did go to one of the celebration anniversaries. And then, because we had to move from Muchea when the timber cut out, for the first time we moved into suburbia and we moved to West Midland.

That was at the end of my first year in high school, and because we'd come in, I think, to the metropolitan area, my mother was really determined that I should go to Perth Girls' High School. Miss Amy Wright was the headmistress when my mother had gone to school in James Street back all those years,¹ and she was still the headmistress. I felt very, very uncomfortable because we were brought up with a very strong ethic about honesty and integrity, and the only way that [my mother] could get me into that school was to register me under my auntie's address in Inglewood. So I always felt very, very careful about anybody saying where they lived. The sad thing about that, on the other hand, was that I didn't ever get to know any young people, my age, growing up [who lived in my area]. I travelled in from West Midland on the Beam buses and back again, of course, and there were no other students from that area going to Perth Girls' High School. But I can understand why my mother wanted that to be, you know.

I went there at the end of 1954, actually, it comes back to me. Amy Wright actually retired in 1956. I was there when she did. We had this big phalanx of girls that she walked [through] towards the gate and left her wonderful career.

RJ What sort of experience was school for you? What did you enjoy most; what were you good at; was there anything you disliked?

HALLAHAN I look back and I sort of reflect on it in a positive way. I did enjoy the opening up to new information and knowledge. When I was young – it probably comes from my mother, and I haven't appreciated this until I met my godmother in recent times – but I loved mental arithmetic.

You see, when we lived at Muchea there was a railway station and refreshment rooms, so I used to get behind the counter, as a young person, and serve. Everybody was very proud of this, you know, fascinated by this young kid that could do all sorts

¹ By this time, Perth Girls High School (previously Perth Girls School) had moved to East Perth on the corner of Wellington and Plain Streets and the James Street school had been renamed Girdlestone High School.

of mental arithmetic and serve and give out the change and all that, so I was in my element. So that was fine, but when I hit Perth Girls the subjects were somewhat different, and I hadn't done them before. I got there about two weeks before the exams and they had algebra and geometry, which I had never touched before. Well, I had a crashing experience, because I got horrifically low scores in those exams, which wasn't good for my psyche at all really. [chuckles] So I think I probably had a fairly successful time in school, you know, until that point. There were three streams: there was professional, general and domestic, I think they called it.

RJ Yes, you're right.

HALLAHAN So I was put in general and I had some very good teachers. It was generally a very good experience.

RJ You obviously didn't enjoy algebra and geometry, but which subjects did you enjoy most? [pause] I know you said you were good at mental arithmetic, but was there anything in particular that you really enjoyed? For instance, I loved history at school. Can you say anything like that?

HALLAHAN Yeah, I liked it. I mean, I find it all fascinating, historical events. I'm sorry, I can't think what I really loved. Okay?

RJ No, that's fair enough. The family life around you, obviously when you were not at school, what was that like? Were you a family that had meals together and talked?

HALLAHAN Well, there were some very wonderful strengths about our family life, and there were a couple of weaknesses. If I can just deal with the weakness first and get it out of the way, because I really feel quite sad about it and yet it was very interesting as well. We didn't have great debates around the table. We were certainly a family together. My young brother actually was born at six-and-a-half months. The family had gone on a holiday, as lots of families did in those days, to Mandurah. All the regional facilities in those days were in Pinjarra. Anyway, clearly, my mother came to the conclusion that he was about to arrive, so they got the ambulance, but he was actually born in the ambulance on the way between Mandurah and Pinjarra, which I think was probably not a very pleasant experience for her. And, of course, it was a real struggle to have him survive, because we are now talking 1946, yes. There was a wonderful doctor there who fitted up some feeding arrangement and I think she expressed milk, and I think they were in hospital for about two months. Anyway, it was a great feat, I think, for him to survive in those days. And, I've forgotten what you asked me.

RJ I was asking about your family life and whether you had meals together.

HALLAHAN Ah, yes, the family life. So this feeds into it, because my brother was spoilt. Okay? And I very much resented that. If you're into having fairness, you've got to have fairness in life. [laughs] And you can understand why my mother would want to protect him; I mean, it would be absolutely instinctive. Of course, he was a boy and he was four years younger than me, and I liked all my books and things and he took to them all with crayons and God knows what. I'm sure lots of younger brothers and sisters do this to their older brothers and sisters. [laughs] So we had this sort of "teasy" relationship all through our lives, really.

But in the family there was this really strong ethos that you do not discuss sex, religion or politics, but you quietly know that all self-respecting people vote Labor. My father was a manager always, so people sort of expected that he was probably on the other side of politics, so we never, ever discussed what we were, but we knew clearly where we were.

I have to say, I didn't quite know why if I look at it now, because there was no discussion. I mean we knew that we were for fairness and helping people, do you know what I mean? My family were incredibly hospitable. At Muchea, for example, my father was the president of the football club and my mother was president of the basketball club. In order to have a football team we needed outside players, so from the Pearce Air Force Base, a number of the men would come up [...] and join the Muchea football club, so they would just sort of make our home a place to call in. Some nights you'd think you were having a quiet night and the next thing there'd be motorbikes and cars arrive at the front and they'd arrive with a keg or something like this. Mum would sort of have a big pot of pea soup on, fortuitously, and just keep adding water as more people walked around the corner. [...] It was very, very warm and hospitable, because a lot of those young men came from the eastern states and didn't have family or anybody, so it was pretty important to them.

When we were living at West Midland my father decided that his retirement would be to the beach where he'd go fishing. So he started building a beach house at Waikiki and again that place was always a place of great hospitality, too. I mean, very simple hospitality but warm and welcoming. There was no question of phoning or anything. People would just arrive. Quite frankly, we'd get exhausted with the hosting of visitors, you know.

RJ Did sport feature in your life? [pause] Sport.

HALLAHAN [laughter] Yes, I heard the word!

RJ There was this hesitation! [laughter]

HALLAHAN I've never been great on physical activity. I mean, I did when I was at Perth Girls' High School. I learnt to play tennis and it's one of my regrets that I've never followed that up. I guess I played basketball. When we were at Muchea, in winter we'd go paddling with all the tadpoles and things like that, do you know what I mean? And we'd walk to school, too. At Muchea we had to walk quite a way there and back, and all that stuff, but ...

RJ Not a great feature. What about art?

HALLAHAN No, not ... I haven't shone, really, in many things.

RJ No, but it's just interesting to know if any of that was in your life; in the light of what happened to you later, whether that was in your life from an early age. Good.

HALLAHAN At Bullsbrook District High School I had a teacher named Noel White, who'd been at Carrolup Aboriginal Mission, and he used to emphasise art with us. I actually did some rather nice crayon drawings, Australiana-type scenes, which I was always extraordinarily proud of. Sometimes I think there is this minor regret that I didn't follow up some aspect of that. I do like arranging flowers if that comes into the ... [laughter]

RJ Yes, it certainly does. Music?

HALLAHAN No, that's another regret. I'd love to be able to play the piano. [pause] Oh, I was in Perth Ladies Highland Pipe Band for some years. [laughs]

RJ What playing?

HALLAHAN I played the drums. I was actually working at Wesfarmers in the city in Queen Street; they had **offices** there then. Over lunch one day I was talking to this woman named (well, we were young girls, really, I suppose) Maureen Chalmers, and she was in Perth Ladies Highland Pipe Band. I said, "Ohhh, really?", because I'd seen them in the ANZAC parade the year before and I'd seen the players with the tenor drums. I said, "I'd LOVE to join." She said, "Well, you're very welcome to come." Well, I couldn't wait to get in. I became absolutely dedicated for about eight years to Perth Ladies Highland Pipe Band and I played the tenor drum, and I won the state championship one year. Sometimes I played the bass drum, but that was unusual because we didn't have one in the ladies' band in those days. Sometimes we'd have a mixed band and I'd try my hand at that. Then I became drum major.

RJ Good.

HALLAHAN I've still got friends from those days; they were great days.

RJ Growing up, what was your own thoughts about what you might like to do with your life? Was anything forming in your mind about a future career?

HALLAHAN Yes, I was very clear that I wanted to be a nurse. My mother was one of eight, and two of her three sisters were nurses. The other one was a dressmaker and had her own business; she was my godmother too. One of the other ones who was a nurse was also my godmother. I was absolutely clear. That's the only thing I ever talked about that I wanted to do.

Interestingly enough, when I got my junior certificate, which was at the end of 1956 – I suppose we knew about it early in 1957 – I was thrilled to bits to get that. In those days ... I'm sorry, I'm probably diverting off the ... In those days and in my social milieu, if you know what I mean, it was regarded that my parents had done very well to get me to the junior certificate. In those days that was the aspiration for me and I'd done well to do that. [phone interruption] In those days it was regarded that my parents had done well by me to achieve that level of education, but the unexpected thing out of that, as I reflected, was that I had absolutely lost my desire to be a nurse. I did not know what I wanted to do.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN I don't know; it just went. It had been so clear all those years. I have no idea what that was about at all. More concerning was the fact that I did not know what I wanted to do. My parents then were in a bit of a quandary about what to do with me, and my mother's elder sister **Aunty Liz** ... she'd been the state's youngest matron of a government hospital. She'd been in charge of the Collie District Hospital, I think it was called and she was married to Arthur Holliday, and he was in the timber industry in a managerial position; a well-respected person. So they turned to him for advice on what to do. I think he suggested that perhaps some office machine training would be a good thing to do. I guess that was a new area, so I was sent to Burroughs to learn about adding machines, calculators and ledger machines. That course was in the morning and I was supposed to go to tech in the afternoon and learn about

shorthand and typing, which didn't really grab my attention too well. I do remember, I think for the first time in my life, being a bit slack and not necessarily always turning up. But I ultimately got a couple of jobs, and then I ...

RJ A couple of jobs ... what doing?

HALLAHAN In an office. Then I took up a position (keeping in mind that we were living in west Midland) as a calculator operator at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board. I had a job there for 10 years in the office.

In that time I was involved with the Anglican youth fellowship at the Church of the Ascension, and that was a very big part of my life. That was in later teens. We had a wonderful, wonderful parish priest there, the Reverend Peter Hodge, who was quite a radical man in his way. In fact, he felt very strongly about the Easter passion story, and he actually would tie himself on a big cross outside the Church of the Ascension, which is right on Great Eastern Highway; it's on a junction of the main shopping area of Midland. He was seen as a bit eccentric by many but [laughs] he was wonderful, very inclusive, loving, eccentric sort of. When my parents were away at the beach place, there'd be an arrangement for him to come and use my parents' house to sort out papers. It was so hot and there was no air conditioning, and I'd come home and there would be hessian draped over an open window with the hose linked up and water dripping through it [chuckles] to keep him cool while he sorted his papers. None of us got involved in helping him in any way when I look back at it, but the house was made available for him while it was a quiet time so he could get on with what he needed to do.

Then he later went to St Bartholomew's House in East Perth and did wonderful work there with homeless men. That work continues today, of course.

RJ You were telling me you had 10 years at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board.

HALLAHAN Yes. The reason I think I digressed from there was the fact that I joined ... rather, my mother insisted. There were certain steps one took in life, and one was to get baptised as a baby and then to get confirmed as an early teenager. So I had been confirmed, but I didn't really get terribly involved with the church until some years later when I was 17 or 18. Then, like anything I do, I then took on, at that point, in a sort of delayed way ...

RJ In what way did you get involved?

HALLAHAN Well, I would go to Holy Communion on a Sunday morning. I would teach Sunday school at 9.30. So it was 7.30 to Holy Communion, 9.30 teach Sunday school and 7.30 in the evening I would read the lesson at evensong, and then I was on the vestry.

It's interesting about politics, because I came to a view ... We were a working class area and we didn't have a lot of money coming into the parish. When we lost our rector we didn't have **sufficient** money to attract another one, and I felt very resentful, for example, of churches like the one [...] Sir Charles Court **attended** and we were struggling. I couldn't understand how you could be in a Christian body and some parts of the body were struggling and other parts were clearly not. So I decided that the Anglican church must really be the right arm of the Liberal Party and, even though ... this is very ill-formed because we never discussed politics or religion or

sex! [laughter] So I came to these conclusions myself out of really seeing it on the ground; what it was like and being pretty involved with the church.

I also became the leader of the youth club. Then there was a body called the Midland Districts Youth Committee set up and John Holland, a teacher, was appointed as the district youth officer which was a full-time position. I ultimately got appointed as the part-time district youth officer. That was a part-time, paid position, so all that happened in those 10 years also while I was working at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board, which took me into youth and community work.

RJ And what exactly were you doing, and many hours a week would you put in?

HALLAHAN Oh, I put in a lot of hours. I think I got paid for about eight hours per week, I think, from memory. The churches in those days all had youth clubs and then we had a couple of clubs that were set up that were not associated, and so we would bring them all together. I didn't establish it but I helped maintain it. [There were] a number of activities and there was a wonderful priest at the Catholic Church called Father Ralph, and he helped establish, and we used their courts, what was called international rules basketball. So I helped with the organisation of all that, and I think he was the one that proposed that I should become the part-time youth organiser for the Midland Districts Youth Committee, too. So from late teens onwards, I suppose you would say, I've done a lot of committee organisational work on the very structures that hold those things together and develop and grow them, and worked with lots of wonderful people along the way.

RJ And enjoyed it?

HALLAHAN Oh, yes, I must have; I must have, because I put everything into it, do you know what I mean? And I've still got friends from those days. One is a woman named Anna Huk; she now lives up in Geraldton. I've always been very lucky in people who've supported me in what I've done [...]. I didn't have terribly good keyboard skills seeing that I didn't go to tech like I should have. Anna was at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board. [In those days] we had these big, old 78 typewriters, you might remember, these iron-framed things I think they were; they were so heavy. [The district youth committee] had an office in what is Woodbridge house, down behind the high school. It's now called Governor Stirling Senior High School. We'd be in the dark and we had to walk past that to get to the office there, and I'd be rushing and poor Anna, who was shorter than me with little legs and she'd be going "Kaylene, Kaylene, go slower! I can't keep up." And I'd be, "Come on, Anna, we've got to get all this work done!", you know. Poor Anna. These people were just doing it for absolutely nothing but commitment to the general youth movement.

RJ And what about any relationship with boys in that time?

HALLAHAN Mmm, they didn't feature ...

RJ What age were you when you had your first boyfriend?

HALLAHAN Oh, no, no, they did. When I was at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board I did have my first, I suppose, ongoing boyfriend. His wife and I are now still in touch; we met and had lunch a few weeks ago. His name was Mick Marshall and he was into sports cars and all that was very interesting. Then he had a friend, who was an officer in the Air Force. I'm not quite sure what the ... I can't remember the transition for me. His friend and I then had quite a long-term boyfriend-girlfriend

relationship. There weren't lots. A couple of special ones, yeah, without wanting to overlook anybody [laughs] who might've been a part of my early years.

RJ So from a working point of view, after your 10 years at the abattoir board, what happened next?

HALLAHAN I joined the women police in the West Australian Police Force.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN Well, you see, it's all a continuum in a way, my life, I think. It seems to me to make sense that way, because I was involved in the youth work, and so I was committed to ... and I really, I think, would have liked to have gone into, say, a welfare role, but I didn't have any qualifications and I was acutely aware of that. In those days, Ethel Scott – she retired as Superintendent Ethel Scott – headed up the women police in Western Australia. They had a reputation for looking out for the welfare of women and children. So in the absence of thinking that I was qualified in any way to go and do any other job – although, I didn't explore it either, I don't think. I mean, I may have a little bit because I came to that conclusion that I didn't have qualifications, so I looked at joining the women police.

In 1969 I joined the WA Police Force. We were women constables, yes. We were plain clothed, but we had to wear hats and gloves and handbags, and we had to chase absconding girls who were in the care of the state who ran away from their care arrangements. You'd be rushing, tearing through, I mean, very, very dilapidated areas of East Perth, which do not exist any more, chasing girls who would jump in and out of windows of dilapidated buildings. You'd jump in and out [laughs] holding your handbag and gloves and hat on your head. It was very, very peculiar.

RJ Why would those girls take any notice of you? You were not in uniform.

HALLAHAN They knew we had power. That was one of the things you got to assert, was, you know who you were. They knew who we were, hmm. And we knew we had a job to do and we were required to do it.

RJ And what happened after you had a young girl in tow? What then happened?

HALLAHAN Well, we'd get them into the car and take them to where they should be.

RJ Back to their home?

HALLAHAN No, no, sorry. [...] That could be the case, but most of them were in some sort of institutional care. If it was that they'd left home, we'd usually take them back to the central police station, which is still there, opposite the WACA, down in Hay Street, East Perth. Their parents would be called in and we'd do interviews about the circumstances that led to the event. When I said "care arrangements" I should have said in the care of the Department for Child Welfare, I think it was in those days.

RJ In light of what happened to you later in life and the interest you took, what did you think about the institutions in that era? We're looking at the seventies.

HALLAHAN Well, I guess some were better than others. There weren't the horrific stories, of course, that we know and acknowledge now, about the abuse that took place, for example. If it did, let's say, we were not aware of it and a lot of these kids were into such a lot of misbehaviour stuff, which probably did come from their formative years, either in their natural family or their community, but in those days we were trying to get them to what we believed were safe conditions.

Yes, it's an interesting question. I need to reflect a bit more on that perhaps. But there were a lot of good people involved. There were a lot of good foster carers; there were a lot of good people involved.

For example, Bridgewater was built in Applecross, and that was like group homes, four or five houses within the one little settlement, and you didn't hear the stories of abuse coming from them, and you did get to know. Those youngsters who were in trouble and having a very unsettled time would get to know us and we would get to know them, and if any of them were charged, we would sometimes spend hours with them in the holding cells at the courts. Certainly I was always appreciative that they certainly came from troubled pasts and presents, but institutional abuse wasn't so clear.

RJ What reason were you being told that that person was absconding all the time, or at all? What did they say to you was the reason they had left?

HALLAHAN I always thought to myself, there was no way I could be a foster parent, because these kids had such extraordinary behaviour patterns. They were not your normal run-of-the-mill behaviour kid at all. In those days, I suppose, we saw them as just rebellious, do you know what I mean? But some of them clearly, we were aware, they had not had good home lives or backgrounds and they were troubled. So there was a sympathy with them, as well as thinking, my goodness, they would be a handful to manage, you know.

RJ So surely there was other work you did besides going after girls like that?

HALLAHAN Yes, the women police were, in those days, primarily involved with the welfare of women and children, so therefore the wellbeing of women and children, and we were involved where there were any crimes committed by women and children, or crimes against women and children. So we would **assist** the CIB on cases where there ... the rape cases, they were just horrific. I always said to myself, women were treated so badly, be they young or mature aged, that if any friend of mine had the misfortune to be raped then I thought I would probably have to seriously counsel her against reporting it. The whole process was so bad, yet it's such a shocking offence against a woman or a girl.

RJ In what way was it so bad?

HALLAHAN Well, it wasn't sympathetic in any way. They'd be taken to the police doctor and examined to see if they were "intact", as it was described, so he could give a certificate that said they were not or something, and that was embarrassing for people and [to have] a woman police constable standing by as well. The court procedures were just shocking. It was like re-abuse on top of abuse. I thought they were shocking procedures, so I was very pleased to see all those things reformed. I still think it's very difficult for victims of crimes like that though; I still think it's extraordinarily difficult.

RJ So that's crimes against and/or perpetuated by women, but you also said there was a woman and child welfare aspect to it. What was involved there?

HALLAHAN In those days, too, with domestic violence, for example, you might be out with ... because in the evenings, on Friday and Saturday evenings, we were allocated to the liquor squad, and if anybody was out and a call came through about domestic violence, as we now call it, that would get allocated to the bottom of the pile for investigation. Of course, it wasn't the liquor squad's job, but in a generality that was what police officers did with them. So there was a need for big reform over that. I've been very pleased to see there's been a huge change in **practise** [...]. A lot of those reforms have taken a lot of people a lot of work. I've worked alongside some of them in those efforts and it's very gratifying to see the difference. I mean, we can all say systems are not perfect now, but they are a whole lot better than they were. [...]

The other thing, I suppose, that was notable in those days was women and shoplifting, that sort of offence. They weren't all personal, horrendous **stories**; there were a lot of others, you know, minor breaches of the law as well, both by women and children, as well as against them.

RJ For the work you were doing, was there any training to help you cope with these things?

HALLAHAN Well, not in my humble opinion enough, but I think I was lucky that I went in at a mature age, because you joined the police force in those days at the age of 20 and a half. You'd have six months on probation and so at 21 you could become a woman police constable. We didn't go to the academy, which was out at Maylands, in those days. We did on-the-job training, so right from early on we had to study the statutes and pass exams, and we would go upstairs (there was a school upstairs on the next floor at East Perth) and do that side of it. Then you'd accompany senior women officers on jobs, as it was called.

Also in those days, of course, women could not be married. So our male colleagues could get married and stay on, and women could not. There were lots of, in my view, inequities and injustices towards women [...] and culturally I think some of them live on in all sorts of ways.

They tried an experiment, I think: we'll bring in women later on. I don't know what the thinking was, that maybe those women had decided not to marry, because a lot of them were coming in, doing a couple of years and getting married and having to leave - understandably. Mind you, it was not a big police force. My memory is that there were only 38 of us in the whole state and we were all at Central, except for Fremantle, I think there were three, and somewhere else. During the year we would get sent to ... I got sent to Northam for about five weeks **on one occasion, for example**. There were different points in the year where different regional police stations would have a woman police officer allocated. I'm not sure what the reasoning was for that. Anyway, they tried in 1969 to bring on women who were a bit older, and they brought on three of us and I was the eldest; I was 27. The other two, one of them stayed ... Jenny Leete stayed on for quite a long career in the police force, and Trish Carty, and she married; she was about 24 and she married within two or three years perhaps, I can't remember how long. But the fact of the matter is that bringing women on later in life didn't actually rectify the problem. I left in 1972 when I got married.

Oh, but we were talking about the training. So the training went on over this period of about six months until you became a qualified woman police constable, not a

probationary one. So you had on-the-job training, mainly, but you did have to do the exams on the various acts of Parliament and regulations that most usually applied to the work that you were doing, yes.

RJ Right. So what age were you when you joined? You were talking about others being 20 and a half and being 21 by the time they finished their training, but you obviously were older than that.

HALLAHAN I was 27.

RJ No, you were 27 when you left, didn't you say?

HALLAHAN No, when I joined.

RJ Ah, you joined when you were 27, okay.

HALLAHAN And left when I was 30.

RJ Okay. So bring Pat Hallahan into the picture.

HALLAHAN Yeah, well, he and I had met some years before when I was president of the Anglican youth fellowship at Midland. In those days there was this thing called a Foursquare program, which was something like social, spiritual, religious and goodness knows what it was, but you had to have the four [elements]. When you did up the program for the months ahead, you had to check that you had all these four components as part of it. We were scratching our heads about it and I'm going, what are we going to do?

Anyway, a couple of the young ones who were going to the Governor Stirling Senior High School said, "Oh, we could get Mr Hallahan; he could come and do debating or drama or anything. He could fill some slots." I said, "Oh, really? Who is this?" They said, "Mr Hallahan. He's our teacher, he's great, he could do any of these things. We could fill in some ... " Anyway, so we got him along to be the speaker on teaching us debating, I think it was, or something. Anyway, he was a great success, and then he asked me if I would like to accompany him to see a play at the Playhouse, which was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe?* He was very interested in drama and I think he was probably teaching that. And so we had this friendship that evolved over time. We ended up together for about eight years.

So there was a dilemma about Pat coming into the family because you could only be in his company about 90 seconds when you would be regaled with whatever was on his mind about the current political processes. And, of course, we had this strong family ethos that you do not discuss sex, religion and politics. We didn't have to discuss religion because we knew we were Anglicans [laughter] but I sort of developed a broader view because I was involved with the youth clubs: the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Catholics. Mind you, they were all Christian denominations; nobody else figured, although I've come to a much more inclusive attitude as I've got older, with Muslim friends and Buddhist friends and others.

So that was a really jarring thing for the family. I mean, they liked him. The interesting thing, of course, in reflecting back was they were all on the same side of politics but he was confronting a very strong cultural norm by talking [politics]; there's no way he could have stopped talking. It was interesting because he came from a very conservative family. His mother was a magnificent woman and he had an older sister. **His mother** had been a foundation member of the Liberal Party in the hills.

Anyway, Pat had been very involved in the scouting movement and youth work, and went through some bridging course to become a teacher after World War II. (Gosh, I don't know what I'm talking about here) Some time anyway, some opportunity came along where there must have been a shortage of teachers and the training for teachers, and Pat decided to become a teacher. He was a very fine teacher. I think he has absolutely been an excellent teacher through the years. But when he did this learning he came to a view that the world's resources were not distributed evenly and this must have a great impact on people's opportunities, and he became a raving social democrat. So he just talked politics anywhere and everywhere. [chuckles] There was no discretion about it whatever.

But anyway, that was interesting and that taught me a lot about political processes and societies and nations and opportunities for people.

RJ And did those sort of conversations make you start to be wanting to know more, more politically aware, more about politics?

HALLAHAN Oh, you didn't have much choice really. I did learn a lot. Of course I did learn a lot, because I didn't know much about it, really, because [...] there [had never been] family discussions. That is quite a serious regret I have and I really think it must be a wonderful rich thing in a family where people, even if they come to different views about where they are, have that exchange of ideas and testing out.

One of the things I think happened, because we didn't discuss things, neither did you get to learn to discuss things about which you felt strongly in a rational and even way. [...] It's taken me 'til quite late in life to learn these skills, I have to say. [pause.]

I've forgotten what you asked me.) Oh, did I learn about politics?

RJ Yes, yes, your political awareness, being enhanced as a result.

HALLAHAN Well, it clearly must have been. Yes, it was, but at the same time another interesting thing was happening, because a lot of his friends were younger and they all had a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education; my understanding two degrees, two qualifications, and I had none. The days of feeling that my parents had done quite well by getting me to year 10 were long past and I became acutely aware that I didn't have the same qualifications as other people and I had a terrible inferiority complex.

I think I also had an inferiority complex on this whole question, too, of the British culture and class system. So it sort of layered onto that and I was acutely aware about this. I felt quite lacking in confidence, you know, around heaps of people, even though I was still doing a good job in what I was doing, do you know what I mean? I didn't really perhaps respect enough the things that I was doing or the effort I put into them, and quite frankly in those days you didn't get asked to things if you were a girl, if you weren't doing them fairly well. But [pause] you're really touching on a fairly big area of change in my life. Do you want to do that now? [chuckles.]

RJ No, perhaps if we just ... There are a couple of other things from what you've said before we do that. You said that Pat got involved with debating in your group. Did you join in the debating?

HALLAHAN Oh, no, no, he just came for one session.

RJ Oh, I see. It didn't become a regular activity.

HALLAHAN We just wanted the hole plugged in our Foursquare program. [laughs] No, that's how I met him.

RJ Okay, because I just wondered in the light of you becoming a politician what debating experience you had.

HALLAHAN No, I had very little debating experience.

RJ Now having grown up in the exact same era as you, because we both share the same birth year, was there any criticism of you being the age you were and not married? Did you feel disapproval?

HALLAHAN That's interesting. I don't know. It's not something that comes through as a big ...

RJ So it can't have been an issue that you experienced?

HALLAHAN It can't have been. The bigger issue was leaving home, because in those days, for me, the only respectable way to leave home was to be a teacher and be posted to the country, or to be a nurse and be posted to the country [or indeed to get married]. Then one could leave home, because, you know, there would be accommodation for the nurses and one would presumably have to go anyway if you were a teacher. But I decided that I would get my own flat, and I did something, really in some ways, I regret; I sort of understand why I did it the way I did it. But when I moved out of home, I actually got one of the women and her husband, with a trailer, to move me one weekend while my parents were away at their beach place. It was a shocking, shocking thing to do. My mother was distraught, and she was in tears and she said, "Whatever are the neighbours going to think? You've got a perfectly good home here." I must have been, you know ... I don't know; I just can't think how old I was. I think I was about 26. But it was a terrible thing to do, really, and I regret it at one level for my mother and my father, because I think it felt like rejection for them. It was just such a bad thing for them to experience as a family.

I would go back and have an evening meal and they'd come to my place and sort of check everything out. So it didn't stop us seeing one another or having a closeness, but it was the only way, in a way, for me to have any, sort of, independence I suppose. I think I must have still been working at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board, and soon after that ... because I tried to sort of explain, but we weren't good at talking calmly about things that we were passionate about. My mother was so upset and I was really so upset to have done it (not that I had to do it that way; do you know what I mean? It wasn't a discussion sort of outcome). I said, "Well, I am changing my occupation", and soon after that I did join the Women Police. I wanted her to understand it was sort of a trajectory through life, but it was a very big upheaval.

So I moved into a flat in St Johns Court on the highway in Rivervale, and that was really nice. It was a one-bedroomed flat, and I had nice neighbours. Then I bought my own one-bedroomed **unit** [in Inglewood]. [...]

In those days you had to have a male to guarantee the bank loan. Everything was really ... I just really found it very, very annoying. But, anyway [I arranged a loan through the] Perth Building Society (in those days) and Harry Sorenson [was the Managing Director]. I was later on a board with Harry at the Positive Ageing Foundation, and I said to him what a splendid organisation his was, [chuckles] that

he had been at the helm of because I had been able to get a loan. Mind you, I was in the Women Police. I don't know whether it was because of my occupation that I didn't have to have a male guarantor, so I was very pleased about that. But I did give him credit for that, and I don't think he actually understood how much it meant, you know.

[...]

RJ Right. So when did you marry Pat?

HALLAHAN We got married in 1972. He went on exchange teaching to the UK, prompted by some of his friends. I think they actually put in for it for him and thought a change would be good for him. So he went teaching at **Jestwood school** which is west of Southampton. He's a great letter writer, and he's skilled both, you know, with the written word and the spoken word, and he would send these wonderful letters about how he'd been here and done this and that every weekend, and I'd be sort of feeling just mildly green with envy.

Then he wrote this letter that was letter number 40, because he used to number all his letters; they would come by airmail. He sent a telegram [...] (nobody knows what they are these days) to say, "Watch out for letter 40", and letter 40 was the formal proposal of marriage, you see. So I thought well, yes, I would do this.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN [laughs] It's a good question. Why I would do this! We'd been going out together for about eight years and at different times we would think, yes, we will get married, but we'd drift along, you know, and then we'd have a big fight or an upset. We had times of, sort of, tumult because we were both determined characters, I think, or, you know, involved. Then when you have a big argument you say, "Okay, well we'll get married on such and such a date." I can remember once saying, "Hang on; I thought we were going to get married, actually, last week." [laughs] We never lived together, because one didn't do that in those days and my mother's teachings were still pretty strong in my head, obviously. We might have been better to do that perhaps, but anyway. So I accepted the formality of this proposal of marriage and I went to England.

It was very interesting to me that I had been employed as a woman police constable imposing the law on people and I had not appreciated that it was actually the law that meant that I had to leave when I got married. I mean, I just hadn't factored this in, so I was really gobsmacked about this. Maybe I hadn't just even thought about it; I don't know. I'm very pleased to say, though, it was 1975 – I left in '72 – in 1975 the police force was the last [government department] to change. They had to change regulations to the Police Act, I think it was, and that allowed women to stay on. They did it very well then, as I understand it, and allowed them maternity leave and all sorts.

But in 1972 I had to leave, and some of my friends from the police force I remember seeing me off at Perth Airport. It was very interesting; I got to the gate and I really turned around. I don't think I really wanted to go [...]. I remember Val Doherty, who was a sergeant, saying, "Go on, Miss Downing, off you go", and pushing me out the gate onto the tarmac to walk towards the aeroplane to go to the UK. It was good. They were good friends along the way.

RJ So you married in the UK?

HALLAHAN Yes. We got married at **Totton**.

RJ Who attended? Did your parents go over for the wedding?

HALLAHAN My father had died in 1971 with lung cancer, and my mother, I said to her, you know, "Think about coming." She had flown once ... because they would never go anywhere on holiday. They would go in the car, but they'd never gone very far. I've always thought there's a certain disadvantage about having a beach house, **and sadly** I think their circumstances changed financially. So they never could go anywhere for holidays really, and they were just very hospitable to everybody coming to their place.

I remember once paying for **my mother** and her neighbour from west Midland to fly to Rottneast so that they could actually have the experience of flying. So she'd done that anyway, but flying to England was great. One of her sisters, one of my aunts who was a great traveller she met up with her over there and they went on a coach tour of Europe, so that was all very nice.

My mother was at the wedding, and **also a** neighbour from Lesmurdie, Brian Crisp, was there. He and his wife were in Scotland on teaching that year, and he came down from Scotland. We had other friends in the UK that we'd met and they came. Two friends came down from Nottingham, two sisters, and then there was Reg and Gladys Frye. They'd been out here and lived out here for many years and gone back to live in Bath. So there were a number of people, and Pat's school colleagues. It was a low-key sort of afternoon tea-type affair in one of those wonderful charming English pubs. It was lovely.

RJ What did you then do in the UK?

HALLAHAN It was very difficult because I'd come out of full-time work, and shift work, of course, in the Women Police (so it was a very demanding, changing scenario every day and every hour; you never knew what you were going to face in that job) to the domestic scene, really, of Pat getting up and going to school. He'd met up with one of his colleagues – she's still a friend – Margaret Ryves, who lived in the same what we would call suburb, and she would travel to school and back with him. So she would come in and have afternoon tea. I got over there and then we arranged the wedding, and so she went shopping with me for my wedding outfit over there and is still a good friend and they'll be here in December. But I didn't do very much then, is my memory of it. Goodness knows what I did.

RJ And how did you feel about that?

HALLAHAN I have no idea. I mean, it was a total change. I don't know what I did, really, when I look back.

RJ So when did you return to Australia?

HALLAHAN Well, I flew back a month earlier [than planned] because my mother died at the end of that year rather suddenly.

RJ In '72.

HALLAHAN Yes. So I flew back probably ... it was certainly a month before we were scheduled to come back, and then the following year we went to Mt Barker and

the following year we went to Kalgoorlie. In Mt Barker (it was an interesting place) I did go and help on the Aboriginal reserve. There was a woman running wonderful programs there and I'd go and help there. In Kalgoorlie I did get a part-time job in an office. Sorry about this. [interruption for phone call]

RJ You were just saying that you got a part-time job in an office in Kalgoorlie.

HALLAHAN Yes, I did.

RJ What office?

HALLAHAN Kyle Motors. In those days (I wasn't a great typist and I had to do keyboarding and things) you had carbon copies of things, you know. Well, I would be in perspiration just about when I was getting to the end of a letter in case I made a mistake [chuckles] because there was no simple rectification in those days. It was just awful. And then – whatever I take on, I do it with everything I can – I was the housewife. So I worked until three o'clock [...] and then I would RUN home to get the afternoon tea ready for when Pat came home from school. A couple of times he had colleagues who were up there who were on their own and they would come home and have afternoon tea too, so I'd rush to get the tea ready and something to eat and everything on the back lawn under the tree. [chuckles]

RJ So how long were you in Kalgoorlie?

HALLAHAN We were only there the one year.

RJ Then what?

HALLAHAN In those days teachers could take a year off on half pay with long service leave, so in 1975 we went overseas again. Bob Pilbeam was the senior master of English, I think, at Governor Stirling, and he'd been over the previous year and they had a van and so we bought their van; a Commer Highwayman, they were called. So we used that to travel in the UK and in Europe. Then we came home by coach from London to Katmandu, and it was on that trip that there were some events that really changed the course of my life I suppose one could say.

RJ What were they?

HALLAHAN Well, in those days Gough Whitlam was the Prime Minister of Australia and we loved all the reforms he was bringing in; it was a rather tumultuous government. I remember us sort of sitting on the shores of Lake Geneva, for example, on a Sunday afternoon with Pat writing a letter to Gough to say, "Please, Gough, you must not have any more ministers resign because it's giving a very unstable appearance to the community. And I would think this was quite eccentric behaviour: quite frankly, manic.

But anyway, this was what would happen, and Pat talked politics all the way. And as I said, you couldn't be in his company more than 90 seconds and [not] know where he was coming from. So we were on this coach, and it was really mainly people from Commonwealth countries and there were doctors and teachers and nurses and architects, and as I've said, most of them had professional qualifications. Again this thing of inferiority complex was pretty overwhelming for me because I clearly didn't have any of these things.

But there were two very big things that happened: one was my realisation, as we tracked across on this remarkable trip home, that none of these people had anything that I didn't have except that they did have an education and a qualification, and I didn't have that so I was going to do something about that. I could not wait to get off the plane and the next day ring WAIT and say, "How do I get to get into the social work course?" And so they explained to me that I needed to do a mature age what I suppose you'd call TEE these days, and indeed in the middle of the year there was an examination that you could do and you could gain entry on the results of that. So I did both, actually, just to make sure that I did get **accepted**. [Interruption by visitor.]

RJ You were just saying that you finished the entry exam, yes, halfway through the year ...

HALLAHAN Well I did the entry exam ...

RJ To WAIT ...

HALLAHAN but I was also going to TAFE as well, so doing ...

RJ What were you doing at TAFE?

HALLAHAN I was doing a mature age ... two subjects you had to do, and I was doing history and English. They were my choices, so maybe I did enjoy those at school; who knows.

RJ Yes. You had to do two matriculation level subjects, and then you did an English test and an intelligence test, because I was also involved in that ...

HALLAHAN Oh really?

RJ ... mature age entry into WAIT ...

HALLAHAN Oh, okay.

RJ ... and that was the test they would have done for you as well in that time. So you wanted to do social work?

HALLAHAN Mm.

RJ What was your aim in getting that qualification?

HALLAHAN Oh, to do the work I'd always wanted to do. I mean, that was, I think, where I was really wanting to go when I joined the Women Police back in '69, and also I'd just come to that through doing all the youth work too when I was working [full time] at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board.

RJ And how did Pat react to that decision?

HALLAHAN I've always thought I was very fortunate to have somebody who was very much pro education. So I was lucky, because when I did get into the course (which was an early '77 commence) I was able to do it full time; a lot of other people weren't in such a happy position. But it was also free education because Gough Whitlam had made that possible. It was a very big **intake**; I think there were 77 of us. I don't think there'd been such a large intake into the first year of social work, and a lot of us were mature aged people. It was really a dynamic group across young,

straight from high school, if you like, into the university pathway, and those of us who were returning and thought maybe we'd never be able to do it. It was just fabulous; wonderful, wonderful. I used to fly down the hill in a Volkswagen (we lived in Lesmurdie) and I used to think, "I'm so lucky." It was just such an elation to be going and doing a higher education.

RJ Just to finish off that aspect of your life: did you finish the course and what qualification did you have at its end?

HALLAHAN Well, I finished the course, yes. It was a four-year course, so I finished at the end of 1980 and had a ... well now it's called ... I can't remember what the terminology was back then, but now of course it's become Curtin University and it's called a Bachelor of Social Work. Oh no, it was called ... was it something in applied science?

RJ Yes, it was.

HALLAHAN Bachelor of Applied Science (Social Work).

RJ Yes, it was, because I have a Bachelor of Applied Science (Library Studies). We'll leave it there for today. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW TWO

RJ A further interview with Hon. Kay Hallahan held in her home on 8 December 2011.

Kay, we finished last time with your completion of the Bachelor of Applied Science (Social Work) at WAIT, which was at the end of 1980. Between then and your entry into Parliament, what work did you do?

HALLAHAN Well, I had [...] three positions, and **one** of them was with the Lockridge Community Health Centre.

There's an interesting story about that. It was certainly poverty-related work in the main, and while one shouldn't do it as a professional person, it was very interesting that I loaned a lot of people money. You'd be going through their budgets with them and you could see that they could not possibly meet their commitments that week, and I would get them to fill out an IOU. I have to tell you that not one of those people ever let me down or didn't repay what they really needed to borrow. So that was a very salutary lesson to me about people and their responsibility, and people who are in absolutely dire circumstances.

I later had a job with the Alcohol and Drug Authority and that was a caseload of people with alcohol-related problems; I didn't work much on the drug addiction side at that time. It was in that position from which I got elected to the state Parliament in early 1983.

It was interesting while I was at Lockridge, because in one week we had three women raped, and it turned out that in the State Housing Commission flats, which was accommodation for people on very low incomes, there were no separate keys to the flats so people could easily break in. It was just shocking; terrible experiences for people. So I was interviewed by one of the newspapers, drawing attention to the shortcoming, and of course the Lockridge Community Health Centre came under the Health Department and I got a very strong reprimand from the senior social worker, or the person who was head of that section, to say that that was totally unacceptable and that I must not do it again, and that one did not do those things in those positions.

So I thought, I'm going to have to find somebody who can speak. I'd heard about a woman called Michelle Scott; as it happens, she is now the Commissioner for Children and Young People. She was working at Warrawee Women's Refuge in Fremantle, so I phoned her and said, "Look, there's a terrible set of circumstances going on here and it needs somebody who can front the media and talk about it, because I am now not allowed to do it." I was very impressed with the job that she did. Later, when I became a minister, on two occasions she headed up my staff and was my chief of staff. She is a highly intelligent and strategic person. It's just fantastic that she's been the public advocate, and that she's now the inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia.

That was my first contact with her without having ever met her, but it came out of that terrible set of circumstances. It was so foolish to have doors that didn't have locks and separate keys in a very low-income, vulnerable population. So that's one of the memories that comes out of Lockridge, but there are many.

At the Alcohol and Drug Authority, I really made a decision to actually accept that position after I'd [...] applied for it because there was a woman senior social worker

there and I'd never worked directly under a woman in an administrative position. I thought that would be a very good experience, and that turned out to be the case. It was a very instructive position working with people in the medical model, directly with psychiatrists and other doctors, some of whom I thought were needing a psychiatrist themselves, actually. However, everybody was well intended and some very good work was done. It gave me an insight, again, too, into the whole question of why people do get addicted.

One of the simple causations was the fact that every one of that client group, not one of them had learned to love themselves. They had not learnt that they were loved by their families (loved or respected) and they hadn't learnt to love or respect themselves, and they were into these very, very damaging behaviours. It was very sad, and [I was] very glad when some of them could see their way to cobble together a reasonable set of life circumstances and get on with some happier days in their lives.

I was in that position when I got elected to Parliament. I remember meeting the doctor who was in charge, a very fine fellow (if I remember his name we'll add it in somewhere) and he was absolutely gobsmacked to find that one of his staff had been elected to the state Parliament. He said, "My goodness, Kay, you've been elected to the state Parliament", and I said, "Well, yes I have." He said, "Well, that's a great surprise and congratulations." It was a terribly understated conversation in a passageway, but clearly it wasn't what was expected of a social worker at the Alcohol and Drug Authority.

RJ The other thing that happened in that period, I think, is that your marriage came to an end. Was that in that period before you went into Parliament?

HALLAHAN No; my marriage ended in 1985.

RJ Okay.

HALLAHAN I was already a member of Parliament in the Legislative Council at that time.

RJ Right. Okay. Well, just to get a background before we get your entry into Parliament: on the record it has you as joining the Labor Party itself in 1976. Why did you join the Labor Party?

HALLAHAN Well, this can be a very long story. I mean, I grew up (I think we've said this earlier) in a family that didn't talk sex, religion or politics ...

RJ Yes, you have.

HALLAHAN ... but knew that all self-respecting people did vote Labor, even though because my father was the manager and employer people found that a bit surprising when they did become aware of it. But because we didn't discuss such matters, probably most people never did know what we voted, and we certainly didn't converse about matters political.

However, my former husband had grown up in a conservative family; in fact, his mother (who was a magnificent woman named Grace Hallahan) was one of the founding members of the Liberal Party in the Darling Range, so he'd grown up with that tradition. Then after World War II, he went and did a teaching qualification (he'd been quite a significant youth leader and scout leader) and he discovered that the

earth's resources were not distributed evenly (have I mentioned this before?) and that therefore that must have a great impact on **people's** opportunities in life. He became a raging social democrat and talked politics continuously and in every circumstance in life. I mean, you could not be in his company more than 90 seconds and you'd know where he was voting.

This, of course, conflicted for me because I'd been brought up not to talk about such matters. It made a problem, of course, when we went to conservative-dominated country areas to teach when students (they were in high school) and he said it was legitimate to tell them his position because then if he said anything inadvertently, they would be able to reflect that back against his beliefs system and they could make a value judgement then of where he was coming from, and that he wasn't doing anything underhanded or influential in any way.

In 1975 we were travelling from London to Katmandu on a coach tour. When we got to Tehran we heard in a restaurant (we'd been having some days of very, very meagre meals on this fairly inexpensive bus trip) that the Prime Minister had been dismissed by the Governor-General. So from that point on from Tehran to **Katmandu** those who agreed with this action and those who disagreed did not speak; we did not say good morning, good evening or have any conversation. Most of the people were people from British Commonwealth countries and most of them had degrees. I always felt rather lacking in confidence because Pat [...] was very vocal, and all his friends had BA, DipEd's and I didn't have any qualifications.

RJ Yes, and you have mentioned this before.

HALLAHAN Mentioned that? Okay.

RJ Yes.

HALLAHAN So, anyway, when we got to Kabul I said to him, "The choice is now. We either join the Australian Labor Party" ... have I mentioned this?

RJ Not sure. I think you might have, but it's worth repeating, because it's quite some time ago.

HALLAHAN ... "or we never talk politics again." So he said "All right [we'll join the Labor Party]". Actually, we [changed flights] to be home [...]; we made sure we got back here to vote in that election on December 11 1975, and then early in 1976 we joined the Darling Range branch.

The population was probably either elated or outraged, and we were in the outraged group and so it seemed that it was time to get involved and do something about supporting the Australian Labor Party and seeing that there was never a travesty and a threat to our democratic system [...] like that ever again. So it was a very strong feeling that propelled my joining of the Labor Party, and it also came with some concerns about policy changes being needed because they were not attended to under conservative governments here in Western Australia or nationally in Australia.

RJ What was the membership like when you joined? What sort of people were joining at that time, and were others joining for similar reasons to your own after the Gough Whitlam sacking?

HALLAHAN I can only think, looking back, that there was a huge swell of public concern and outrage for those who were not conservatively minded. So when I say

“on the left”, a lot of people weren’t necessarily on the left of politics; they might have been what today would be called middle Australia or from working-class backgrounds. It was just the most amazing experience in my life to have the democratically elected government dismissed by the Governor-General. Lots of people were galvanised into actively taking an interest in civic affairs, and some, of course, did join the Labor Party, like us I guess.

I can’t tell you what the membership of the Western Australian Labor Party was like at the time (I had no history of it) and I just joined the local branch and sat quietly and took note of how meetings were run and what the activities were. My ex-husband got very involved. He **was soon in** an office-bearing position. We met in a member’s home, and I remember it was one of those houses that had [what was called] in those days a sunken lounge that has two steps down from the front door or somewhere to the lounge room. I remember sitting on the steps at the back of this room and looking with great interest at what was happening. Gradually, [...] over the next two or three years I moved further forward and got involved in the branch activities and Pat seemed to move further back. So there was nothing conscious about that, it just sort of happened as a dynamic.

I had no thoughts of standing for Parliament. That just wasn’t part of my thinking at all at that time because (a), I didn’t know the processes of a Parliament. I’d been a youth organiser and I understood about organising activities and things around whatever the organisation was, so I got involved at a branch level in a very grassroots way and got very, very active and became, ultimately, president of that branch and raised the membership in that time. We built it up **and I had** started selling real estate as well part time with my studies at WAIT, and in that time I’d suss out any clients (sellers or buyers) and whether they were likely to be supporters of the Labor Party or not. So we got the branch membership up to over 100 members and they’d never seen those numbers before. We had progressive dinners and we had policy [debates]. We had lots of policy debates; it was just excellent really. It was a very active time both while I was at WAIT and following that.

RJ When you joined the Labor Party in ‘76, Sir Charles Court was the Premier of Western Australia, and I wondered what you thought ... not thinking of the national scene, which is where, of course, Gough Whitlam had been the Prime Minister, but in the local scene, what did you think of Sir Charles Court both as Premier and as the leader of a coalition government? What did you think of the government as well?

HALLAHAN Well, I have a kinder view of him now than I did then. I had been fairly critical in my attitudes towards him and his party. For me it was a personal thing, experience going back to being involved in the Anglican Youth Fellowship in Midland, where we had a working-class demographic; people struggling to meet all sorts of reasonable expenses for the basics of education and health care, and supporting the local church. Very often we would have great difficulty meeting the stipend for the Anglican priest, yet churches like Nedlands and others down Stirling Highway, where Sir Charles Court was a member of the congregation, had plenty of money it seemed to me, and I couldn’t quite reconcile this with the Christian view of life when you had parts of the Christian church really struggling for the basics to keep a congregation and a community going and others who had plenty. Not many people would have brought that experience with them, but I certainly had that as an impression. I did not view people like that with any great integrity or validity about their church membership or their commitment to the state. In those days I was going through a pretty radical time and coming to terms with lots of things, and that was one of them.

When I look back on history I can see that he provided leadership for the mineral developments up north. But two of the areas that, of course, I would always be critical of (I haven't yet had time to read the book that you wrote about him, although I've loaned it to friends and they've read it and enjoyed it) are I think the Noonkanbah dispute, to do with Aboriginal folks on a station was ... well I thought then (and I've never revisited it) [that it was] sort of unforgivable in a democratic society; and also section 54b of the Police Act, which forbade people gathering together to protest. I thought that was very anti-democratic. I saw these things as fascist. So I didn't have a very kindly disposition towards Sir Charles Court as Premier, or his government.

Indeed, as I had become more involved in policy development and the need for changes in so many areas and the resourcing of so many areas to give Western Australian families a reasonable standard of living and services, in that area there was a huge gap too. Also, there is another area, too, which I haven't had such strong feelings about him personally, but governments led by him (he was very senior in the government before the one that he lead, of course) was on electoral reform. I mean, as far as the Liberals in this state were concerned, they would have been very happy to carry on forever, I believe (much like regimes like Syria and the Middle East at present would like to do) being in power and doing it on the basis of a very unequal electoral system. Personally, I find that reprehensible anywhere, anytime, with anyone. The striving, in my view, always has to be towards equality and sound institutions that represent everybody fairly. I'm happy for them to represent rich people fairly, but I do want and expect them to represent poor people fairly as well.

I think we're moving to that much more in some ways perhaps; I mean, people point out shortcomings to me now, but they were certainly glaring shortcomings in those times. So there was plenty to be angry about if you were an angry, concerned person wanting to see changes and believing change was possible. I mean, the good thing is we lived in a system where it was possible to bring about change.

RJ It's interesting that in 1980 you contested the Legislative Assembly seat of Kalamunda. How did that come about? Why did you stand for that, and was it with any thought you could win it?

HALLAHAN I certainly had no thoughts that I could win it, and I certainly had no thoughts that I was going to go into Parliament either. I simply took my responsibilities as the branch president of the Darling Range ALP very seriously. There was certainly very little interest in running a campaign against the sitting member, who was Ian Thompson. He was a well-regarded member of the State Parliament and of his community.

There were two seats up there in those days, actually; there was Kalamunda and there was Darling Range right next door. We lived in Lesmurdie [...] in the seat of Darling Range, but there wasn't any identifiable candidate for Kalamunda. So I decided, well, I would do it.

Then a very surprising thing happened; a car pulled up out the front one day and a man got out and came to the front door. He said what his name was, a nice, affable sort of chirpy-natured man, and he said he'd been told to come and meet me because I was president of the branch, and that he'd been to party office and indicated his interest in running for the seat of Kalamunda and they'd said he'd better come and see me. I said to him, "Well that's all very interesting, but I have decided to run for that seat and we don't need a candidate, thank you very much." We left, sort of, amicable friends, but I didn't really actually understand that I was making judgements about things I had no right to make judgements about, but that was part

of my ... we'd all worked hard and we knew our patch, and all of a sudden we've got somebody driving up and saying they're prepared to stand. I mean, it would have been perhaps sensible to say, "By all means", but we just didn't know him. It just seemed slightly surreal and ridiculous really; a bit Monty Pythonesque, in my view.

So I stood because I thought that was part of my duties in that seat anyway. So we had lots of fun. We had parties at our place (fundraising parties) and we campaigned. I learnt a lot about that.

A most extraordinary thing happened. A mature-aged man arrived and he had a utility, and he said he wanted to put some of my signs up on his roof and he wanted to campaign. I didn't know him from Adam. Anyway, it seemed a silly thing to knock back any assistance, so he actually set his utility up with these signs on the roof and a PA system, and he would park off the main street, Haynes Street, up by the library in Kalamunda and just yell over this microphone about voting for Kay Hallahan and the Labor Party in Kalamunda. It was just abhorrent behaviour, quite frankly, and I don't think it would help anybody's campaign, but the spirit was appreciated. It was one of the colourful things that happened that we had no control over. I mean, we could have gone and said, "Please be quiet", but we weren't going to win the seat anyway and it added a bit of colour to the community. But you never know what's going to happen in a campaign. It was that sort of spirit in those days; different people and characters bobbed up and said they were really outraged about what had happened and how could they help and how could they get involved.

We had progressive dinners and, as I said, we had done a lot of policy development and we just ran the best campaign that we could. Ian Thompson, I must say, arrived and knocked on my front door one day and came in to see me. It was a bit disconcerting because I'd been shopping or something and was feeling a bit hot and bothered. I'd taken off my shoes and stockings and I was in a very casual state and he said he'd just called round to meet the candidate who was standing to oppose him. I thought it was sort of a gentlemanly thing to do; the sort of thing you can only do when you're very assured of your position, I suspect. But anyway.

RJ That's lovely. Did you knock on doors?

HALLAHAN Oh, I'm sure I did. We just did everything thoroughly. I mean, it was terribly grassroots.

RJ I'm just wondering what sort of reaction you got.

HALLAHAN People are very pleasant. I've never found that any different. People are very civil. People are very civilised. Whatever area I've doorknocked in, whether it's been pro-Liberal, pro-Labor, poor or wealthy, whatever ... I think in those days, actually, people accepted more people knocking on one another's doors. I think these days ... I mean I even find myself these days thinking I don't want people knocking on my door about anything really, and if any of my friends want to come and visit I'd like them to give me a phone call first, quite frankly. But that folksy sort of thing, I think, has changed considerably.

But, no, people were very pleasant whether they were going to vote for you or not, and if they took half a breath before they spoke I was able to see if there was any chance of persuading them or even that they might just leave their minds open until they actually got to the ballot box on the day.

I think, actually, the reason I ran for that seat was that I actually helped out in a campaign in 1977 for the federal election and I'd learnt a bit then. I helped campaign for a man named Jim Hansen in the federal seat of Canning, and I'd learnt a bit. That's why it seemed a reasonable thing to do, to stand for the state seat and just do my bit for the party.

RJ Now knowing that you were very sure that Labor wasn't going to win that election, did you get any help from the party? Ron Davies was the leader of the parliamentary Labor Party at the time, did he come and give you any help during that campaign?

HALLAHAN Oh no, we didn't expect that sort of help. The party was there and they gave us the basic sort of help that you needed with how-to-vote cards and things. The Labor Party's never had a lot of resources, so you have to put the resources where they're going to give you the greatest benefit. Everybody accepted the good sense of that. One of our big fundraising activities was making pickled onions. My ex-husband's actually written a story called "From pickled onions to Parliament". The fundraising was very modest, but even my godmother, who I'm sure never voted Labor in her life, would try to canvass greengrocers (they were called in those days) for bags of pickled onions, and we'd have busy bees of people making pickled onions. It was great community-building stuff, you know?

RJ Yes. Now, in 1983 you stood for what was the next state election and you actually won the South East Metropolitan province, and that particular election brought Brian Burke's Labor government into power. In that case, in '83, were you approached to stand, or did you decide that's something you wanted to do?

HALLAHAN No, I didn't want to do it; it was just an evolutionary sort of thing. I did get approached to stand.

RJ Why do you say you didn't want to do it?

HALLAHAN I just didn't understand it. We lived in the hills; there was no Labor member around us. I didn't understand what a member of Parliament did. It just was not part of my experience in life. I had no idea.

RJ When you were approached ...

HALLAHAN This is really a story that a lot of people would think is probably better left unsaid, but when Mother Teresa visited Perth there was a big gathering, I think, at the old entertainment centre in Wellington Street, which was recently demolished. A lot of us, who were in favour of pro-choice for women and for women to have greater control over their lives, had a big protest outside the gathering for Mother Teresa. Anyway, I said to some women there, "Look, somebody should stand for that federal seat of Canning" (because we didn't have a very well-resourced or robust campaign in 1977) "and that seat is really winnable." So out of that discussion Wendy Fatin decided to run and she was the first woman elected for the Labor Party to the House of Representatives. She might have been the first woman representative in the House of Representatives from Western Australia altogether actually—something that we could check. [Wendy Fatin was the first WA woman to win a seat in the House of Representatives.] So that's how that happened that Wendy got involved, which was great.

Somebody said to me why didn't I do it and I said, "Good gracious me, I don't know anything about it, certainly not, no, no, no. We've got to find somebody who knows

what this is about.” Then we had a boundary change down the south east corridor, which I was involved in because the federal seat of Canning had within it a number of seats down the south east corridor and I was a delegate to the Canning electorate council from the Darling Range branch, so I’d sort of got to know that geographic area and lots of building up contacts in that area. Again, that was quite ... not with a view to going anywhere particularly with it myself. But there was a boundary change and Bob Pearce was the member for Gosnells, although I don’t know whether it was called Gosnells.² Anyway, there was a seat created south of Gosnells called Armadale and he lived in Armadale and he chose to take the seat of Armadale.

Somebody said to me why didn’t I look at running for Gosnells and I said, “No, no, I just don’t know enough about this; we should get somebody else”, and out of that people alerted Yvonne Henderson who lived in the northern suburbs and she secured the pre-selection for the seat of Gosnells and moved to Gosnells.

Then I remember the state secretary called me one day (that was Gordon Hill who later became a member of Parliament and a minister) and he said, “Look, Kay, would you think of running for the upper house for the South East Metropolitan Province?” By then I was learning a little bit out of the conversations I was having with people and I thought, well that wouldn’t be as critical to government if I ran for that, because I was still very, very conscious that I didn’t know enough about it. I thought, maybe I could manage an upper house seat and I could make a contribution and I could help. In those days four lower house seats made up that province, so there was Armadale and Gosnells and Canning. You had Bob Pearce and Yvonne Henderson as the candidates, those two candidates, and Tom Bateman was a continuing member as was Bob, sorry, and then you had Barry MacKinnon for the Liberals in Murdoch. I thought maybe I could help those lower house campaigns and I could help in some way, and it didn’t seem to me to be so front line; I just wasn’t a confident person. So I said, yes, I would think about that, and that’s how it happened that I stood for the seat of South East Metropolitan Province. Then there was an incredible swing to Labor under Brian Burke’s leadership and I was elected.

RJ When you were out campaigning, what were people saying about Brian Burke as the leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and did he come and help you in any way in the campaign?

HALLAHAN Brian had a very high, strong, positive profile and he was a great asset to the Labor Party. It was a good team; it was a very talented team with Brian as the leader and Malcolm Bryce as the deputy leader and there was Bob Pearce. You know, you could name names, all of them extraordinarily talented and energetic in their own ways. A lot of them had come out of university politics and had probably all been galvanised in the same way that I had, to some extent or other, by the dismissal [of Gough Whitlam’s government]. There was a high-energy time around labour politics in those years.

Brian helped every campaigner, as I recall it, and I used to run fundraisers for the lower house seats and he was a fabulous quizmaster. He would come along and you’d be able to get the most fabulous ticket sales and rollup of people and a great community night. And he was very good, very personal with every candidate. He would ring people individually and say, “How are you going? How do you see us going?” So if you had any concerns or anything you had an opportunity for a dialogue with the leader. He was an impressive leader.

² Bob Pearce was the Member for Gosnells.

RJ By the time you were campaigning Ray O'Connor had been Premier of Western Australia when Sir Charles resigned in January 1982 ...

HALLAHAN Nineteen-when?

RJ In 1982 Sir Charles resigned and Ray O'Connor took over and he was Premier up until the time of that election in '83. Were there any comments as you were campaigning about Ray O'Connor as Premier and the coalition government at that time?

HALLAHAN There were lots of negative comments about the coalition government and probably about Ray O'Connor. I don't think he was seen as very strong or particularly outstanding in any way. We were very keen to put forward our policy positions on a range of issues and really I'm not a great student of things, I live it rather than read it, but I think it's the old truism that governments lose. I think the Opposition in this particular case was a particularly energetic, strong, new, fresh, capable team and was up against a pretty tired team and I don't think it was very hard campaigning.

Mind you, when you're campaigning in Labor electorates and if people in Labor electorates are Liberal oriented, they feel a bit under threat, they feel like they're the minority and they can be a bit sharp. That's sort of understandable in a way, but most people are terribly, terribly civilised – pleasant and if they don't want to talk, they don't want to talk. Quite frankly if you can get an indication that they are going to support you, I would give them my card and say, "Look, if there's anything, give me a ring." But you really want to get on and doorknock as many people as you can.

One of the things that you have to watch when you're a new chum at this electioneering business is not to get held up unnecessarily at doorways chatting about a whole lot of erroneous things because it stops you completing your program doorknocking. Some people were adept at that and one has to learn these things I guess, because one thinks one's having an earnest, genuine conversation when sometimes one isn't.

RJ To move to election day itself, what were your activities on that day and how confident were you feeling? As it turned out, there was a swing to Labor in that province of 10.5 per cent, which is actually pretty damn impressive. To what extent did you have a feel that that could be the outcome by the time of election day itself? Did you have any confidence you were going to win?

HALLAHAN Well, I can't really remember that. I still say in my head I think that the seat, when I got preselected, was sitting at something like 49.5 or 49.6 per cent of the vote, so clearly, clearly that vote needed to be lifted to be elected. I can't tell you about being ... I think in those days political parties probably also had a policy that even if they can see that polling is going well, that you don't get your candidates filled with confidence, you keep driving them hard until the end, I suspect. I'm out of the way of campaigning these days so ... But I don't think that we would have gone into that election [too confident that victory was possible]. I don't know the answer to that question; I can't remember.

But we had a program of driving from ... I tried to drive to as many booths as I could in the four seats, but they're exhausting days election days ... and picking up any problems at any particular booth there might be. People run out of stuff, how-to-vote cards. They shouldn't do, but things happen and you just have to ... or somebody gets sick and doesn't turn up for their roster on a booth and those sorts of things.

Somebody may be coming from another area to help out the local workers and they get lost or something. All sorts of things happen on election day. When you're driving from booth to booth, from an organisational point of view if you strike those things, it's a jolly good thing. But it can be exhausting trying to sort them out. You keep going and keep up with the program that you've set for the time you've got, which is only a limited time from morning till night when the booths close, and making sure then and hoping that you've got enough scrutineers for the count. The candidate doesn't have to do all that, but I was pretty involved in those ways and very conscious of all those things needing to flow smoothly. So they're exhausting days, the election days, with those who are involved as candidates and their teams.

RJ Yes. You said earlier today that you really didn't want to be a member of Parliament. How did you feel when you realised you were going to be a member of Parliament?

HALLAHAN Oh no, it's not that I didn't want to be. When I say I didn't want to be, it wasn't one of my ambitions. It's not so much that I didn't want to, it just wasn't one of my ... [pause]

RJ Ambitions is probably a good way to put it.

HALLAHAN I still feel I didn't know much about it. No, no, but once I put my mind to a thing, I give myself to it completely. So I was gobsmacked, quite frankly, when having been asked by the assistant state secretary to run for the seat in the upper house that when it came to the pre-selection process, four men actually put up their hands as well, and I had to work really, really hard to convince people that I would be the worthy candidate to be supported. I drank lemon, lime and bitters until they were running out of my ears at the Court Hotel talking to all and sundry delegates before every state executive meeting and trying to convince union representatives that I would be worth supporting.

There was one fellow I'll always remember, and he's only died in the last year or two, and his name was Wally Palmer from the ETU, and he was a really radical, colourful character. Anyway, he really took a liking to me because he thought anybody that could fundraise by making pickled onions and selling them in the Court Hotel was worthy of support. Even though I looked a bit like a housewife, there seem to be other elements about me that were worthy of support. So you get all these colourful judgements made about you from ... it seemed to me to be pretty ordinary things. So he would always give me a hard time in the Court Hotel and we stayed friends through the years in a sort of way, but only in as much as everybody's paths change, you know, go their separate ways after.

So they were interesting collegial times. But it was hard fought, and to go around to every electorate council and present your credentials, it was all pretty harrowing, because I'd never done any public speaking either, and trying to think what were the most salient things to say. Then of course the speech that you have to give on the night, I think it was 10 minutes. And a friend of mine who is now the leading toastmaster or one of those, he's stayed interested in public speaking for decades and decades, but anyway, he drilled me on my speech and it was down to 10 minutes. You have to cram in all the reasons why you were a worthy candidate.

But anyway, I got an absolute majority in the vote for the pre-selection. So incrementally, I got introduced to the processes of political parties, the path to Parliament. So on the day, on that evening, when you asked the question, how did I

feel about being a member of Parliament, I suppose I felt that I'd worked my way towards it and had no idea what was in front of me quite frankly.

RJ Were you excited about the possibilities it was opening up for you or were you a little bit scared of what might be involved? Can you remember your feelings?

HALLAHAN In those days I think I was very good at suppressing my feelings. I don't admire that and I don't encourage it in other people at all, but I think that's how I'd learnt to get through life. I must have been pleased and certainly would have been pleased for all the people who'd worked with me and helped, and certainly pleased to see the Labor Party get elected. I would have been thrilled, thrilled, thrilled to bits for the Labor Party to get elected.

It was interesting because federally, Labor had got elected two weeks before, so we had Wendy Fatin elected to the federal seat of Canning in that area and then two weeks later state Labor got elected. It was the best combination, as it turns out, for social reform in so many ways.

RJ I am remiss in not asking you about that pre-selection process and as someone who's done a lot of speeches, it's extremely hard to have all your points in 10 minutes. You say you had an absolute majority: were you told the actual vote in the pre-selection?

HALLAHAN I think we were. I knew I had an absolute majority, but **that was after** the vote was counted; until then you don't know.

RJ No, but I just wondered how strongly you were supported by the electorate, the people choosing the candidate? They don't tell you?

HALLAHAN Who, what? The people don't tell you ...

RJ They don't tell you the actual vote of the ...

HALLAHAN They did at the end, yes.

RJ Okay, so do know what that was?

HALLAHAN No, no, no, I can't remember just on that.

RJ No, but you just knew it was very strong.

HALLAHAN My memory is that it was an absolute majority, so out of five candidates I got the most, the absolute ... But you know I quite frankly thought it was rather cheeky of other people to ... I mean, you know, I was naïve. I'd been asked to stand and so what do those other people think they're doing? So then I'd go into overdrive of activity, you see.

RJ Now your actual term commenced on 22 May 1983. Do you remember between the election results being announced and your entry into Parliament, was there a Labor Party meeting under Brian Burke?

HALLAHAN There would have been.

RJ And what do you remember of that meeting?

HALLAHAN There would have been lots ... I mean there would have been state executive meetings of the Labor Party. They were monthly meetings and they were very vibrant in those days, very good policy debate and contested positions and negotiations, so it was an excellent time. I went back to work. I had to go on leave for the formal election period proper from when the writs were called until the election was held, and then I resumed working at the Alcohol and Drug Authority until May. I think that's when I met the director, it was probably after I'd got elected and he said, "My goodness, Kay, you've got elected to Parliament", and I said, well yes I had. So I think it was after the elections that ... That would have been the explanation that I would have been back at work. So I wouldn't have been part of the first sittings of the Labor Party in government because I was not elected until May and I'm presuming, seeing the election happened in ...

RJ It's usually March or February.

HALLAHAN February.

RJ February was it?

HALLAHAN I am suspecting it was February that the Parliament would have met in that time. Students of that sort of thing they could check that.

RJ Yes, we can put that in for sure.³ Was there any guidance from the parliamentary party to its new members about how they would be operating and was there any induction from the staff of the Parliament itself to help you understand the new role you had?

HALLAHAN There may have been, but it doesn't stay in my memory and I think looking back that any introduction was fairly, not wanting to sound critical, but inadequate. But that's how training was in those days; we didn't have an emphasis, really, on training. There were lots of us. And I still think in many ways today people assume people know about Parliament and parliamentary process. If you talk to anybody in the community, they assume a lot of wrong things. I think there is quite a concerning degree of ignorance about our democratic and parliamentary processes. There would have been, I think, some form of induction, but it was very cursory in my memory of it and you learnt on the job. I came from a whole history of learning on the job, really, and it wasn't dissimilar to that.

RJ I think it's worth putting on the record that in 1983 when you entered Parliament, there were 91 members of Parliament in the Assembly and the Council, only six of whom were female, four in the Assembly and three in the Legislative Council, and you referred to this in your maiden speech. There was 8.8 per cent in the Legislative Council compared with 51 per cent of women in the electorate. Those members who were in the Council represented 8.8 per cent of the whole and yet out there women represented 51 per cent of the community. In the Assembly at that time you had Pam Beggs, Pam Buchanan, Yvonne Henderson had been successful and Jackie Watkins. In the Council you had yourself, Labor of course; Lyla Elliott, also Labor who had gone into the Council in 1971 and remained there until 1986; and you had Margaret McAleer, a Liberal, who was elected to the Council in 1974 and didn't leave until 1993. Did any of those women act as a mentor to you at all, particularly Lyla Elliott, who was of your own party?

³ The election was held on 19 February 1983 and Parliament met for the first time on 22 March.

HALLAHAN Oh yes, Lyla would have been a great support; she is a good woman. She'd been, I think, the secretary to Joe Chamberlain, who had been the secretary to the Labor Party in Western Australia so she had a lot ... And she was very involved with communities. She would have been there as a resource and you know, we're very different personalities of course and she had already been in the Parliament some time, and I was coming from a pretty critical perspective you've got a keep in mind. I thought there were not enough women in the Parliament. It's interesting to highlight the fact that in the lower house there were no women for the conservative party at all and Margaret McAleer stands out of course in the upper house, and a lovely woman too: very quiet, a quiet sense of humour but a pleasant, decent human being. I used to think, how did she ever get there, but anyway ...

The reason that a number of us got elected at the time was also that we were pressing the Labor Party to adopt greater representation of women because 8.8 per cent in the Legislative Council compared with 51 per cent of women in the electorate ... All those women were critically aware of that and wanting to change, not only women's opportunities right throughout the community, but within the Labor Party – that it had to have a greater commitment to endorsing and supporting women into the parliamentary process and to all levels within the Labor Party as well. So we had all been very active to a larger or lesser extent (certainly I had been, for example, and Yvonne Henderson would have been) in policy changes within the Labor Party and also acutely aware of that within the wider community.

I mean it is interesting today that despite all that work that has gone on, and there is an improvement in the state Parliament membership certainly, that on corporate boards across Australia women are still highly unrepresented regardless of their expertise and knowledge and their ability to get on in boardroom teams. It's part of our culture and it's part of that dominant culture. It seems to me that people that are part of the dominant culture are never going to very easily give up their position of power and influence. It's a very serious side of humanity, but you know, it is the generous-hearted, confident, capable people who can see their way clear to share power and resources with other people, it seems to me. But that's going to be a challenge for humanity ongoing into the centuries ahead.

RJ Had you ever sat through a sitting of the house before your election?

HALLAHAN I doubt it. I may have gone, particularly to some pertinent piece of legislation, but I don't remember going. Dropping in and out of Parliament House wasn't part of my activities really. I am comfortable, of course, about doing that now, and I encourage other people to do it all the time because I think it's very important for them to understand and see their Parliament at work on their behalf, but I don't think that I ... I may have. It's possible that I did, but until you actually get in there and you're a member and your head is busy with all sorts of other things ... I don't remember taking much notice until I got there and had to really see what the processes were and how it functioned.

Mind you, what I tell other people even to this day is that Parliament runs on very much the same procedures that run any P&C meeting or community-based meeting or any other meeting you're likely to go to. There is just a very much more formalised process on those basic meeting procedures, so that people shouldn't be overwhelmed by the formalities that seem to go on, but they make sense and they work in the same way as any meeting you might go to that is reasonably well conducted in the community.

RJ It's very hard to put yourself right back, but when you actually were sitting in the house for the first time as a member of that Parliament, can you remember how you were feeling? Was there any sense of excitement or were you somewhat overwhelmed? Can you remember what the feeling was?

HALLAHAN Not really. At some point I must have experienced a feeling of satisfaction and being a bit chuffed. I would have experienced feelings of apprehension, anticipation and looking forward to the possibilities of changing policies and laws and making the place a better place. That's what I was there for: to make this state a better place and a fairer place in all sorts of ways for all sorts of people. So that was the overarching driving force and sense, so anything else just had to fit into that greater picture, if you like.

But I did have to learn, I didn't know very much about any of it; I learnt as I went, really. Even speaking I've ... I mean I had been the leader of the branch and taken on leadership roles in other community-based organisations, so I wasn't without an ability to get up and speak. I always thought if you had one or two relevant points to make about anything, you could spin it out for five minutes I learnt, or 10 minutes.

One day I was gobsmacked when ... I was actually on my feet and I was a backbencher and Peter Dowding was a minister and he obviously needed to go to his office to get some documents for, probably, a bill he was putting forward or something. It was something important that he had to leave the chamber and he just leaned over as he went out the door and said, "Can you keep speaking for 10 minutes?" And I went, "Pardon?" Like, no! Anyway I didn't say that, but it did fluster me temporarily as I looked at my meagre notes, which were not meant to be for an extended period of time at all. So one learns to do these things.

RJ When you entered the Council, Clive Griffiths was the President of the Legislative Council. He was Liberal, of course. He had been it from 1977, and he remained it until 1997. What did you think of Clive Griffiths when you first joined the house, and did he offer you any advice?

HALLAHAN Well, he would tell me to be quiet when he thought I needed to be told to be quiet and I did think he was a bit like ... I never met a school teacher that was like him, really, but in fact I just thought he had some tendencies of, you know, school ... [pause]

RJ A school principal?

HALLAHAN Yes, sort of. Yes, it was quite quaint really.

He was a good man; he took his roles and responsibilities seriously. He, I think, tried to treat people fairly, but he would sort of get up and ... it was sort of a mix between authority and cajoling as well. It was quite interesting, but anyway, we had a positive relationship that would sometimes be pleasant and laughing and sometimes a bit tense. But it was all just part of the scene really.

There was one day some person in the public gallery actually interjected from the public gallery and Clive said, "You cannot interject from up there", and the person

took that literally and found their way downstairs and into the entrance, which came in behind the President's seat, and got onto the floor to obviously interject from down there. I thought it was really quite an intelligent response, but there was just hushed silence. Everybody was amazed and then people were saying in sort of hushed tones, "Mr President, Mr President, there's a STRANGER on the floor." I thought it was truly, again, Monty Pythonesque. Anyway, the person was ejected from the floor of the house. That was the only time I saw that happen but I did think it was a reasonably logical response to the instruction from the President.

It was very interesting. In those days there were two chairs on each side that were pushed back towards the wall which were in fact behind where the President's seat was. You were allowed to go and read the newspapers and sit there when they came in about nine o'clock at night. I always thought that was truly bizarre why you couldn't sit in your seat and read the newspapers, which seemed to me to have a lot of policy-related stuff that we needed to be aware of and know about. So there were some very funny practices.

RJ Kay, your maiden speech was given on the 27 July 1983 and I'm going to attach a copy of that speech to the transcript of this interview so that researchers can read that for themselves.⁴ In that maiden speech you said that you believed the vote—this is the vote of the Labor Party winning—reflected a demand in the community for open, honest and compassionate government, which was a nice way to sum up obviously what you thought of the previous government. But the maiden speech, those who read it will find it is a moving testament to your thinking. You expressed concerns about unemployment and its effects, was your main theme, leading to feelings of, and to quote your words, "worthlessness and hopelessness". You referred to alcohol dependence leading to "violent and chaotic relationships"; that there was a need for adequate housing. You set out plans to improve the electorate and provide for youth and for seniors. You wanted to see an improvement in community-police relations. You were concerned about domestic violence and the need for women's refuges and the need for electoral reform. You pointed out that your electorate represented 69 605 electors. It was the fourth largest in the house. There were 20 members representing provinces with less than 30 000 electors and in the Lower North Province there were less than 7200 electors who were represented by two Legislative Councillors. So you were very much setting the scene of the things that greatly concerned you, and you have already referred to your concerns about electoral reform, and your life reflected your concern about people.

Also in that speech you said you would be working closely with Bob Hetherington, also a member of the Legislative Council—and I wondered if that happened—and you wanted to work towards a cooperative relationship with local government authorities, and I wondered how that was achieved?

HALLAHAN Actually, I sat beside Bob Hetherington in the house, which was very useful because he was an experienced member and understood the processes, so he was a great resource. We had different priorities and interests really, I suspect. We did work together well and cooperatively, but my priority, I guess, was working with local community groups, so I pursued that more. But Bob and I had no trouble cooperating on areas where we could assist one another in any way in the electorate, even though we may be working with different interests and different priority groups.

⁴ See pp. 93-97, copied from Hansard, 27 July 1983, pp. 333-337.

With regard to local government, I've always thought if you're interested in communities, you have to really have a good, close relationship with local governments, both with their elected councillors and with their significant staffing positions, so I did work as closely and cooperatively with them as I could. I'm not sure that it happened immediately because it takes time to establish one's own credibility with people, but I did ultimately establish the south east local authorities group where [local government representatives would] come together and discuss interests and issues of concern. But again, for me, they were around mainly community-based issues, more than, for example, infrastructure needs.

I always enjoyed that level of cooperation that you could engender with people. A number of people, of course, in those areas were not necessarily going to be Labor supporters but supporters of the community, so we worked within that broader context even though I had become pretty passionate about supporting Labor-oriented priorities. But I enjoyed working across the broader community as well.

It was very satisfying. It was very, very demanding. I was an upper house member and I liked to work my upper house seat, rather like you would expect a lower house member to do, which can upset lower house-seat members because they can be thinking that you are intruding too much into their territory and they need to be the ones developing the close-type relationships. It was never much of a problem really, but it can be. Bob Pearce never minded at all that my office was later in his electorate and we worked closely together.

On parliamentary sitting weeks you would be mainly in the Parliament on a Monday with meetings, and on Tuesday [morning] with party meetings prior to the Parliament sitting on a Tuesday [afternoon]. In those days the Parliament used to sit quite late on a Tuesday night and a Wednesday night and rise at about six on Thursday, so Friday was the day when you would quite clearly try to quarantine it from other demands to be in your electorate. But the problem with it was that the more that you tried to meet people's demands and needs, the more they would tell their neighbours and their relatives and their friends. It was an absolutely huge and growing wave of people coming for assistance for all sorts of things and it became impossible to service it effectively really. It was quite disconcerting.

The problem in a Labor electorate also is that people have very few other places to go for assistance, so people would come to you with legal problems, housing problems, health problems; all sorts of things. You would have to be this incredible resource of guiding them to the most appropriate place or in fact being their advocate and writing letters for them. That was time consuming to get it absolutely accurate and honed the way that would get the best possible outcome for people.

A lot of people were very, very grateful but, of course, they would tell more people that, "If you've got a bit of a problem, go and see your local member." It was like an avalanche in the pile of enquiries and needs. You could see people needed help, so it was very difficult in some ways; very satisfying and very difficult on the other hand. Electorate office work for me, I have to say, was incredibly satisfying. That was what I wanted to do along with the other work in the other times of policy development with committees of the Parliament and committees of the Labor Party.

RJ Where did you have your electorate office?

HALLAHAN Well, to begin with, my electorate office was in Parliament House itself for a time and ultimately then I went into Albany Highway in Cannington and then, later, into Armadale in a couple of different locations there.

When I had my office in Parliament House I wrote to all sorts of community groups that you could get any **information** about and I said I'd been elected as their member of Parliament in the Legislative Council and if there was any way that I could be of assistance to them, their clubs or their organisation, or their members, they were to feel free to get in touch with me.

One woman came along one day and she sat down in my office at Parliament House. I will never forget because we actually became life-long friends and I was virtually there when she died. She was Italian. She was the secretary but she was really the prime mover of the club, Fiumano E Giuliano, which had club rooms on Welshpool Road in the Wattle Grove area. Anyway, she was sitting there and she said, "So what do you do for my members? The boys, they cannot get work; what do you do about that?" She kept throwing up things which were quite non-plussing really and she expected instant answers. Anyway, at some point it became clear that I was a Labor member of Parliament. She said, "Mamma mia, LABOR; you're not Liberali? You're not Liberali?" I thought, what do you do with somebody like this? So I said, "Look, I think it would be a very good idea if we went and had a cup of coffee, don't you?" "Oh, well!"

So we went and had a cup of coffee and out of this process we became the best of friends to the extent that I've been like a sort of pseudo grandmother to her two grandchildren. I went with her on her first return visit to Italy when I left the Parliament, but she was so demanding. She had only one son and after some years he said, "I don't know what you've done to my mother but from a committed Liberal, she's now a committed Labor." [laughs] But it was great fun. She was a great challenge. When I was a minister she would arrive at the ministerial reception desk with a chicken cacciatore or something and hand it to the staff and say, "When I get to see her?" And I said, "Rosetta, I am sorry, I'm just so busy." "Well, what sort of friend you be? I ring my other friends; I see them. What sort of friend you be?"

She was a character. She used to go and take trays of pasta and things to the Commissioner of Main Roads because she wanted the alignment on a highway changed. We'll deal with that another day.

RJ You said you "wrote to"... Did you have any secretarial help when you first went into Parliament?

HALLAHAN Oh, yes, I did. We had what was called an electorate officer.

RJ Right, and was that full time?

HALLAHAN Yes, five days a week. That was a bit of a challenge for me too because I'd never worked closely with people. As a social worker you didn't have

support staff. Prior to that I'd worked for the 10 years at the Midland Junction Abattoir Board and other offices and I'd never worked in a place where people could actually see your diary. I found it all quite challenging; it was quite an imposition on my privacy. Do you know what I mean? I found it very difficult. There's virtually no personal life in a way. I mean, that's not true because you work it out, **however your diary covered** your evenings and weekends and everything.

Sue Howard-Smith was my electorate officer for the first five years. She's a magnificent person; I'm having a coffee with her tomorrow morning. But she was just excellent and I was very, very lucky. As life went on and changes came I did have some other very good staff but they must have been very, very forgiving and supportive people.

RJ When you first had Sue, was she the only help you had?

HALLAHAN Oh yes. At that time we only had one staffer.

RJ Yes, you just had the one staff member.

END OF INTERVIEW TWO

INTERVIEW THREE

RJ A further interview with Hon. Kay Hallahan, held in her home on the 9 February 2012.

Kay, last time of course we have your entry into Parliament, and we talked about your maiden speech and the things that that set the scene for what you hoped to achieve. We also talked about how you divided your time between Parliament and the electorate. When we come to the end of that first term of the Burke government in 1986, looking back on that time how did you feel about (a) being a member and (b) what that government was able to achieve? One of the things it did very early on was to abolish capital punishment in 1984 and I wondered what you felt about that. But overall what did you think of the first years of the Burke government?

HALLAHAN Well, it was a very, very busy time and everybody had gone in with a lot of policy work completed or underway, so there was quite a passion really in the parliamentary party about bringing reforms to every portfolio that I can think of actually. So there was great energy, great passion, and everybody worked very hard, it seemed to me. So now the question was ... are we talking '83 to '86?

RJ In that first period of the Burke government, how you felt about it.

HALLAHAN Yes, and of course the abolition of capital punishment was very significant indeed. There were other things, but I guess that was very, very important because it took a lot of negotiation.

You have to keep in mind that while Labor had the majority in the Legislative Assembly, we would lose every division by four in the Legislative Council. It was extraordinarily difficult to get reforms through the upper house and it took a lot of negotiation at the Premier's level, the Deputy Premier's level and other ministers there, and keep in mind that in those first three years I was only a backbencher and not in the ministry. But I just know that there was an extraordinary amount of negotiation about every piece of legislation and, indeed, about capital punishment as well. So, I was very delighted when the Parliament passed that legislation. I thought it was really the state of Western Australia becoming a little more human, and recognising, with respect, the dignity of human life. My personal concern has always been based on the fact that should the legal system make an error and convict a person wrongly, then the death penalty gave you no way back if indeed at some later time some new evidence came to light and the person was actually acquitted. I just think that was a terrible thing on the conscience of a community really, so it was wonderful to see that pass into history really.

RJ That problem of getting legislation through the Council – it is probably an unfair question in many ways, but does anything stand out in your mind that you were passionate about and you saw rejected because of that situation?

HALLAHAN Oh, it happened all the time.

RJ But is there anything that stands out as a particular issue?

HALLAHAN No, there were many things that did get passed. One would always make one's first foray to the National Party, and some of those people were more community-based in their outlook and perhaps not so conservative. They were in coalition with the Liberals, who were very conservative, and hadn't, in my view, had a very good track record on social policy issues in government either, or the provision

of services for people who needed them who weren't in the well-off set. But, anyway, that was my general observation and opinion.

They were just devastating times, I have to say, and you'd think that you had convinced somebody and then somebody else from their team or the Liberals would get onto them and they'd say, "Look, we just can't do it." And sometimes you didn't know what they were going to do until they actually got to crossing the floor. So there were some very tense times and they are not so unusual; do you know what I mean? And also it was a great satisfaction when people could be convinced of your arguments and actually agree to pass legislation.

It took a lot of negotiation because sometimes we would be able to negotiate an amendment to what we were putting up. In my view it very often meant that the legislation did not achieve all that we wanted it to, but it got to the art of the possible really, and so it was a matter of achieving what one could with the circumstances. But it was particularly galling; we had a government elected and it couldn't enact its mandate. And in addition to that, the people who were obstructing it were elected on a very, very unfair electoral system.

I didn't ever think that I would live to see an absolutely fair electoral system in Western Australia, but I think we're pretty close to it now. So that's a great satisfaction, but it was particularly galling to see people who really were representing less Western Australians in their electorates than all or any of us on the Labor side. We had the numbers in the lower house and yet you could not get legislation that the community had endorsed in the election process and campaign, and you could not get it through. It was really, you know, in fact a corruption of democracy.

RJ If we could move now to the 1986 election, did you notice any difference in campaigning? What was the sort of reaction people had to those first three years of the Burke government?

HALLAHAN I think the Burke government was well appreciated by lots of Western Australians, and Brian Burke was a very good campaigner and an excellent communicator. He was an excellent communicator through the media, but he was also amazingly thorough and conscious of getting in touch with everybody at all levels of society. He would ring people into the evenings and say, "How do you think we're going?" So he was a good team builder in that way, and I think he used those principles in his contact with the electorate as well. That was a good example to other members about keeping in touch with their electorates and the constituencies within their portfolios. And the measures we had ... I mean capital punishment, of course, was important, but that would not have been significant to lots of people, I suspect. I can't remember the year of the opening of the Fremantle railway line.

RJ That's later, I think.

HALLAHAN Is it later?

RJ I haven't got a note of that because it wasn't directly relevant, but I think that is later. I know that Bob Pearce was very proud of the ... Oh, I'm sorry. I'm thinking of the extension [of the freeway north]. No, the opening of the actual Fremantle line was almost immediate.

HALLAHAN Yes. So the community saw very early on very significant action in the legislation about the death penalty, but also about opening the Fremantle railway line

and lots of other things which had stayed dormant for a long time under the Liberal Party.

Also, there had been quite a disregard for people who were not so fortunate in life, and there was a balance about what we did in that. We did a lot through, certainly, the community services portfolio and certainly the health and education [portfolios], and other portfolios, of course, impinged in a positive way as well. So, my memory is, anyway, that we campaigned very hard and that the climate was not a hostile one; it was quite a positive one. But governments are ... My view is that people don't remember the good things; they only remember things they really need and want. So, campaigning, even though you may have done some very, very good things, constantly has you confronted with the things that people still want done or that they are particularly disappointed about personally, or their family is or their community is or local government is or somebody is, so it's never an easy task.

RJ At the time Bill Hassell was the Leader of the Opposition. Did you notice any comment about him and how people felt about him leading the Liberal Party at the time?

HALLAHAN Well, I have since met up with Bill Hassell, you know, in the community sector because we've got a mutual friend, and so I now quite appreciate him and Sue, but in those days I thought he was sort of, you know, a bit Hitler-esque, really. I don't know how people saw him as the leader. I didn't see him in positive terms; that's all I do know. So I think it was probably a difficult position for him to be in. You know, some people are suited to it and some people find it difficult, and sometimes it's unfair. Sometimes people just do not convey, and I think we've had a recent example here with Eric Ripper. I think he is a very capable, intelligent man but does not resonate through the media. Maybe that was the case with Bill Hassell for other reasons. I'm not comparing them in any way whatever, but, anyway, I thought Bill was probably not one of the success stories in the leadership role for the Liberal Party.

You've got to keep in mind also that I was in the upper house, I was not in the lower house, so my view of people is not as distant as community members would be, but I just thought he was too right wing.

RJ Leading up to the election, thinking of your re-election, which you would have hoped, did you have any thought that you would like to be a minister or had Burke raised with you any possibility that, one, that might happen?

HALLAHAN I can't remember such a discussion. However, I think I need to make clear (I think I'm correct in this) that when we were elected to the Legislative Council in those days, we were elected for six years. So, there were two members to each region, and I think that I didn't actually face an election myself ...

RJ You would not have faced election, no.

HALLAHAN But I certainly worked very hard with ... there were four lower house seats in that region of the upper house, and I worked closely and where it was most appropriate to work within those four seats. So, I guess that's why I'm not having a strong recall.

RJ No, but, by the same token, knowing that you were going to be there anyway and Burke was likely to win, did you feel you would like to see yourself get a portfolio? Was any of that in your mind before that house reconvened?

HALLAHAN I actually cannot tell you that, only because I do not know.

RJ You do not remember. That is absolutely ...

HALLAHAN I guess everybody has got ambitions about being a minister and wanting to do more and having the wherewithal to do it, but I think I have always been a bit – not reluctant, but not wanting to stick my head up too high and getting it chopped off. Do you see what I mean? So I can't really ... One day I should have a chat with Pam Beggs and see what she remembers about that period.

RJ With the return of the Burke government, you were appointed the Minister for Community Services, the Family, Youth. You held Multicultural and Ethnic affairs for a short period from February to July that first year. From May 1986 you had added the Aged to your portfolios, and you kept that, and you were the Minister Assisting the Minister for Women's Interests right through, and Brian Burke was the Minister for Women's Interests. I know that the caucus nominates the people to be ministers, but the choice of portfolios is the leader's. Were you happy with those portfolios? Did you have any say in what was given to you?

HALLAHAN I suspect not. The only thing was ... We had worked very hard prior to going into government in '83 on a whole lot of policy areas, so we wanted to establish a women's portfolio, but we also wanted it to have status, and so that's why we asked the Premier if he would carry that portfolio and maintain it, and I would be the minister assisting and do all the required work. Brian was very flexible and cooperative in any of our putting forward of policy positions or measures to be taken.

RJ So, how did you feel about the portfolios you were offered? They all seem very in line with your interests, but ...

HALLAHAN Well, they certainly were in line with my history, being earlier on a youth worker and then a policewoman and then a social worker, so I imagine that I was pretty delighted really, but there was a lot of work, when I look back now, and not ... It's so true with so many things in life, until you actually occupy the role, you often don't know what's really involved, and I think politics and being a member of Parliament is particularly about that. The only people, in my view, and I hope I haven't said this before ... the only people who have got any idea of the demands that are made on members of Parliament and, indeed, ministers are the people who are on their staff and working closely with them, because they are the ones that can witness the complexity and the intensity and the never-ending demands that go with the job.

RJ But even staff don't see you all the time, so your electorate office staff don't see what happens to you as a minister and your ministerial staff don't see the electoral side, so, really, the only person who knows how hard it is is yourself, isn't it?

HALLAHAN That's true to some extent, because it's the personal impact on yourself; only you experience that. But ...

RJ They would still have an understanding.

HALLAHAN Well, they would all see, you know, the ...

RJ The diary.

HALLAHAN The day sheet it was called, and they would know. People on your staff who were policy people in various portfolios would be competing to get the minister to go to appointments in that portfolio, and they'd often have to have lots of discussions to, you know, concede that the minister could not be in three different places at one time, so they would have to work out which were the most important, and there would be discussions around all of that. No, so they weren't **always** mindful of the pressures, I found, but I had some very good staff mind you.

RJ Why did you only hold Ethnic Affairs for those few months? Was that your request to relinquish that or what happened?

HALLAHAN Well, it was my request, because in the period between '83 and '86 we'd had a big review into the Community Services Department and sector. A woman named Jan Carter headed that up. So when I became the minister in '86 following Keith Wilson, it became the job of implementation and it was just extraordinarily busy. Of course, we also established a new bureau for the aged, and the youth portfolio we'd established at some point [...] too, to give a focus and a priority to these areas of policy development and services that had been long neglected.

With the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs portfolio, a lot of their policy issues were indeed dealt with within larger portfolios, so it was very much a policy development activity, but, from my point of view, with having a very demanding portfolio load, it required the minister to attend lots of functions, to go to dinner dances, unendingly. I said to my staff, "Look, I cannot", because I worked from, say, 8.00 until 11.00, and sometimes later, and I just could not fit it all in. Going off to a function, even if you tried [to get away early] ... I mean, there was a very great sensitivity about "The minister didn't stay very long; she just stayed for the formalities and then she left". So it was quite difficult, because the last thing you want to be doing is to be insulting people. But I also had very serious policy to implement, and all the work that went along with that, and so I suggested that the portfolio be moved from me, and the Premier agreed to that.

RJ The Aged was added in May that year. You still had Ethnic Affairs at that stage. That probably also added to your feeling about you needed something to go, I would have thought.

HALLAHAN Well, no, it was the nature of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs particularly.

RJ Yes, what you said of the demands.

HALLAHAN It was extraordinarily socially oriented because there were so many cultural groups in Western Australia, and they all had special days of the year that really, in fairness, warranted recognition by the state at a senior level. It was weekends and evenings and other times of the day as well. We would try and negotiate and also send another member of Parliament representing the minister, and sometimes that didn't suit people either.

RJ From what you have said about Women's Interests, it was really you who was running that portfolio, but you had the imprimatur of Brian as the Premier.

HALLAHAN Oh, absolutely, and if we wanted any really significant announcements made, we always saw that Brian ... that we got priority in his diary for him to do that.

RJ But did he try to influence policy and that sort of thing or did he leave you to it?

HALLAHAN If there was anything contentious or there was some question about anything, I would have a discussion with him about it. That was not a problem. Everybody was very busy, and getting time in his diary was probably more problematic than getting an appointment in my diary, but we all appreciated, you know, the dilemmas about that. No, no, no; he was very supportive.

RJ Okay. Now, at the same time as you were appointed a minister, Pam Beggs became the Minister for Tourism, and Racing and Gaming, and the two of you were the only female ministers in the Burke government at that time, and you were the first Labor females to hold cabinet positions. Before you, June Craig, as a Liberal minister, in March '77, held Lands and Forests, and then later Local Government and Urban Development, and Town Planning. What was the attitude of male colleagues to the two of you, particularly in cabinet meetings?

HALLAHAN I don't remember there being any particular attitudes. We were colleagues and we were part of the team, and I don't remember feeling that I had ... I was glad Pam was there. We sat beside one another in cabinet meetings and had little asides to one another at various times, which was very companionable and good support for both of us, but it didn't come down to gender lines particularly. I think they were a very fine team of people actually in the cabinet.

RJ And did you and Pam do any working together, you know, pre-discuss matters from the female's point of view or did it just sort of happen? When issues were coming up, did you find yourself talking to Pam about ...

HALLAHAN Sometimes it would be useful to have a chat with her. She was actually very close to Brian Burke in those days, and so she was useful in sounding out on some things. There were issues coming up, quite frankly, at every cabinet meeting. If you had a cabinet minute going forward, that was an issue for you and your office to get through. My staff would be contacting the staff of other ministers to make sure that they clearly understood the necessity and the complexity of the cabinet minute so that we didn't get embroiled in long discussions around the cabinet table that were not necessary and were not always going to be so helpful. So it's always, in my view, very important to get key people onside if you're going anywhere with something that needs a decision, and we worked very hard at that. My staff, I think, were very competent and enabled that negotiating, [always] coming back with some feedback from ministers that there were some concerns about this, that or the other, which we would then either provide the answer to or re-examine a particular point to get it through the cabinet [meeting] as painlessly as possible.

RJ I did find it interesting, particularly in the light of you pointing out in your maiden speech about the very few women members of Parliament there were, that there are the two of you in that ministry, and now we have the Barnett ministry today, and there are still only three women. In all those years we have gained one, and that's, of course, Elizabeth Constable, Robyn McSweeney and Helen Morton. Now, in your various ...

HALLAHAN Can I just say that I think the current ministry only having three women rather demonstrates or ... In my humble opinion there is a lack of talent in the current ministry and maybe if they had more women they might be doing themselves a favour.

But, you see, we had campaigned ... It was very strong within the Labor Party that we wanted an increasing role for women in society generally, and so to get Pam and I into the ministry was a good thing, but that was underlaid by a lot of work that went on for some years before we went into Parliament, and then during the three years too. So, there was a strong commitment in that direction.

Political parties, and any organisation, quite frankly, that wants to bring about change has to have a very strong and continuing commitment, otherwise it will not happen. I don't know what the Liberal Party's policy is on women, and maybe they don't know that lots of women have equal ability, or more ability than some males. It's just ignorance really, and it's cultural and it's very aggravating, and it deprives our society of getting the best possible people to do the job.

RJ When it comes to each of your portfolios, I know that some ministers go to the department to do their work as a minister and others choose to do it in a central office and do all their portfolios from the one office. What did you do, because you had several departments?

HALLAHAN I'm not sure what you mean.

RJ Well, you know how you were Community Services, the Family and Youth, there would be various government departments involved in those portfolios. Did you do your ministerial work in those departments or did you do it centrally?

HALLAHAN No, no, no; I had a ministerial office which most ministers did. If a ministerial office was located within a department ... for example, the Minister for Education, I think the ministerial office there was located within the department, but he would have still operated as a separate office and entity, even though **the** location **was within** that department [building].

RJ I suppose I'm influenced by Sir Charles Court did Industrial Development in Industrial Development; he did Railways in Railways. He didn't have them coming to him in Industrial Development, so that's why I'm really asking that question.

HALLAHAN Yes. I don't know how that would function, quite frankly, and I don't understand it. I haven't heard of that way of working.

RJ No, that's fine.

HALLAHAN I haven't seen that style of working, and it sounds to me as if it's interference in the public sector to me in a way that I don't think is acceptable. I think they have a job to do with the policy of the government of the day, and to get on with it, and be redirected if they are misinterpreting something about that policy or to be encouraged along further avenues. But, yes, I'm not sure how that worked. Maybe it's a different era.

RJ Yes, that's a point for sure. In the life of the Burke government, which didn't last for that much longer; March 1987 ... Oh, no, sorry; no, he resigned ... Was it '87 he resigned or ... February '88, yes. So it didn't last for the whole period, as we know. How did you feel about what you were able to achieve in those various portfolios as a minister?

HALLAHAN Well, I think that Labor did an excellent job in those portfolios. In fact, in that period from '86 to '89 we doubled the funding to that portfolio in three years,

which is phenomenal. It was a salutary lesson to me to find that as each measure was taken, people would appreciate it, but then be pointing out what next needed to be done, and I thought you could not rest on your laurels for any time with anything, it seemed to me. So that was a very good lesson in life to me, because there were significant things done.

You see, we were very lucky that in '83 the Hawke government was elected and at the state level the Burke government was elected and there were some coinciding policy positions, so out of that we got the HACC program [Home and Community Care] services to people needing health-related services at home and other places. Then we had the childcare agreement, because we didn't have child care to speak of in this state; it was very undersupplied. So all the childcare centres were established. There was no ongoing funding for women's refuges in this state. The supported accommodation assistance program was a Commonwealth/State joint funded program. It funded refuges for people in crisis, and in the early days it was under three programs: for women and domestic violence; for youth; and for a general sort of grouping, but it tended to be mainly single men and services supplied by groups like the Salvation Army, for example.

They took some time to implement, but they were very, very significant services across the community but, again, providing for the most needy either in terms of crisis in accommodation, violence in the home, young people leaving home and on the streets. I suppose the traditional image was older men who were on the streets and not-for-profit organisations, the non-government organisations attempting to provide where they could, but it was totally inadequate and people were in very, very vulnerable and dangerous situations.

RJ So that would have been very satisfying, in the light of your maiden speech, because these were the things you cared about.

HALLAHAN Yes, they were, and you can imagine having the opportunity to do something about it and being part of a cabinet that also gave it priority, with a Premier who also gave it priority. You've got to keep in mind he represented the seat of Balga, and that had a very low socio demographic. [...] He was fully appreciative of the need for housing and was a great advocate for his own constituents in that seat, but helped a lot of other members in their advocating for better outcomes for people as well prior to going into government.

RJ In March 1987 you became the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council and you were the first female to hold the position of Deputy Leader in the Council. How did that come about?

HALLAHAN Well, that would have arisen with Des Dans retiring, and then Joe Berinson became Leader of the Legislative Council and I became the Deputy Leader.

RJ But how come?

HALLAHAN What do you mean "how come"?

RJ Well, was it voted for?

HALLAHAN Those positions were always voted.

RJ And anyone else wanting that position? Did you win against someone else or did you ...

HALLAHAN I can't remember. I doubt it.

RJ Were you the only person nominated?

HALLAHAN Well, I probably was the most obvious choice but [chuckles] ...

RJ Fair enough [chuckles]. And what did that then mean?

HALLAHAN Can I just say on that, I think Graham Edwards was a member of the ministry then too, so the front bench in the upper house was Joe Berinson, Kay Hallahan and Graham Edwards, which raises an interesting point. Yes, because Peter Dowding too ... We would have had Des Dans retiring, and I think Peter Dowding left the Council and ran for the seat of Maylands, so there was more than one thing going on, if you like, which created the vacancy and the opportunity.

RJ And how did you feel about it? In what way did your life change once you became Deputy Leader?

HALLAHAN Well ... [pause]

RJ What does a Deputy Leader do?

HALLAHAN Well, supports the leader ...

RJ Yes, but ...

HALLAHAN ... in the upper house [laughter]. You see, you have to keep in mind that the life of a minister in the upper house is quite busy because there were only three of us, okay, and you have to handle all the portfolios coming up from probably 15 other ministers in the lower house. So life as a minister in the upper house was extraordinarily demanding and busy anyway, so being the deputy leader I don't think changed my life a great deal because you're still dealing with portfolios coming up from the lower house from various ministers.

Joe Berinson was an excellent leader of the upper house. He and Des Dans were as different as chalk and cheese. Of course, Des had come out of the union movement and he was one of those colourful, robust speakers, who would be so flamboyant and expressive and loud. Joe, on the other hand, was like a classical actor; he was such a brilliant performer. There were times, when, if he got inspired by a particular circumstance, legislation or whatever it was, he would speak in the most BEAUTIFUL way, and you'd just feel like you were observing a most WONDERFUL performance [comparable to the best] you could ever see on a stage. He had a wonderful, wonderful intellect; a very quiet, private man but always supportive; given to setting you straight as needed, as everybody does in politics. But he was a very fine parliamentary performer and wonderful legal brain. So, I don't think the chores on me were particularly onerous, quite frankly.

RJ We have the publication *Building on the Burke Years* that was published in 1988,⁵ which was, of course, summing up what had been achieved under the Burke government. In a letter Brian Burke wrote in February 1988 to the people of Western Australia he refers to what he saw as the major achievements of his government, which included "cautiously implementing a program of responsible

⁵ *Building on the Burke Years*, Department of the Premier, 1988, p. 1.

social reform". Social reform was important to you; you've identified it was happening, but was it too cautious?

HALLAHAN No. I think in politics, you have to always keep in mind that it's the art of the possible. We didn't have the numbers in the upper house and every measure we took which needed legislation ... Not all measures do need legislation; sometimes it was a question of adequate funding and policy directions and a change within a department implementing things, but I think they were, for me, extraordinarily busy years of doing a lot.

I had friends of course I'd come through social work with and they were impatient to see more happen. I could understand where they were coming from but they did not have to deal with the reality of the political system as I did. So, if I was really tired, and sometimes I was exhausted, I didn't always have a lot of patience with them and then they thought I was not someone who'd kept to my commitments. But most times I'd try and explain to them, "Look we've done this and this, and we would have been able to do that, but that's the state of the Parliament, you know; it's a reality and it's about the law and we all want to live by the law." So I had lots of dynamic conversations in those years.

RJ You've had a glance at the pages in that booklet which cover the portfolios for which you were responsible. Is there anything out of that that you would like to comment on?

HALLAHAN Well, the Family portfolio was an interesting one because we had never had one before. To begin with, we focused on research to see the formation of Western Australian families, if you like. That was really about the first time anybody had done work locally. What emerged was seemingly surprising to lots of people – the fact that lots of young people were leaving home, (keep in mind this is, what, nearly 30 years ago) but a lot of them were returning home. So this was quite a new dynamic in families in our state because generally the pattern was that young people left either for careers or to get married or to go away for a job or whatever. But this pattern that was obvious was that young people were coming back home and so parents were in quite a different role with adults coming back into the house and sometimes having to support them, depending on the reasons they'd come back home. So a very fine woman did the research on all of that and then we would **formulate policies** within the major portfolios across government that would relieve some of the pressures on families.

RJ Anything else worth commenting on?

HALLAHAN Well, of course, the family package was very good. I don't have the details of that to hand but it had a great range of measures in it to support families. In that, it was also supporting, of course, a lot of children and youth activities.

The one that's printed here is the bicycle helmet rebate scheme. You forget those things; that earlier on there was no need for people to wear helmets. Those things all took quite a lot of community education about the incidence of accidents, injuries, deaths. A community will take on board what they see as restrictions, if you like, once enough are persuaded that really it is a serious risk to life and limb to them and probably to their family members. That will usually be the thing that will sway people that maybe we do need to make some changes. Even that one sounds small but there was a lot of other work going on around it and significant change in the community's attitude about a lot of things.

The childcare centres were just extraordinarily important to families. It's very well if you're in a financially sound position, you can afford whatever services you need but that isn't the case for the majority of citizens and that quality childcare provision was very, very important. But anyway, the whole thing about immunisation and the free dental scheme ... I think we need to boost both of those again at present, quite frankly.

The poverty package was geared really at those who were doing it the hardest of all. While it might sound quaint to us today to talk about a poverty package, we did it in such a way that it was accepted by people who never saw themselves as being in poverty. **Some measures were particularly aimed at** impacting on young children for sufficient care and provision in their early years. So a lot of measures were geared at the family at that level of providing for children.

The Seniors' Card was an interesting saga in my life really, because we had set up that portfolio with the Bureau of the Aged. We had also established Seniors' Week in an effort to give recognition to older Western Australians who really had done a lot of the hard work that had given us the standard of living and the services that we had as a community. It seemed to everyone that it was a very fine thing culturally for a community recognising its senior citizens.

However, with the Seniors' Week, which we saw as being an opportunity to showcase what a number of people had done and to do some things that expressed appreciation and some enjoyment and fun things as well, there was this schism developing between those who had provided for themselves with superannuation and those who had not. [...] Really, I think the Civil Service Association came in lobbying about [their members needing] some recognition for the fact that they had contributed to the wellbeing of the state and to their own wellbeing financially to see them through their retirement years and that they had nothing that identified any of this and that pensioners did have a pension card which said they had reached a particular age. They were men; they were very fine men and they were very passionate. It seemed in the end to me that they were being very reasonable actually.

In the beginning I was interested and respectful but I became converted to their cause because they said (I remember just one example in one meeting we had) "Look minister, if we go to a hardware shop, we've got nothing that says we're retired, but if a pensioner goes in they've got a card that says they've reached a particular age and the hardware shop will give them 10 per cent discount. The owner of the hardware shop can say to his staff, 'Anybody who's got this card is eligible for a 10 per cent discount', but we have nothing, minister; it is not fair and all we need is a card to show that we are retirees."

It was developing, as I said, into a bit of a schism at a time of the year when we were trying to have the whole community supporting and recognising and appreciating all the work that older Western Australians had done. So I said - I'm not sure whether I said it to them but at some point I said to my staff and to Dr Trevor Lee, who was the head of the Bureau of the Aged, "Look, I don't think this would be too hard to do. Why can't we have a seniors' card; everybody can have it, and then if they go to a hardware shop or anywhere else and anyone wants to give them a discount, they've got an identification. It just gets rid of the problem."

Well, we all decided (a small group) that this is a really good idea, all incredibly doable. I put out a press release to say that this was what was going to happen and the next Monday I got to the cabinet meeting and I'll always remember Brian Burke very warmly for this because he could have been extraordinarily critical but he looked

across the cabinet meeting and he said, "Kay, next time you have a really good idea, do you think you could bring it to a cabinet meeting first?" Well, I just put my hand over my head, "Oh my God!"

We moved on with getting application forms printed and setting out the conditions that applied and the response from the community was overwhelming. Mail bags of application forms just rolled in. We had no capacity to process them [laughs] at the Bureau of the Aged; it was only a small office. So it was arranged that people would volunteer their kitchen tables, do you mind, and volunteer processing all these bags and bags and bags of applications for the Seniors' Card. It was an enormous exercise. I've never seen such an under-resourced exercise in my life.

RJ You had the resignation of both Brian Burke and Mal Bryce as deputy leader on the 18 February 1988. Did you know in advance of that announcement being public that they were both going to resign?

HALLAHAN I just really cannot tell you now. It's possible I would have known a short time beforehand. I can't be sure. I haven't looked at any notes on that period; if I have any notes. Do you know what I mean?

RJ Yes, I do know what you mean. How did you feel when you knew about the resignations?

HALLAHAN Well, it was certainly a difficult period and certainly significant change, there's no doubt about that. It's always, I think, sad to see eras in which you have been involved and you believe that good things have come from, not be appreciated and celebrated at the ending. Do you know what I mean? It's always difficult, I think, for human beings. I've never really wanted for myself or anybody else really, accolades; because, as I say, in politics there are a number of people who are always wanting more. And rightly so, there is always a lot more to do to bring a sense of fairness and adequate service provision in various sectors of the community. But it's a pity to see an era not remembered positively for the good things along with those (I don't know) tragic set of circumstances I think really that happened. However, that's life.

RJ If I asked to you sum up Brian Burke, how would you do that? What did you think of Brian Burke?

HALLAHAN Well I think that he was a fantastic communicator, I have said that earlier, and I think he was, for the most part, very well directed and I think the story that has unfolded is really quite a tragic one.

RJ In what way? What are you referring specifically to?

HALLAHAN Oh well, I think there have been years of inquiries. Only last week there was a dropping of charges by the CCC after extraordinary expenditure incurred by everybody. I imagine the state of Western Australia and the CCC as well as Brian and his family and the other members who were associated with that, Julian Grill and his family, and the other young man who was not a member of Parliament. I think those years must have taken a terrible toll on all of those people and their families. It's meant that there's been no adequate reflection on the good things that came out of that period. But also maybe not an accurate reflection on the things that were shortcomings about behaviours in that period either. I just think it's been a very distorted representation. When you see the talent of people like Brian Burke it is tragic in its proportions.

RJ What did you think of Mal Bryce?

HALLAHAN I always felt very positively about Mal. He was certainly another passionate member of the cabinet with his interest in technology and other matters. The Technology Park at Bentley is not far from here and that was one of the things that was put in place under his period. I think he's a very affable, pleasant human being but he was also a very effective team member.

RJ According to *The West* on 16 February 1987, "Mr Burke acknowledges that at times the government has upset its traditional constituency but says the resignation of long-standing ALP members over what they considered to be policy breaches does not particularly upset him." What policy breaches were you aware of that some of the long-standing ALP were unhappy about? Do you know anything about that?

HALLAHAN No; I would have to reflect back on the media of the time, I guess. What year was that?

RJ This was the time of his resignation. I'm sorry; this was a full year before his resignation. He said that ... There must have been ALP members leaving the party and complaining that it was because there had been policy breaches, but you don't have any clear memory of that?

HALLAHAN Probably if I looked at the papers of the day, I would be surprised that I can't remember. But I have to say that sort of thing does go on all the time as well.

RJ Did you feel any disappointment about some of the things that you were passionate about as a member?

HALLAHAN Well, I was busy implementing what I was passionate about and so were other ministers. Bob Pearce was doing the same in Education. Pam Beggs had Transport at that point did she?

RJ I think so, yes?

HALLAHAN But, I mean, that whole pre-planning for the northern suburbs railway line; the new railway line. There was such a lot going on.

RJ Pam was, sorry, Tourism and Racing and Gaming?

HALLAHAN Later I think she was ...

RJ Did she later hold ... You could be right. I haven't noted that.

HALLAHAN I'm not sure, I should have

RJ Yes, I think she did have Transport, but anyway.

HALLAHAN I mean, that took an enormous amount of pre-planning, the whole northern suburbs railway. There were many, many excellent things happening, but others will have to make that analysis and do the research back to the media of the time. That'll tell them.

RJ I think at the time the railway was planned, Bob Pearce was your Minister for Transport.

HALLAHAN That could be so.

RJ And I think, and we'll check this, that when he voluntarily stood down from the portfolios, Pam took over at that point, but we will check that.⁶ Now Burke also said ...

HALLAHAN Hang on, I don't think that's true.

RJ You don't think Pam did take over transport?

HALLAHAN No, no; I do have this memory of her having transport; however, when Bob Pearce resigned from the Parliament that was prior to the 1993 election.

RJ I'm talking about his standing down from cabinet and any portfolios. This is before the ...

HALLAHAN And what, did he stay in the Parliament then?

RJ Yes, stayed in the Parliament. It was over the controversy that was going on.

HALLAHAN Yes, which was very unfortunate. It was something that virtually just flicked him as it went by. I thought it was a terrible thing for him to have to do that.

RJ In that same article, the year before he resigned, Brian Burke also said that he considered his most notable achievement, "The thing that I have tried to do is to make people more understanding of each other, less aggressive, less offensive to each other, less confrontationist and create within the whole community employers and employees, business people and working people, a compatibility if you like; an understanding." What do you think of that comment of his?

HALLAHAN I think that's true. As I said, he was an amazing communicator with all sectors of the community and I think that he did want to reduce divisions and conflict in order to get the best possible outcomes and the most productive use of resources. You don't get that with conflict and negativity and you really need people seeing one another in a way which allows them to explore what the possibilities are rather than there being just out and out confrontation. So I think that is a fair enough observation of his time and the way that he communicated with so many people.

RJ When he actually resigned, Burke named possible successors as Dowding, Parker, Pearce and Taylor. Sorry, Peter Dowding, David Parker, Bob Pearce and Ian Taylor. What did you think of those four as possible Premiers?

HALLAHAN I had a great regard for all of them and I was happy with the choice of Peter Dowding as the Premier. I think he had a tough job. At the time, it was very difficult I would think for him to take over the leadership role, and I'm sure he found it very stressful. However, I think that was a good decision.

⁶ Bob Pearce held the Planning portfolio. Pamela Beggs was Minister for Tourism and Racing and Gaming from 1986 until 1988. The Minister for Transport was Julian Grill from 1983 until 1986 and Gavan Troy from 1986 until 1988.

RJ There were no changes in your portfolios, with Dowding taking over and you remained the Deputy Leader of the government in the Legislative Council. Dowding, like Burke, became Minister for Women's Interests and you were the minister assisting. What difference did you notice between the style and what was happening in cabinet meetings et cetera between Burke and Dowding?

HALLAHAN Gracious me, I can't remember that. I really cannot remember a difference in style. No doubt there would have been, with two key players in Brian Burke and Mal Bryce going, but I don't have a particular memory without getting together and chin wagging with previous colleagues to be reminded of various incidents.

That's what I like about the institution of a democracy really. Essential processes must keep going and personalities do make a huge difference, there's no doubt about that, but I don't recall it, going back such a long way, I have to say. How long ago is it – '87?

RJ It's 25 years, round about.

HALLAHAN Twenty five years ago.

RJ It's just under that. It is a long time ago, that's for sure. The *Weekend Australian* said at this time, with Dowding taking over, "Under Premier Dowding, Ministers are going to find little opportunity to follow an independent line."

HALLAHAN Sorry, say that again.

RJ "Under Premier Dowding," – this is when Dowding became Premier – "Ministers are going to find little opportunity to find an independent line."⁷ I take that to mean you're going to get told much more about what to do rather than think for yourselves. Is he right in that? This is Peter Terry.

HALLAHAN I don't recall that being a factor. I've always worked, and believed people should work, as part of a collegiate team and, of course, the nature of politics means that people who go into politics are somewhat extraordinary in terms of their belief in their position and their own wisdom. There is an element of that, there's no doubt. However, I do think that [pause] ... I didn't ever see myself particularly as a leader of the government in the up-front sense. I had portfolio responsibilities and I had a responsibility to represent the government and indeed the people of Western Australia to the best of my ability in all possible circumstances. There's no doubt there was a different style about Brian and Peter but I don't remember it being particularly curtailing, if that's what that article was implying.

I am also a believer that if the dynamics of a situation change, then you and your staff change your modus operandi to manage that for the most effective outcomes you can, so I don't know whether there were great changes in the way that we did things from my office. It's not staying with me.

RJ Yes, it's interesting, because there certainly was that outside perception. At the same time Mark Irving of the *Daily News* said, "Despite the general demeanour, he gives the impression he's not above cracking heads to get results."⁸ Now, of course, that's not saying he's going to crack his fellow parliamentarians'

⁷ *Weekend Australian*, 27-28 Feb. 1988.

⁸ *Daily News*, 29 Feb. 1988.

heads. It could have just been people within departments or something, but there obviously was a feeling that he was a stronger personality.

HALLAHAN I don't know about stronger. It's a different style; not stronger, but different style. Also he was needing to make a mark. That's what you have to keep in mind too. A leader has to be seen to be and perceived to be somebody who can get things done and they have to be bristling with energy. He certainly was that. But the media don't always pick things up accurately. Neither of them were beyond cracking heads if it needed to be done, there's no doubt about that.

RJ Can you give an example of that?

HALLAHAN No. I can't think of one, but you wouldn't put yourself out there looking ... I had an incident with him, too, with Peter. One particular very significant citizen in this state was complaining about me as the minister and also making some derogatory comments about me as he wasn't going to be appointed to quite a significant board that was important to him **under one of my portfolios**. So I went to Peter Dowding as the Premier and said I had had this conversation and I just thought I'd better let him know because this person was quite significant and what the person had said about me to me that indicated that he thought I was generally inadequate for the job. He simply looked up from the papers he was reading and writing at the time and said, "Well, I don't think you can work with him. Do you?" To which I said, "No; I don't." So that was endorsement and affirmation for me. I very much appreciated it because it could have gone the other way.

RJ You said with Burke holding the Women's Interests portfolio, he let you get on with it mostly. What was the case when Dowding was ...

HALLAHAN It was the same, and it was understood that the minister assisting the Minister for Women's Interests was the one doing the work, but that we seriously wanted the community and the public to have the understanding that this portfolio of Women's Interests was significant, and it was significant enough for the Premier to hold it and for the Premier to be the one to make any significant announcements. That continued and I was very pleased about it.

RJ It's worth putting because that was the first time there had been that emphasis placed with Burke and you becoming the minister responsible, what did Women's Interests actually encompass?

HALLAHAN Well, again, it was like any of the smaller bureaus, if you like. [...] Equal opportunity legislation was, of course, one of the major **achievements** to come out of that period. That was very, very significant in our state's development, in my humble opinion, and the setting up of the Women's Information Referral Exchange, and the Women's Advisory Council so that it could be seen as a legitimate thing in government for people to be selected from the community and to be representing to government the things that they thought were of significance for the government to be acting on in the interests of women, in their various roles, in the broadest possible sense.

Again, that might mean some policy changes and service provision in [other portfolios, particularly] in the Health portfolio, the Education portfolio or in my portfolio. It gave an opportunity, right across government, for there to be changes that impacted and improved opportunities for women, and recognition that women were equal citizens and of equal ability, and simply needed an equal opportunity to compete.

RJ And when you took things to cabinet that are in line with what you were trying to achieve, how readily were those changes accepted?

HALLAHAN Well, if it was a matter that needed to be provided under the Health portfolio, then a lot of work would have been done with the Minister for Health and, indeed, the Department of Health. Same with any other provision with other departments, so that when you took it to cabinet, there were two, three or more ministers intimately involved in the formulation of the cabinet minute and the provisions that would be provided, and of course that always involved the Treasurer as well, so all those ministries would be involved in it. So you didn't just go in and act arbitrarily with your interest, whether it be something for the Bureau for the Aged or youth, family or women's interests. There was a lot of work across government to make any of those things happen, so that when it got to cabinet it was well-developed, well thought out, and the impact of it, bureaucratically and financially, was also well examined and well supported.

RJ You have the decision that Peter Dowding made to buy a 43 per cent stake in the petrochemical project because they were getting into trouble financially. Do you remember that being discussed in cabinet and what you thought of that decision to buy into that project?

HALLAHAN Well, I'm sure it was a matter that was discussed at cabinet meetings. Because I was so engrossed in the social policy area, I do not have the recall of detail regarding that matter.

RJ A month short of a year of him taking over as Premier, Peter Dowding set up a commission...

HALLAHAN A month short?

RJ I'm sorry, a month short of a year of him being Premier; less than a year of him being Premier. He established a Commission on Accountability, and it was said it was established to control the growing financial crisis. In an article in *The West* it was reported that the "Commission of Accountability, headed by Sir Francis Burt, meant that Mr Dowding had to concede that the Commission was an admission of the need for changing the way things had been done in the past," and it was an attempt to deal with some of the issues arising from WA Inc.⁹ Did you see it that way? Was there a need to change the way things had been done in the past?

HALLAHAN I think there was a need to address some of the issues that arose out of that period, and I think Sir Francis Burt was highly respected and would have brought a very informed and fair mind to the task.

RJ The report that Sir Francis came out with is highly regarded, and David Black described his report as "well written and academically useful, but it had little political impact,"¹⁰ are his words. What did you think about that?

HALLAHAN I don't remember David's observation of it or, indeed, of the report or its follow-on. It sounds to me as if it was in a period leading up to an election, was it?

⁹ *West Australian*, 8 Nov. 1988.

¹⁰ Email to Ronda Jamieson, 19 July 2006.

RJ *The West* said about this commission having been set up that there was a “breakdown in the Westminster system of government in WA” which occurred in the way “key government agencies, set up by the former Premier, Mr Brian Burke, were allowed to operate.” They were critical of the WA Development Corporation, Exim, Goldbank, and WA Government Holdings. It was considered they operated without ministerial direction and were therefore not responsible to the Parliament through a minister as defined under the Westminster system.¹¹ Do you have any comment on what was said in those implications?

HALLAHAN No, I don't. Again, given the time lapse of course, my memory is of being very intensively involved in the whole social policy portfolios and associated portfolios that impacted on people. Other ministerial colleagues had more to do with those particular endeavours, if you like. I am not a person who is confident about the observations of any newspaper; they can be accurate and very informative, but not necessarily so. So I am not sure about that.

RJ But the business about these ... You wouldn't know whether those departments operated without ministerial direction at all.

HALLAHAN I don't know that, and I don't know about them having to report to ministers. I personally believe that they would have had to do so in some way or other, but I don't know the detail of that.

RJ In your cabinet meetings, to what extent was the financial situation being discussed?

HALLAHAN Well, Joe Berinson as Treasurer, would always give a useful indication of the financial situations, but I cannot remember coming down to these individual ... what do you call them? Quasi, semi ...

RJ They're not really agencies either, but yes.

HALLAHAN Authorities. They must have had Treasury funding and were reporting back on that.

RJ So you can't remember much about them being discussed in cabinet at all?

HALLAHAN Oh well, they may have been. Cabinet meetings were very full; the agendas were very full every week and there would be other things that would also get added in to the agenda. I am not saying that they weren't; I'm just saying that I can't give an accurate account of that.

RJ You then have the February 1989 election. Is there anything that stands out in your mind about that election? Your province became East Metropolitan instead of South East Metropolitan, when Council changed the proportional system of election, and the South East Metropolitan division was abolished. What did you think of that move and the change in boundaries?

HALLAHAN Well, it was a step along the way to a fairer electoral system, but it was only a step along the way, which was all that was possible when you don't have the numbers in the upper house. It was previously called South East Metropolitan **Province** and then it was called East Metropolitan **Region**, I think. Previously I had

¹¹ *West Australian*, 23 Jan. 1989.

represented four distinct lower house seats, and the **new regions** tended to represent much larger areas and people in the upper house targeted their efforts at particular parts. I continued working in the south east corridor with all the communities there that I had previously been working with, and supporting the lower house members in that region. That was just a fact.

RJ That election result, there was a swing against the government in the actual figures, but in your own electorate how did you feel people had reacted to ...

HALLAHAN Oh, I don't have those results. I do think that ...

RJ But your campaigning, what were people saying to you?

HALLAHAN No, no, no. An upper house seat is different from a lower house seat. I can't remember that. They were tough times; there was a lot of negative publicity about some of the matters you have already alluded to and I thought Peter Dowding provided amazing leadership to bring that election through as a win for Labor, quite frankly, so there must have been a lot of disquiet in the community and, indeed, in the areas where I was campaigning about a lot of that. I don't have the results here to show what the impact was in the various electorates in the south east metropolitan area; however, I'm sure the vote would have been negatively impacted for Labor.

RJ I'm thinking more what people might have been saying to you in person about what had been going on.

HALLAHAN No, I don't have any particular **memories**. I just found people generally courteous. The picture that people have of campaigning being a scary thing is generally not warranted. Most people are courteous and respectful, and they will give you their opinions. I am not saying that they didn't and they didn't do it strongly, and it's a pity that I don't remember, but that's just how it is after all these years. But the vote is what counts, and the vote was a diminished vote, I've no doubt.

END OF INTERVIEW THREE

INTERVIEW FOUR

RJ A further interview with the Hon. Kay Hallahan, held in her home on 28 March 2012.

Kay, we finished last time talking about Dowding taking over as Premier in February 1988, and you had the election in February 1989. And I wondered about those first months of the Dowding government. Were there any changes that you remember in priorities in your portfolios or did it very much ... what sort of transition was it?

HALLAHAN Well, I don't recall there being major change.

RJ So he was supportive of the things you were doing?

HALLAHAN I think he was committed to the values of improving people's lives in the community, and he was particularly interested, of course, in Indigenous people. But I don't recall there needing to be any debate about redirections of any of the portfolio areas that I was involved in.

RJ You were responsible for.

Now we have in November '89 the Australian Railways Union severed its ties with the ALP because it claimed the state government had lost touch with its roots and Dowding was accused of arrogance, and it was said, in *The West*, to have reflected discontent with the federal and state governments rather than the lay party. They were dissatisfied with the government's dealings with the railways union and with social and industrial issues generally. "More jobs have been lost on the railways during Burke and Dowding Labor Governments than in any other period of our history", according to the secretary, Bob Wells.¹² Do you know anything of what happened then and how it was felt when they severed ties?

HALLAHAN Well, I'm sure that it would have been of great concern to people. However, I don't have a particular recall of the circumstances at that time, and whether indeed there was some restructuring going on that led to the loss of jobs that you're talking about or that you're referring to, so I can't add to the record that you've presented, really.

RJ Right. Also in that month it was again a quote of *The West* that quoted that senior colleagues of Dowding were critical of him. There were comments that he was "not a good people manager", had the "worst political nose in Cabinet"; another quote was, "He can be almost impossible to work with ... either he won't survive or we won't".¹³ Now, what is your view of those quotes?

HALLAHAN Well, I think any leader is under enormous pressure, and as it turned out, further down the track there was a perceived need to change the leadership. So I don't remember. But personally I was never in favour of public comment about internal party workings or internal government workings, really, so I certainly don't recall those public comments, but I wouldn't have approved of people doing it anyway.

RJ No, no.

¹² *West Australian*, 10 Nov. 1989.

¹³ *West Australian*, 11 Nov. 1989.

Dowding went overseas a couple of months later, and in *The West* on 6 February [1990], it was said that he was to be asked to stand down as Labor leader on his return. And I'm quoting from *The West*, "Up to 33 of the 47 members of the state ALP caucus are said to be in favour of getting rid of Mr Dowding. Police Minister Ian Taylor and Education Minister Carmen Lawrence are the two main contenders to be WA's next Premier. Acting Premier David Parker is also in the running but there is a growing realisation that he might be too tarnished by his involvement with the business scandals of WA Inc." It was said that ministers who spoke out against Dowding were Ernie Bridge, Yvonne Henderson, Gavan Troy; and said to have worked hard to dump him, according to *The West*, were Kay Hallahan and Pam Beggs.

The *Daily News*, at the same time on the same day, said that the party had talked of a leadership challenge for several months, and the final straw was when Rothwells' chief, Tony Lloyd was convicted in the District Court of improper use of his position, a trial in which Dowding was implicated, and there had been increasing dissatisfaction over Dowding's handling of WA Inc.¹⁴ How accurate are those two reports in newspapers?

HALLAHAN Well, I certainly was a part of a small team that believed the change of leadership was necessary.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN Well, it's very hard to recall the precise reasons at this time. However, I think that Peter Dowding was under increasing pressure and when people are under pressure they are sometimes somewhat irascible, and that then means that you don't get the best from your team if people are not free to contribute what they have to contribute. So I think it really got to the point where it really needed a change of leadership.

RJ And did you work hard to make that possible?

HALLAHAN I was part of a small team of people who worked to bring about that change of leadership.

RJ In what way? What were you doing?

HALLAHAN [Pause] Well, when I consider it, probably not very much; however, I was part of the small team that was behind that change. So I can't ... the problem is we're talking about something that happened, what, 20 years ago plus?

RJ Nearly 25, yes.

HALLAHAN Nearly 25 years ago, and I can't be precise. I mean I don't think I was particularly significant, but I certainly was one of the people who thought a change was necessary.

RJ So is the fact that you were rated, along with Pam Beggs, as working hard to dump him, you would dispute that that was an accurate report?

HALLAHAN I can't speak for Pam.

¹⁴ *Daily News*, 6 Feb. 1990.

RJ No.

HALLAHAN But as I said, I was part of a small group that did meet and discuss how the matter was to be handled.

RJ How did you think the matter had to be handled?

HALLAHAN Oh, as respectfully as possible.

RJ But you wanted to see a change.

HALLAHAN Yes.

RJ Did you have anyone in mind in wanting that change; you personally?

HALLAHAN I can't recall. I mean we did have quite a few people who were eminently suitable; we were very fortunate in that.

RJ But you can't remember favouring one over the other?

HALLAHAN Not particularly, no. I think leadership, or the leadership of a team, really needs to have the input of the team and the confidence of the team. In that regard I'm very much a listener to what other people want as well when it comes to that.

RJ So from your personal point of view and in the portfolios you held, what did you see as a change in Dowding that made you feel there needed to be a change of actual Premier?

HALLAHAN Well, I can't remember all those elements now.

RJ Right. Okay.

Now it's also claimed that left wing MPs had been lobbied to remove only Dowding and not touch Parker or Economic Development minister [Julian] Grill. It was felt the party could not afford to risk three by-elections. Do you remember being lobbied about only removing Dowding?

HALLAHAN I don't recall that, and I was not a member of the left.

RJ Right. Okay. No, well that's fair comment, too.

There was a claim that there was "intense" – and I'm quoting – "though unconfirmed, speculation of support from former Premier Brian Burke in the plot to get rid of Mr Dowding. Mr Burke was reportedly unhappy at the way Mr Dowding had dismantled Mr Burke's network of Labor unity faction people in central government departments, including the Premier's Department."¹⁵

Now, Peter Dowding has been recently interviewed by the ABC by Andrew Dodd; the interview was December 2011. He actually makes the comment, "It became clear ... that Brian was always in the background wheeling and dealing and doing deals with the feds ... although he has never admitted it to me. I have pretty good reason to

¹⁵ *Daily News*, 6 Feb. 1990.

think that he orchestrated my downfall as well.”¹⁶ Is there anything that you can comment about that assessment of Dowding’s? Did you have any knowledge of Burke?

HALLAHAN Oh I wouldn’t ... no, I didn’t have knowledge of it, and I wouldn’t agree or disagree with Peter’s summation. I mean he’s likely to be recalling it much more sharply than I am, and maybe also had greater knowledge at the time of the dynamics going on than I would have had.

RJ [David] Parker was said to see himself as an aspirant for Premier. Was he, as far as you are aware; and was he being a realist if he really did have that ambition?

HALLAHAN Well, I think that we had a very talented cabinet, and I was always of the view that they were talented and ambitious, a number of the men (not all of them, but a number of them) and it’s possible that he did. I don’t know that.

RJ You don’t know that personally. Okay. Do you remember, when Dowding returned what he said to caucus?

HALLAHAN When he returned?

RJ When he returned from his overseas trip, because this all broke out while he was overseas. On his return, what do you remember of what then happened?

HALLAHAN I’ve said to you that I don’t really have clear memory of all the detail.

RJ So you don’t remember him saying to caucus, you know, “Why do you want to get rid of me?” or “Is it true?” There was nothing like that?

HALLAHAN No, I don’t recall his speech to caucus.

RJ Or that he fought to stay as Premier; he tried to persuade people that he should?

HALLAHAN I’m sure that he would have tried to persuade people, and that’s understandable. He no doubt felt that a lot of activity had gone on in his absence from the state, and no doubt he would have tried to talk to a lot of people. That just makes common sense to me. I don’t know that. I can’t give you... I didn’t make notes at the time and I can’t give you accurate recollections about any of that, really.

RJ Dowding resigned as Premier on 12 February 1990, and Julian Grill also resigned from cabinet on the same day, which he claims he did for the party. Just your personal assessment of Peter Dowding, firstly, seeing him in operation as a minister; what did you think of him in the way he handled his portfolios as a minister?

HALLAHAN Well, I don’t have any reason other than to think that he would have done it competently. He’s intelligent and energetic and committed. Personally, I think there’s another whole area of requirement as a leader about drawing out the best in your team members, and dealing with the stresses and strains which are peculiar to you in your position if you’re the leader, and I think that’s very tough. As history goes

¹⁶ Peter Dowding interviewed by Andrew Dodd for the ABC, 18 Dec. 2011.

on I'm coming to a view that not very many people have got it, but that's probably not true either. However, I think Peter would have been a competent minister.

RJ What did you think of him as Premier? He actually said in that same interview with Andrew Dodd, "My heart was really in social issues, and, to a significant extent, in Indigenous issues", which you've just mentioned that he had an interest in that area, and "When I was Premier, one of the priorities I put in place was to try and elevate Indigenous issues in the way in which government made its decisions, and I formed a special cabinet subcommittee which everything had to go through which focused on ensuring quality responses to Indigenous requirements."¹⁷ Do you remember any of that?

HALLAHAN No, I don't remember it, but I have no reason to question it. It's possible I was a member of it.

RJ [Chuckles] Right. Now you've just talked about leadership and you talked about Burke's ability to get people... that he was a good team builder. How did Dowding compare?

HALLAHAN I don't know if I said ... I've said that Burke was a particularly outstanding communicator.

RJ Yes.

HALLAHAN And I think he put a lot of time and effort into that in all levels of the community, actually, as well as his parliamentary and cabinet colleagues. But I'm not sure that Peter would have allocated the same amount of time to that communication process of keeping in touch.

RJ What did you think of him as a parliamentarian, ability to make a case in Parliament, to argue his case?

HALLAHAN Peter Dowding was very talented.

RJ Effective in doing that.

HALLAHAN Oh, very effective. He came as a lawyer. I don't know what lawyers refer to themselves as, but I suppose as an advocate for their client's case, I would have thought he would have been absolutely first class, and he certainly was very talented with language and putting a case to the Parliament.

RJ And what about Peter Dowding the person; what did you think of that?

HALLAHAN Well, I think he could be very charming if he had time. People may have a view that you get to know people really closely and intimately; well, you only know aspects of their lives, you only encounter them in aspects of their lives as part of the political team. But I think he's a decent, talented, energetic human being.

RJ Carmen Lawrence was elected as Premier on 12 February 1990. What are your memories of that process? Were there any negotiations that went on beforehand? It was said at the time that Ian Taylor had the support of the powerful

¹⁷ Peter Dowding interviewed by Andrew Dodd for the ABC, 18 Dec. 2011.

left faction to take the top job; they wanted him in that.¹⁸ So any memories you have about what was going on; and of course Ian became Deputy Premier to Carmen?

HALLAHAN Well all I can say about that ... can't talk about detail because I don't recall the details, but my clear memory is that if you have a leadership change, there's inordinate amount of discussion, contact with every member of the team and with people who might influence the opinion of members of the team. It's a frenetic time in a political party, as it is in other corporate teams, I understand, as well. So I just know that to be the case because I've lived it.

RJ But you don't remember being approached yourself for your vote for anyone?

HALLAHAN Well, I would have been involved in it.

RJ And who did you want to see be Premier?

HALLAHAN Well I can't remember. I don't know. I guess it was Ian; I presume that's the case.

RJ Okay. So how did you feel about Carmen Lawrence becoming Premier?

HALLAHAN Sorry; I must take that back; sorry.

RJ Yes; I thought ...

HALLAHAN No, no, no; sorry. You were talking about later; I'm getting a bit mixed up with year zones.

RJ Carmen became the Premier and ...

HALLAHAN Oh no, I would have been very happy about that.

RJ Very happy because you supported Carmen Lawrence, or very happy to see a woman take the job?

HALLAHAN Oh well both, both. She's a very competent, able woman, and the fact that she was a woman would not have detracted from her ability, in my estimation, to do the job.

RJ The ministries that were offered to you or became your responsibility with the new Carmen Lawrence government, for just two months you held Planning, Lands, Heritage, and you continued to assist the Minister for Women's Interests, which I assume was Carmen; Carmen was the minister?

HALLAHAN Oh yes; we always had that policy.

RJ And you became the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. Now you retained that deputy leadership role in the Legislative Council throughout the entire period of the Lawrence government, but you did have changes in your other portfolios. As I've identified, those first lot were for two months, and then ...

¹⁸ *West Australian*, 13 Feb. 1990.

HALLAHAN But they were continuing; they were what I had.

RJ Planning.

HALLAHAN Mm.

RJ Lands.

HALLAHAN Mm.

RJ Heritage, and Assisting the Minister for Women's Interests.

HALLAHAN I had those under Peter Dowding, yes.

RJ Okay. Then in April it changed to Planning, Lands and Heritage, which you already had, and you had added to you the Arts. How did you think about that addition?

HALLAHAN Well, I always had the feeling that I was not very competent in the particular area but I needed to get up to speed. That was my feeling with every portfolio I had, which was probably accurate at the outset, so it wouldn't have been any different.

RJ Okay. Then the change came. From April of 1990 to February '91 you held those; in February of '91 'til September, Planning went, Lands went, Heritage went, the Arts remained, and you were Education, Employment and Training. Why did those changes occur and how did you feel about them?

HALLAHAN Well, I don't know why I was asked to take on those portfolios. I went to see the Premier in her office and she indicated that's what she wanted me to do, and I said (mind you, I'd felt this about every portfolio I'd had) that I didn't know whether I was the best person for the job. She said that they were the portfolios that she wanted me to take on and that I'd just better make sure that I saw to it that I made a good job of it, really was the sentiment. So that's what happened.

RJ So how did you feel about becoming responsible for Education?

HALLAHAN Well, I thought it was a bit overwhelming and I did phone ... well, I regard her as a friend. She had been my Chief of Staff previously under Community Services and had done an extraordinarily wonderful job. The quality of your staff, the ability of your staff is just so important, and I said to her, "Look, the Premier seems to be insisting on me taking Education and Training, and it seems to me to be as big as the *Queen Mary*, and I would like you to consider coming to join me as my chief of staff. If we could turn [this enormous ship] by one or two notches, we could consider we'd done a good job, and would you be interested in joining me in this?" So she said yes, and so we got on with it.

RJ Then in September another change occurred ...

HALLAHAN Should I be putting in the names there or not?

RJ Yes, that's fine.

HALLAHAN I haven't put them in for anybody else, have I?

RJ Yes you have at times, yes.

HALLAHAN Have I?

RJ Oh yes; it's good to name people.

HALLAHAN [whispers] I just worry about their future careers.

RJ In September ...

HALLAHAN So I'll say it anyway; that's Michelle Scott.

RJ Michelle Scott. Good. Thank you.

HALLAHAN She is currently the inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People.

RJ Oh yes; now you say that, I remember the name. Good.

In September you lost Employment but you kept all the others. Do you remember why that change occurred?

HALLAHAN No. There was some discussion about that. [...] I don't recall now the reasoning behind that, but it was not problematic from my point of view.

RJ So with these various changes, which were considerable and always take some adapting to, particularly when you take on areas that you have not been in before like Arts and Education, was there any discussion with Carmen Lawrence about this, or was she virtually telling you that that's what was to be?

HALLAHAN It's the leader's prerogative to allocate portfolios, and they make a judgment on what they've seen you do before, presumably. I had never thought that I was adequately prepared, competent or knowledgeable for any portfolio, so it was a matter of applying myself. With that particular one I do remember thinking, my goodness me; this is a real challenge. I must say – probably again – that it was enough to get me out of bed earlier than I usually was out of bed to go walking first thing in the morning to get fitter. I don't know what that was about, but it was about somehow needing to be fitter to deal with the immensity of the task, I think.

RJ I can well imagine. To go over these various portfolios, what did you think about the state these things were in, and what did you set about to achieve and were you able to achieve in these portfolios?

HALLAHAN Are you talking them all since 1986?

RJ I'm talking about them all, yes.

HALLAHAN The Arts, for example, we got funding **directed from** Lotterywest. Before it had gone to Health [and other areas] and so we **elevated** the Arts. I won't go into that. So they got a **proportion** of [Lotterywest] funding. It was a very significant breakthrough for the Arts. That's just one thing, apart from others.

[In the Heritage area, another major achievement was the successful passage of the State's first Heritage legislation in 1990. It was a huge challenge with an Opposition with the majority of numbers being pressured by property owners to oppose it.]

This big Planning **for the future**, I think they've just revisited actually. Planning was a really, really busy year but a very satisfying one. [...]

With Education we **introduced the voluntary** pre-primary, five-year-old program, but also tried to lift the status of TAFE training, you know, because ...

RJ Good.

HALLAHAN Yes; it was very important. It needs to be done again now, I think, from what I'm hearing.

RJ They're actually downgrading TAFE.

HALLAHAN I'm hearing that.

RJ Mm; another concern.

HALLAHAN Stupid. Lands needed a big legislative change because **of documentation daily**. There was so much paperwork for everybody, let alone the minister. There **were piles of files**. They did, ultimately [reform the legislation] but those big changes all take time. [...]

Well, there was significant work in the Planning portfolio because there was a need to draw up a blueprint for the future, if you like (that's not the right terminology, I'm sorry) and those things need to be done periodically over the years because land development is so critical to the community. We're seeing that at present with a huge shortage of housing and people still complaining about [land] development approvals. So that forward planning at a government level, if you like that whole land infrastructure and planning regime, needs to be very well developed. In 1990 there was a huge achievement in that, but I'm not suggesting that that was completed work. It was in itself, but it forms an important plank of what one would look back on in 50 years [along with] other important planks within the planning **portfolio**.

Local Government was an interesting time. It was very engaging with various local governments. It meant quite a lot of travel throughout the state, of course, to various local governments; and in that year we had an international conference here. I actually did have to go, I think, to Oslo, to a meeting of international local government authorities. It was called IULA, the International Union of Local Authorities, and we put in a bid to have the conference in Perth, and won that, and then we conducted that in Perth. That was a huge success and was very good for the morale of local government councillors and people involved in local government right across the state. That was quite a focus for that year. Pauline Basdonavicius who was my Chief of Staff at that time, worked so hard on that conference, working along with the Department of Local Government.

They were interesting years. Lands had really old, old legislation governing the way that titles were issued and all those sorts of things. It had the most enormous paper workload for everybody, including the minister, and the legislation desperately needed changing. That took some time to achieve after I had left the portfolio.

But what I did come to appreciate about the Lands portfolio was that in Western Australia, we certainly had a very, very advanced land registration system. In fact, some Asian countries were interested and were looking at it with a view to adopting it. It did take sophisticated institutions, but of course it's a great safeguard because it is people's security. If they put their money and their whole life savings into the family home, then that has to be a legal and safeguarded entity. It was a very sound system, but it did need updating and that ultimately did happen, I think, some years later. Those discussions were underway.

In Education, it's an area that again needs constant reform and movement and is so critically important to the community. A couple of things that come to mind, if you like. We did set up things like state training boards. I can't remember the terminology, but we did want to give a much bigger focus to the choice and the importance of making a choice for courses other than universities; not to diminish the importance of university courses or that career path, but that there were other career paths that should be regarded as having equal status and equal importance to a community for people to follow trade-related careers. So we did put in a lot of work to raise the status of the whole TAFE and training sector.

That was happening nationally too – Ministerial Councils (certainly some of the states, particularly South Australia with Mike Rann and others) lifting that status of trade-related careers and the need for adequate training. [...]

The other thing, of course, was bringing in the voluntary pre-primary program for five-year olds. It was a very great mystery to me that one of the upper house members, in the Hon. Barbara Scott **was so** opposed. Some people travelled the length and breadth of the state opposed to that program, which made no sense whatever to me, I must say. However, that's the sort of thing: whenever you bring around change some people feel obliged to oppose. That's the role of opposition too, but some people do it more passionately than others and you sort of think they really believe this. Even though they might be misguided, they do believe [or they do it for purely political reasons].

Everything you do, to be quite honest, to bring around change, is a battle, even if it seems inordinately sensible to most people when you can work out how a government can afford it and that a lot of people will appreciate it. I had people who would run after me as I got into my car and say, "You won't let those people stop us having this program, will you?" That was very **sad and concerning**, I thought, but anyway, it was well accepted. [...]

RJ And what about the Arts?

HALLAHAN I really think the Arts, generally, are easily overlooked in the big welter of government business, because if you look at the demands of Health that are all so critical and acute, Education, Economic Development, all those endeavours, and the other ones that I have mentioned, impinge on people's lives pretty directly, and they don't see the Arts as doing that in the same way.

I'd come clearly to the view that people in the Arts actually underpinned our culture and that they should have increased support for doing that. I would need to check, but I think at that time we made a decision to lift the recognition of the Arts by funding from Lotterywest. I'm not sure what it was called in those days, but that did give a significant boost and has been ongoing for the Arts portfolio.

I believed that a community can be judged on the level to which it supports the disadvantaged and the elderly; that whole quality of dignity in life question. I think another measure of significance, maybe not as equally important as that one, but in an advanced economy and in an educated community and a community that's got the wherewithal to fund it, that another judgment could be made about the financial support that's accorded the Arts from the public purse as well. The vibrancy of the various art forms in a community is a measure, I think, of its health and wellbeing, at a totally different level of course.

RJ How supportive were your colleagues, because clearly there would be things that you would take to cabinet which needed funding, such as the voluntary pre-primary? Did you get the support you needed?

HALLAHAN Well, a program doesn't happen unless you do get the support you need, but you need to put in an inordinate amount of work to achieve that.

RJ But how much of a fight was it? Was it easy to persuade your colleagues?

HALLAHAN This is where my memory is letting me down. All I know is that no changes are achieved without inordinate effort both internally with your own colleagues and externally with elements of the wider community, even though it might be welcomed by everybody else. Of course, you don't go announcing things or promising things until you do have the support of your colleagues; that would be most unfair, [and financial measures are assessed by Treasury and Cabinet].

RJ One of the things that I did notice (I didn't do a study of what went on in your portfolios) but as someone who had an early job in my career with the Young Australia League, I noticed that you are credited with saving Araluen by persuading the government to buy it. Why did you feel that was something the government should be doing?

HALLAHAN Well, that was one of the happy decisions I had to make. I didn't really have to persuade anybody because I did it within my portfolio, not that I didn't get some negative comment from one particular fairly reasonable colleague who thought it was a ridiculous thing to do.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN He confronted me in the basement in the car park. I think he thought it wasn't justified expenditure. However, like you, I had benefited from camps at Araluen when I was a young person. That just gave me an awareness, let's say, not a predisposition to support it, but certainly an awareness of the role that it had played, but also, more importantly, the role of the botanic park.

The Young Australia League I think had fallen into some disarray, as organisations do after many years. I can't remember the details of that. However, the wisdom seemed to be that they were going to sell it and put it on the open market and let it go for subdivision. There was a group of citizens who were very, very committed to saving it. There was a woman named Mary Hargreaves [...] who was very significant and so was Noelen Drage [...] who actually mortgaged her own home to put a deposit on [Araluen] to save it, and people were getting more and more concerned about the future of this gem in the hills. It's well-known here in Western Australia for tulip time particularly, but for other seasons it's a remarkable garden, and it's a lovely family picnic place for all Western Australians.

I was coming under increasing pressures to see what we could do to safeguard it, and so I said to my Chief of Staff [another outstanding person], "There need to be discussions within the department to see if there are funding capacities to protect the park." So my memory is that it was the metropolitan regional improvement fund that was identified as being a legitimate source of funding which could [...] purchase Araluen. But it wasn't without its negative comments as well, as nothing ever is. But it was generally applauded by the community and certainly those that valued the garden and the uniqueness of it, they were very well pleased. They worked very intelligently about trying to save it too.

RJ In May 1992 you have the Western Women episode become a fact. Robin Greenburg headed the Western Women investment group of companies which operated financial services from 1985 to 1991. This is a quote: "The group found a profitable niche in financial advisory and investment services by pitching" and again a quote "financial empowerment for women. Greenburg was later found guilty of misappropriating \$2.98 million of Western Women's money for her personal use and 2000 investors, mostly women, lost about \$6 million in the collapse of that group." The government first offered legal support to some investors who lost money, and according to the *Australian Financial Review* of [21 May] 1992, a parliamentary inquiry has found considerable evidence that many women placed their entire savings in Western Women on the advice of WIRE.

HALLAHAN On the advice of WIRE?

RJ That was the government's ...

HALLAHAN I understand what WIRE was; I helped set it up.

RJ Okay, then we need you to tell us this: the government's Women's Information and Referral Exchange. Lawrence announced the government would fund immediate independent legal assessments of claims against it by investors in Western Women. *The West* claimed on 23 May [1992]: "Carmen Lawrence showed her true colours on the Western Women affair this week when she put off any determination of the government's liability to investors until after the next state election." So that's kind of the summary. You tell me what you know about Western Women and WIRE.

HALLAHAN WIRE was set up by the government. Yes, it was a very good innovation to be a sort of one-stop shop for all sorts of information for women. Then my memory is (but I really should be careful I suppose) that financial advice ... or that Robin Greenburg's group sort of maybe ingratiated itself. We have to keep in mind that there were not services for women in this regard. It would be the privileged few, I guess, who had, with families and whatnot, explored financial advice, so it was a very, very unfortunate thing that Robin Greenburg ... I mean, was she convicted?

RJ Yes.

HALLAHAN Yes.

RJ And she ended up serving a prison sentence.

HALLAHAN Yes, she was of criminal intent. Quite clearly, nobody saw that. She had her own premises, I remember out Mt Lawley way, I think. It was a really, really terrible development for women individually but also the letting down of women

getting advice. You can always question, I suppose, whether there's a wisdom about people putting their savings into any particular institution. I don't really know about that aspect of it at all and I actually can't throw any light on the decision that was made for a deferral of action on them until after the next election. [By then I was not the Minister Assisting.] But it was a very disturbing period. It was disturbing because WIRE was doing a wonderful job in so many ways and had helped so many women and that there should be an agency through that of **women** maybe being referred to Western Women, which turned out to be not a reliable agency at all. So it was very, very ... well, "unfortunate" is one word, that there was a criminal involved, and very unfortunate that women lost savings. It was shocking.

RJ And how did you feel about the putting off of accepting doing something about determining liability and helping women who had been affected?

HALLAHAN I have only read this in your proposed questions for today. I really do not remember the reasoning behind that. [As I've said earlier, I was not the Minister Assisting when the decision was made.] Sadly, I don't even remember whether the following government picked up and honoured that undertaking either.

RJ I think they did, but I know that a lot of women lost a lot of money.

HALLAHAN Right.

RJ But I can't be sure of that I'm sorry, because I haven't researched that side. It was really just concentrating on what happened during the time that you were involved.

HALLAHAN Yes, indeed.

RJ But we can check on that and add a footnote or something for the sake of the researcher.

[Of \$9.4m raised in deposits about \$6m was lost. In 1992 Greenburg pled guilty to embezzlement and arson and was sentenced to 17 years jail. Depositors got only some of their money back with the WA Government, the National Australia Bank and the R&I Bank putting together about \$3.6m in compensation.]

One of the next big things that happened was that you had the decision to establish the royal commission into WA Inc. It was established in January 1991 as a decision of the Carmen Lawrence government. They reported in November 1992. The cost was \$30.4 million and the commissioners were Kennedy, Wilson and Brinsden. According to Allan Peachment who's written a book called *The Years of Scandal*: "The decision to set up the royal commission could be seen as yielding to extreme pressure from the public, media and the opposition. This conclusion is unconvincing for as later events demonstrate caving into political pressures was not a Lawrence characteristic."¹⁹ So what did you think of the setting up of that commission? What do you remember about the discussion about the setting up of it and what did you think of Peachment's comment about Lawrence not being the sort of person who gave in to pressure?

HALLAHAN Well, again, sadly (or not sadly about all this period) which I guess is still 20 years ago isn't it?

RJ Yes, it is.

¹⁹ Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 114.

HALLAHAN I don't recall discussions, but clearly, there must have been a need to do that because it's a serious thing to set up a royal commission and it is a costly process. But it is a question perhaps (I don't know that it drove a decision) that a community needs to have confidence in the processes of its government. There were probably sharper reasons, but I'm sure that's an underlying propulsion, so I'm afraid I can't throw a light on discussions around that, but there would have been a consensus that there was a need to do it.

RJ I know, Kay, you've made it very clear when it came to matters that were not within your portfolios, after all this time there's no really clear memory of discussions that went on. But in overall terms, when the report into WA Inc, the actual royal commission report, came out, what impact did it have on you? How did you feel looking back yourself on that era it was covering?

HALLAHAN Well, I guess there were two aspects to it: one was an interest in its judgment and judgment on my actions and the actions of my colleagues individually and collectively. The other aspect of it was, if you like, the terribly negative view in which the whole government was held and all those years of work that you put in doing your absolute best seems to get just wrapped up into a web of negativity and dismissal, as the negative dominates the psyche of a community. It was a very disturbing time and very regrettable time, both in terms of actions that were – not to minimise it – not commendable and in terms of the impact on the community in the various ways; but, I suppose, also personally, psychologically as well. So it was a very regrettable period.

RJ And did it change your view of Brian Burke or Peter Dowding as a result of those findings?

HALLAHAN Well, I suppose I came to a view that Brian had in some way been seduced by the power of the position and of certain members of the corporate community and that was quite a tragic thing both for him and for the government and everybody associated with it.

RJ And what about in Peter's case?

HALLAHAN Well, I always thought to some extent that Peter was left with a legacy of problems to deal with, which I think would have added to the pressures and tensions of his job and maybe the way he conducted himself in his relationships with cabinet and caucus and various community agencies. So I think he had an unenviable task and I'm not sure to what extent he could reasonably be held accountable. But no doubt all the inquiries have done that.

RJ Well, it's very true that the finances were a huge mess and that's always difficult to deal with.

There's one comment that Peachment makes that I thought was worth raising with you. Julian Grill in writing of this time disagreed with the commissioners' conclusion that cabinet was not fully informed, and to quote from Grill, "Sadly for several cabinet members some financial-technical matters were beyond their intellectual competence or experience. Others simply relied on the judgment of the premier and the deputy premier. However, there has never been any doubt in my mind that cabinet was fully informed on all of the important aspects of Rothwells and PICL, before cabinet

decisions were taken.”²⁰ I was particularly interested in what you thought of his comment that “some of the financial-technical matters were beyond the intellectual competence” of cabinet members?

HALLAHAN It’s a good-sounding phrase, isn’t it? It’s a good choice of language to put your colleagues down, but I think that indicates the pressures of the time too really. The fact of the matter is that in all portfolio areas some ministers would be across cabinet minutes on any given cabinet day more thoroughly, with a greater complexity of understanding of the particular cabinet minute that was before the meeting than others. There’s no doubt about that. It just would not be possible to have everybody as fully informed as the most informed around (well any meeting I’ve been to actually) the cabinet table or since. However, I think there is no doubt that people around the cabinet table were all competent for their portfolios and competent enough to comprehend information coming from other ministers’ portfolios.

I suspect that when you’ve got something that is particularly controversial and difficult the case may not be made as clear at a meeting as might generally be the case. But that would be unfair on people; that’s a bit unfair too. The fact of the matter is that some ministers would have spent a lot of time going through it and other ministers would have respected their ability to do that and the judgments and the recommendations that they came to cabinet with.

RJ Matt Birney when he was the WA Opposition leader came out in February 2006 with what I found an interesting fact. To quote from him, “The fact of the matter is that WA Inc dealings cost the taxpayers of this State somewhere in the excess of \$1.5 billion. That was about \$3,500 per family. West Australians were required to front up with an additional \$50 on their annual licence renewal every year as a result of the Burke WA Inc era.”²¹ Now as someone who clearly cared a lot about families and their survival in this modern world, what did you think of the cost of WA Inc being \$3,500 per family?

HALLAHAN Yes, I don’t know about the veracity of that information at all, and I’m not sure how an opposition leader’s estimation of that could be relied upon. But no doubt, if you have state losses then people across the state are going to feel it and there’s no doubt also that the most disadvantaged, or the people with the lowest incomes, feel the impact more than do others.

RJ And did that hurt you, to think that that was the case?

HALLAHAN Well, I think the whole thing was a very sorry saga in all conceivable ways.

RJ One of the other things that Peachment refers to, to quote from him, “In the WA Inc power scandal, the government not only maintained secrecy from the public on matters of the public interest unrelated to security, but both the premier and the deputy premier were found to have maintained secrecy between both them and the remainder of cabinet on serious financial matters and in so doing actively misled their cabinet colleagues.” Now this is the commissioner’s findings. “When questioned on this during the WA Inc royal commission, Deputy Premier Parker defended the action” and, to quote, “saying government worldwide is built upon the basis of concealment’, a judgment the commissioners described as a profound misconception

²⁰ Julian Grill in Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 271.

²¹ *Lateline*, ABC, 8 Feb. 2006.

of the proper role of government.”²² What do you personally think of Parker’s comment?

HALLAHAN Well, I think it’s a ... either it’s some misunderstanding, or if it’s not a misunderstanding then it’s unacceptable.

RJ So do you think to achieve your aims at times, is there any excuse for concealing information from your cabinet colleagues and from the public to achieve what you want to achieve? Is there ever a justification for that?

HALLAHAN We had an informal discussion about this. [...] Concealment; I don’t think that’s ever justified and if, in fact, by concealing you’re distorting the reality, then that’s a real difficulty for open government and for a democratic system of government. The only thing I would say is that what people don’t appreciate very often is that with every decision there is a mass of information. So I guess it’s always a question about what to put ... what needs to be known in order for an understanding, a sufficient understanding, of the considerations to go into the public arena.

Personally, I hope that’s what he was talking about rather than concealment, but it would be impossible for a daily newspaper to publish all of the material about, say, five matters the government is considering on a cabinet agenda. There just isn’t the space. If there’s a responsibility of representing the strengths and the weaknesses of any given situation or argument, or the costs or the benefits, if you like, I don’t think it’s about ... You, see, I just wonder whether it’s not been taken out of ... or he has put it in a way that’s not, certainly not, acceptable. But the reality is anybody doing anything complex in life, I presume researchers and private sector and investment decisions, there is such a lot of material to consider. If you’re going to do a thorough job, it would not be possible to put it all ... to make it all available, I wouldn’t have thought but I might be wrong. Maybe with modern technology these days, it would be. But it is a question of how ... I certainly don’t accept misleading people at all, in any shape or form.

RJ To follow on from that, Peachment actually says, “Those who have followed the royal commission have been startled to hear the views of senior members of former governments who testified that that they did not believe they had a duty to tell the truth to the media, that concealment was an acceptable activity of government and that even answering parliamentary questions was an art form designed to obscure rather than expose.”²³ That to me was an amazing conclusion to have come to.

Paul Murray picks up on this, and he actually says – he was working for the *West* at the time of the WA Inc royal commission and he’s now on 6PR – “Question time in state parliament should be one of those rare occasions when politicians are compelled to tell the truth – and the whole truth. It doesn’t work like that and the politicians appear happy to allow it to be abused. When I started work as a press gallery reporter in 1973, question time was a major source of stories. It rarely gets a mention in the media these days.”²⁴ What do you think of Paul Murray’s assessment?

HALLAHAN Well, I would prefer to leave Paul Murray’s name out of it. However, I think there is an obligation to tell the truth in answering questions.

²² Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 41.

²³ Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 99.

²⁴ Paul Murray in Allan Peachment, p. 101.

RJ [pause] He says it doesn't work like that: "and the politicians appear happy to allow it to be abused". Did you ever feel that way, that your colleagues ... Obviously you can only speak for the answering of questions in your time. Did you ever feel that ...

HALLAHAN Look, I always committed to wanting to answer questions truthfully, but as I have said to you already, there is so much information that goes with every answer that could be misconstrued as not telling everything. There is just a large story usually behind every question. I do not believe in misleading, or not telling the truth; what you say has to be able to stand up in the years ahead of you. When other material comes to light you would need to be able to give the rationale why you took a particular decision at a particular time. I think that is critically important , personally.

But some people will get up and ask ... I strike it in conversations all the time now (it's the same thing) people will say something or ask a question not having an understanding of what they're actually asking. You can answer them truthfully but there might be a whole lot more information that you would give in another situation where there's more time or more understanding, a whole lot more information. It's not that you want to hold back, it's just that the practicality of a situation ... I'm not saying that to give any suggestion that there's ever a justification in not telling the truth. Whatever you do tell should be the truth and it can be added to other bodies of truth, and it shouldn't be found to be wanting in accuracy or honesty.

END OF INTERVIEW FOUR

INTERVIEW FIVE

RJ A further interview with the Hon. Kay Hallahan, held in her home on 23 May 2012.

Kay, if we could now move to the election of 5 February 1993, which was won by Richard Court and the coalition. What were your thoughts about that campaign when you were out seeking to be re-elected?

HALLAHAN Well I thought it was a very nigh on impossible job for Labor to get re-elected. However, that was the year that I had agreed to move [from the Legislative Council] to run for the seat of Armadale in the lower house, and we did have a good result in that seat, as we did in a few other seats, so that was gratifying. There was a good team to work with; very community-minded people, and people within the Labor Party who also wanted to support my efforts there. So my memory of that was that it was well supported, but when one allowed oneself, it could be a very sobering thought looking forward to the actual outcome of the election.

RJ Why did you contest Armadale?

HALLAHAN I think actually Bob Pearce approached me and said was it something I would think about because he was not going to continue. I had actually worked very strongly in the seat of Armadale, because Bob had been a very easy lower house member to work with. Not all lower house members appreciate their upper house members being too active in their patch, if you like. It can work very well, and I think upper house members can play a great supporting role to a busy lower house member, and personally I really liked the community contact. So I did do a lot of work in all my ... well in the beginning they were individual four lower house seats, and then it became a region, but across the region. My office was in Armadale in the recent years before that and so I had built up a lot of contacts in Armadale, so it seemed a logical thing to respond and say yes, I would do it. And the other thing was too, of course, I did have this rather optimistic view that anything I could do to help Carmen Lawrence get re-elected, then I was prepared to do that.

RJ Does that mean she supported you moving to Armadale as well or was that merely between you and Bob?

HALLAHAN Oh no; no, no, no. Bob just put the idea to me. It had to be supported by the whole party process and system. But he was a good advocate for whatever it was that he believed in, I suspect [chuckles]. I don't remember having to be particularly embroiled in that element. We were still very busy as ministers approaching the February '93 election, so I don't really remember great discourses about it, but undoubtedly there were.

RJ And did Bob help you in that campaign?

HALLAHAN I'm sure he helped. I can't remember really who helped, but I'm sure that he did and he certainly would have helped in any way requested; there's no doubt about that. There was certainly a clear feeling of support from him, and I'm not wanting to overlook great efforts at all because it would be really hard for me to remember individuals right throughout the campaigns over the years.

RJ And how do you feel about the way Pearce's career ended, because he had been a minister and had done many things while he was minister that were

respected and so on, but it's said that the WA Inc Royal Commission really brought an end to his career in politics, and he expresses that himself.

HALLAHAN I actually can't remember the incident or the reference to him. As I understand it, it was a very small reference to him that sort of flicked him in the way that it went through and that he felt that he was doing the right and decent thing to not continue. Personally, I thought it was a great pity. I'm not sure ... At the time, I think I felt a bit of disbelief, really, when he told me, so obviously I didn't think that there was a huge transgression, but maybe I didn't go into it either. But I still think it was one of the very, very unfortunate things for him personally, but also for the party, and that comes out of those sorts of processes.

RJ Alannah MacTiernan was the person who succeeded you in the East Metropolitan seat.

HALLAHAN That's correct.

RJ And I wondered whether you helped with her campaign?

HALLAHAN I very much encouraged Alannah to run for the upper house seat in the vacancy that would be left by me. I thought to myself I had learnt a bit of lobbying from the boys, actually, over the years, because there was some attempt, by others of course (it was a very good seat), from people who thought maybe they would make better candidates or they had a greater claim or whatever it is people think about these things. I had to be quite tough with one person in particular about the fact that if there wasn't going to be happy agreement about the fact that Alannah was a very good talent and would make a great member of Parliament, then perhaps I would reconsider my view about creating a vacancy for anybody at all to move into. That seemed to be effective and Alannah did get elected and was an extraordinarily energetic, intelligent, committed member of Parliament and later of the ministry, as I think anybody across the spectrum would readily recognise.

RJ Once you were elected to Armadale, you were the first woman in Western Australia to sit in both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. Obviously you started in the Council but then the Assembly. How much did that milestone mean to you personally, if it did?

HALLAHAN I don't think it did mean a great deal, and I don't remember anybody making any reference to it whatever, to be quite honest; and I don't know how many men had also been members of both houses, actually.

RJ It certainly has happened with men ... well, I mean Dowding is a case in point.

HALLAHAN Well perhaps because in fact that had happened in my time in the Parliament I didn't see the gender difference as being particularly noteworthy, and I don't recall anybody else thinking it was particularly noteworthy.

RJ Okay.

HALLAHAN So there you go!

RJ Yes [laughs]. Obviously Carmen Lawrence, on the defeat at that election in '93, took over as Leader of the Opposition, and she remained so for a year, resigning on 7 February 1994. What did you feel she was like as Leader of the

Opposition? – and talk about this period of when you found yourselves in opposition under her leadership. You'd gone from being a government minister able to achieve things; what was the biggest change as far as you were concerned?

HALLAHAN Well, the parliamentary experience becomes a very different one, and of course you don't have the responsibility of enormous (how should I say?) administration, if you like, as you do with a portfolio and people reporting to you and needing decision making all the time, which means being well informed and understanding all the issues associated with any and every item before you. So that was a huge difference.

However, there was a huge difference also in the lack of support from any staff and expertise to call on for the matters before you in the Parliament, and I did miss that professional close relationship with people where there was a very good dynamic of discussion and consideration of all things. In opposition you don't have the luxury of that and it takes a while to build the team around the opposition offices. In fact I think the resources are better these days, too, I think it would be true to say. So all that is a very huge adjustment, a reality. If you believe in democracy, well you have to adjust and get on with it.

But in terms of workload, the one thing that's common I would say across all positions in the Parliament, if you take the job seriously, and it seems to me ... my experience is that most members of Parliament do take their workload very responsibly and their contact with community members very seriously. You can always point to the odd member who may be lazy or distracted in other directions, and that's true of any professional or occupational group in my humble opinion. So most MPs, contrary to what I suspect is the public perception, work very hard and in a committed way.

The amount of information that comes across a parliamentarian's desk is amazing, to the extent that you can't possibly keep up with it all, read it all or digest it all. It is just not possible in a, sort of 18-hour day. So that remained a common demand, but there was also the demand in opposition of not having access to all the considered positions that have led to a decision being made for an item to be coming into the Parliament or for some controversy which is going on in the community, so there are a whole lot of other strategies that have to come into play.

RJ And what did you think of Carmen as Leader of the Opposition in that year?

HALLAHAN I don't have a memory of it so I don't think that there was any shortcoming, if that's implied in **your question**. I think there's a comment you've got via the commentators that she may not have been an effective leader.

RJ Oh, not as far as the Leader of the Opposition; this is when evaluating her overall. There was actually a comment (this is her as Premier); *The West* referred to the Lawrence administration as being a one-woman show. That was in *The West* on [17] March 1994. Was it?

HALLAHAN Well that's not my memory of it.

RJ So overall what did you think of her as Premier?

HALLAHAN I thought she did a remarkable job. They were very difficult circumstances in that period following the royal commission with so many good and

experienced ministers having to go. Indeed the poor reflection on Labor in government was a shocking period for everybody and I think that would have been tough for her as the Premier as well. But I actually thought she did a very good job of restoring some public confidence, and it was certainly an extraordinary psychological lift to a lot of women to have the first woman Premier.

It's a very interesting thing, of course, that when the times are the toughest, very often if women just happen to be positioned in the right place at those timings in life, they get an opportunity, but they're not given those opportunities readily in easygoing times. So she was there at a very tough time, and I have nothing to add to that but rather to say that I thought she filled the role admirably.

RJ When it comes to Carmen as a parliamentarian, you of course only had the year with her in the Assembly, but Peachment talks about Lawrence being critical of the low standards of parliamentary debate, and, to quote him, "attacking both her opponents and her colleagues for their poor parliamentary behaviour."²⁵ And I know that's something that she's referred to since in terms of federal politics as well. In your opinion, was that a fair criticism of the low standards of parliamentary debate; and in the time you worked with her, did she try to encourage her team to do something about raising those standards?

HALLAHAN Well she may have. I don't remember particularly, but that doesn't mean to say that there wasn't an attempt and some attention paid to it. I think any professional group needs to be constantly developing and paying attention to the carrying out of its task, whatever that is. I don't remember the standards being particularly low or particularly high. Maybe it could be pointed out to me where I've had something to say about it myself, but it just doesn't stay with me as a memory particularly.

Where Carmen's concerned, I think we have to understand, too, that she's now at the University of Western Australia, and she was a highly intelligent, verbally skilled individual. It is likely that the level of discourse at some times would not be engaging to her or her preferred way of communicating, perhaps; I'm not sure. I just offer that as an aside, really. I think she is particularly well endowed in many ways in that regard, and maybe very often she feels lonely in lots of social groupings; who knows?

RJ Allan Peachment in his book *The Years of Scandal*, to quote directly from that book, "Years after the WA Inc scandal, former deputy premier David Parker described Dr Lawrence as 'the most ambitious and ruthless politician I have ever met in my life ... yes, totally. And I would say that over and above the Brian Burkes, the Bob Hawkes or the Paul Keatings, and anybody else.'"²⁶ What do you think of that comment?

HALLAHAN That wasn't my experience, and it sounds to me as if David had some particular experiences with her, and maybe they're valid from his point of view and his particular experiences. It's not a view that I would share, and I'm not sure what led to that observation.

²⁵ Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, pp. 114-115.

²⁶ Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 300.

RJ There's also a quote in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* that she was considered "dictatorial and spent too much of her time appeasing selected faction chiefs".²⁷ Any comment on those ideas?

HALLAHAN I would find that rather surprising, quite frankly. But as I've said, she's intelligent and she's a realist, and you talk to all representative bodies across the community involved with the Labor movement and those not involved in the Labor movement. So I really can't add to that.

RJ Peachment was also critical of the big donations from corporations which gave them access to the party that wins office ... oh, I'm sorry; that's not Peachment, that is quoting Carmen Lawrence. It was something she also believed applied to trade unions.²⁸ You've got this controversy today in *The West* (I don't know if you've seen it) where business leaders are paying a certain amount per year (\$25 000 a year) to have dinner with Colin Barnett. How is this overcome, because, you know, to me it is something that both parties could be criticised for. You can pay to get access to Julia Gillard and Commonwealth ministers, you can pay to get access to our Premier and his ministers. Is this how we should be operating?

HALLAHAN I'd like somebody to tell me how you don't have fundraising without it being supported by the people with the most money in the community, quite frankly. We do it at a community level all the time with things like quiz nights and dinners with a speaker. I might prefer not to have to ask local branch members to go to fundraisers, and you're always keeping the price down so that it doesn't preclude people going, as much as that is possible, even though some people can't afford to go to anything additional in their household expenditure. And I don't know that electors – the community generally – would be prepared to pay the sort of money that is required for the election campaigns. I don't see that day ever happening.

I'm not saying that I'm not disquieted by not so much the influence (although that is true) but I'm more, I suppose, concerned about the inordinate imbalance that there is in the amount of support that goes to (if we look at this country generally) the two major political parties. In this state we know there are some very, very well resourced big businesses who see their interests being pursued more by the Liberal Party than the Labor Party; although the reality is, I must say, that I think there's also an element of realism amongst a lot of them that for a vibrant society we need healthy political parties. I think a number of them do support both political parties, although it would not surprise me to know that they double, treble or quadruple the amount they give the Liberal Party.

So I don't know how you get away from that. It is an element in a democracy which is of concern, as is the exposure in the media, because in my view that is a very, very unbalanced situation. The media is owned by wealthy corporations; some of them, of course, we can identify the individual people behind those corporations. I think that's even more concerning, but it's of a similar concern to the operations of a democracy. But I don't know the answer to **addressing** those two things.

RJ This is a personal opinion, but I think I know the answer. I do not want huge money spent on election campaigns criticising the other side and telling me all the things wrong with them. I want everyone, each party involved, to tell me what their policies are and trust me to have the intelligence to select the one that best suits my ideals. Now, I know that's TOTALLY idealistic and I have no idea if others would

²⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 6 June 1994.

²⁸ Carmen Lawrence in Allan Peachment ed., *The Years of Scandal*, 2006, p. 115.

support it, but there's huge money now being spent on advertising et cetera that is just being critical and horrible to the other side or to other parties.

HALLAHAN So how would we arrive ...

RJ There would be public money that would pay for ...

HALLAHAN Sufficient.

RJ ... each party to set out its policies, and obviously we pick them and put them into all types of media, because not everyone buys newspapers, not everyone listens to ...

HALLAHAN And who would do the analysis that the public would be looking for in the shortcomings of a particular policy and the strengths of a particular policy, according to the particular ...

RJ I don't need someone else to analyse it [chuckles].

HALLAHAN No, but you're in a very rare and informed position, if I may say so, Ronda Jamieson, [chuckles] and we would have to find a mandated position that satisfied every single citizen along the lines you're suggesting. I do think that is a bit ...

RJ Well I wouldn't even mind paying for a bit of analysis, but why does anyone pay for the horrible dirt campaigns that are now going on; and why does anyone think I want to hear that?

HALLAHAN Don't ask me why they fund it! [Laughter] You ask them.

RJ No, I'm not asking you [chuckles].

HALLAHAN And why do you think they do it? Because they want to see the team that they think is going to further their ends get in power.

RJ No, they think that influences me. That's why they do it.

HALLAHAN And don't you think it does? Don't you think ... can I just say ...

RJ No; it does the opposite. [Chuckles]

HALLAHAN Yes, to you it does. Can I just tell you, you're not representative; sorry.

RJ I'll be quiet at this point.

HALLAHAN No, you can try.

RJ [Chuckles]. Ian Taylor took over as Leader of the Opposition on 7 February, following Lawrence's resignation, and he resigned on 12 October, and it was the shortest period on record for someone to hold such a position. Tell me about that time, and why he resigned, in your view?

HALLAHAN I really can't remember why he resigned, actually.

RJ He has been interviewed and he has set out his own reasons.

HALLAHAN What were they?

RJ To my knowledge I don't know that that interview is yet open, so I cannot say that; I'm sorry.

HALLAHAN Oh, okay.

RJ But I'm asking you what you know about it anyway.

HALLAHAN No, I can't remember why Ian resigned. I don't think, really, that he and I were a good team as leader and deputy leader.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN Because sometimes you can ... it might be that we're too much the same in our background ... well, not same in background, but there's similarity in commitment and personalities, maybe. Nobody has made this observation to my knowledge, but it might be that we'd both come out of government. Speaking for myself, I suppose, you come into opposition in a fairly exhausted state, and I don't think personally that I was the best deputy that a leader could have had.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN Because I do think that I was in a really exhausted state, and I found that transition quite, quite difficult, and I'm sure Ian did too. I don't remember having discussions with him about it. We didn't have that ... I had respect for him, but we didn't have that camaraderie thing of sitting down and going through things or maybe how we personally felt. I don't remember there being any of that, and that's why ... maybe that's why I'm saying it indicates perhaps a different deputy leader might have been a better team with Ian, and I might have been a better deputy with another leader, too; who knows? You know those dynamics? You never know. You never know, and I haven't thought seriously about it, but it comes to mind as we reflect now.

RJ I am remiss in that there were quotes from Ian at the time in the newspapers, as you would expect there to be, in which he did give his reasons. I can remember that one of them was the fact that he never actually took on the leadership with any great enthusiasm anyway. But if you don't mind, I will send you a couple of those quotes from the newspapers at the time to see if you would like to add anything further, and we can just make a note in the transcript of your comments if you feel there's something that needs adding.²⁹

HALLAHAN Well, you can do that, but that actually sits quite well with my impressions. I think Ian's a good fellow, you know "hail-fellow-well-met", and he would have been well liked and respected, and he would have responded to a request to stand as leader, no doubt. I don't remember him being involved in any of the negotiations around the leadership, or deputy leadership either actually, and I don't think I was looking for it either. You see what I mean?

I think in some ways we were, when I look at it in that way, too much the same. But it takes a while for an opposition team to settle down in a way. You just want people who will hold the team together, which Eric Ripper has done following the last defeat

²⁹ The decision was made not to add anything further.

of Labor here. That's a very important role for leaders and deputy leaders to play immediately following an election.

It's a very fragmenting experience for political teams in government to be defeated, even though there wouldn't be real hope that that wouldn't happen. But nevertheless, you're never prepared for it, and even, as I say, you're still a minister and you're very busy giving everything you can to government to the end, as well as assisting and running your own campaign, and assisting other people's campaigns. All of a sudden you're into a new world, and you haven't planned for that and you find yourself being asked to do something.

That's probably absolutely true of Ian, that people would have asked him to do that and it hadn't been one of his ambitions particularly. I can quite understand that of him as the person I know.

Then after that, the next wave of leadership comes; it's much more ambitious, perhaps, and they've got their heads together about what the task is. I think that's an understandable dynamic that happens.

RJ Jim McGinty succeeded Ian Taylor, and Geoff Gallop became the deputy leader. From your comments just then, I take it that you, too, decided you didn't want to go on as deputy.

HALLAHAN Yes. I had a clear view, as I've said, that I was not doing a great job as deputy leader, and once you become aware that others, your colleagues, some of them don't think that either, although leadership ballots always bring up differences in a team. It's a very rare situation where you get everybody wanting to support particular groups, but you go with a majority. But I could see the need for that to happen. In fact, I virtually chaired the press conference introducing Jim McGinty and Geoff Gallop to the press conference which we held, I think, over in the Labor Party offices, announcing that I was going and this was the ... By then it must have been clear that Ian was going, and I bowed out as graciously as I possibly could.

RJ So you didn't stand to be deputy?

HALLAHAN Oh, no, no.

RJ You both went at the same time?

HALLAHAN Mmm.

RJ And what did you think of those two taking over? Was Jim McGinty the best choice at that time?

HALLAHAN Well, he must have been; the team must have thought so.

RJ What did you think?

HALLAHAN Well, I think Jim had difficulty resonating through the media in much the same way, I think, quite sadly, that Eric Ripper has had a problem resonating through the media. But Jim proved himself to be quite a competent person. I don't know that his team building skills were all that great at that time, but they probably developed in those years that he was the leader.

I don't have great memories of ... when I say I don't have great memories, I don't have clear memories particularly of a whole host of things over the years and when Geoff Gallop clearly emerged as a ... It was a good training and development exercise for him. I think there'd be agreement on that. So, it's part of the evolution and changing of the times in any movement, really.

RJ In that time in opposition, you always held shadow ministries: education and training, arts and media under Lawrence; deputy leader, federal affairs, tourism, racing and gaming under Taylor; and then tourism and transport under McGinty. Any comments about your role as a shadow minister? How did you find that?

HALLAHAN Oh, it was always tough because there was a lot of work associated with each and every one of those portfolio areas and getting to know them. A lot of them were areas I had not had as portfolio areas. I had with education and training and the arts, of course, under Carmen Lawrence, but then with the change of leadership I had areas that I had not previously held responsibility for and therefore needed to get to know all the industry players and bodies, as well as the issues. So there was quite a lot of work and new areas of responsibility always create new interest and new people to meet.

RJ I actually found your shadow ministries under Taylor interesting because each one of them was an area that you had not been involved in before. As deputy leader I would have thought you had a fairly strong say about which ones you had. Did you ask for those, or did Ian ask you to take on those and you didn't mind?

HALLAHAN I don't remember asking for them; I don't think I would have had a clear reason to ask for any of those. [laughs]

RJ Well, those particular ones, no! [laughs] Racing and gaming?

HALLAHAN But I mean, it's just most important at that stage, you're training up a team for the next era, in a way, so you're looking to encourage and bring people on, I suspect. I guess I would have just agreed to take on whatever was asked of me, really.

RJ You didn't contest the 1996 election, and when I saw those portfolios I thought that you already had it in your mind that you would not be contesting that election. When did you make the decision not to stand in 1996?

HALLAHAN Probably it was early in 1996. Really, when I say I was exhausted I, in fact, hadn't looked after myself; this whole thing of work-life balance. You see, I had separated in the mid '80s and really just threw myself into the work of being an MP and then the following year became a minister. I really was sort of bone tired and so I decided that really I should go. You know when you're not holding all the balls in the air at any given time, and being a member of Parliament you're needing to be doing that all the time. I became acutely aware and unhappy with that, so I decided I would not contest the '96 election.

Then I made time to go and get some medical opinions about my sense of non-wellbeing and found that I had, I think three chronic complaints. I was very lucky they weren't life-threatening; do you know what I mean? But they were attended to. Over the longer term, of course, the energy returned. But at the time when I decided that I really needed to resign, or not to continue let's say. [...] I didn't have that knowledge.

Okay, had I had that knowledge, I think I would have stayed for another term. But if you neglect yourself, that's one of the things that happens.

RJ So before you got that medical knowledge, when you decided you wouldn't stand, how were you feeling about it? Were you seeing that as an end of a ... Well, you'd had a very productive time as a minister; you had achieved things that would have been very exciting to achieve.

HALLAHAN I think I did think that I would have another career; that I was still young enough to have another career. That was in the back of my head, let's say, without any clear planning about it.

RJ So one door was shutting and, hopefully, another one was opening?

HALLAHAN Well, you just have to believe that in life, don't you?

RJ Yes, yes, you do. Not that everyone always does, but still.

HALLAHAN It didn't for me as it happens, either. I made other choices for reasons coming out of the time in Parliament really.

RJ Well, because you've raised it, did you make other choices or you didn't get to ...

HALLAHAN Well, I just felt, after you've been ... I'd worked so hard, and not only me, but other people did too, but personally I had worked so hard and we had done such good work in social policy and the education areas, in every portfolio, and I believe made a real and constructive difference. But all that got lost and overshadowed by the disgrace, if you like, the disrespect, the difficulties, of the WA Inc era, to the extent that I think I didn't want to have a public persona or responsibility where you could be set up for more criticism ever again. I think that's why working in a voluntary capacity in the not-for-profit sector, for causes that I thought were very worthwhile, became a substitute for doing anything active about paid or responsible positions, quite frankly.

RJ Well, before we move into that time, just looking back on your time in Parliament, you did serve on parliamentary committees. You were a member of the Joint House Committee for three years, the Standing Committee on Government Agencies for two years, Select Committee on the Fruit and Vegetable Industry, Aboriginal Poverty in WA and Heavy Transport was another. Is there anything out of the service on those committees that is worth commenting on?

HALLAHAN Committee work is really important because for no other reason you learn a lot! I mean, you might actually make a good contribution as well with reports and suggestions for directions for the future, but at a personal level you learn a lot about your colleagues. You've got colleagues from all sides of the Parliament working in a somewhat more collegial environment. You can still get difficult personalities that you'd prefer not to work with ever again and that sort of thing, but generally that's not the case and you find respect and areas of common interest, in addition to the extraordinary access to information in depth on particular things. So committee work is something I would always recommend, but it brings its burden of work as well, of course.

RJ Ruby Hutchinson, who was also Labor, was the first woman elected to the Legislative Council in 1954 and she remained there until 1971. She spoke about

the malapportionment and the disenfranchisement of women and Aboriginal people, and she argued always, apparently, that the Legislative Council should be abolished. Should it be?

HALLAHAN Well, I can understand her position. Really, I think it's a scandal that it took so long in this state to get anything close to one vote, one value, and I've always thought that was an absolute disgrace and should be a badge of shame on all conservative MPs. They don't seem to wear it that way, and they don't seem to have been labelled that way; I think they've got off scot-free on that. But some people used the argument of distance from the services.

In the time that I was a member of Parliament, of course, communications and transport and everything were improving so markedly you could just laugh at the argument and say, "Well, why should your vote in the house be worth 11 times the vote of the people in my electorate on any given matter?" That is just not fair in a so-called democracy.

I can understand her criticism about it. The upper house operated as a rubber stamp for conservative Liberal-Country Party governments and as a house of review when Labor was in government. It didn't function very much as a house of review, as I can hear from anybody who's had a look at the history of the place, when Liberal governments had the numbers in the lower house. I think it's a real disgrace on this state, quite frankly, and I don't know how people live with it. So I quite understand her being ...

Personally, though, because I'm an optimist, I still believe that if you had a really excessive government in the lower house and if they did try to do something, as do regimes worldwide and in the so-called developed and western democracies as well, if they were going to do something outrageous, hopefully, in most instances, although not in too many instances if the media played its role, could they do that and transmit it immediately through the upper house, because there was a tradition of leaving a bill to sit for seven days on the notice paper. So you couldn't have too many excessive things rushed through, one after the other, without any scrutiny. Hopefully, the media would bring that to attention and you could halt that practice. So for that reason I always thought you were better to have an upper house.

Now, you could say I'm making that argument because I was a member of the upper house, but I did think there was a serious role for the upper house in scrutinising legislation. I didn't enjoy it when I had to argue sometimes every clause in a bill to get it through a house that was dominated by the opposition, but I think it brought some rigour to all legislation nevertheless, particularly to Labor's legislation, I'd have to say.

So I came to a view in those years that while I thought it was at times an attractive proposition to go the Queensland model, the more you saw, of course, of the Joh Bjelke Petersen government, that didn't recommend a one-house system or a one-house state. I don't think I ever would have been in a position to really support Ruby's position, although I can utterly understand why she might have had that view.

RJ In the time you saw him in operation, what did you think of Richard Court as Premier of Western Australia? You had three years in the Parliament when he was Premier, and, of course, he continued to be Premier after you left. What did you think of him as Premier?

HALLAHAN Well, again, I don't have clear views about him. I think he gained a lot of public acceptance and that **nepotism** thing of a father being, in many people's

views, a very revered figure, and then Richard following on from that no doubt benefited. Although people always make comparisons from fathers to sons and things, nevertheless I think he would have enjoyed a lot of encouragement from lots of people. I don't remember the excesses. I think there were a couple that I think were ... I think they took an appeal to the High Court on land rights.

RJ They did.

HALLAHAN I thought that was reprehensible and sort of bordering on the realms of unforgivable. And there was another item as well I've always thought was ... and, again, lack of commitment to furthering the tenets of a democracy.

There was another issue I thought was pretty reprehensible **which was the Royal Commission into Use of Executive Power, 1995, in which Carmen Lawrence was involved.**

RJ Clive Griffiths was the President of the Legislative Council throughout your time in the council. What did you think of him as President?

HALLAHAN Well, I think Clive very much enjoyed his position and he liked to control it a bit. It was reminiscent for me of a schoolmaster, really, but I think he was reasonably fair. [pause] I think he held the position and brought no disrespect upon it, really.

RJ For your three years in the Assembly, James Clarko was the Speaker. What did you think of him as Speaker?

HALLAHAN Again, it's a terrible, terrible thing to say, and I don't mean to be minimalistic in praise of members of the opposition, he must have done a reasonable job because I don't have a great or clear view.

I managed to have a fairly amicable relationship with both Clive and with Clarko as much as **was** required; I'm not being mean about that) in the working day with anybody I work with, let's say. There are some people you might have particular difficulties with, but they're always in the minority within your own party and the opponents' team, so he must have carried it off with satisfaction. He was a little less (I was going to say "schoolmarmish" but I don't want to put women down) schoolmarmish than Clive could be at times. [laughter] There was a little more rigour and colour about the Legislative Assembly.

Apart from that, I had never been in opposition before and I did love interjecting and I was no longer a minister. It did give me a certain freedom, which I enjoyed.

RJ [laughs] What sort of things did you interject about?

HALLAHAN Anything that moved, at a given time!

RJ [laughs] Was there anyone who stood out for you as speakers and debaters in the house in your long time in Parliament?

HALLAHAN Well, I think Joe Berinson was outstanding. He was a wonderful rhetorician and a beautiful performer, if you can say it like that. Not always, but, you know, I thought, really Joe, you could be on the stage as a dramatic and formal actor. It was backed by beautiful language, voice, knowledge of the subject area, always wonderful.

Peter Dowding was very able and competent. Des Dans was a very colourful character. He was the leader when I was first in the upper house and he'd come from a very colourful working stock, and his language was of an era that you will never see again; we would never see that again today, sadly. It was very acceptable and very colourful. Education modifies the excesses in us all. Both Des, you know, as colourful and one of a kind, really, that's gone. Joe was magnificent, I thought; and Peter was very able, very competent.

It seemed to me I didn't have any of those skills, really, to start with but you have to pick them up pretty quickly. I remember Peter Dowding said to me one day, or evening, I'd just got to my feet, I had the call on some particular thing, and he apparently needed to go into his office in the Parliament to get some material for a bill coming up. As he walked past me he said, "Can you keep going for another 10 minutes?"

RJ Yes, you've mentioned this episode. [laughter] It's all very well for him, sort of thing.

HALLAHAN People don't realise that people often get dropped on them to extend what might be a few concise comments about something in particular, into an elongated discussion which can be very hard to find the words and the ideas [...] as you go along about three words in front of **verbalising**.

RJ In the *Four Corners* program on 30 October 1989 about funds for political parties in campaigns, it was claimed that all politicians are approached at some time by someone offering money to an election campaign in return for a favour. Was that ever your experience?

HALLAHAN Well, no, I didn't have that experience, and I wondered what was wrong with me, really. I don't remember. [laughter]

RJ Maybe it was obvious you couldn't be bought!

HALLAHAN Well, that's the nicest way of putting it; I hope it was that. I hope it wasn't they didn't think I was competent to do whatever it was that needed doing! However, I'm sure it does happen, but I'm not sure it happens ... Well, I know it didn't happen to this person; that means it probably didn't happen to others, as well.

RJ Did you know of a time, to your knowledge, when that happened to one of your colleagues?

HALLAHAN Hmm. I'm hesitant to rule it out as having never happened. So whether I've heard reference to somebody being approached is a possibility but I can't remember it. It certainly was not my experience. Really, to be quite honest, if we think that's how it happens, I think that's a bit silly. They're going to go, I would have thought, to other people with such offers, either within the political party structure, I would have thought might be one avenue that happens a lot. You know, can they get somebody to influence something? Not that that's much of an access; I'm not sure. I just think it's a whole lot more subtle than that, that's all, but I might be wrong.

RJ And what was your relationship like with the lay party throughout your time in Parliament and since? Do you have any contact with the lay party today?

HALLAHAN I have less and less, and very little, actually, at present, although I did go to the State Executive meeting last Monday evening because a very good friend of mine, whose name is Margaret Duff, was made a Life Member of the Labor Party, and I thought that it was of such import that I went along to my first State Executive meeting in a long, long time, and was amazed at the crowd there. I thought, well, how wonderful that they should all be here the night that Margaret is to be made a life member of the party. However, it was a big night with pre-selections and because I'm not informed or taking an interest these days, I was gobsmacked at the lack of parking available, and I was quite unaware of the importance of the evening. Anyway, that was very lovely that she was acknowledged for her wonderful work to the party.

I would consider myself to have good relationships with a lot of people in the lay party, but in fact I don't see many of them these days. I feel warm towards a lot of them so I don't know whether that's reciprocated or not.

RJ And while you were a member of Parliament, did you have much contact with the lay party?

HALLAHAN Oh, absolutely, particularly in my electorate; with all branches in my electorate I gave a lot of support and encouragement.

RJ And how satisfied were you about their activities and the way they were run?

HALLAHAN Oh, well, good. I would make sure that I would be assisting the people who were officers and you would be looking to recognise and encourage them in their role.

You find very fine community leaders in political parties. To be quite honest, I don't know what it's like in the Liberal Party, but the Labor Party branches came out of the local community and were an integral part of the community. Those people would be probably taking leadership roles in all sorts of community activities; they are very commendable people making vital contributions to those communities. It was part of the web, if you like, I think a very rich and wonderful web within communities, of people engaged in the affairs of their own communities. That was a lovely aspect of being a member of Parliament.

RJ Good. I know this is a very big thing to ask in one way, but you were given advance notice: what do you see as your greatest achievement during your years in politics?

HALLAHAN You did give me advance notice, this is true; whether I have taken advantage of it is another thing.

Well, I think (I am doing this a little without preparation, which is entirely my own fault) in all the portfolios I have held there were really great and ground-breaking things done. I'm happy to highlight some, but in not highlighting lots one knows that there were a lot of people who worked very hard for what was achieved who will be very disappointed if they ever read this transcript.

In the community services area in three years (I've probably said this earlier) the funding for that portfolio doubled in three years. That was very significant. We increased funding, for example, for emergency relief – not very important to a lot of the community but very important to survival for some families. It certainly made the

lives of a lot of emergency relief workers and community organisations much improved in the services that they could give.

Of course there was (I'm not sure whether we mentioned this earlier on) the Commonwealth–state agreement on child care, on funding for emergency accommodation, the supported accommodation assistance scheme, and for the HACC scheme, which wasn't under my portfolio. There were just lots of things achieved in those areas and under every portfolio.

We created a portfolio to focus particularly on youth affairs, and a family portfolio; there'd never been one prior to that. We had research done on that that showed (really, it was the first time that was acknowledged in the public policy arena) how young people were leaving home and then returning to live at home. Now people accept that young people are going to leave home but they'll be back, so they don't even take all their mementoes from their years at home. I often hear parents now still complaining about this matter. So, we were able to focus on the changing nature of families.

Of course, single-parent families, too, were deserving of support and needing support and not to be regarded as some second-class type of family. There was quite a move in those years to say children were important and the focus, and the early years were very important.

In education we brought in the voluntary pre-primary program. I must say, I was really, really surprised at a couple of the women, particularly in the Liberal Party, who campaigned actively against that, even though they were said to be appreciators of early childhood and kindergarten movements and goodness knows what. I never will understand that. Anyway, it was just crazy, crazy stuff; it just was so contradictory.

However, in TAFE of course ... not TAFE, but the whole technical training area ... have we covered this before?

RJ Yes.

HALLAHAN Yes; so I mustn't go over it.

RJ No, no; please do.

HALLAHAN No, no, no, but all those areas were very important. You know, even under the Planning portfolio work was done on creating the East Perth Redevelopment Authority and earmarking that for redevelopment; the same with Subiaco. That was in my year as Minister for Planning. The whole big planning for the years ahead ... because I only had that portfolio for one year, but it was a very busy year and a very satisfying year. I think I've said that previously too. Anyway, in every portfolio there were very significant achievements.

RJ Just say what specifically about TAFE did you consider a major achievement?

HALLAHAN We were lifting the whole profile; that university is not the only worthwhile goal of an educational career. That, in fact, **trade qualifications are** very legitimate (more than legitimate; they are very necessary) that it is one of the educational pathways to take and that we needed to lift the status and recognition for trade and other skills. People who had a calling in that direction were quite as worthy

and deserving of support and encouragement and recognition as any choice towards university.

But, anyway, that is happening again at present, too. It's something that needs to be kept on being revived really, and in this economy of course at present in Western Australia there's an even greater awareness of the need for a range of skills. [...] think probably the emphasis also is on making clear to young people that making that choice is a very fine choice and that they are going to be so much better equipped in life to make a choice about a qualification than thinking, "If I'm not fit for university I'm not fit for any other"; or there is no other pursuit that is worthy of the work and effort. Do you know what I mean? Just trying to change that mindset about outcomes through education.

RJ And again, thinking of those years, what do you consider your greatest failure?

HALLAHAN Again, this doesn't come out of a whole heap of reflection but I accept responsibility for that. Failure? I'm a person who does dwell on my shortcomings and failures more than successes, but there must be so many I can't think of particular ones.

RJ That's fair comment. Was life an anti-climax after being close to the centre of power once you left politics? I know you said you were tired and there were health things you were not aware of, but is it an anti-climax when you've been right there in the middle of it all and suddenly it's all gone? I know at the end of your career you were in opposition, but you know what I'm saying.

HALLAHAN Oh yes, I think it's a huge adjustment. The thing that I think, looking back, that you notice the most is not having access to information about what is going on and what is planned and the work that has to underpin any change or development if you like.

People have no idea about the amount of work that has to go into any decision. When I say that, a decision that is actually going to affect a whole community as big as our state, and it might only be an aspect of the state, however it's very, very complex. My experience is that most people have no awareness of what does go on behind the scenes to get to a cogent policy position or a cogent project small or large **underway**.

So, it is a privilege to be involved in those things and the complexity of them, all the negotiation with the various interest groups and professional groupings and non-professional groupings that make up any decision and that have to be part of the consultative process bringing their particular knowledge and expertise. I often, even now, think, "I wonder what's going on over there", because there's clearly something emerging on the ground, which means years of work has gone into it before anything **becomes noticeable**. I do miss that, just not having that sort of knowledge about things, but I have learned to live with it. It's only going to get larger and not smaller, that particular element of my life.

[Throughout my parliamentary career I was very fortunate to have many very talented staff members, committed and highly professional. I will remain forever grateful to them.]

RJ Before we leave the political side of life, you were Jane Gerick's campaign director when she stood for federal parliament in 1988, and she won and

represented Canning until 2001. Labor strongly rebounded from its landslide defeat in '96 but narrowly failed to win back government. Gerick defeated the one-term Liberal, Ricky Johnston. At the following election in 2001 she was defeated by Liberal Don Randall. She was re-endorsed in 2003 but died of a brain haemorrhage on Christmas day. Cimlie Bowden was pre-selected, but resigned claiming that she had a lack of support from head office and a personal campaign against her from within the Labor Party. Bill Johnston as the ALP state secretary is said to have told the ABC that Miss Bowden "has no hope of winning the seat and will be replaced". You were then approached apparently, and you were endorsed ahead of Geoff Pain.³⁰ Why did you agree to stand; and is there any comment you want to make on what was going on beforehand, particularly when it came to Bowden's comment?

HALLAHAN I was asked to stand and I agreed to stand because in a way I found it hard to say no to the people who were asking me to consider it. They said it was very, very difficult working with Cimlie and that she would not be continuing as the candidate. A number of the people who approached me were people who'd worked very closely with me on my campaigns, and some of them I had also worked on campaigns for other people; so they were people I really respected and was fond of.

We all acknowledged that there was no way we were going to win that seat; that was as clear as a pikestaff again.

RJ Why?

HALLAHAN That seat, Canning (I'd worked on it over the years), it had always been marginal. If Jane had been in good health ... I don't remember it being in the media saying that she died of a brain haemorrhage. If that is what was said, well maybe she did. But she had leukaemia and had been fighting that for several months, so it had really impinged on the ability of that campaign to really make an impact. It was a very, very sad thing to happen; I was very fond of Jane, and a number of us had worked closely around her campaign. Some of those people, as well, were saying would I think about doing it. We all acknowledged that it would be impossible to win but that they could all keep working hard on it if they had a candidate they could work with. It was sort of out of that – how do you say no, really?

RJ So you truly-ruly did not believe you could win that?

HALLAHAN Oh, I don't think so, although there was one point in the campaign actually where things tilted a bit in Labor's favour. I remember one of the federal ministers who'd come out to a community meeting said to me, "Kay, what will you do if you get elected?" [laughter] I hadn't thought really! I said, "Well, I'll adjust to it!"

RJ I must say, I wondered that too. You'd been out of politics for eight years, you were then aged 62; if you had have been elected would you have said "hallelujah"?

HALLAHAN Oh, of course. Well, I like flying, I like big organisations, I like structure and resources to consider things, and I always work best within a team. No, there were lots of reasons why it would have been all right. Probably not for a long period; when I say that, probably a couple of terms. But a lot of people only ever get to do two terms anyway, two or three terms. Who knows! Fantasy!

³⁰ ABC News, 18 August, 2004.

RJ To move to the other side of your life post-politics, you certainly were very active in all sorts of ways. In 2001, November, Geoff Gallop as Premier announced a special inquiry into (and it's a long title) the Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities. It was prompted by the coronial inquest into the death of 15-year-old Susan Ann Taylor at the Swan Valley Nyoongah Community in Lockridge. The coroner's report included allegations of physical and sexual abuse at that community and raised questions about the practices of various government departments and other agencies. That committee commenced work in January 2002, submitted an interim report in April, and the full report in July of that year. There were formal hearings, and representatives of Aboriginal communities were consulted.

What can you tell us about that inquiry and what you thought about its findings, please?

HALLAHAN I thought it was a very good inquiry. The chair of that inquiry was Sue Gordon, and she was full time [...] and Darryl Henry is a man of Aboriginal descent and a psychologist. He and I were part-time members of that inquiry.

We worked very hard and we had some good staff who did excellent work and I think came up with a very, very sound report and recommendations. I was quite pleased really that the Gallop government actually did take note of that report and implement a number of its findings over time. Although I hear (and it is a difficulty with various government agencies and the way that they report) that the necessary cooperation on the ground between government agencies is **continuing to be** difficult to achieve. [...]

You can have people from different agencies arriving in different regional centres and in remoter communities and a seeming lack of coordination. I understand a lot of that was addressed for quite some time, but it's one of those things that needs constant, constant attention and needs to be driven from the highest levels of government down through the various layers within bureaucracies to keep that on track.

There was an improvement with police and there were some police stations built and a greater police presence in a number of areas too. But it was very sad; it was incredibly sad.

One of the Aboriginal people I remember speaking to about it in an informal sense said that he thought that as many as eight to ten girls were sexually assaulted ... he was sort of saying across the board, but certainly in a number of communities (it was very widespread) and as many as six out of ten boys. Well, if that is not a fragmenting thing on any culture and any community, I don't know what is – apart from the impact we've had as people who didn't respect their culture and are still, in my view, not doing terribly well at it. We've created such fragmentation those communities [and their cultures] that this can be happening to the extent that it is, is a commentary on the way we've treated that culture and I think it's really a savage commentary on us.

RJ The following year you received an Order of Australia partly for service to the community, particularly as an advocate for the needs of children, women and the elderly in matters of social justice, and to the Parliament of Western Australia. That was a very nice tribute. How did you feel about that?

HALLAHAN Yes, I was very appreciative of that.

RJ These were things you cared about, too, that they have highlighted as the reason you got it ...

HALLAHAN That is right; that was good. No, I agree, that was good.

RJ Now, there's been VERY many things that you've been involved in since those years in Parliament, and some of it's available on record. You were chairperson of Save the Children Australia, for instance, and national chair of the Positive Ageing Foundation. Of the many things you've been involved with (there's been Telethon, WA Council of the Homeless et cetera) which ones stand out to you as the ones you've felt most pleased about being part of?

HALLAHAN Well, all of them. If I wasn't happy about being **involved with** any of them I wouldn't have stayed. But I had been on the board of Starick Services, for example, prior to being elected it would have been, and also the Roberta Jull Child Care Association in those days too. I think I left being members of those boards when I became a member of Parliament. [...] I am still the patron of Starick Services; we built the first women's refuge down the south-east corridor. They've now got services right through the south-east corridor and now programs up in the Kimberley as well, and the eastern goldfields. In fact I was on the selection panel when the [CEO] got the **inaugural position** in about 1982, I think, and she's still the CEO. [...] As patron I don't have anything to do with the governance, but I'm a strong supporter and I keep in touch to hear where they are going.

But in the following year [after retiring from Parliament in] 1997, I became a member of the state board of Save the Children. I am not sure how much time we've got, but it happened, I thought, in a quirky, interesting way. One night I was at the opening of a play in a small theatre over in the Northbridge area and this woman came over to me with a particularly educated accent and said, "Oh, now that you are not a member of Parliament do you suppose you would be interested in joining the board of Save the Children in Western Australia here?" I had heard about their good work over the years, and I said, "Well, that is one organisation I think I would be interested in, yes."

The next thing I got a letter and I joined the local board here of Save the Children. Then a screed came out to say that there was a group going to look at programs in Bangladesh and Laos, and were any of the state board members interested in going. We were paying our own way, of course, because it was all voluntary work. Another woman from Perth, Joyce Taylor, who now lives in Bunbury, and I went. We were the only ones who were members of the organisation, but the others who went from each state **were** staff members [...] which was good for them to see the programs on the ground.

That was a very, very interesting sojourn and I came back from that and ultimately ended up on the national board, within a very short time, of Save the Children Australia. And, within an even shorter time, became the chair of it and then worked with the state boards and people from Western Australia here too to bring about an amalgamation of the seven legal entities into one legal entity, which was a challenge I have to tell you. It took nearly six years of constant negotiation and advocacy and guiding the organisation towards that. [...] It was very interesting to work at that level in the not-for-profit, non-government world. It was very educational again. But ultimately it was achieved and it took some time to finalise. But they did make me a life member of Save the Children, and that was very, very nice.

I think you made reference to being the national chair of the Positive Ageing Foundation. In fact, that was a Western Australian-based organisation, not a national

organisation. I did become a member of that board, I think when Rhonda Parker was the Minister for Ageing here in WA. As the time went on (and I think she lost her seat in the Parliament) ultimately she became the CEO of the organisation; so she was the CEO and I was the board chair. That was an interesting relationship development too. I did move quite considerably from being a very angular [chuckles] lefty sort of person over the years to being able to work with all and sundry, one could say.

There's no real context particularly to these things, but I was a member of the Armadale Redevelopment Authority and deputy chair of that board for some time. There was a board payment for that, as indeed there was a smaller payment for an advisory committee I chaired. [...] That was the state advisory committee for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, and that was the one that the money for the refuges came through which had come in early on under the Burke and Hawke governments but continued through the years: and still does, the funding agreement, with modifications along the way.

That funding meant three programs: for youth refuges, for women's refuges, and for general. That tended to be for older men or single men, but older men in the beginning but it has developed along the way.

Then later it became [...] the WA Council on Homelessness, and that reports to the current minister. My term on that came to end on 31 January this year.

But also in the years I've been a Board member for the Australian Technical College at Armadale. Two were created in Western Australia, one up in the Pilbara and one at Armadale, funded through the federal government. That was a Howard initiative, which I have to say wasn't well done because there was no discussion with the TAFE system here, but it was brought in as a TAFE like training establishment. So there were lots of difficulties in the working out of that model because it was sort of thrust upon everybody, but I was happy to be a part of helping make that work in Armadale.

More recently I was the chairperson of an organisation called the Dreamfit Foundation, which has a very young CEO, an engineer, who's absolutely passionate about finding ways of providing **engineering solutions** [...] for people with disabilities. It has a very, very close relationship with the University of Western Australia and has been well supported by the university and indeed other corporate bodies. I left that during last year.

I was also on the board of Parkerville Children's Home ... I'm sorry that's a terrible mistake ... Parkerville Children and Youth Care. In the early years we knew it as Parkerville Children's Home. But anyway they have a diversity of programs now doing an excellent job, and my term on that came to end last year too.

I've been on the boards and committees of a number of not-for-profits, which I will research now that you have asked me about it, and we'll make some addendums later, which won't, I understand, appear on this tape but will be in the transcript.³¹ A lot of my time has been taken up with voluntary work, which has mainly been at board and committee level with not-for-profit organisations.

RJ Some record.

According to the WA Women's Hall of Fame for the Australian Association of Social Workers you were, and I quote, "a catalyst for change both in Parliament, through

³¹ A list was prepared and is attached, pp. 98-99.

leadership roles in community organisations, and as chairwoman and director of a number of not-for-profit boards". That's a rather nice statement to have on the record. How did you feel about that assessment?

HALLAHAN Oh well, I think that's good. I'm glad that that's on the record because I think that's fair enough comment. I'm not too sure about this "according to the WA Women's Hall of Fame for the Australian Association of Social Workers". I'm not sure about the linkage of the WA Women's Hall of Fame to the Australian Association of Social Workers.

RJ That's how it started. It was the Australian Association of Social Workers who had the WA Women's Hall of Fame and that's what you were inducted into.

HALLAHAN No, no, that's not my understanding.

RJ And in 2011, as part of International Women's Day centenary, celebrating 100 years of women in Western Australia, you were one of the Women's Hall of Fame's inductees in the list of WA's top 100 women and they used the same statement as had been used in the Social Workers' hall of fame.

HALLAHAN Oh well, I didn't even know the Social Workers' had a hall of fame.

RJ Well, that's according to the internet, which is where I've got it from. It's not always accurate.

HALLAHAN Well, I'm very surprised about that. I thought it came out of an initiative within the Department of Communities and that that was the first, 2011, was the initiation of it. However.

RJ After your comment, Kay, I've just checked my background papers and I have misread something put out by the Curtin Alumni when they referred to five Curtin social work graduates named in the inaugural WA Women's Hall of Fame. I've taken that to be a Social Workers' hall of fame and of course it was in fact the inaugural Women's Hall of Fame for the 100 women who were nominated as being special people, so that needs to correct that record and that question I asked you.

The fact remains that it was a real honour to be named a member of that first group of women in the Women's Hall of Fame.

HALLAHAN Oh, absolutely. And you can understand Curtin University or the Curtin Alumni drawing attention to the fact that a number of their graduates ...

RJ There were five graduates, yes.

HALLAHAN ... were recognised. I was very honoured **when in October 2002**, Curtin University **conferred** an honorary **Doctor of Letters**, and that was a great honour. I go along to graduation ceremonies and wear my doctoral hat and gown [chuckles] and after I've been there clapping for about the 239th graduate I think, why did I think this was such a good idea, Kay? Maybe you've done this often enough now! However, that's being a bit frivolous. That was a very great honour.

RJ You actually said to me in the pre-interview about that list that there were other women who should have been honoured. Can you think of anyone in particular?

HALLAHAN Well, no, I can't. There would be many, many women, though, who should be on it; there's no doubt about that.

The other thing is this year there were additional women inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame and the minister at that presentation or function indicated that women's groups would also be recognised next year. It was a bit regrettable last year with establishing it (I thought it was a good recognition for women and to draw attention to women's contribution to the development of this state) that some women were very critical that women's groups had not been recognised as part of that essential contribution to the state of Western Australia as well. So I was pleased that there'd been a response to that and apparently next year groups, I presume like the CWA and the Women's Electoral Lobby and several others, will be considered and a number of them inducted no doubt. I think that's a good development too.

RJ I found it interesting in *The West* covering that hall of fame that when it came to yourself they only made a mention of you being "the first minister to introduce the Seniors Card, an initiative followed by all States and Territories." I wondered, when you did the list of what you thought were your major achievements, that was not one on the list, so you might have felt a bit disappointed, in fact, did you, that that's the thing that they focused on.

HALLAHAN I'll have to confess I don't think I saw that coverage, so I'm interested that that is the case. But it's interesting that the Seniors Card does mean quite a bit to people, not that they remember that I was the initiator of it. But I was at a friend's birthday only yesterday who turned 65 and one of the guests at the table (there was a party of nine of us, I think it was, or maybe ten people who had lunch together) and one of the people there said, well, her ambition was to cut her working hours down to the point where she would indeed be eligible for the Seniors Card. I felt this was a very unusual ambition, myself, but anyway I thought it was very funny. I hope she does that. I'm sure she's been working a number of years long enough to be able to consider it, but none of us were of a young vintage, I have to say, at the table.

RJ Looking back, what is the thing that you would most like to have changed in life – something that you didn't do or something that you would have liked to have done differently when you think back?

HALLAHAN I regret not being more confident and not being more focused about what I would like to do and to be in life, and I'm very pleased that a lot of younger people these days are brought up to be confident about themselves. And when I say that I don't mean precocious and I don't mean arrogant, but aware of their strengths and indeed their weaknesses and what they would like to achieve in life, and I think that is a very fine thing. I have regrets about that, only because I really do think I have wasted lots of opportunities and potential openings to do a range of things in life. Maybe when everybody gets to the age of 70 they think and say that; I don't know.

RJ But anything particular that stands out?

HALLAHAN Well, no, because I'm not given to this sort of analysis, am I really? That's why I'm talking about it as a regret. [laughs] I do want to say about the Women's Hall of Fame, though (it came to mind and then we got side-tracked) that one of the pleasing things about that was that I was represented at that by my god-daughter. She's just now completed her article clerk's period and is now a lawyer. I'm

going to get this terminology incorrect, but anyway. At that time she was probably going through her article clerkship following doing the law degree.

I had been (what's the word? I should know the language) summonsed to be at a court case in Canberra to support and give evidence at a case of assault. It was a domestic violence assault against a Bangladeshi friend of mine who I had been supporting. I actually met her in Bangladesh in 1997 and have stayed in touch with her during the years and she won a scholarship to do a PhD at ANU, which I think was a wonderful achievement. Sadly, that marriage was not what it seemed on the surface and there was a lot of negativity and psychological and physical violence. So I was required to be in Canberra at that very time and missed the **induction** for the Women's Hall of Fame, but I thought it was a worthy thing to be supporting a woman who had had taken out a charge [relating] **to** physical violence against her, which of course is tragic when you come from any culture but particularly when you're here in a country on your own and your marriage breaks down and it's a violent incident or incidents, plural, that led to it. So on that side it was very sad, but on the other side it seemed to be a worthy thing to be doing and to be [...] prevented from being at that presentation, but it was very gratifying also to have my god-daughter represent me on that day.

RJ Her name?

HALLAHAN Her name is Millie Richmond-Scott. Imelda, I suppose, formally, Richmond-Scott.

RJ Thank you. And overall in your 70 years of being around, what do you see as your greatest achievement in life? Not politics, but in life. It could be in politics but ...

HALLAHAN I think it probably is that I'm a good friend to have when you're in need. I don't think I'm the greatest social friend to have. [chuckles] Some people refer to my home here being a refuge house, but it has been the host to many people for varying lengths of time and for various reasons. Another friend is about to return this weekend who's having, very sadly I must say (I should not be saying it with anything other than great seriousness really) quite severe health problems and she's taken a two-week break away. But it sounds like she's going to be returning here this Saturday, so my hopes of using my spare room for sorting out my papers and clutter and clobber will be deferred a bit longer as I try to get said clobber and clutter out of the way so she can have a good space to recuperate in.

So, again, probably, when you're in need, I can be a good friend to have.

RJ That would be a lovely way to end the interview, but there was an article in *The West* on 31 January 2011 about a bid to end the gender gap around the world and it contained what I thought was an alarming assessment. To quote: "Women make up 51 per cent of the world's population and do two-thirds of the world's work, yet they receive less than 5 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's assets." They were talking about the world population as a whole, of course, including cultures in which women are virtually ignored, but I still found those staggering figures. What do you feel about that situation, and were you more aware of that fact than I was, because it came as a shock to me?

HALLAHAN I don't think it should be a shock to anyone. I think it's wonderful it was reported in *The West*. The fact that it was a shock to you just says that it's not of

interest to the commercial media to put out that information. It should be highlighted very frequently. It would be interesting to know what page it appeared on, of course. I bet it wasn't page one.

RJ No.

HALLAHAN No, no. Well, you'd think that it would be worthy ...

RJ I can't tell you where it was. I think it was well in, yes.

HALLAHAN Exactly, but it would be worthy of page one, wouldn't it, you would think?

RJ Sure, yes.

HALLAHAN So I think we've got a long way to go. We've made strides in this country and in this state, but even if you look at figures, for example, on paid positions on boards, the figures are still extraordinarily low for women being included as members of boards. I think there are items like that that should remind us that we are not yet a gender-neutral society based on the talents and the skills that are needed in appointments.

I heard a most extraordinary statement. I think it was the Minister for Women's Interests [Affairs] in Victoria I think it was, on the radio this morning saying that virtually in some sections of the work force where there is sexual discrimination it would be better if women worked harder and ignored it, because in fact they may further aggravate, I think was the sentiment, people who already don't like women. It was the most extraordinarily ignorant position to take I thought; just uninformed, really, on the realities and the dynamics of sexual discrimination; the same as racial discrimination. Anyway, I think she'll be incapable, probably, of understanding the nuances of all the dynamics behind that, but she sounded incredibly strident, which I think says a lot about her own experiences as a younger person and coming up, and, sadly, has still got a lot to learn but is in quite an influential position. I think she's going to get a lot of critical comment. Quite frankly, I would have thought we would be wanting to put air space and critical comment into other things and not having to go back to those dark ages and dark, ignorant positions of people in leadership positions.

However, it's a bit sad. So, I think there's a long way to go for women yet.

RJ Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW FIVE

**Activities, Community Service, Honours
Kay Hallahan AO**

Alliance for Children at Risk
Advocate 2006 – continuing

Araluen Botanic Park Foundation
Council Member 1997 – 2004

Armadale Redevelopment Authority (ARA)
Deputy Chair: 2002 – 2010

Australian Labor Party
Member from 1976 – continuing

Australian Technical College, Perth South
Board Member 2006 – 2008

Child Protection, Department of
Child Death Review Committee
Chair 2002 – 2004

CURTIN UNIVERSITY
Social Work and Social Policy Advisory Committee
Member 2004 – 2005

Department of Social Work Advisory Board
Member 2008 – 2011

Dale Cottages Care Foundation, Armadale
Patron 2001 – 2013

Dreamfit Foundation Inc.
Board Chair 2008 – 2011

Habitat for Humanity – WA
Patron 2008 – continuing

Inquiry into the Response by Government Agencies into Allegations of Family
Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities (Gordon Inquiry)
Member 2002

International Save the Children Alliance
Board Member 2003 – 2004

Justice of the Peace
Appointed 1983 – continuing

Parkerville Children and Youth Care (Inc)
Council Member 2008 – 2011

Positive Ageing Foundation of Australia (PAF)

Board Member and Board Chair 1999 – 2006

St Bartholomew's House, East Perth
Member (Ambassador) 2011 – continuing

Save the Children Australia
National Board Member and Chair 1998 – 2004

South of the River Branch
Member continuing

WA State Council,
Member 1997 – 1998, 2005

Seniors Recreation Council of WA
Board Member 2005 – 2008

State Advisory Committee for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
(SAAPSAC)
Committee Chair 2005 – 2009

Starick Services
Patron 1998 – continuing

Telethon Trust, Channel 7
Trustee 2008 – continuing

Western Australian Council on Homelessness
Independent Chair, 2010 – 2012

Western Australian Police Academy
Patron Blue Squad 2008
Patron Red Squad 2005

AWARDS

Centenary Medal, 2003

Curtin University
Honorary Degree, Doctor of Letters, 2002

Order of Australia, Officer Division, 2003

Save the Children Australia, Life Membership 2004

Women's Hall of Fame
Inaugural member, first 100 inductees, 2011