



Oral Histories: The Hon. Dean Brown AO

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Interview held in the House of Assembly Chamber, Parliament House, on Tuesday 9 December 2025 at 11am

Emeritus Professor Clem Macintyre, Interviewer

The Hon. Dean Brown, Interviewee

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let me just start off by saying: Dean Brown, Premier of South Australia from December 1993 until 1996, minister for a whole range of portfolio areas before that: industrial relations particularly and then some further ministerial responsibilities.

DEAN BROWN: Industrial relations, industrial development; I had the industry development portfolio, and Minister for Public Works.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Thank you for agreeing to join us today to talk about your time in the South Australian parliament and your political life. I would like to start, if I can, by going right back to your early days and childhood, where you were born, a bit about your parents, family background, those sorts of things. Can you just give us sense of the early days of your life?

DEAN BROWN: Yes. I lived in the very close community of Belair. My parents were one of the few early residents of Belair. My father was an architect who started an architectural practice after the war, and it is still going today, called Brown Falconer. He had come from the Riverland from a very tough background because his father died of TB at a young age on the fruit block. He had to run the fruit block and complete his secondary education from the age of 16, and then studied architecture by international correspondence school through the London School of Technology. He shifted to Adelaide during the Depression. My mother came from a well-established family farm on Yorke Peninsula and they married and settled in Belair. I went to Belair Primary School and then Unley High School.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you have siblings?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, two older sisters and two younger brothers.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So a big family and relatively close-knit?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, and on the north side of Belair. We overlooked Old Belair Road, up Brownhill Creek, Brown Hill as such as well. We had about one and a half, two acres of land. The neighbours had five children as well and they had about three acres of land. They milked their sole cow and we shared the milk. It was a very close, tight-knit community.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And still some aspects of rural life, even though it was relatively close to the centre of town in those days.

DEAN BROWN: Very much so, and very poor transport from the old Unley High School, which is now the Mitcham Girls High School. You used to have to walk to the Mitcham Railway Station, catch the five past four or ten past four train to Belair and you would get to Belair at about five o'clock, five past five, covered in smoke because it was still the old steam engines, until the school moved, in my final year, over to Kitchener Street, which is where Unley High School is today. It was, frankly, far quicker to walk up to Belair than it was to catch the train. The locals invariably used to see you and stop on the Old Belair Road and pick you up—they knew who you were—and take you up to the top.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That is painting a picture of a good, close, integrated community.

DEAN BROWN: That is the first occasion that I had some interaction with parliament, because Robin Millhouse was our local member of parliament and he used to visit both the primary school and Unley High School. He would speak at Unley High School.

CLEM MACINTYRE: In your experience at school and in your family, was public affairs a big issue? Was politics talked about?

DEAN BROWN: Yes; not party political, but my parents took a particular interest in global affairs. My father was the first president of the Australian Asian Association in South Australia and organised the first major Asian festival, which in those days was in the town hall and is now quite different, down near the Torrens. As a result of that, we had a lot of international students come through our home, including ambassadors.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there was an awareness of global affairs but perhaps not a focus on State matters.

DEAN BROWN: That's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you know how your parents voted?

DEAN BROWN: They wouldn't say. They regarded that as confidential, but I had a fair idea. They were Liberal voters.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there weren't really political debates in the family, but what would you say your first political memories were?

DEAN BROWN: From Unley High School I went to the University of New England in Armidale. I won a cadetship from the South Australian Government to study for a Bachelor of Rural Science.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How old were you when you went there?

DEAN BROWN: Seventeen, I think.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So quite young.

DEAN BROWN: I stayed in a university college. In those days, the University of New England was all residential, virtually—95 per cent of the students were residential. So it was a fair break away from home.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It would have been. How long did that course go for?

DEAN BROWN: It was a four-year program.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Where did your interest in agricultural matters come from?

DEAN BROWN: From both my mother and my father. My father's mother, and his father before he died, owned a fruit block, a 20-acre irrigation block at Ramco, just downstream from Waikerie. I had a particular interest in the River Murray. For all the school holidays we used to get packed off to my grandparents on Yorke Peninsula, who looked after us very well. We would get on the bus in Adelaide and head over to Curramulka, and there my love of agriculture and farming and that lifestyle developed.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you see yourself as possibly a farmer or as more on the research side of agriculture?

DEAN BROWN: On the research side. Through the cadetship through the department of agriculture I had an obligation to work for four years, when I came back to Adelaide, with the department of agriculture as a research scientist, which is what I did.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was that enjoyable work?

DEAN BROWN: I enjoyed it very much. I spent more than four years there.

CLEM MACINTYRE: At the University of New England, were you involved in clubs or societies? Was there a political feel on that campus at all in those times?

DEAN BROWN: It probably wasn't too much politics and political parties, although there were some extreme views expressed, particularly from the left. I was on the SRC for a while. I was also involved in Wright College affairs and WUS (World University Service) for underprivileged university students. We used to raise money for underprivileged people to go to university.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So that was the beginning of a desire to actually involve yourself in public affairs and make a contribution?

DEAN BROWN: In public affairs, not in politics per se. It was Robin Millhouse who introduced me to politics. The family knew Robin through school and being the local member and everyone knew everyone at Belair. My father, for instance, did a lot of work with hospitals and aged care, including establishing the Blackwood Hospital for the first time with Bob O'Neill. They raised the money to put down a deposit to buy the property, which then became the Blackwood Hospital. My father did a lot of

health work around the state. In those days, hospitals were owned by communities and he was the architect for 62 different hospitals around South Australia.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you had a connection with Robin Millhouse. Was he something of a mentor in terms of getting you to become more active in—

DEAN BROWN: Robin rang one day and said, 'Dean, we're having a meeting at Belair of a number of people who are young graduates who would like to have a debate about policy issues. Would you be interested in coming along?' Bob Such was another one who came along, and there were about 14 or 15 of us. What we didn't know was that Robin Millhouse had in mind forming a Young Liberal branch. We had a good discussion on a whole range of political issues, but then he said, 'I would like to form this Young Liberal branch. Who would be the inaugural president?' We went around the table three times I think, everyone declining, and finally I said yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The music stopped with you.

DEAN BROWN: I was involved in debating at that stage and debated for Young Liberals when I joined Young Liberals.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How old would you have been then?

DEAN BROWN: In my early to mid 20s.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there thoughts at that stage—

DEAN BROWN: We formed a debating team with Bob Such and my younger brother and me, and Robert Lawson at various stages was I think an opponent debater in another club.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So clearly you were a group of people who were going on to reasonably successful careers?

DEAN BROWN: I was a terrible debater. I hated public speaking, and debating taught me to think on my feet and think of arguments. It was very good. I ended up in the state debating team. But I found debating very good in terms of a background for a political career. I had no interest in going into parliament. I did my master's degree externally through the University of New England with a research program for the Department of Agriculture, at the Northfield Laboratories. I was involved very heavily in animal nutrition and the digestibility and intake of feeds by animals—that's what my research was on. I was quite happy, except that a couple of matters came up and I thought the then Labor Government lacked the vision for what could be achieved in agriculture. It tended to be reactive rather than proactive. I expressed this to Robin on a number of occasions.

Eventually, in 1972, he said, 'A seat is likely to come up'—which was Joyce Steele's seat—'would you be interested in running?' Before that, I was president of the Blackwood Young Liberals, and then I became president of Young Liberals in South Australia at that stage. That was when Steele Hall resigned as Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Movement was formed. I supported the idea of the Liberal Movement being part of the Liberal Party, to modernise the ideas.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you are in your mid-20s, beginning to build a reputation inside the party but very much on the moderate side of the Liberal Party at that time.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There was a suggestion that you nominate for a seat in the parliament. Did you take much persuading, or were you pretty keen on that from the outset?

DEAN BROWN: I took a fair bit of persuading. I said no I think about three or four times. This must have been in early 1972.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, ahead of the 1973 election.

DEAN BROWN: Yes. Eventually, I said yes I would, after about two weeks of thinking about it and constant urging from Robin Millhouse and a couple of others.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The preselection process: were there other candidates?

DEAN BROWN: There were nine of us running for preselection. The most outstanding one was Alan Hickinbotham, who was a well-known businessperson at that stage. He came in rather late in the preselection. The preselection process in those days involved a postal ballot of every financial member

in the seat of Davenport. The seat of Davenport had 2,300 financial members of the Liberal Party, a huge number.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, it's a fair size.

DEAN BROWN: I sat down and I think I could count on two hands the number of people I knew in the electorate, so I had an enormous task of setting out to get to know people.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Davenport didn't cover where you were living at that time?

DEAN BROWN: No. Davenport was based around Burnside, Beaumont, Hazelwood Park, Linden Park, Glen Osmond. It stretched over to Magill, Kensington Gardens; all the foothills, up to the top of the foothills.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Where were you living at the time?

DEAN BROWN: I rented a house at Linden Park. I had already applied for and been offered a scholarship to study for a PhD at Pennsylvania State University on agricultural marketing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So offering yourself as a candidate obviously put that off.

DEAN BROWN: I had been offered support from the dairy industry of Australia. I had not heard back from the university, although I did visit the university because in 1970 I was part of a small group of six individuals selected under Rotary International Group Study Exchange. We spent nine weeks in Utah and Idaho, talking about South Australia and visiting all their leading industries.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That must have been a wonderful experience for somebody at the beginning of their career.

DEAN BROWN: It was.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let's go back to the preselection process. You said it was a postal ballot. Was there a process where you all had to make an address or a forum for speaking?

DEAN BROWN: It was over a very long period. I think it was over three months, to give the candidates a chance. In the middle of this, there was the petrol strike. For a week, you effectively couldn't use your motor vehicle. You had people in fur coats, etc.—it was the middle of winter—riding around on pushbikes or walking long distances, trying to find people who were members of the Liberal Party who were home. I did it mostly with coffee afternoons for women and coffee evenings for men.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were you organising that all off your own bat, or was there support not from the party patch but family and friends?

DEAN BROWN: I had good support from family and friends and I got very good support from Linden Park and Beaumont branch members.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This was after preselection?

DEAN BROWN: This was before preselection. A lot of key people became great supporters, such as Dorothy Cant, even though I did not know her initially.

CLEM MACINTYRE: These were individuals working on your campaign?

DEAN BROWN: Individuals, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The electoral process: was it just preferential voting?

DEAN BROWN: It was a preferential vote.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you remember how close the results were?

DEAN BROWN: A large number of people voted. There was one occasion where each of us had the chance to stand up and talk for 10 minutes or something like that. I led the voting count from the start, but it boiled down to a relatively close battle between Alan Hickenbotham and me.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am sticking with that, because you were relatively young.

DEAN BROWN: I was the youngest of the candidates. I think the people of Davenport saw there was a need to change the Liberal Party. It looked like being in opposition for some time. I won't go into some of the interesting occurrences that occurred—it is inappropriate—but some interesting stories occurred during the preselection.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Instances of skulduggery?

DEAN BROWN: Various people supporting individuals, etc. Finally, it must have been about September or October when the final count was done, and it took most of the day by the time they had distributed preferences. Late in the afternoon it was announced I was the winner. A fortnight before the preselection count I had received a telex from Pennsylvania State University saying that I had been accepted with a scholarship to go to Pennsylvania University, so I had the tough decision on the night: do I accept the nomination to represent the Liberal Party in Davenport or do I go to Pennsylvania?

CLEM MACINTYRE: How tough was that decision?

DEAN BROWN: I thought about it for a couple of hours and then thought, 'I won't get a second chance, probably, of going into parliament', so that is what I chose.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This is sort of a strange question in a way, but were your political ambitions reasonably clear then? Did you see this as a career move that would shape the rest of your life or was it just something like a young man in his late 20s being invited to apply and finding yourself caught up in it?

DEAN BROWN: I went into parliament with the firm belief that you needed to have a professional background behind you so that if you lost your seat you could go back and have a career. I had never wanted to be put in a position where I took a stance against my personal beliefs to save my seat in parliament. I was firmly of the view that you should always be able to stand up and express your views, and whatever, without worrying about whether or not it would cost you a seat.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And having that professional background gave you an insurance, in a sense, if anything?

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Davenport was a relatively safe seat, then held by Joyce Steele, the first woman elected to the South Australian parliament. Did you get much support from her after your preselection was announced?

DEAN BROWN: Not from Joyce, no. I did from her son. I got good support from Chris, her son. I got some very good support from the various branches. I think there were 11 branches of the Liberal Party in Davenport in those days.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So, despite it being a contested pre-selection, the electorate swung in behind you and was very supportive.

DEAN BROWN: Very much so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And the campaign? Was that more of your own initiative, or were there very clear guidelines coming from the Liberal Party hierarchy?

DEAN BROWN: It was very local, but with good support. When you put 11 branches together, with 2,300 financial members, that meant that more than one in 10 voters in Davenport were financial members of the Liberal Party. I had numerous requests for coffee evenings to meet neighbourhoods, etc.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The sort of numbers prospective candidates dream about now in terms of financial members and the resources that would be available through a campaign. So were you balancing that campaigning? You had how many months between the pre-selection and the election in 1973?

DEAN BROWN: The election was on 11 March.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Right, so it was a relatively short campaign for you.

DEAN BROWN: I had about five or six months.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How did you balance the demands of campaigning with the work that you were still doing?

DEAN BROWN: I took leave from work. It was appropriate. Having won pre-selection, I took leave and prepared for the election.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you had the financial resources to look after yourself for a few months?

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: On election night, you win the seat. Do you remember the announcement, watching the party at campaign headquarters? You were watching television as the results were coming in. How did you spend the election night itself?

DEAN BROWN: I was more interested in the overall results. Bruce Eastick was Leader of the Opposition. There had been a lot of division within the Liberal Party at that stage, although I didn't find that in my own campaign in Davenport, so I expected to win the election, which I did. I was very close to David Tonkin, who lived not far away, who was also a member of parliament. When we had electorate offices, David and I shared the common reception area and then had separate offices and we were the only members of parliament to do that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I just want to go back to election night, though. You are a 29-year-old man about to step into parliament for the first time and you have won the seat. There must have been a sense of euphoria and excitement. Was there trepidation as well in what lay before you?

DEAN BROWN: I think probably more trepidation at that stage.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just after the election, parliament meets and you are in this chamber for the first time. Had you visited the parliament before the election? Were you familiar with the building?

DEAN BROWN: I had come in a number of times as president of the Young Liberals, so I was aware of and knew Steele Hall and his staff and a number of other members of parliament. Ian Wilson was the federal local member of parliament. The other person I got to know very well in the run-up to the election was Ted Chapman, who was standing also for the first time. Ted and I became very close friends, both being elected to parliament on the same day.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there many new members in that parliament in 1973?

DEAN BROWN: I don't think so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So a bond with another new boy, as it were, is logical enough. Do you remember taking your seat for the first time and being sworn in as a member? Did you have family in the gallery?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, I do, and probably overwhelmed again.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Tell us how you felt.

DEAN BROWN: I don't recall exactly how I felt at that stage, just overwhelmed with the enormity of the task. What I do recall is coming in to parliament for the first time after the election, because the election is on Saturday night and I was elected, clearly, so I came in to parliament on the Tuesday morning, I think. I said, 'What happens now? Where do I sit? Do I get an office?' I got taken to the basement and put into a room with five other members of parliament.

CLEM MACINTYRE: All Liberals?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, all Liberals, one of whom was Robin Millhouse, who was doing a lot of legal work and representing clients in the Supreme Court at that stage. He would rush in at about 1 o'clock, dictate some letters, have a quick bite of lunch and then head back to the Supreme Court to continue his cases.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So sharing with five others, there were pretty lean resources and support available for a backbench member in the opposition?

DEAN BROWN: There was almost no support. You had one typist to five or six members of parliament. You would handwrite your letters and give them to the typist, who would type them on a manual typewriter and you would get the typed letter in about three or four days' time. You would go through it to correct all the errors and send it back, then get a second version a couple of days later. Things were very slow. I think I sat at my desk reading the book on the rules of parliament, the green book, from cover to cover several times so that I had at least some understanding of standing orders.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I was going to ask how you learnt the ropes. Was there any induction process for members in those times?

DEAN BROWN: Very little.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you were just expected to turn up here and get a feel for the place.

DEAN BROWN: And learn.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And learn on your feet.

DEAN BROWN: Learn by experience.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Clearly, Robin Millhouse was a political mentor of yours from the outset. Was he someone who took you in hand and explained the way things worked?

DEAN BROWN: To a certain extent, but Robin was very busy. He was in the Army Reserve and a Supreme Court barrister, so he was in and out all the time.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Not a lot of spare time.

DEAN BROWN: Steele Hall would help. Ted Chapman and I certainly worked closely together.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What about the clerks, table officers and so on?

DEAN BROWN: They were very helpful.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And understanding of somebody arriving new?

DEAN BROWN: Yes. One of the young clerks I used to play squash with. We would go off and play squash.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How quickly did you feel at home in the chamber and think, 'I know what's happening'?

DEAN BROWN: I think it takes about a year for a new member of parliament to really get to understand and have confidence in standing orders and debate.

CLEM MACINTYRE: When you came into the chamber I think there was just one female member at the time.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: People from that period talk about the parliament very much as a boys' club and a very male environment. Was that something you were—

DEAN BROWN: And they were older members, too, on both sides.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. Was the atmosphere of the place and the tenor something that you expected or were the mood and patterns of behaviour in the chamber a bit of a surprise?

DEAN BROWN: I think it was about what I expected.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Again, as a new member building a reputation, asking questions, contributing to speeches and so on, where were you getting your advice? Did you have a group of supporters you could turn to? Was it just beavering away in the parliamentary library? What were the sources that you were drawing upon?

DEAN BROWN: I used to go into the library a fair bit. Graham Gunn had been elected three years earlier and so Graham Gunn also became a very close friend and supporter. We decided, after two or three years, that we needed to be much more aggressive in challenging the overnment over what it was doing, so Graham Gunn in particular and I started to ask some difficult questions and do a lot of research.

We started getting a lot of complaints about the government. Water rates were linked to property values in those days, so water rates were huge out in my electorate, the same in David Tonkin's electorate. The property values were revalued every five years, so water rates were going up double or treble from the previous bill. We decided to make a big issue of it. We organised a public meeting in the Burnside Town Hall in the main facility. We filled not only the main hall but the banquet room completely as well, and we had hundreds of people outside listening to speakers. I think we got over 3,000 people.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This was partly around collaboration and working—

DEAN BROWN: All within our two electorates, all over the issue of how water rates were rated.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So this is you learning, in a sense, how to take issues and turn those into much more political areas and so on?

DEAN BROWN: Exactly. As a result of that, we forced a change in the rating system so that, today, your sewerage is based on the property value but your water rates are based on use.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just before we leave the acculturation, if you like, and early days in the place, everyone is familiar with the rules that govern behaviour inside the chamber, but can you talk a bit about unwritten rules in the house more broadly in terms of engagement, interaction between members and so on?

DEAN BROWN: I quickly came to be told that there were unwritten rules that you had to abide by. Firstly, it was not uncommon to sit down with opposition members in the dining room and have a general discussion, but the rule was, whatever was said outside the chamber stayed outside the chamber. It was never to be thrown back or used in the chamber. That meant that you could have a free mix between the two parties: the Liberal Party and the Labor Party. You could talk freely. You could have good discussions and debates without it suddenly coming up in the chamber. The other rule I learnt at a very young age was you never, ever talk about or raise personal matters concerning other members of parliament in the chamber.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We will come back to your time in the parliament in more recent days later on but, just while you are there, do you think those unwritten rules that you learnt then in the early 1970s were still prevailing when you left the parliament in the early 2000s?

DEAN BROWN: They had started to change.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. The sense of informal engagement between opposition and government and so on was much greater in the early days than by the time you were leaving?

DEAN BROWN: It was starting to break down and, before I came back the second time, so was the standard that you didn't raise personal matters in the chamber.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We were seeing shifts in the culture, I suppose.

DEAN BROWN: Also, there were deadlock conferences—particularly in 1973 on, because Don Dunstan introduced an enormous amount of legislation in 1973. For the second half of 1973, I think we sat continuously from late August or the beginning of September right through until mid-December with only one week's break.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We should say that a deadlock conference is when there is disagreement between the upper house and the lower house.

DEAN BROWN: That's right. There was a whole series of legislation on compulsory acquisition of land, workers compensation and numerous pieces of legislation like that. The parliament would sit Tuesday and Wednesday nights until 10.30 or 11 o'clock. Towards the end we were sitting until well after 12 o'clock, and on two occasions I think we sat until breakfast time.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This was a government with a big legislative agenda but, certainly until 1975, an overwhelming minority in the upper house. Again, just sticking with the early days, do you remember your maiden speech in the chamber?

DEAN BROWN: I remember raising a number of matters. One—which, interestingly, I took up later in life—was that all the treated effluent water from Bolivar was going out to sea, killing sea grasses, and was a waste of resource because South Australia is the driest state. So I advocated very strongly for re-use of this treated effluent water. This became a big issue and had a huge impact when I came back, because I took that up and implemented a number of policies such as the McLaren Vale pipeline, the Virginia pipeline and upgrading the treatment of the effluent water.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I think you also mentioned the Northfield agricultural research centre and the proposal to move that to Monarto. That was obviously something dear to your heart.

DEAN BROWN: I was opposed to it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Sorry, the maintenance of it at Northfield was something dear to your heart.

DEAN BROWN: Yes, I thought Northfield was a key research centre. The Dunstan Government developed Monarto, but it was all froth and bubble. It was based on the federal government and Gough Whitlam announcing new cities, and the idea was to create a new city at Monarto. That would have just magnified what we see at Mount Barker today, on a road that wasn't anywhere near as good as it is even today. I claimed it was a disaster. They brought in German urban planners who were very, very

expensive and didn't understand the Australian landscape. Hugh Hudson, who had coverage of it for the government, and I used to have some very interesting and robust discussions.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It is clearly a topic you knew a lot about, so using it in your maiden speech, I suppose, allows you to speak from a level of expertise and knowledge. But were you nervous when you gave that first speech?

DEAN BROWN: Probably; I am not sure.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Lots of members of parliament will have the gallery filled with family and friends and things like that, but yours seemed a more businesslike affair than lots of thanks and generalities.

DEAN BROWN: Yes. I tried to deal with policies.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, that came through very clearly. So you are building a reputation fairly early on. There is media coverage of you as an up-and-coming member of the opposition. Reasonably quickly the newspapers are saying you are one of the more recognisable members of parliament. Then after a period in office in the late seventies—

DEAN BROWN: We were in opposition from 1973 until 1979.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Until 1979, yes.

DEAN BROWN: Bruce Eastick was the Leader of the Opposition in 1973. I think in 1975 David Tonkin became Leader of the Opposition for the election in 1977 and 1979. We had elections in 1973 and 1975, which the Labor Party almost lost. It went very close indeed. In 1977, the Labor Party won new seats. In 1979—and Des Corcoran was Premier at that stage—everyone expected we would lose the election. We won.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, so Don Dunstan resigns, Des Corcoran comes in, goes to an election. The Liberal Party win that, and you are Minister for Public Works and Industrial Affairs.

DEAN BROWN: Industrial affairs covered industrial relations and all of that department and also industrial development—economic development.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Tell us about the transition from opposition to frontbench in the government? Again, were you having to learn that as you went? Was there any guidance, advice, support about the process of setting up a ministerial office and taking control of departments?

DEAN BROWN: We were all newbies, so it was a matter of learn as you go. I think it took three months. The first three months were really hectic, but after that you settled down. Again, I appreciated the chance to implement a lot of policy ideas, because I had been in charge of looking at policy development leading up to the 1979 election. We had a small team of outsiders. I met with them weekly, and we developed a whole range of policies.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you arrived in government with a pretty clear agenda for reform?

DEAN BROWN: Yes—things like a complete revamp of the apprenticeship training scheme, which the unions at the time said there would be blood in the street before that was adopted. Finally, when we sat down and talked over a day and half with the trades and labour council, they supported it. As Minister I established Technology Park, Adelaide.

Chrysler closed, and I had to find a replacement with the department. We picked on Mitsubishi, which had close links with Chrysler's facilities. Uniroyal closed unexpectedly. We had to find a replacement for Uniroyal. Bridgestone had the best growth prospects and so the company had to be persuaded to take over the Uniroyal facilities.

As Minister for Public Works, I took on the task of building the Sir Samuel Way law courts building, which was the derelict, old Moore's building. We stripped all the inside. The remarkable thing was that we finished it within a fortnight of scheduled completion and on budget. I remember, early in the piece, closing down the manufacture of DMAC unit classrooms, because the Labor Government had been trying to sell them interstate. They were costing about 150 per cent more than standard construction. I met regularly with industry groups and started the building industry forum with all the architects and builders, trades, etc. involved, and unions. I had a strong relationship but not always agreement with the trade union movement as well, which I enjoyed.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. I can sense that engagement and enthusiasm even today.

DEAN BROWN: For instance, with the Sir Samuel Way law courts building, they had been building the Hilton Hotel alongside and the labourers were getting \$70 or \$90 a week site allowance, which was outrageous. I said to the builders labourers union, 'No site allowance on the law courts building.' They said, 'Yes, there will be and there will be stoppages until we get it.' I said, 'Well, let's take it to the industrial commission now and get the matter settled once and for all,' and the commission said there were no site allowances.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you have had three years on the government benches after six or seven years in opposition when you first came in.

DEAN BROWN: Before we move on, I should say one of the big issues in the 1979 election was what would be built as public transport from Tea Tree Gully to the city. The Labor Party suggested either normal rail, using the abattoir rail station and extending from there, which was going to be very slow and very expensive, or light rail with heavy trams coming down the Torrens corridor.

I saw, when reading a German magazine, this concept of O-Bahn and suggested it to the party room and to Michael Wilson, who was shadow minister for transport, and we took it up with Mercedes-Benz. I think Mercedes-Benz Australia knew nothing about it at all but, about two or three months later, they contacted us and set up a meeting in Melbourne. I think the day before that proposed meeting, Des Corcoran called the snap election in 1979. But we went ahead and developed the O-Bahn busway.

CLEM MACINTYRE: While in office, yes.

DEAN BROWN: It is the best public transport system in Australia, the big advantage being that it can travel at 100 km/h on the track but then break off and cover about five times more area than a light rail system could cover.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, it has a flexibility there. I have a minister who is busy, after a long period in opposition, and then three years in government, back in opposition. That must have been—

DEAN BROWN: And I had married in 1979.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just before the election?

DEAN BROWN: In the beginning of 1979.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So changes in your private life—

DEAN BROWN: Nine months before the election.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —and then big changes in your professional life in 1982, when the Bannon Government was elected and you are back in opposition.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That must have been dispiriting and depressing for the Liberal Party?

DEAN BROWN: It was a disappointment, having lost after one term, and I think the Tonkin Government was a very good government. There was a severe drought and an economic down-turn across Australia.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So did that mean that there was a sense of deflation and a reduction, for want of a better word, for the enthusiasm with which you engaged in opposition?

DEAN BROWN: I don't think so. I was the shadow minister for transport. I think I had one other portfolio as well.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there's another—

DEAN BROWN: Three years.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —three years in opposition and then we come to the 1985 election.

DEAN BROWN: Which the Liberal Party lost. I challenged for leadership after David Tonkin stepped down, after the 1982 election. John Olsen stood as well and won it and we lost the 1985 election with a number of seats going. Michael Wilson lost his seat and I lost mine.

CLEM MACINTYRE: With internal divisions inside the Liberal Party over things like preselection, you were moving from—

DEAN BROWN: Well, they changed my electorate—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, Davenport had moved, effectively.

DEAN BROWN: —which was the eastern suburbs. They changed it, but with the same name of Davenport, to the southern electorate.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The old Fisher, is that right?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, the old Fisher, which took in Belair, Blackwood, Coromandel Valley and even Clarendon. So I had lost all my traditional support.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was there a thought of nominating for the seat that took in the old eastern suburbs?

DEAN BROWN: I probably should have, but I stuck with the electorate of Davenport and won preselection but narrowly lost the election. I think I got 49.3 per cent of the primary vote, but the Labor preferences went to Stan Evans.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you were out of parliament. You talked earlier about the need for some professional background to fall back on. You were working for a number of years. Did you think at that time that there was going to be a second parliamentary career?

DEAN BROWN: No.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That was it; you had had enough?

DEAN BROWN: I was grateful I had a bachelor's and a master's degree. I was approached to join AACMC (Australian Agriculture Consulting and Management Company), which was the largest agricultural consulting company in Australia and had worked in 55 countries around the world. It did a lot of work for the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, ADAB, etc. I became a director and took on certain roles. One was trying to set up trading opportunities for Australian goods.

CLEM MACINTYRE: When talking to members after they have lost a seat—due to defeat rather than resignation—there is often a sense of depression and 'what is the purpose?' It sounds like you bounced back pretty quickly into a professional life and didn't dwell at length on the defeat.

DEAN BROWN: I took four months off because I had been working pretty hard up until then.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There is no support for ex-members when you are out.

DEAN BROWN: No support and no moral support at all.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No.

DEAN BROWN: In those days you got a parliamentary pension, which was not great. It was relatively small, and you had contributed 11 per cent of your parliamentary income to get the pension.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was the transition from parliament back into private work difficult?

DEAN BROWN: Uncertain, I think is the best way of putting it. But then I relished the opportunity, when they gave me the chance, to set up trading opportunities. We looked at exporting fresh produce direct into Hong Kong and Japan and various projects in the Middle East. I negotiated a contract in China to erect four dairy complexes—that was everything: training, equipment, vehicles, the works—in Shanghai. I ended up going to China about 16 times. I signed a contract to build four dairy complexes and, a bit later, for the biggest chicken project in China at the time, which included feeding and breeding, hatching four million chickens a year, slaughter equipment, vehicles, training, etc. I also had responsibility for trying to engage with the Japanese aid companies, which were engineering companies, so I went to Japan on a frequent basis as well.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So this is a pretty comprehensive load and broad range of activities.

DEAN BROWN: It was very good experience, particularly international work.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and I can see it was fulfilling from just the way you are talking about it. But after about seven years, the lure of politics comes back?

DEAN BROWN: Ted Chapman and I remained good friends and we went across to his property on Kangaroo Island on a regular basis. Ted had a nasty vehicle accident, I am not sure which year but it was after I had left parliament. He said to me in 1991, 'Dean, I want to get out of parliament.' He was hurting, suffering from his injuries, and he kept floating the idea that I should take his seat. That went

on for six or nine months, and I said no because I had commitments in China and we were in the middle of negotiating contracts.

Then, in February of 1992, he said, 'Dean, I am going to announce my retirement. Will you stand in my seat?' I thought about it, discussed it with my wife, and she said, 'Well, at least you will be around the family, and it's probably easier than negotiating contracts with the Middle East and China.' I developed through experience. I think I changed as a person quite dramatically between 1985 and 1992.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Obviously, in 1992, the Liberal Party leadership is under stress, there is talk of John Olsen coming back to the parliament, and you end up being preselected for the seat of Finnis and win that in a by-election. When you were making that decision with Ted Chapman, were you thinking through in terms of the future of the Liberal Party and your possible role as a leader after that by-election?

DEAN BROWN: No, I saw myself as a potential minister but I was particularly concerned with a Liberal Party that seemed to be going nowhere. I was not aware of John Olsen coming back, because he was in the Senate at that stage.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But he talks about coming back with an eye to taking over leadership?

DEAN BROWN: Not at that stage.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Okay, so that comes later, much closer to the days of the two by-elections?

DEAN BROWN: That came closer—I announced on the Tuesday I was standing in Ted's seat, and he announced on the following Friday that he was coming back.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Which, in a sense, is setting up, potentially, some of the divisions or reinforcing some of the divisions that had been in the Liberal Party earlier on. Was that something you were conscious of or not?

DEAN BROWN: I wasn't conscious of that because I had been out and with overseas trips on a regular basis had lost contact with the party, the parliament—not so much the party but the parliament and government.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Again, preselection—was that relatively straightforward for Finnis?

DEAN BROWN: There were seven candidates, from my memory. There was a much smaller number of delegates, but I won the preselection on the first ballot with a clear majority.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Then a by-election in Finnis, back into the parliament, and the leadership falls vacant almost immediately.

DEAN BROWN: Yes. I think the election was on the Saturday, and we had the election of leader on the Monday.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That's right, I think. So, at what stage did you think, 'If I am coming back, I am going to put my hat in the ring for the leadership'?

DEAN BROWN: There had been a lot of urging after I announced my preselection for the seat of what was then Alexandrina but became the seat of Finnis, which was basically McLaren Vale out to the river because it took in Strathalbyn, Langhorne Creek, all Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island. It was a marvellous electorate, and I really enjoyed being their member. They were fantastic people.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you are back in the parliament and leader almost immediately on walking back into the parliament. Again, not that many people lose their seat and then, after a period, come back for a second stint. Was that a sense of déjà vu, or was it straight down to business?

DEAN BROWN: Straight down to business. I didn't know members of parliament, particularly on the government side.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It must have been strange walking in as a 'new member', albeit one with experience, and you are not familiar with all of your colleagues. You don't know many in the government, and you are sitting in the opposition leader's seat, prosecuting the attack on the government.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Tell me how that felt, getting your head around that so quickly?

DEAN BROWN: I had learnt from working with the Chinese, working with the Japanese and working with various Middle East countries that you had to be able to take on any challenge and just use your common sense and experience to work your way through it. Careful planning—I had learnt some good techniques in terms of developing policy. AACM had developed a consultative process, which the World Bank then finally accepted, because they found too many of their projects weren't working, funded by the World Bank.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you were bringing a lot of that experience back into the parliament the second time round.

DEAN BROWN: That's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you get a sense when you arrived that a government that had been travelling quite well had a more serious opposition then? What was your relationship with the front bench of the government like?

DEAN BROWN: I knew Lynn Arnold and that's about it, because he was minister for agriculture or primary production or whatever. I had had one or two meetings with him but didn't know any of the others.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Any sort of personal relationship with John Bannon?

DEAN BROWN: No. I had met John Bannon once, I think, or twice. So it was very much coming in with a clean sheet, getting to know members of parliament. What motivated me to come back was the State Bank collapse. SGIC had collapsed or was in the process of collapsing. Beneficial Finance had collapsed. The State was in dire troubles, and the Liberal Party seemed to be going nowhere.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, that's my sense of living through that time, too. But it still takes work to arrive, almost introduce yourself to a party that you are not that familiar with, put a team together and then, as I say, take the case up to the government.

DEAN BROWN: Yes. I relied a lot on professional people around Adelaide and industry leaders and the community. In my own electorate, I held forums to work out what the key local issues were. It was very much using the consultative process that had been developed for the World Bank, and the same with developing policy. By the time we got to the election in December 1993 we had a very strong policy framework.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you have in that last year or so of the government, particularly after John Bannon's resignation when Lynn Arnold was Premier, a sense of opposition strategy of how we should play this and how we should build and prosecute the case, or was it more reactive to the unfolding story of the financial circumstances?

DEAN BROWN: We had the unfolding circumstances, and the royal commission reports were tabled on a regular basis, which got worse and worse for the State Bank, but it was very much, aside from that, that we were going to have a very positive plan about winning government and policy development. We could have sat back and just criticised on the State Bank but we didn't. I was absolutely committed to making sure that, if we won government, we had a policy framework that was supported by South Australians and would lead to development of the State.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Who were the most important members of your front bench helping put that plan together?

DEAN BROWN: Well, all of them.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Any who stood out as particularly significant contributors?

DEAN BROWN: No, I think all of them. I used a corporate consultant, Graham Winter, who had worked as a psychologist for the Australian Olympic team on seven or eight occasions, and he got us together and worked out, with the whole of the shadow cabinet, how we were to operate, how each minister could develop policy and what their messages were.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I haven't heard of many occasions in Australian politics where you would bring in an outsider like that to, in a sense, school and develop the shadow cabinet capacities, I suppose. Were you sensing that that was an unusual step?

DEAN BROWN: I saw it as a necessary step.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just to galvanise and get—

DEAN BROWN: In the same way as in the corporate world I had learnt that you had to do that. Why not apply it in parliament as well?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Okay. Then we get to the 1993 election. There is a campaign with you and Lynn Arnold engaging in debates, and so on, but there is a sense of inevitability that the government is going to fall and that the Liberal Party are going to form office. That is obviously what happens—it's an overwhelming victory, something like 61 per cent, two-party preferred, support for the Liberal Party.

DEAN BROWN: Yes, we won 37 of the 47 seats.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Labor is reduced to an opposition of 10. What about election night?

DEAN BROWN: The swing took place gradually during the election campaign. It was a very long election campaign—6½ weeks. Very unusually, the parliament sat the day after Lynn Arnold had called the election, where we took the initiative. I think the Labor Party thought they would win in the house, but we took the initiative and moved a vote of no-confidence, and had the opportunity to highlight what had occurred with the State Bank, SGIC and Beneficial Finance.

People were leaving the State in droves, going particularly to Queensland. We had, I think, the biggest migration out of the State leading up to the election. There was a fear within the community that a Liberal government might be a repeat of what Kennett had done in Victoria, which was to close half the hospitals and close a third of the schools.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You were at pains to put that to rest?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, because my view was that that would simply lead to further destruction of confidence. The biggest single factor was the lack of confidence—economic, financial and industrial confidence—in the State, and it was a matter of how to rebuild that. We had a huge debt and we were paying just under 10 per cent interest on that debt, so a huge chunk of the government's revenue was going to interest payments. It was a matter of rebuilding the economy and rebuilding confidence in particular but at the same time meeting the needs of the community. I found that a really positive challenge.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let me take you to election night. It is clear very early on that there is a change of government and there is a huge swing on and the Liberals are going to be returned with a thumping majority. You front the television cameras and clearly claim victory and certainly my recollection is that the celebrations of the Liberal Party were long and loud at that election result. It was a record majority, I think, at the time.

DEAN BROWN: Yes, it was, not only for the State, I think, but for Australia.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It must have been close to it at that stage. Obviously, in Queensland and Western Australia there have been bigger imbalances in the house. Did you find yourself thinking that there were almost too many members and that there was not going to be an opposition and that you were going to have a whole lot of people sitting on the backbench that you couldn't find jobs for, some people who probably did not expect to get elected to parliament when they nominated and suddenly found themselves sitting in there?

DEAN BROWN: That was very much the case.

CLEM MACINTYRE: When did that become clear?

DEAN BROWN: Very quickly because we had members of parliament elected who weren't in their wildest dreams expecting to become members of parliament.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So did you have a strategy in mind to manage that and keep them busy, I suppose, while putting the State to rights at the same time?

DEAN BROWN: A couple of things. I made myself available every Wednesday night at mealtime to have dinner with any member of parliament who wanted to and they could just nominate and say, 'Yes, we would like to come and join you in the dining room.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: And they took you up on that?

DEAN BROWN: Yes. My wife decided to work with the spouses in a very positive way because she would hear what was being developed in the State but most people are removed from it in reality. So she started organising tours and visits to various key features where the State was developing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So that was a strategy to keep the backbenchers abreast of developments?

DEAN BROWN: Feeling part of it, too. We opened up our own home. We had Christmas functions at our place. We had a big backyard so we could accommodate all of the members and their families and have Father Christmas.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Becoming Premier after a long time in political life in South Australia, it must have been daunting given the task that you faced but a sense of achievement and opportunity as well?

DEAN BROWN: It was daunting, but equally can I say that negotiating absolutely new contracts with the Chinese or the Middle East was just as daunting because I had put forward a proposal, for instance, for a complete soil survey of Kuwait with the Kuwaiti Government and we had done that very successfully. So, yes, they were new challenges, but it was important to get out and spread the message.

One of the big issues in rebuilding the State was what new industry we could attract. Professor Craig Mudge was a computer specialist, a South Australian who had been professor of IT at a California university. He and I developed the idea of bringing together all of the data processing of the State Government departments and saving money. At that time every government department had its own data processing. There were 32 different account receivable systems operating in the State. We were spending a fortune.

Governments were calling contracts for new computers and, by the time the government had gone through its due process, it was about 2½ years after calling the tenders, yet in that period the technology would have changed because computer chips were doubling in capacity every year. So we proposed, with quite some opposition, including from the law courts and the police, that there be one data processing system and one operating system throughout the whole of the State for government, and that it be outsourced to a computer specialist

At the same time, a unique part of that was that we gave 50 per cent of the marks to the companies for putting forward the best proposal for cost and performance and 50 per cent of the marks for new economic activity within South Australia, EDS won the contract, offering over \$500m of the new economic activity

CLEM MACINTYRE: You were at once trying to take the big picture view of turning the State around in the aftermath of the State Bank crash and the dire economic circumstances it found itself in, and at the same time you were clearly interested in some of the nitty-gritty more immediate applied aspects of policy. Yet, without wanting to be too critical, the mood shifted fairly quickly.

When I was reading as background for this, I found critics saying that the government was being a bit cautious, that there wasn't the boldness of policy that some wanted to see and so on, and within three years the party was beginning to become restive and look for a new leader. Is that critique of caution fair?

DEAN BROWN: The main issue was should we sell ETSA and raise new taxes. I have been a great supporter of Tom Playford's strategy, and I thought that ETSA should remain in State hands. Although Jeff Kennett had sold off his electricity system, I believed that we should maintain it because it was essential in terms of economic development in the state. Some Members wanted to impose new State taxes like Kennett. During the election campaign I promised not to increase State taxes, as it would damage business confidence. There would have been the main issues of so-called caution. Also, there were a lot of backbenchers who were going to lose their seats at any rate who became edgy.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, the terrible dilemma of a thumping majority is that you end up with a whole lot of people who are looking over their shoulder at the next election.

DEAN BROWN: Yes, and who had no hope of winning, and knew they had no hope of winning, so why not change?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. When in doubt, change leader is a syndrome we see in a lot of political parties, I suppose. So the challenge comes and John Olsen wins that leadership battle. Again, you are left in the parliament. You had a portfolio, I think, of human services and ageing; is that right?

DEAN BROWN: No. Initially—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Back to industrial affairs.

DEAN BROWN: Industrial affairs and Aboriginal affairs.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And information and contract services. Tell me what it's like sitting as a minister in a cabinet that you were once leader of.

DEAN BROWN: Someone once asked me did I have any regrets, and my only regret was that I didn't have more opportunity to put into place all the things we had promised to do. We had started them. We started the Southern Expressway, designed as a two-way expressway. We had laid the foundation to expand the wine industry, and there had been rapid expansion of the wine industry. We had set up the EDS contract and the benefits that was going to bring. We had given a commitment not to close any hospitals in the State.

There was a whole series of things. We had grown the tuna industry from \$30 million to \$300 million. We had set up an audit commission of the State's finances, which brought forward very strong recommendations. These were very experienced businesspeople. I had a business advisory committee made up of some very key people.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But a party that was impatient for more; is that fair? Or more speed?

DEAN BROWN: You can't deliver everything overnight, and we had had to make sacrifices. We had a huge debt. We had to reduce the debt. How do you do that? We created a bad bank and a good bank. We sold off the good bank. We cleaned up SGIC and sold that off. We had laid out a financial plan before the election with quite precise figures about how we were going to reduce the debt and we were exceeding that. Stephen Baker gave very good support as Treasurer.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And if I've got it right, there was a push to have John Olsen installed as the deputy leader and you were not prepared to countenance that?

DEAN BROWN: That's correct, because Stephen Baker had done a very good job. I think he had ruffled a few feathers on the backbench but he still deserved to be—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was it a case of ruffling feathers and impatience and dissatisfaction, in a sense, or was it a case of longstanding generational battles inside the Liberal Party coming to the fore?

DEAN BROWN: I think probably a combination of both.

CLEM MACINTYRE: A bit of both. Yes, almost impossible to resist, in other words.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We touched on the process, the disappointment that you must have felt as leadership challenges came after three years as premier and the change of leadership to John Olsen, but I am sure, at the same time, there was a sense of some degree of satisfaction for some of the steps and achievements that you had made while you were premier. Can I just ask you to reflect a bit on some of those most significant developments during your time in office?

DEAN BROWN: We had started to rebuild the confidence in the economy. We had reduced the debt very significantly. We had attracted EDS. We had attracted about 12 other major IT companies globally to establish their head office for Australia in Adelaide. We had built the pipeline to McLaren Vale to double the vineyards. We had built visitor centres at McLaren Vale, Penneshaw on Kangaroo Island and Seal Bay, and Wilpena Pound. All of these were issues that the Bannon Government had failed to take up.

We took the vine plantings at Langhorne Creek from about a thousand acres to 20,000 acres. We had started the Southern Expressway well and truly as a two-way designed road. We had put the new portion on the Art Gallery. We had signed agreements for the Tour Down Under, which took a couple of years to finally set up. We signed agreements for the Alice Springs to Darwin rail line. Both governments, the Northern Territory Government and I, the South Australian Government, had put in \$100 million each to start that process of building the railway.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And you mentioned Murray River initiatives.

DEAN BROWN: We signed the agreement for Tasting Australia, and one of the most important issues was the River Murray. It had this huge over-extraction which was underway by New South Wales and Queensland in particular. South Australia had held its entitlement at the same level as it was in 1968. So I advocated and negotiated with the other premiers that we have an immediate halt to any further additional extraction. We had an audit and that became the basis for the development of the

basin plan by John Howard, who gave very good support for the whole concept. We halved the number of councils in South Australia.

So there were a lot of initiatives. I had set up the international chambers of commerce and brought those together into one centre, and provided reception and conference facilities. We aimed to expand exports by 15 per cent a year, compound, which we did. So it was a very busy time—

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sure was.

DEAN BROWN: A lot of companies also expanded and developed in South Australia in that period, which was the result of building up the confidence again in the State.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You have certainly given a feel for the complexity of tasks that you were faced with as well as the range of initiatives that were developed to deal with those. When you left office as premier, you must have been frustrated and tired at the same time.

DEAN BROWN: I was frustrated that I hadn't had a chance to bring in some of these things, such as the Tour Down Under, to fruition. Tasting Australia had held its first tasting in South Australia at that stage. But I wasn't grumpy—

CLEM MACINTYRE: No, I get the sense there is not the anger there.

DEAN BROWN: I wasn't angry about it. I was annoyed, more frustrated.

CLEM MACINTYRE: If you had your time again, would you have approached those three years differently?

DEAN BROWN: No, and that is what gave me confidence. We had set out to achieve a lot, we had a policy framework and we stuck to that policy framework. If history repeated itself, I would do the same again.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I do get a sense, in talking to you, that you really enjoyed the time that you had as an MP, as a minister and as a premier.

DEAN BROWN: I did, very much so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: From the very start, it seemed that you were someone who was going places. Again, looking through the clippings, I noticed that, in the early days, Don Dunstan identified you early on as, I think he said, the most talented member of the opposition at one stage. So you were clearly making a name and standing out—not pushing yourself to the fore but certainly establishing a reputation as someone with ability and a bit of drive.

I was going to ask about some of the great people you have seen in this chamber, the best parliamentary performers and orators and so on. We have just mentioned Don Dunstan. How does he compare with all of those whom you have sat with in this parliament?

DEAN BROWN: He was the best actor. One moment you would ask a question and he would appear to be asleep. He would stand up and would utter a few quiet words and then would explode. He was a great actor and a great orator, and he did a lot for the arts. Des Corcoran was very much down to earth. David Tonkin was down to earth and had a really strong human touch. He brought in the legislation on the discrimination of women, and also on the APY lands. Those were probably his two great achievements, together with a lot of work that the various ministers did. Jennifer Cashmore did a great deal in health under David Tonkin. She set up a health commission and sorted out a lot of the problems.

CLEM MACINTYRE: One of the tasks that a premier faces on a regular basis—all ministers do—is question time. Some of them seem to really enjoy it and some of them find it a bit of a challenge. How did you feel about question time?

DEAN BROWN: My view was that public were tired of the yelling and screaming across the chamber, so I tried to soften the tone a bit, to the criticism of some. But I still believe that it was more important to stick to the facts and to tone things down, rather than try to be an actor and shout and yell across the chamber.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We talked earlier about sitting hours and things like that. Again, you were in the parliament all the way through; you were first here in 1973 and you left in 2006. So much must have changed in terms of the organisation—things like sitting hours and so on. Is that change something for the better, in your opinion?

DEAN BROWN: I think so. Members of parliament have a much better family life now than we had in 1973 or 1974. The electorate offices have changed things dramatically. They probably came in in very late 1973, or in 1974 mostly, and that allowed a member of parliament to have a direct interface with their constituents and to respond more effectively. As Premier, I used to go to Victor Harbor. I would spend at least a half a day a fortnight in my electorate office, and I would try to go there every other weekend, for at least a day, to attend community functions, etc., which is why the community there supported me throughout, even when I had lost the premiership, and even today are close friends.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That's good. Sticking with the changes in the parliament, you, over the more than 30 years you sat here, would have seen big changes in terms of, as you talked about earlier, typists and manual typewriters, dealing with correspondence and so on. Did the introduction of information technology, as it grew through your time, make a really material difference to how you were able to perform as an MP?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, very much so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: For the better?

DEAN BROWN: For the better, yes, because you could write letters, and you could correct them very quickly. People would line up to come into your electorate office and you could see them and deal with their problems, whether they were federal or State. I think the community has benefited greatly from electorate offices.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Reflecting upon those changes—sitting hours and information technology and so on—versus the more informal engagement that I think you were talking about earlier between government and opposition and different members of parliament that has taken place over that time, do you think, if you could choose, would you rather be an MP now or in the 1970s?

DEAN BROWN: In the 1990s.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Halfway between—that's a good answer.

DEAN BROWN: I think some of the things that have occurred have been very beneficial to the community and the response, and some have been detrimental.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Give us some examples of some of the detrimental ones.

DEAN BROWN: I think the way the media play out and highlight some of the issues that are insignificant, the extent to which members of parliament raise personal matters in the parliament and it becomes a slanging match across the chamber and who is at fault and who has done what. That's unfortunate and is diminishing the view of young people I think in democracy.

I am a firm believer that members of parliament need training as they progress. If you were in any other business, you would go through a personal development program. I was fortunate to be the first member of parliament in Australia to attend the advanced management course at Mount Eliza for eight weeks, sponsored by the Dunstan Government.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Why do you think he picked you for that?

DEAN BROWN: Because one of his own members was picked and pulled out at the last moment.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But he didn't go back to find somebody from his own side of politics?

DEAN BROWN: No, I put my name forward and, at the last moment, was selected. I also attended the Duke of Edinburgh Industrial Study Conference in Canada for a three or four-week period, which I think brought into focus what governments around the world were doing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: If I was asking for advice for new and aspiring MPs, would professional development be one of the key points?

DEAN BROWN: Very much so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What else would you suggest for a new MP coming into the parliament at the next election? What words of advice would you have?

DEAN BROWN: To be positive about what they can do to improve the State. That's where policy development becomes so important. Politics shouldn't be about just trying to drag down the other

side of the chamber or the other party; politics should be about how to do things better than are currently being done.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And you sense there is not enough of that at the moment?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, I am concerned.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The focus is more on the more petty side of things rather than the bigger picture?

DEAN BROWN: Particularly federally.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We talked earlier about when you left the parliament in 1985 and obviously went off and found very productive professional work. You chose to resign in 2006 and stand down.

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How was the adjustment to life outside parliament the second time?

DEAN BROWN: Quite different from the first time. But can I just briefly talk about the fact that for nine months I was minister for Aboriginal affairs and industrial affairs.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, please do.

DEAN BROWN: We were the first parliament in Australia to apologise for the stolen generation, which was a horrific policy that needed to be apologised for. I was proud that we beat every other state and the federal parliament, some years later. I think it was 2007 or 2008 federally.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That was while you were minister?

DEAN BROWN: Yes. Then I was Minister for Human Services for 4½ years. I was the minister for health, ageing, disability, housing and community welfare, with support from Robert Lawson as a junior minister. I enjoyed that immensely. It was a huge challenge. It was about a third of the State's budget.

We did a lot of things, including starting new hospitals at the Lyell McEwin and The Queen Elizabeth and upgrading the Royal Adelaide Hospital. We started Foodbank SA. We underwrote it for the first three or five years financially, and look at it today: it has just gone from strength to strength. With the Rotary Club of Mitcham, we started the first scholarship called the Indigenous Health Scholarships, because I was of the view that the biggest improvement you could make to Indigenous health or Closing the Gap was to have the health services delivered by Indigenous people.

Out of that first scholarship, which was 50 per cent funded by government and 50 per cent funded by the Mitcham Rotary Club, I offered to fund up to \$100,000 a year. I spoke to the other Health Ministers, and a number of them supported it as well. Over 400 graduates have now gone through that, which I think has made a huge difference in delivering Indigenous health. So there were quite a few different initiatives that I was grateful that we could start.

CLEM MACINTYRE: With that record, turning to post-parliamentary life, you stand down in 2006, as I say, after key portfolios, key roles in opposition, a period as Premier. Back to private life: was that an easy adjustment?

DEAN BROWN: I didn't find it difficult. I sat around for the first month or so wondering what I was going to do; I think it was a month. Since then, I have served on 16 or 17 boards national and State.. I haven't applied for any of them: they just keep coming, and I have enjoyed it immensely. Some in the corporate sector: Hillgrove Resources, Scantech. Some community welfare: Foodbank SA, the National Youth Mental Health Advisory Council (which established Head Space), Mission Australia in Sydney and SkillsIQ in Sydney, which is a national body about technical training.

I have done work with the construction industry. I have worked with the government in terms of completing major projects on time. Under the Steven Marshall Government, we did about \$1 billion worth of school work to expand the high schools for the transfer of year 7s from primary school to secondary school. We got them all finished and operating on time, even through COVID. I am chairing those committees with new projects.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So, a busy life. Do you miss parliament at all?

DEAN BROWN: No.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You had your time and that's that?

DEAN BROWN: Yes, I have had my time, but I have enjoyed doing the things that I have done.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Are you still engaged with the Liberal Party?

DEAN BROWN: I am on the sState Council. I took an interest in my old electorate, but now, because we have sold the house in Victor Harbor—we lived in Torrens Park or Urrbrae throughout, but we had the house at Victor Harbor, which kept us in touch as the local member.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So politics is still important for you?

DEAN BROWN: The focus has changed—achieving things for government. I took on a role in the drought, which was the Premier's special adviser on drought. We built the creeks' pipeline at Langhorne Creek. We have built pipelines running from the river to deliver water down around the Meningie area. I have worked with the second or third largest construction company on projects that have been established and built. They set up in Adelaide and asked if I would help. The offers have kept coming, and I have enjoyed it. I am in my 80s and still—

CLEM MACINTYRE: And doing pretty well.

DEAN BROWN: Seeley International I have been involved with them, a local manufacturing company which has the world's best heating and cooling technology.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I think we should finish up there. Thank you very much for coming in and talking. I have one more question for you: what does it feel like coming back and sitting in this chamber and reflecting on your career?

DEAN BROWN: The chamber feels very comfortable.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You still feel at home?

DEAN BROWN: Having spent 26 and a bit years here, it is not an unusual surprise to come back and see the chamber.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You do come in from time to time?

DEAN BROWN: Occasionally, not as often as perhaps I should. Tom Playford used to come in on a regular basis on Friday. He was my mentor (or one of my mentors) and he would sit at the lunch table in the 1970s and talk about things that occurred when he was Premier. I used to refer to them as the parables according to Playford, how to handle different circumstances.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You weren't tempted to follow in those footsteps as an ex-Premier?

DEAN BROWN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But not coming in on a regular basis and talking to current members?

DEAN BROWN: No, but I will come in down in the Blue Room. Things have changed. In the seventies, eighties and nineties—particularly in the seventies and eighties—most members had their lunch in the dining room and sat around tables. Sometimes the parties used to mix, etc. Nowadays, people do it in the Blue Room.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We should say the Blue Room is the cafeteria in the parliament.

DEAN BROWN: Yes, cafeteria in the basement. What was the members' dining room is now the strangers' dining room where members of parliament bring guests to dine, and I still do that occasionally.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It has been fabulous to talk to you. Thank you very much for your time and your reflections, and I think we should finish up there.

DEAN BROWN: Thank you very much, Clem, I have enjoyed it. It has brought back a few memories.

The interview concluded at 1.09pm.