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Transcript of an interview with Barry Hodge

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DATE OF INTERVIEW: 17, 18 & 24th November 2020

INTERVIEWER: John Bannister

TRANSCRIBER: Valerie Holmes

DURATION: 2hr., 53 min., 188 sec.

REFERENCE NUMBER: **OH4564**

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THIS THE FIRST RECORDED INTERVIEW SESSION WITH BARRY HODGE IN HIS HOME IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA ON THE 17TH OF NOVEMBER 2020 FOR THE STATE LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AND THE INTERVIEWER IS JOHN BANNISTER.

JB: Barry, thank you very much for being involved in the project. I wondered could we begin by your telling us your full name and where and when you were born, please.

HODGE: Yes John. Barry James Hodge. I was born on the 16th of February 1944 in Melbourne, Victoria. I spent my very young years in Victoria. My father had a heart attack as a relatively young man, about forty-two, a very serious heart attack. He survived, thanks to good medical treatment, but the doctors did advise him that he should move to a warmer climate. He was working at that stage as a tram driver in Melbourne. He'd been a truck driver and a tram driver and, oh, I think an apprentice boilermaker and a bookmaker's clerk. He'd had quite a chequered career. But anyway, he was from Western Australia originally, from Boulder, and so he was quite happy to move back to Perth for the warmer climate, which apparently would help his health.

My mum was a city girl and wasn't all that thrilled about moving to Perth but she did and we moved over here, but Mum couldn't settle down. She found Perth was just like a big country town and she didn't really have any friends and no close family. So after a period of time, I can't remember exactly how long, perhaps a couple of years, I can't really remember, we all 'up stakes' and moved back to Melbourne, and we stayed there for a while. We'd been living in West Footscray initially when we moved the first time, and then when we moved back we moved into Footscray, sort of central, and bought an old house. My father did it all up and we were living there. Anyway, he couldn't cope again with the climate so the decision was made that he'd come back to Perth and try and find a suitable house that perhaps my mum might be happier in, and he'd get a job. That eventually happened and we moved back again to Perth.

On the first attempt to settle in Western Australia my parents tried a small business, a shop, mixed business deli sort of selling homemade cakes and things, but that wasn't a great success. But anyway, this time we did stay and my father got a nice house in - well the suburb was called Applecross in those days but these days they've changed the name to Ardross for where they were. It was near the Wireless Hill. It was a nice house in a nice area and the neighbours were friendly, and my mother settled down a lot better. I went to school: I was enrolled in the CBC in Fremantle.

I've got a brother, but he didn't come back to Perth this time. He was at the stage where he was just leaving school, and he went to technical college in Melbourne to learn wool classing so he stayed in Melbourne with his aunt, my mum's sister. Anyway, my father's health was not very good. He never actually ever worked full-time again after the heart attack - he had casual and part-time work – but he got a job initially as a night watchman on the wharf and then he got a job as a tally clerk on the Fremantle Wharf. He got casual work there and my mother worked casually at Coles in Fremantle on Fridays and Saturday morning, and occasionally when other

people were on holiday, she'd work a bit more, so we weren't exactly wealthy. We had a pretty austere time, but my mother was a brilliant finance manager and managed our finances extremely well, so we never went without much due to her management.

I didn't like school. I didn't like this particular school I was at. I wasn't a terribly good student. I managed to get through my Year 10 that was called a Junior Certificate in those days. There was never any talk or suggestion about me staying on in school or going to University or anything. Working-class kids in those days, that wasn't on the agenda for them - you got a job pretty much as soon as you could leave school - so I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't seem to be particularly good at anything and I went to a career adviser and they were no help; they couldn't think of anything for me [laughs].

I was talking to some friends of my parents, Frank Forrest, and his wife, and Frank was the manager of the Wireless Hill, which was the Overseas Telecommunications Commission Station, and he said to me, "What do you think you want to do?" and I said, "I don't know." He said, "What are your hobbies?" I said, "I love messing around with crystal sets and radio sets and telephones, and things like that. I enjoy doing that sort of thing"; and he said, "Well, I know the Chief Engineer at 6PR, Dave O'Brien. If you like, I'll have a word with him and see if there's any positions coming up on the technical staff." So he did that, and I had a meeting with Mr O'Brien and he said, "Well look, there's nothing immediate coming up but from time to time there is. What you'd probably have to do is we employ an office boy here, and if an office boy position comes up you could take that and bide your time, and then if a position came up in the control room we could employ you as a control room operator and you could study." I said, "Well that all sounds pretty good," so he said, "I'll let you know if a position comes up."

In the meantime, I still was after some work. I'd got a bit of work immediately the school holidays developed at the end of the year when I was 15 – 1959 – and I got a job as a junior storeman at Coles in Fremantle through my mother. I did that for a little while and then I used to play with the boys over the road from where we lived, Jim and Peter Mortlock. Anyway, there was a firm in Perth called Mortlock Brothers: they used to sell Standard Vanguard motor cars and motorbikes – I think BMA motorbikes. Anyway, they must have mentioned to their father that I was wanting some work while I waited for 6PR, so Len Mortlock said, "Come in and work for us as a messenger boy. I'll get you a job at Mortlock Brothers." That happened so I was very fortunate, wasn't I? Anyway, I used to travel into work with Mr Mortlock, and, of course, he'd pull into his parking bay in Mortlock Brothers and he'd get out and go to the boardroom and I'd get out and go and get on my bike. [Laughs] The messenger boys were treated very poorly by most of the men there, the staff, the parts people, they were the lowest of the low, but somehow or other I always managed to be treated a lot better because they weren't quite sure of my relationship with Mr Mortlock. None of the other messenger boys knew Mr Mortlock. Anyway, I rode my bike for about six months, I think it was, all around the city delivering parts and picking up parts and doing all these menial jobs.

Eventually, 6PR contacted me and said they needed an office boy, so I left Mortlock Brothers and went to work at 6PR. Well, the office boy job was pretty similar to the job at Mortlock

Brothers. I had a bike, and I had to ride around the city delivering tapes to other radio stations and advertising agencies, picking up copy and doing all the staff's running around, dropping their dry cleaning off and picking it up and getting the morning tea and all this sort of stuff; and in my spare time, I had to put the records away. In those days, of course, they used 45s and the LPs and so there were hundreds of records every day that had to be put back in the proper place in the Record Library, so that was my job in between riding the bike.

In due course – I can't remember how long, at least six months I did that, maybe a bit longer – the position came up in the control room and so I put the bike aside and went and worked as a control room operator, which was a sort of a semi-technical job. You had to get in early and turn the transmitters on by remote control because in those days the stations didn't run 24 hours. They came on at about 5 a.m. and went to about midnight most nights. On the weekends they went to about 3 a.m., and it was shift work. Sometimes, or a lot of the time, you played the commercials from the control room. They were on discs in the main and you played programmes on tape and monitored the quality of the transmission and kept the volumes under control et cetera and, as I say, you had the transmitters, which were out here at Alfred Cove, on a dial system where you could turn them on and turn them off from the studio; and I just loved that job. I just loved it. It was fantastic. It wasn't like going to work at all. I just loved it. The owners of the station were Nicholson's Broadcasting Service, and Nicholson's you may recall were an electrical retailer shop. They sold all sorts of electrical goods but they owned 6PR, 6TZ, 6CI. 6TZ was Bunbury and 6CI was Collie so they had a network, and it was easily their most profitable section.

They were approached a number of times to sell it but they didn't want to sell the most profitable part of their business, but in the end, they got an offer from a firm called The Victorian Broadcasting Network – VBN – and VBN offered to buy the whole business. Even though they didn't want the refrigeration retail side, they bought it to get the radio stations and then they sold off that side of it. Anyway, VBN were nowhere near the same employers as Nicholson's. Nicholson's were making plenty of money. They left us to our own devices and so life was very pleasant, but VBN were different. They were very hungry for profit and very strict and supervised everything very closely, so it wasn't long before the control room operators, technicians, and the announcers all started to come to blows with the VBN. We had a lot of unrest, so we all joined our appropriate unions. The announcers joined Actors and Announcers Equity and I joined the Professional Radio Employees Institute of Australasia, PREI, and we had a sort of unofficial leader of our technicians and control room operators, a man called Eugene Fry. He actually was only a little older than me but he was a lot more mature and he looked a lot older, and everyone thought he was a lot older but he was probably only a few years older than me but, nevertheless, he was our sort of unofficial leader and he encouraged us all to join the Union. Previously, when Nicholson's owned the business, he used to draw up all the rosters, and he'd draw up the rosters to our favour so that we got the maximum hours at the maximum penalty rates and the maximum numbers of days off, and all this sort of thing. When VBN came in they changed all that, so that was one of the problems.

Anyway, after a while, VBN realised that Eugene was the troublemaker, they thought, so they fired him. And, of course, in the meantime, we'd all joined the Union. Eugene went to the

Union, and they took up his case, and they took the VBN to court for unfair dismissal and they won; and the court ordered that they had to re-employ him, which VBN were absolutely aghast at, and no-one thought he'd have the nerve to come back and work there but he did. He was a very strong man and people underestimated him because he had a very meek and mild demeanour, but underneath he had a will of iron and he was very bright. He came back and oh, the atmosphere was quite poisonous and terrible, so everyone was looking for another job; and all the announcers, as I said, they all joined the Announcers and Actors Equity and they were having fights over rostering and pay. Anyway, Eugene encouraged me to get active in the Union and I was elected as the Vice President in this state at that Union, even though I was only a very young man, and because he knew I was pro-Labor, he encouraged me to join the Melville Branch of the Australian Labor Party.

I'd been brought up in a Labor household. My father was very pro-Labor and pro-Union and my father used to hand out *How to Vote* cards for John Tonkin, the member for Melville.

JB: Honest John.

HODGE: Yes, and I did as well because sometimes Dad, because he wasn't that well, needed a hand. So from about twelve, I used to work on polling booths handing out Labor cards.

Anyway, I did join – I couldn't join the Labor Party in those days till I was 21 but as soon as I was 21 I joined up. Eugene used to pick me up and drive me to the ALP branch meetings because he didn't want me to 'forget' to go, and he encouraged me to go and he encouraged me to take an active role in the Union.

JB: Where were those meetings held?

HODGE: The Melville branch met upstairs in the lounge at the Leopold Hotel [laughs]. The owners were the Coneys. We didn't have much to do with Mr Coney, but Mrs Coney was *very* friendly and helpful to us. I suspect she was a Labor supporter, and she used to let us have the lounge room upstairs for nothing, and she put on a little Christmas do for us for nothing and, you know, she was very kind to us, very good. We met there for many, many years.

JB: You'd had an [? interest in this part of the world?]. I mean, you were still living sort of up the road from where you grew up, really.

HODGE: Yes. The only change was I left 6PR, and I got a job at 6IX. I worked at 6IX, which was owned by WA Newspapers, for a couple of years but I was bored. In the meantime, I'd been studying at night school and so I got all my technical qualifications. I got what they call *The Broadcast Operators Certificate of Proficiency* which was required, under the law. Radio stations had to have a certain number of technically qualified people on the staff. It was quite difficult to get this qualification: it was run in those days by the Postmaster General's Department and all strictly government-controlled.

Anyway, as I say, I got bored at 6IX; there was not enough work to do. It was embarrassing. You had to keep out of the way of the bosses all the time because there was nothing to do.

I approached Channel 7 and said, “Is there any jobs?” and I told them I’d just got my Broadcast Operator Certificate so they were immediately interested and said, “Come out and see us”; so I went out and saw them. I saw the Chief Engineer who was a guy called Jeff Mortlock. I think he might have been related to the Mortlock family somehow, you know the Mortlock that family I was familiar with, and also I had a bit to do with his deputy. Oh sorry, no, I’m getting muddled. John Quick was the Chief Engineer, Jeff Mortlock was the Deputy Chief Engineer, and I had more to do with Jeff Mortlock than John Quick.

Anyway, I got a job at Channel 7 and that’s where I met my wife Dianne. Dianne was working at Channel 7 and we started going out together. Our first date was a wedding of one of the videotape operators, Kevin Reeves, who just passed away recently. We got married in, I think, 1969. Well, I know we got married in 1969. I got approached by my friend Eugene who had left 6PR when he found another job and he got a job at 6KY, then he left and he became an organiser with a Trade Union called *The Hotel Club Caterers Union*. He, by that stage, by the time I got married, had become the secretary of the *Hotel Club Caterers Union* and he approached me several times, would I come and work for him, that he needed someone he could trust, someone he knew. There had been a lot of problems in the Union, and some of the previous staff had been pinching money and he wanted someone he knew and trusted.

I’d been promoted at Channel 7. In those days I started off in Telecine, and then I was put on master control. Anyway, the salary the Union was paying wasn’t really equal to what I was getting at Channel 7, and in the end Eugene said he would match the money. I found out years afterwards he’d paid the difference out of his own pocket. He wasn’t short of money, and I didn’t find out until years and years later that he actually made up the difference from what the Union could afford to what I wanted.

Dianne left shortly after as well, because Channel 7 had this archaic rule where they weren’t all that pleased about having married women there, and she got a job at the ABC. I was working for the Union and we had been living in the northern suburbs since we got married, up in Yokine, and then we moved into the city and got an apartment in the city because the Union’s office was in the city and the ABC was in the city.

I got very active in the *Hotel Club Caterers Union.* After a while, I was elected as the President and Eugene was the Secretary, and it was a real education for me seeing the way - we had about ten thousand members. It was quite a big Union, but they were mainly all women and a lot of them foreign women and didn’t speak terribly good English and often didn’t have much education. They were working as housemaids, and kitchen maids, and cleaners and cooks, and we had barmen and barmaids and, oh, you know those sorts of people. The industry was notorious for underpaying people and so the Union started taking people to court that they underpaying and getting wages, and we got very, very active in enforcing the awards. Eugene taught me how to appear in the *Industrial Commission* to help argue cases for new awards, and he also taught me how to appear in the *Industrial Magistrate’s Court* and conduct prosecutions, gather evidence, and be a witness. I learnt an awful lot from him.

The Union was affiliated with the *Trades and Labour Council* and the Australian Labor Party, and he asked me would I like to go along to the meetings on behalf of the Union and represent the Union at both forums, which I jumped at. I relished that and, again, I started to meet fellow Unionists and people in the Labor Party, and I think that's where I started to come to the attention of some of the senior people in the Labor Party. After a while, I got approached by Bob McMullan, who was employed as the Assistant State Secretary, the first one, and then when Joe Chamberlain retired he became the state secretary; and he approached me a few times about would I be interested in standing for Parliament.

The first time, I think it was for a state seat, Karrinyup, and I said, "No. Look, if I'm going to go into Parliament I'd like to represent the Melville area or somewhere around here, which is where I'm familiar with. Karrinyup I don't know anything about. Then I was approached about the federal seat of Tangney and I said, "Well look, I'm just newly married, and I'm familiar enough with the lifestyle of federal politicians to know that they spend an awful lot of their time travelling to Canberra and out of the state. That didn't really appeal to me, so I turned that down as well. That's when they approached John Dawkins, and he became the member for Tangney for a brief period, and then he lost his seat, then he got it back again afterwards – well, he got Fremantle back.

Anyway, after a while, McMullan approached me again and said, "Look, the Party needs an assistant state secretary. I used to do that job but now I'm state secretary and we don't have an assistant. Would you like to nominate? There'll be an elected position"; so I said yes, I would. It started off there were quite a few in for it, but it ended up I think there were three in for it, and I had strong support from Bob McMullan and a number of other Union secretaries who knew me. My main opponent was a chap called Ted Cunningham, who was being supported by Brian Burke. Brian was very influential and had a lot of following in the Party. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I ended up getting elected as assistant state secretary. I did that job for a couple of years and, again, that was an education for me – very, very interesting. I spent a lot of that time as acting state secretary because Bob McMullan hadn't had time to have holidays, because there was no-one to stand in for him, so he took advantage of me being there to try and take some leave and do a few other things he wanted to do.

After a couple of years, John Tonkin announced that he wasn't going to stand again for Melville and so I thought, well, this is my opportunity to stand for Parliament if I'm ever going to stand.

JB: What was it about politics that was grabbing you? Up until this point you'd been working in back rooms and sort of scurrying around in the media. What was it about politics that grabbed you?

HODGE: I had a burning desire to make society a fairer place, a better place. It particularly came home to me when I was working for the Union and I saw the way these members were being exploited, being underpaid *all* the time, and being not given their proper award entitlements. Trying to prosecute them all one by one in the Industrial Magistrate's Court was a very time-consuming and pretty ineffective way of getting justice for people. I thought being in the Union was good but I thought being but politics would be even better, that I could

influence how society treated these people and make society better for lower income, poorly off people; that there was a lot of division in our society between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and I wanted to do something useful to make the world a better place.

I missed working in the Union and Eugene, whilst he never actually said a lot to me, I could tell he was very, very disappointed that he never got approached. He was, I think, very keen to perhaps go into politics or do something a little bit more challenging and demanding than running the Union, but he never got approached whereas I did. I got approached a number of times, as I've said.

JB: Why do you think that was?

HODGE: He had a very quiet, introverted sort of personality. He didn't mix with the boys; he didn't go and drink in the pub or do any of the sort of 'blokey' things. He was very diligent with his work, a single bloke who led a very quiet life, and I don't think people felt they actually knew him very well. Others in the Labor Party and the *Trade Union Movement* didn't really know him very well, whereas I'd been representing the Party on the *Trades and Labour Council* and on the state executive of the Labor Party and I looked a lot younger than him and I was probably more outgoing. He did get approached at one stage when the Tonkin government was in office and sounded out, would he be interested in a position as an Industrial Relations Commissioner and he said yes he would. He would have been absolutely excellent at it because he was a natural for that sort of thing but, unfortunately, something happened and the job never eventuated, which I was very sad for him. I think he was proud that I'd got into Parliament and that I'd got the assistant secretary's job and that he'd helped train me and I'd come from his Union and I think he was quite pleased about that. He used me up a bit when he needed help with different things that he felt I could help with. He didn't hesitate to contact me and get him an appointment with the Minister for Industrial Relations or something to have a talk. Yes, I always felt a bit sorry for Eugene, but we'd stayed good friends all through the years.

Anyway, John Tonkin indicated he wasn't going to stand again for Parliament, and there was a Melbourne Cup team in for that, obviously, because it was a very safe seat in those days. I forget how many there were in. There was a lot, I think. It started off about 19 or something. One of them was Kim Beazley junior and a few other well-known, people but Kim, unfortunately, put his nomination in from Oxford, or wherever he was, whereas I was on the spot. I was the assistant state secretary; I'd been president of the Melville branch; I'd been in the branch since I was 21. I had the support of the state secretary and others and so I got the endorsement, and in 1977 I stood for the seat of Melville and easily won it. I was there till 1989.

JB: In '77, what was Melville like? What was the community like? What was the culture of the place like?

HODGE: In those days it was still a much more working-class area, big blocks of land, modest houses. A lot of the residents worked on the wharf. In those days there was a big workforce on the Fremantle Wharf, waterside workers or 'lumpers' as they were called; truck drivers; forklift drivers; railway people. Yeah, the wharf, a lot of the people that lived around

the Melville/Bicton/Palmyra area worked on the wharf and, of course, my dad was on the wharf and was well-known, and my brother had given up the wool classing and my dad got him a job as a tally clerk on the wharf. My dad, before I went into Parliament, said he could get me a job as a tally clerk, and it was 'a wonderful job' and he couldn't believe that I wouldn't want to take it up. [Laughs] He said, "But politics are so erratic. You've got to stand for election every few years and you might be chucked out on your ear and this is a good, well-paid, secure job." Oh, he couldn't quite understand it but, anyway, I was pretty headstrong in those days - still am I suppose - but I said, "No, no, it's politics for me," and I never regretted that decision. But, yes, it's changed dramatically since 1977. It's now much more middle class and been redeveloped, and it's a different area. It still leans Labor way but, of course, they did a major electoral redistribution before the '89 election and they cut out some of the strongest areas, Labor areas, from the seat and put in very strong Liberal voting areas - a lot at Attadale and cut out parts of Coolbellup where I used to get 87 percent of the vote. If someone didn't vote for me in Coolbellup, well, we sent out a search party to track them down [laughs] and Willagee the same. I worked hard as the local member and that got even harder when I was a minister because the hours were very demanding. But anyway, I worked very, very long hours to try and do both satisfactorily. The first three years - they were three years, the elections, in those days. For the first three years, I was on the backbench of the Labor Party, learning and listening. Fortunately, I was taken under the wing of two very experienced older members, Mal Bryce, who went on to become the deputy Premier and a good friend of mine, and another chap called Ron Bertram, who was the MLA for Mt Hawthorn. Mal was the member for Ascot. Ron Bertram had been a minister in the Tonkin government. He'd been Attorney-General and Minister for Railways, and he was a qualified lawyer and a qualified accountant, and a very wise man. Whenever I needed advice or assistance or I wasn't sure of something, I'd ring either Ron or Mal and get advice, and they saved me often from making a complete fool of myself with all sorts of issues because I was young and enthusiastic and headstrong and gung-ho, really.

JB: What were your impressions of the way that the state was being run at the time?

HODGE: Well, Charles Court was the Premier for a good part of my period. He was a bit of a dictator, very ultra-conservative, right-wing sort of a fellow. I mean, you can't deny that he was efficient, and he got a lot of the North West opened up with mining and development et cetera. He was very, very pro-development, ultra-conservative, and right-wing, as I said, but he did work hard. And even before he became Premier, Sir David Brand was the Premier and Charlie was his deputy, but I mean Charlie was the driving force. David Brand was a very mild, meek sort of easygoing bloke and Charlie was the driven dynamic one. But, of course, if you're in the Labor Party you had to hate Charlie Court, you know, it was sort of mandatory. [Laughs]

JB: Policies possibly. You would be interested in the wellbeing of the working man.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: What of health? What of the general health of the community and the concerns that you might've had for that in those early days, particularly the wharfie and the working bloke who might be in a Union?

HODGE: Well, I was interested in health. I was always interested in health, particularly alternative medicines and things like that. I was a bit of a fan myself of trying to eat healthy food and avoid unhealthy food et cetera.

JB: Had that been a direct link to your father's health? I think you mentioned that he'd had a heart attack because of smoking.

HODGE: Yes. He started smoking when he was about 14 and he'd been smoking right up until he had the heart attack. Even after the heart attack, he still smoked surreptitiously. We pretended we didn't know, because he didn't smoke in front of any of us, so we kept up this façade really.

JB: But he'd been told by his doctor not to smoke because of what had caused the heart attack.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: But the doctor was a smoker himself.

HODGE: Yes, he was.

JB: And he died before your dad.

HODGE: And he died before my father, yes. Anyway, my dad also, back in those days the diet was very, very heavy on animal fat, which isn't good for the heart and the arteries and being a smoker, and as far as I know, he didn't do any regular exercise and so that got me on that track. I used to go to the gym and used to exercise. I used to swim a lot in the river and go to the gym and ride my bike, and I was very conscious of my diet. I tried to avoid the fat and eat healthy food. I really came into my own in the health area when I got re-elected in 1980 and elected to the shadow Cabinet as Shadow Minister for Health, and I was on a steep learning curve there. The health portfolio was the single biggest portfolio in the whole government. It took more money than - between health and education, health was the biggest, next was education. Between health and education, 50 per cent of the entire state budget went, and then the other 15 portfolios fought over the other 50 per cent. Anyway, I made it my business to start going around to prominent people related to the health portfolio. One of the people that I was greatly influenced by was Clive Deverell, who was a long-time CEO of the Cancer Council, and he gave me a lot of information about health, failings of the system, and emphasis, of course, was on smoking.

JB: Was the Liberal Party as concerned about health as with Labor?

HODGE: No, no, no. Their attitude was you built hospitals; you built something tangible that you could see. There was nothing - - - Very, very little effort went into preventative measures – health education. Practically no money was spent on health education or

preventative health or fighting tobacco. I think their peak expenditure in the year before the '83 election, which they lost, was I think $30,000 they spent on the smoking and health education. No, their idea of health was to build grandiose buildings but not get too involved in health education and trying to change people's attitudes or mind-sets. They were philosophically opposed to that. That was the 'nanny' state telling people how to live their life and, of course, I got that thrown at me often. I was part of the 'nanny' state, dictating to people how to spend their life and what was good for them and what to eat and **[?what?]** to smoke.

JB: I think that's a point that's worth discussing because you talk of Charlie Court and his development and, you know, making north the place and making Perth the place, infrastructure and roads, and buildings and things.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: Where had the concern come from in relation to preventative health and things like that that weren't sort of 'sexy', as it were, in relation to the Labor Party and why?

HODGE: Because the Labor Party was much more people-oriented. Our policies were focused, primarily, on helping people; educating people; providing them with a good health care service; a good public school system; public hospital system; health education, preventing them getting sick in the first place, and providing them with healthy jobs – not jobs like Wittenoom Mining or something where they were going to get asbestosis and this sort of thing, you know, safe working conditions, occupational health, and safety. The Labor Party's philosophy was all revolved around those issues, whereas the Liberals were all for the big project development and getting big mines up and running and generating wealth for mining companies and the government.

JB: And the state!

HODGE: And the state, yes, but I – yes, I'm getting a little bit - - - I'll just go back a little bit and I'll get onto something else about money and the health facilities in a minute. The other influence and big influence when I was Shadow Minister for Health was Maurice Swanson. Maurice was a dynamic young man. He's still around, still working in health. He's working for the ACOSH - the Australian Council on Smoking and Health - and I have got a bit to do with Maurice, still. Anyway, I can't remember whether Maurice was working for the health department or not but he came out to my office in Palmyra when I was shadow minister, and he provided me with all sorts of fantastic evidence about the danger of smoking and health, and he really fired me up on it. He urged me to do something about it because he was convinced Labor was going to win the '83 election and I'd be minister for health and he wanted me to, as a matter of urgency, do something about it, and he gave me all the figures, the statistics and the information he had at his fingertips; and this reinforced, of course, what Clive Deverell had told me, that Maurice was a more insistent young guy. Anyway, he fired me up, and I was converted, not that I needed much conversion because I'd seen my father, the evidence of him with the smoking. Anyway, I had the Labor Party adopt a policy for the election that we would do something; that we would implement legislation to prohibit the advertising information of

tobacco products and we'd embark on a smoking education campaign, and we'd take the matter very seriously and do something about it.

JB: And what was your impression of how that was received by the voting public?

HODGE: Ho-hum by the ordinary voting public, the medical profession, different. They were very suspicious of the Labor Party. They thought we wanted to nationalise them and bring in a National Health Service like Britain, and they were pretty suspicious in the main about us. As soon as I started talking to medical groups about the smoking, I could detect a different attitude altogether. They all sat up and started listening and looking, and sizing me up and thinking is this bloke fair dinkum? Is he actually going to do something or is this just a load of waffle?

JB: So these people could see the impacts of smoking in our hospitals.

HODGE: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I had a vascular surgeon come up to me and he said, "Are you serious about doing something?" I said, "I am. I'm deadly serious." He said, "I'll tell you, I am sick of cutting people's legs off because their veins can't cope because they're going gangrene because of the smoking. People think it's, oh, you'll just get a sore throat or you'll have bad breath or you might get a bit puffed. It's much worse than that, much worse," and he told me about how he had to keep cutting people's toes off and their legs and things because of gangrene caused by poor circulation, which was the direct result of smoking. And, oh, I had many other examples of that: respiratory experts coming and telling me how it was affecting people's respiratory system and how, even if people survive after serious operations they could never work again and they would be a drain on the welfare system, their families they support, it was costing the health care system a fortune treating people. I mean, I just got bombarded with so much factual information that you couldn't just ignore it; it was the largest preventable cause of death in the country. So, I was absolutely determined when I was elected, that I was going to fulfil this election promise and do something about it. I think a lot of the medical people could see that I was genuine about it, and I think a lot of quite conservative medical people, who'd probably been Liberal voters, all their lives, swung in behind us because I think I convinced them.

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW

THIS IS THE SECOND RECORDED INTERVIEW SESSION WITH BARRY HODGE IN HIS HOME IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA ON THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 2020.

JB: Barry, you were talking obviously about the support that you were getting from the medical fraternity.

HODGE: Yes. As I think I said previously, I had a feeling that, predominantly, most members of the medical profession, certainly the senior doctors, seemed to be conservative voters, I thought, but when I made it clear to them that I was very serious and was going to do something constructive about the smoking issue I found a lot of them were very, very interested and started to show some interest in supporting the Labor Party because they were so concerned about the damage that smoking was doing and that nothing effective was happening about it. So I pretty much staked my reputation on fulfilling my undertaking that I was going to do something serious about the smoking issue so I was quite determined, when we won and I got sworn in as Minister for Health, that doing something about smoking was going to be a very high priority for me and I wasn't going to be fobbed off, side-tracked, delayed or diverted [laughs]. I was pretty determined because I thought if I don't I won't have any credibility.

JB: How big a sort of platform had the health direction that the Labor Party were taking? How important had that been for the [?win?] do you think?

HODGE: I think generally speaking, health as a topic was very important. The previous government – the Liberal government – had not really given a high priority to health, and we did - the Labor Party did. I was very active as Shadow Minister for Health and I got an awful lot of leaks from senior bureaucrats in the health department from senior doctors, hospital administrators. People were leaking information to me about how chronically short of money and resources the health care system was in this state, and I was getting a lot of publicity and putting the Health Minister, Ray Young, under a lot of pressure.

In addition, the nurses' Union was very active in criticising the state government. The nurses were after a lot of major changes to their working conditions and their profession. They wanted their hours altered; they wanted their rosters altered; they wanted pay increases and probably almost, well, as important as all those issues were, they also wanted to get tertiary education. They still had a sort of an outdated apprenticeship-type system for training nurses, and nurses wanted to be recognised as health professionals. They wanted to get a university degree; they wanted to be recognised, so I undertook to do all I could to bring about all those reforms that they were agitating for. The nurses actually went out and door knocked in Ray Young's electorate of Scarborough to help unseat him [laughs] and get the Labor candidate elected, so agitated were they, so I was a very, very busy boy, I tell you, attending to all that and numerous other health issues. So yes, health was a big issue and, as I said, the expenditure on health was incredible. My budget, I think in the last year of the three years I was health Minister, I think altogether health spent about a billion dollars, which in those days in a state with a numerically small population was an awful lot of money; and there were about 25,000 people employed in

the health profession – health portfolio. So, yes, it was a big deal, and I was pretty prominent and pretty active in my portfolio.

Anyway, we won quite well in the '83 election, and in due course, I was appointed as Minister for Health. I felt tremendous pressure and responsibility after I took over the job and realised how big it was; the vast expenditure; the vast staff numbers. The problems facing the minister were quite overwhelming and at times I felt, initially, quite overwhelmed but gradually learnt how to cope with it and I got briefing and I got good staff around me, which is absolutely essential, so I came to grips with it and started work on implementing our policies. I think I may have mentioned to you previously, I was quite shocked that there were three absolutely separate health departments in this state. I sort of vaguely knew there were three areas, but I naively thought they were all part of the one department, but they weren't. They were three separate public service departments, all in the health area, and they didn't co-operate. They actively competed against each other for budget money, and had all sorts of different rules and regulations and criteria and qualifications for their staff, et cetera, none of which were interchangeable. For instance, a nurse that worked in like a community centre for children or something like that, to look after children in a child health centre, couldn't go and work in a hospital. Her qualifications were not recognised, they were different, and a mental health nurse could only work in a mental hospital and couldn't work in a general hospital, and so it went on. And, as I say, there were three separate permanent heads of these departments.

JB: It must have been an impossible deal to have to work with these three departments and the bureaucracy associated with them.

HODGE: Yes, I thought it was grossly inefficient and frustrating, and I just felt that I couldn't tolerate it and put up with it and I had to do something about it. In those days the nominal employer of all public servants in the state was the Public Service Board, so I contacted the chairman of the Board, Ken McKenna, who was a very experienced, wily operator, and I questioned him about why we had three health departments and he said, oh, he didn't really know, he thought it was just something that, you know, being a historical created many years ago, and he agreed it was grossly inefficient and it shouldn't be in place. I questioned him about why we needed three health departments and anyway, to cut a long story short, I said, "Well, I want to do something about it. I'd like to amalgamate them all," and he said, "Well, you'll need help. There'll be passive resistance and in some cases not so passive, and you'll need to set up a working party of senior people from each of the departments, perhaps some of your senior staff, and I'll chair it for you if you'd like me to," and I said, "Yes, I would very much." So that's what we did, and after a few meetings of this working party to work out how we were going to amalgamate the three, he came to me and he said, "Look, if you've thought about who you want to be the head of this new amalgamated health department, if it's one of the existing people who are in charge of these three departments then you should tell them so and you'll have one less enemy, and you'll have them on side rather than resisting you." I had given it some thought, and I thought the outstanding candidate was Dr Bill Roberts, who was a surgeon who was in charge of the department of hospital and allied services and he was a very, very intelligent sort of a man, very hardworking, and I called in Bill and told him. I said, "Bill, I

think you would be a great candidate if you're willing to take the job to be the head of the new health department." He willingly accepted that and so I got him on side and things went a lot smoother with his considerable ability pushing for it rather than against it.

Dr McNulty, Jim McNulty, was the commissioner of public health. He was in charge of the public health department. I broke the sad news to Jim that he wasn't going to be the new commissioner but that he would be a very, very senior person in the new department and he wouldn't lose any of his entitlements or benefits, or anything like that. He wasn't all that thrilled, but he accepted that. Then I called in Dr Bell – Fred Bell. He was the head of the Mental Health Services. He was a psychiatrist, and I broke the sad news to Fred that he would probably be made redundant and that we probably wouldn't need his services once the new health department got up and running. He was not impressed by that, but we made sure that he was very generously treated with redundancy et cetera, so that helped a bit. I sort of got all that sorted out and then gradually over the months we proceeded to deal with all the millions of other problems, but Ken McKenna, the chairman of the Public Service Board was absolutely invaluable with his experience and his determination.

JB: **Well, tell us a bit about Ken.**

HODGE: He was, of course, familiar with every delaying tactic and every bit of passive resistance that the public service could bring to bear. He was aware of it and headed it off and just got the whole thing flowing and working, and I was very much indebted to him. It's strange that some years later, after I'd been moved to the environment portfolio, I needed a very reliable person who would be the convenor of appeals against decisions of environmental significance and I needed someone that I could really trust who knew how the system worked. I found out that Ken had retired and contacted him and asked him would he be interested and he said, yes, he would; so he did a lot of work for me again in the environment portfolio, so he was a big asset, a big help to me. But anyway, we got the new health department up and running after about a year, I think it was, and it's still in existence and still going very well. That was something that had been, I think, overdue to be done for decades and I got it done.

In the meantime, of course, I was tackling all these other millions of problems in the health portfolio. I was progressing the tobacco thing, which I'll come back to in a moment, but I was also very conscious of needing to address the nurses' grievances because they were very influential in – well Ray Young lost his seat [laughs] in the election I'd say to a large degree because they had nurses door knocking the whole electorate saying to people, you know, don't vote for this man; and when you get a nurse in a uniform knocking on your door, [laughs] I think this influenced a lot of people.

Anyway, I made all the changes to their pay and conditions and rosters, and so forth. That was relatively easy; cost a fair bit of money. Then, of course, I addressed that they wanted a tertiary education. Anyway, I managed to get that up and running as well: it cost $40 million. When the health department was already drawing such a massive amount of the state budget for health

and then you go along and you tell the Cabinet you want another 40 million, you get a few funny looks. But anyway, I think most of them appreciated that it was very important that we honour our undertakings to the nurses.

JB: What sort of response were you getting from the opposition now?

HODGE: They were pretty much in disarray and not terribly effective [laughs] at that stage, you know? I don't think they could really object to the amalgamation of the departments. I think they probably recognised that it probably should have been done decades before; and the nurses, I think they got the message that if they didn't want nurses campaigning against them at the following election that they needed to go along with what we did. They actually sprung into life and were pretty vigorous in opposing me when I started addressing the tobacco issue.

JB: But you did get support from across the floor from people like Bill Grayden.

HODGE: I did.

JB: Tell us about Bill.

HODGE: Ah, well, he was a maverick. Bill had been in state parliament a long time. He also had a stint in the federal parliament for a period and then back into the state parliament. He was quite a heavy drinker and he would get into trouble occasionally when he'd be intoxicated and do stupid things but, nevertheless, when he wasn't intoxicated he was quite an effective operator.

JB: He had some pretty amazing experiences during the war ---

HODGE: He had.

JB: --- which would have been something to do with his drinking.

HODGE: Yes, you're quite right, and I think that is true. He was an amateur boxer, and when he got fuelled up on alcohol he wasn't adverse [averse?] to picking a fight with someone, so you had to be careful how you treated Bill. But it so happened that on the smoking issue he was very much in accordance with my views, and the Liberals made him the Shadow Minister for Health. They also had another maverick on the backbench, Dr Tom Dadour, the member for Subiaco. He was a GP who'd gone into Parliament with the Liberal Party, and about twelve months before the '83 election, Tom introduced a bill into Parliament pretty much to do what I intended to do to ban the advertising and promotion of tobacco products. It went through with the Labor Party's support and went through the lower house and went to the Legislative Council, and it was introduced in the Legislative Council by a man called Peter Wells, Liberal member. Peter was a very prominent member of the Salvation Army and was very hot and

strong on doing something about smoking. His nickname was 'War Cry Wells' [laughs]. Anyway, he actually introduced Tom Dadour's bill into the upper house and sponsored it and tried to guide it through the upper house, and it was defeated mainly by his own colleagues who voted against it. So when I introduced my bill in late '83, Tom Dadour and Bill Grayden made it clear to me that they were going to support it and I thought, well, this is going to be interesting because Bill Grayden's the Shadow Minister for Health and the Liberal Party had been vigorously opposing everything I tried to do in respect of smoking.

Anyway, they shunted Bill Grayden aside. He wasn't able to handle the legislation, which would be the normal procedure, and they appointed Tony Williams, the member for Clontarf who wasn't a shadow minister, and they put him in charge of handling the bill from the Liberal Party's point-of-view and Bill was relegated to just a spectator. Tony Williams, of course, vigorously opposed the legislation, as did the entire Liberal Party except for Bill Grayden and Tom Dadour. They crossed the floor and voted for it. That was pretty symbolic because the Labor Party had the numbers in the lower anyway without them but, nevertheless, they had the courage of their convictions and they both supported it. It went to the upper house, and we lobbied everyone we could up there. The Premier threw his weight behind it and made a point of lobbying Peter Wells, who we were very confident we had on side because this bill was almost identical to the one that he had actually introduced himself on behalf of Tom Dadour. Anyway, we figured with a few National Parties and other members supporting it we would just, perhaps, get it through, but when the vote was taken, Peter Wells didn't support us so we lost by one vote.

JB: That must have been an extremely frustrating and depressing thing to have happened.

HODGE: Yes, it was, because we'd had a huge battle. The tobacco industry had fought us ferociously. They were buying massive amounts of advertising on radio, television, newspapers. All the newspaper editorials were thundering against us, particularly me. I was an extremist, a zealot, communist, a Nazi, a dictator; you know?

JB: We should paint a picture of how normal smoking was considered in '83.

HODGE: It was considered normal. Smoking was permitted virtually everywhere. I was aghast to know that smoking was permitted in public hospitals, in the health department, all government departments, on buses, trains and aeroplanes, in restaurants; it was normal. And if you opposed it, people were mystified and thought you were some sort of wowser or 'what was wrong with you, it's just a social custom and it was considered quite normal and socially acceptable'. They had on aeroplanes – I used to have to fly East a lot of the time – so-called 'non-smoking' and 'smoking' sections which were just this non-existent invisible barrier between the seats where you could sit and smoke, and the seats where - - -

JB: Pull a curtain across.

HODGE: [Laughs] Not even a curtain; it was invisible. So you'd get off the aeroplane, and you'd be reeking of stale tobacco smoke, and you would have been breathing it in all the way for four or five hours to Sydney or somewhere, and the tobacco industry just were spending a fortune. We retaliated and started advertising as well, supporting our position, and the Premier who was the only smoker in the Cabinet when I started, he got so embarrassed that he gave up smoking, went cold turkey after being a heavy smoker. Then he took charge of the advertising campaign and he, personally, organised all the ads and spent a lot of money matching the tobacco industry. They got a rude shock because in the past, they'd been used to wherever a government anywhere in the world tried to do anything they just unleashed this onslaught against them, and they would try and divide the government and isolate the Minister for Health, paint him as a zealot who was out of step with public opinion and was doing a lot of harm to the government and that you should cast him or her adrift. I was alerted to this by people that I'd spoken to from other countries. I'd had other health ministers from other countries come to visit WA to see what we were doing because the word had got around the whole world that we were mounting a very big government-sponsored campaign against smoking. They tried hard to paint me in that very negative light and to try and cause a split in the government but they couldn't: the government stuck with me. As I said, the Premier himself took over running the advertising campaign, and it was a ferocious battle. Anyway, as I say, my legislation was lost, but that wasn't the end of it, because we put up the tobacco tax drastically to bring in a lot of extra money and to act as a disincentive for people to buying cigarettes because they were so expensive. I got the government and with the Premier's help, he guaranteed me 2 million a year for three years, 6 million in total, to be earmarked specifically for anti-smoking. That was a lot of money in those days, so I set up a special team of people to take charge of the smoking campaign.

JB: I want to talk about that. You talk about the opposition within the community, within the general sort of people in the real world, I suppose, but what of the people within your own party? Do you have problems?

HODGES: Yes.

JB: Lack of support?

HODGES: Yes, at times, yes. The Labor Party, like all the other political parties, was getting donations from the tobacco industry, and those donations were disguised. They didn't usually come direct from the tobacco company but they might have come from a parent company or a subsidiary and so on the books, it would appear that there was a donation from perhaps a soft drink company or a snack food company or something like that, but in fact, it was tobacco money, so there was a lot of concern that the party might miss out on some donations. Also, I got a very hot and bothered young man, who was very prominent. He used to run the **(break in recording)** - - - I got a visit from a young man who used to run the youth section of the Labor Party, and he thought a lot of our advertisements were discriminatory against young people because we were trying to prevent young people, particularly young children, from taking up smoking and he thought it was very discriminatory targeting young

people unfairly and so we did our best to persuade him that that was not correct. In the Women's Electoral Lobby, which was very prominent in those days – it wasn't actually part of the Labor Party but a lot of the women in it were in the Labor Party and they objected to us focusing our advertising at times on women, trying to prevent women from taking up smoking. Fortunately, there was a young woman on our team, Debbie Fisher, who was a very dynamic young woman, and she volunteered to go and address the Women's Electoral Lobby and inform them about how the tobacco industry were making a conscious effort to try and recruit more female smokers, that there were a lot of male smokers giving up cigarettes but they were trying to bolster the numbers by getting more females to smoke. Anyway, she did an amazing job and turned them around, and changed their attitude totally.

The thing that actually prompted them was one of our – I think it was our best ever advertisement. We did some amazing advertisements, but this one was called *Pretty Face.* I don't know if you ever saw it, but it was revolutionary for those days. It started off with a photograph of a very attractive young woman lighting up a cigarette and starting to smoke it, and before your eyes, she actually started to age. She just aged and aged till she was this terrible poor old woman that was all lined and wrinkled and looked about a hundred. That was called *Pretty Face*, and we were thrilled to bits with it; I was in particular. I thought it was really impressive and, as usual, I rang and contacted all the other health ministers around the country. At that stage, I'd been elected as chairman of the Australian Health Ministers' Conference and so I contacted them all and offered them all our advertisements free, if they wanted to use them and our market research because we were doing a lot of market research. Anyway, after the ad had been on for about a week, we got instructed by the Australian federation of commercial telecasters – I think that was their title – that they were going to take the ad off the air, that it was misleading. We said, "What do you mean, misleading?" "Well, you know, if a young woman smokes a cigarette she's not going to go like that; that's misleading", so we were all in a flap over this. I'd employed Mike Daube, who I can come back to in a minute if you like, who wasn't going to accept this and I said, "Well, come on Mike, put your thinking cap on and work out what we're going to do." Anyway, before long Mike came back to me absolutely very excited, and he said, "We've found another ad that's on all the time for bath salts, and this wrinkly old man jumps into a bath with these bath salts in and a little while later he hops out and he's this a strapping young man. It's very similar to our advertisement, and it's being played all the time on every television station in the country." So he put this to the television people, and they reluctantly had to agree that it was very similar and that our ad was really no more misleading than the bath salts ad. Anyway, I think to save face they told him he had to change about six words or something in the audio which we did, so *Pretty Face* was back on the air again.

JB: You talk about market research: what was the general thought about how these ads were working?

HODGE: We found that they were going over particularly well, particularly with parents who didn't want – they might have been smokers but they didn't want their children to take up smoking so we did put a lot of emphasis. We thought we were on a winner by putting a lot of

emphasis on stopping advertising and promotion of tobacco products that might affect children and influence them to take up smoking, so we were guided all along with market research about the effectiveness of ads. We did very well with our advertising and, of course, we were also working on getting the health messages on cigarette packets improved. There was a very wishy-washy warning in minute print on packets. I can't remember what the warning was, but it was very wishy-washy.

JB: No smoker's looking for writing on a packet of cigarettes [? except for?] the title.

HODGE: Exactly, and it was minute writing, and Mike Daube did all this research about that and he came up with these really strong words. I can't remember them all now but one of them that struck me as soon as I saw it was in much, much larger type in black lettering and had to be right across the packet was: '*Smoking Kills'* [laughs] which was about a hundred times stronger than whatever was there previously. I thought, oh, this is going to cause a stir and so I sent these new strong – there were about four new strong health messages - over to the Premier and said, "What do you think about these?" Well, he was on the phone in a flash because he was being heavily lobbied by the tobacco industry because I'd only had one meeting with them and refused to meet with them again. Although I did meet with them once more in Melbourne, I think, in my capacity as chairman of the Health Ministers' Conference, as Minister for Health, I had one meeting and then I said, "I'm not meeting those guys again."

JB: Well, tell us about that meeting. What was that like?

HODGE: Awful! I didn't like the people who approached me at all. They were just living in denial. They still didn't admit in those days that smoking was any problem for health at all and, yes, I just found them obnoxious to deal with. I just said to my staff, "Don't accept any more appointments; I'm not having any more to do with those guys."

JB: They might have not been accepting it but they would have known for a long time that smoking did kill.

HODGE: Well and truly! Well and truly! The whole world knew. I mean, the US Surgeon General had issued a statement years and years before, and so the British authorities also had issued statements. Yes, everyone knew, but they were still deluding them all, pretending that they didn't know, and I just found them very insincere.

JB: What, saying there was no real evidence?

HODGE: Yes, and offering to set up scientific bodies to investigate this matter and 'we'll fund it and you can nominate whoever you want to be on it'. This was all stalling tactics which I was well and truly ready for and this would take five years to investigate and by then I would've moved on and the whole issue would be dead and buried et cetera. Anyway, I just resisted all that and said I wouldn't meet them again.

I remember when Brian Burke rang me when he got the health messages on for the packets and he said, "Smoking kills? Couldn't you toughen it up a bit Hodgey?" I said, "Yeah, I suggested we put 'instantly' on the end." [Laughter] Anyway, he went along with it even though he was being heavily lobbied by them; they were pointing out how they sponsored sport and gave money to charities and, oh, you know. And it's true that many, many sporting bodies were addicted to the tobacco money, so we decided that we probably would have to set up some form of alternative funding so that if a sport decided that they would reject the tobacco advertising and not have the logos on their shirts or their grounds, or whatever, that we would make up whatever money that they were missing out on. And so we tried to negate that aspect of the tobacco industry's campaign by reassuring people that if they gave it up, they wouldn't end up out-of-pocket. So we just kept fighting the tobacco industry at every turn, and it was very exhausting but fortunately, as I mentioned, we'd set up a smoking and health team which was full of dynamic people who were really, really motivated and ready for the fight.

JB: And you are going to talk about a chap by the name of Mike Daube.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: We see these graphic photographs now on cigarette packets, you know blood and tar in the lungs: lungs sort of blackened. Sport and advertising for cigarettes, I mean smoking a fag and [?bowling a ball?] doesn't really - - -

HODGE: Yes, it's direct contradiction, isn't it? But unfortunately, these sporting organisations were addicted to the money.

JB: And these sort of humorous commercials: *Anyhow Have a Winfield* by Paul Hogan, the funniest man in Australia.

HODGE: Yes, well, there was a group established here in this state called B.U.G.A. U.P. They were, well they were anonymous officially, I knew nothing about them, but they were in the main health professionals that ran B.U.G.A. U.P [Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions] and they went around defacing tobacco advertising in around Perth. Near the railway line, near the railway station, the Horseshoe Bridge and the Beaufort Street Bridge there were big, huge billboards full of tobacco ads. There was one there with the Marlborough man, the cowboy who smoked Marlborough cigarettes, and one day it appeared that it had all been spray canned: *A social crutch is a smelly crutch*; and things like that. So gradually, I used my influence to stop the tobacco advertising being accepted on any government-owned land, but a lot of the billboards, of course, had been let out on contracts to an advertising firm and so it took time till the contracts expired.

One of the most controversial things I did, was I set up the smoking Death Clock on a huge billboard near the Horseshoe Bridge. That was a big, huge billboard, all black except for a clock in the middle, a digital clock that ticked over every time someone died from tobacco-

related disease. I signed that contract some time, and it took probably at least six months for the clock to actually appear. This was getting very close to the '86 election, and the government had brought in a guy called Rod Cameron, who was the managing director of Australian national opinion polls, to give us a briefing on how we were going for the '86 election. He said we were going quite well, and he thought we had a good chance of being returned but that we should stop that 'stupid bloody tobacco campaign', that that was unnecessary lead in the saddlebags, and I just about fell off my chair. And the Premier said, "Oh, oh, right, right, oh well, we'll have to do something. We'll have to do something about that," and I just about exploded. I looked at him and I said, "Brian, you must be joking! You must be joking! We have nailed our colours to the mast on this issue. Are you seriously suggesting we drop it?" and he stopped and thought and looked at me, saw the look on my face and he said, "Well, no, no, no, you're right, we can't do that but soft-pedal it, soft-pedal it until the other side of the election. Go easy." I said, "Yeah, I can do that. We're not dropping it, Brian." "No, no, no, okay. Well anyway, take it easy." A few days later the smoking Death Clock went up and he just about fell out of his car as he drove over the Horseshoe Bridge to work and he saw this huge thing go. So he rang me and he was furious and he said, "Is that taking it easy, is it?" I said, "I forgot about it, Brian. I signed that contract about six months ago and I can't stop it now, we've signed the contract, it's up." "Oh, when does the contract finish?" I said, "Look, as soon as it's finished I'll take it down." "But when is it finished?" I said, "Oh, it's only there for seven years." [Laughs] With that he hung up on me and the smoking Death Clock stayed there, but I wasn't very popular for quite a while.

JB: Tell us a little bit about Brian and his views on your work, because he was a smoker as you mentioned.

HODGE: Yes, well, he and I had a bit of a rocky relationship. As I mentioned, he had a candidate for the assistant secretary's position, which I stood for, and he had a candidate, a man called Ted Cunningham who later went on to become a member of Parliament, and I won and Brian's candidate got defeated. I had a few run-ins with Brian over various policy issues but in the main, we hit it off moderately well but I got to where I got on my own. I never had to rely on Brian to support me or push me or endorse me, and so I was pretty independent and I had a good strong support base in the Labor Party. He made it clear in his book that I was very black and white on the smoking issue, that everything was blacker than black and whiter than white, there was no room for compromise or delay or, he suggested when I first started talking about launching the campaign, that I should do some consultation and consult with different people; and he said in his book, and it's true. I said, "Brian, I've done all that. It's all done and I'm not going to delay it. My credibility is on the line here. I promised all these medical people we were going to do something and as far as I'm concerned, we're ready to go and I'm going to do it." So he had to go along with it, and he did, and when the going got tough against the tobacco industry he threw his lot in with me and supported me. We had the occasional disagreement over particular aspects of the campaign, particularly about me trying to stop advertising on government-owned land and things like this. But anyway, in the main we hit it off well and I can't complain about the support he gave me on the smoking issue. It was a pretty tough time for the government, and he stuck with it and gave me all the support I could

expect. So whilst we were never terribly close personally, we learnt how to work together and get on together, and when on the few occasions the going got tough, he supported me - so yeah. But I wasn't one of his really close people.

I've mentioned Mike Daube a few times. I should go back to that.

JB: You actually put out a search for this chap.

HODGE: Yes, we did. I spoke to one of the doctors in the health department who I trusted on these issues, public health sort of issues, Dr Charles Watson, and I said, "Charles, we need to get a really good team of people around us who are just dedicated to this smoking and health thing. It's going to get really hard going." And he agreed, and he said, "Look, you probably should advertise nationally or even internationally and try and get some really heavy hitters." I agreed with that and we did. We advertised nationally and internationally, and we got some very good applications. One that I was particularly taken with was from a professor in the US. He'd been Jimmy Carter's top adviser on cancer, Professor Don Iverson, and everyone I asked about him said, "Oh, wow, he's really one of the world's top people on cancer." I contacted him and he was very enthusiastic about it and said, "Oh gee, I wish they'd do something like this in the US," and I said, "Well, do you want to come out and see us and have a talk to us about it?" so he did, and he was very excited and said he was quite interested but he'd go home and talk to his wife and family and so forth about it and he'd be back in touch. In the meantime, I said to Charles, "You know there are other very impressive candidates. We should start interviewing them as well," and Mike Daube's name came up. He was a young man at Edinburgh University and he was very prominent with the World Health Organisation on the smoking issue and had a very good reputation, and I was quite interested in him; and there was a man from Victoria, Dr Nigel Gray, who was very prominent in cancer and anti-smoking circles. Anyway, Professor Don Iverson got back to me in the end and he said, "Oh look, I'm sorry. My wife absolutely refuses point-blank. She won't even contemplate moving to Australia. She thinks you've still got kangaroos jumping down the main street and in any event, she's not leaving her mother who's not well. So he said, "I wish you all the best and anything I can do to help I'll do but - - -."

So I thought, oh well, the other person that really interested me was Mike Daube so we got in touch with Mike and he came out and we interviewed him and he was just perfect. He was a dynamic young guy who had a good reputation and tremendous contacts all around the world. He was a single man, so no problem with family moving and anything, so we gave him the job; and he came out to Perth, and he just did a tremendous job and he stayed on. I got shifted after the '86 election to the environment portfolio but Mike stayed on with the health department. He ended up, anyway, as the top of the tree in the health department, in charge of the whole department, and then he ended up at Curtin University as a professor of health policy. He just recently retired from that position but he is still very active in his fields. So, yeah, he turned out to be a terrific appointment.

JB: This is all pre-internet?

HODGE: Yes.

JB: A thousand people that can do the job of a researcher or a photographer in one fell swoop of the, you know, the digit on a computer.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: The process of compiling all of this knowledge and information, and people like Michael Daube helping to do this, tell us a bit about that.

HODGE: Well, Mike Daube had an incredibly good network of contacts, a lot of whom were in the academic world through the World Health Organisation. So in Britain and Norway, which was very prominent, and the US and Hong Kong and other places, he had contacts so he could get all sorts of information fed to him quite easily really considering, as you say, there was no internet in those days. The health professionals, I'd say, almost to a person, were very much in tune and on side with us, so any request for research or assistance or information was usually very, very promptly complied with. Yes, even though we didn't have access to the internet, we had no shortage. Of course, we paid a lot of money to get market research on the direction of our health education messages and our advertising. Most of the health ministers in this country were pretty much on side. I used my position while I was national chairman to encourage them to do everything they possibly could in their states and territories to promote the anti-smoking message. But, yeah, it really wasn't a problem getting access to information, but trying to change social attitudes to smoking was the big task. Smoking, up until then, had pretty much in most circles been considered fairly normal behaviour.

JB: They might not like the smell, but they didn't know about the potentials.

HODGE: Yes, exactly, and passive smoking had never been heard of, really. We started talking about passive smoking and I had a doctor say to me, he said, "It's not just lung cancer, you know minister, there's sixteen different cancers we've identified that are caused by smoking," and so we started to publicise this and it really started to hit home together with, I think, very effective advertising and health education programmes. The nurses were incredibly good. On one occasion it was *Quit* day, on a Friday, and the nurses volunteered who were not working from public hospitals in their uniforms to go and hand out poppies or flowers in the city block and at the Perth train station, and places like that, to promote and advertise that it's *Quit* day. We had hundreds of nurses off duty, not getting paid, handing out flowers and pamphlets and messages about not smoking.

JB: So what did that tell you about the success of what you were doing?

HODGE: Oh, it encouraged us no end, no end. But on the other hand, the tobacco industry was still running advertisements showing the young woman behind bars in prison because she wore a T-shirt with a tobacco company logo on, that I was such a dictator and Nazi and

whatever. I mean, that's all in Hansard. That's all what the Liberals called me in Parliament on the debate on the legislation. It's all in Hansard. I'm not making it up. Anyone can check it. I was a dictator, a communist a Nazi; I was everything. And the newspapers I mean, again, you can see the editorials: I was impinging on freedom of the press and human rights and I was wanting to run the 'nanny' state and tell people what they can do. I was a wowser! My principal private secretary was a woman, Barbara McDonald. She mixed in a pretty wide social circle and told me, she said, "I've had people come up to me and say, 'Oh, are you working for that wowser? He sounds a real wowser. That must be a hard job.'" And she said, "He's not a wowser at all. You should see his wine cellar!" [Laughter]

JB: You were the first Australian health minister of the modern era to understand and act on evidence-based health promotion; and that's coming from the current health minister, Roger Cook.

HODGE: Yes, well, there were vast amounts of advertising money being spent on radio, television and in the newspapers. I said in one of my speeches not so long ago on this subject – in fact; they said to me also in the *Daily News*, the evening paper that used to be here, I was mentally unbalanced on the issue because they were getting all this advertising. There was a newspaper being published, the *Western Mail*, and being run by an entrepreneur, Holmes à Court, Robert Holmes à Court, he owned it, and it was the only newspaper in the state that didn't attack me. The reason they didn't attack me is that they wouldn't take tobacco advertising. Robert Holmes à Court wouldn't take tobacco advertising in his newspaper and so I got a dream run in the *Western Mail* [laughs] and got attacked mercilessly in all the other media because I was threatening their income.

Anyway, I survived till the '86 election and then, against my wishes, I was shifted from the health portfolio to the environment portfolio.

JB: Before we shift you, I want to ask a few more questions. You were involved with smoke-free areas, promoting smoke-free areas. How was that accepted within the community?

HODGE: Again, partially accepted, but I remember having a big fight over the Casino. They wanted to be exempted from it and I got overruled on wanting to enforce it there. I got overruled by the Cabinet or the Premier occasionally on different issues where they thought I was going too far too fast and not bringing the community along with me. I agitated very much against the smoking in aeroplanes and on buses then, of course, the health department. I'd put my foot down with all the government departments to stop the smoking permitted in there and the hospitals. Then, of course, people used to stand outside the front door of the hospital and smoke and abuse anyone who tried to move them on. Yeah, it was quite tumultuous.

JB: **Well, alfresco dining was a thing as well. People were puffing away at the table next to you and you were sort of choking as you're trying to eat your exotic meal.**

HODGE: Yes, well, my wife told me the story: we were at a big flash dinner somewhere one night and the bloke next to her said, "Do you mind if I light up?" and she said, "Yes, I do." And he looked at her and he said, "I beg your pardon?" and she said, "Yes, I do mind. I'd prefer it if you didn't." Hmm. So he waited for a few minutes, then just got his cigarette out and lit it, anyway. There was a very prominent doctor who was a member of the Labor Party, a specialist – I won't mention his name – he is alleged to have carried around a pair of small scissors in his suit-coat pocket and people swear that they've seen him get his scissors out and just go snip [laughs] and cut the ends off people's cigarettes. I never saw him actually do that, but I had a number of people tell me he did. Yeah, but it was hard going.

JB: **Are people getting used to not being able to smoke wherever they basically felt like?**

HODGE: Yes.

JB: **Now you have people walking down laneways to have a smoke, you know, next to the rubbish bins.**

HODGE: Yes, but what pleases me very much these days is that I've heard on several occasions people who are trying to get campaigns off the ground for other health-related issues, be it diet or alcohol or something else, and they say, "We need to run a campaign like the *Quit* campaign." Initially, of course, when I started the *Quit* campaign, the Liberal Party just were aghast at that and they peppered me with parliamentary questions trying to get to the bottom of how much was it costing and who was engaged in making the advertisements, and on what evidence were they based. When I said on market research, "Oh well, we want the market research." I said, "No, I'm not giving you the market research because you'll give it straight to the tobacco industry." Oh, you know. So here I was doing it all in secret and spending taxpayers' money and wouldn't divulge the information, wouldn't give them anything. The Leader of the Opposition at that stage was a man called Bill Hassell, and he was really, really vicious on the whole issue, but I did eventually some years later saw a photograph of him appearing in public with a *Quit* T-shirt on, so I felt that I'd had a bit of a win there. [Laughs]

END OF SECOND INTERVIEW

THIS IS THE THIRD RECORDED INTERVIEW SESSION WITH BARRY HODGE IN HIS HOME IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA ON THE 24TH OF NOVEMBER 2020 FOR THE STATE LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AND THE INTERVIEWER IS JOHN BANNISTER.

JB: Barry, you were talking about Bill Hassell being a convert [laughs]. Off-air you were saying […….inaudible] probably more a good campaign slogan to be wearing, but were you sort of seeing quantifiable results during that time? You mentioned that the parents weren't wanting their children to take up smoking; you were doing market research that was showing there was support for what was going on.

HODGE: Yes, I was never – just to get back to Bill Hassell, he was the leader of the opposition and he'd been very, very strongly opposed to everything I was doing and did his very best to sabotage it all the way along. But gradually, we were winning the battle and our campaign, we were doing constant market research and polling and the results were showing that our campaign was going over well and was making inroads into people's thinking. We found, particularly, we were on strong ground where we started aiming at preventing children from taking up smoking. And we found that most parents, almost all parents, whether they were smokers or not, didn't want their children to take up smoking; so we felt that we were on strong ground when we started heavily promoting advertising and education programmes aimed at alerting children to the dangers of smoking.

JB: You are talking about the adverts. We talked about the *Only Dags Need Fags* commercials, and there was a team that was organised to run that.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: The other commercials that were involved that I remember, there was the sponge, squeezing the tar out of a sponge. Tell us what was involved in getting that one up and running.

HODGE: I personally didn't have a lot of involvement in it; I left that to the smoking and health team. We had a dedicated team of really talented, determined individuals in the health department. All this was being funded by this extra licence fee, or tax, that we'd put on selling cigarettes and tobacco. I wouldn't say we were rolling in money, but we had ample money to do this properly, and we did it. The squeezing out of the tar from the lung was a very effective ad. I'm not absolutely sure who devised the actual content, whether it was the West Australian Smoking and Health team or whether they got the idea from somewhere else; but anyway, they adopted it with great enthusiasm and sought my endorsement, which I was only too happy to give them. There were a lot of other very innovative ads. As you say, *Only dags need fags*, and that was made in-house. I have some of the original artwork for that cartoon, which obviously was aimed at the children, and the health department gave me some of that original artwork as a going-away present when I shifted portfolios. I've mentioned the *Pretty Face* ad. I was quite heavily involved in that, of course. As I explained, we ran into trouble with the television stations, but we overcame that.

JB: But we see much more graphic ads today, and then they were confronting. I remember that 'squeezing out of a sponge' and that was pretty gross.

HODGE: It was pretty controversial at the time and pretty radical because all this was quite new and foreign to people because up until we really started agitating about smoking, smoking was socially acceptable. You could smoke everywhere and anywhere, and if you complained about it, people looked very strangely at you.

JB: I remember around about that time that there were lots of cigarettes coming out that were lower in tar, and people were saying, you know, at least if I only smoke five or whatever I could have two or something in the day. What was the sort of response, I guess, from the smoking?

HODGE: Oh they were trying all sorts of innovative things; you know. They had menthol flavoured cigarettes that were 'kinder to your throat', not that they ever admitted that there were any adverse health effects. They still were claiming adamantly that there was no proof that smoking was dangerous to your health or damaged your health in any way but, anyway, if you did get a bit of a sore throat it was a pretty minor ailment and if you smoked 'Kool' I think it was, you know that had menthol in them which soothed the throat and cleared the head; that was their slogan – *Sooth the Throat and Clear the Head*.

When we started heavily criticising them, that was a shock to their system and, as I've said, they tried very much to unsettle the state government to try and isolate me and try and then fight the state government and in their view stop the contagion that was gripping this state from spreading to other states and other countries. [Laughter]

JB: One of the more powerful ads at the time was the Yul Brynner ad.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: I think it was about '85 that that came out, and it was as a result of footage taken from another interview or something of Yul Brynner in America. Tell us what you know of the origin of that commercial.

HODGE: Look, I can't remember much about the origin of it. I know the smoking and health team and Mike Daube was very excited about it because Yul Brynner, earlier in his career, had made tobacco advertising. He'd done cigarette commercials and to get him to agree to do this, I suspect the American health people probably persuaded him to do it because he had a diagnosis that was fatal, his disease that he had caused by smoking. He made a huge impact because he was a well-known star and we put up a *big* billboard over the railway line in the centre of the city with a big photograph of Yul Brynner saying: *Whatever you do, don't Smoke*, *don't Smoke*, and that was very powerful and made a big impression on people.

JB What was the result of that that you could see with the ad being run?

HODGE: Well, we were getting more and more positive comments and support. As I said, to start with, people were looking at us and thinking you wowsers, or something, killjoys; and in Hansard, in one of the debates one of the very prominent opposition members, a shadow minister, was saying we were trying to take away one of the few pleasures that pensioners and low-income people could have. We were trying to take it away from them, and that's in Hansard, so it's on the record. A man called Ian Lawrence, who was the member for Carnarvon and a shadow minister - we were taking things away from pensioners and poorer people and, of course, the exact opposite was the truth. We were trying to protect their health and stop them from getting ill health and/or premature death.

So, yes, we were getting positive responses and attitudes were changing, but nevertheless we still had a huge task in front of us because it had just been so accepted. I mean, someone I was talking to the other day reminded me that during the Second World War and other wars the army supplied cigarettes to the soldiers and thought they were doing a good thing to help them, to help calm their nerves and, you know.

JB: […….inaudible] people who were instructed to start smoking was something that would chill you out before and after you went on a bombing raid!

HODGE: Well, it was seen as a calming agent, yes. It would settle your nerves and calm you. So we were up against decades of social acceptability but we were very encouraged by the market research we were doing and the polling and, of course, our friend the leader of the opposition, Bill Hassell, was peppering me with parliamentary questions the whole time demanding that I supply him with the research that we were doing: it was paid for by the taxpayers; it was public property, and I had a cheek to keep that secret.

JB: That's right.

HODGE: And of course we knew straight away since we gave it to him we thought he would probably just pass it on to the tobacco industry, who he seemed to be very sympathetic to.

JB: This is all before chewing gum, patches, E-cigarettes.

HODGE: It was.

JB: It was make or break. You either smoke or you don't.

HODGE: Yes; and there were many, many people who tried unsuccessfully numerous times to give up smoking, but it is a drug of addiction. I once had the head of the New South Wales Alcohol and Drug Authority say to me that in his experience, giving up smoking was as tough or tougher than giving up other illicit drugs because they were so readily available. You could just go and legally purchase them at the corner shop.

JB: For two dollars a packet.

HODGE: Yes, and people were blowing smoke in your face. So it was a lot more difficult to give up cigarettes than to give up illicit - - -

JB: **It's a serious choice these days. If you're going to be a smoker, it's going to cost you.**

HODGE: Yes, big money. Well, that was part of the tactic, of course, of us putting up the tax on the cigarettes. One reason was to raise money to fund the *Quit* campaign and other campaigns, and also to help fund the medical treatment we were having to give people when they became ill and went to hospital. The other reason we did it was to discourage people, to impose a financial penalty on them, really.

JB: **Certainly for the first few years a few extra cents wasn't really going to cut it, but now you're spending $25 on a packet of cigarettes and you need four of those a week or whatever it is, it's getting pretty serious.**

HODGE: It is and other governments have increased the tax even further so, yes, it is a very expensive addiction now.

JB: **Those adverts that we see today, and the latest one running I think is one where a doctor's actually taking out the voice box of someone and saying, you know, this is the most impacting operation that a person can have […….inaudible] it was going to happen to me, give up smoking whatever you do sort of thing.**

HODGE: Yes.

JB: **How do you see those current ads?**

HODGE: I'm a great fan. I was invited by the Cancer Council of Western Australia to go to the launch of those ads - that was just recently - and they showed the ads at the launch and I thought they were wonderful. I also met the two doctors that were featured in the ads and had a chance to talk to them. I was told that one of the ads, one of the most graphic ones where they actually cut a person's voice box out and then cut the voice box open and show you all the damage done inside, that they made that with the grand final being on television and to play the ads during the recent grand final, and they were stopped. I'm not quite sure whether it was the AFL or the television station or who it was that stopped them but they were told they were too graphic and would scare viewers and they had to amend the ad and they had to delete that actual surgery that showed the voice box being removed and then dissected. They were still able to have the first part with the doctors in the operating theatre in their gowns and equipment, and they were able to show the doctors talking to the camera saying don't smoke, et cetera but they had to cut the most graphic part out. The full commercial was allowed to be shown at other times, and I've seen it on television myself, and I think it's an excellent advertisement; far, far more graphic than we would have ever got away with back in the eighties when we were running ads. What we were doing was considered very radical. I was a zealot! [Laughs]

JB: **There are other ads that I can think of where a chap's being given the news by a doctor that he's obviously got cancer. There's another one where a family is sitting down to dinner and the wife is pouring something into a jug that's going into a tube into her stomach rather than actually eating proper food.**

HODGE: Oh, yes, yes.

JB: They're really doing a full-on job.

HODGE: Yes. Well, my understanding is that these days, the WA Health Department itself subcontracts all that work out to these not-for-profit groups in the community like the Cancer Council, the Heart Foundation, the ACOSH – the Australian Council on Smoking and Health. I think they're given funds by the health department to run these campaigns and manage them. I don't think the health department is hands-on any longer like it was in my day when I was running it.

JB: Well, it must give you a sort of a good feeling to know that the campaign that you started has inspired the ads of today.

HODGE: Yes, and I'm delighted that the campaign is still going. Quite a few other reforms that I made during my ministerial career only lasted for a short time after I left Parliament or I was shifted in the portfolio.

JB: I was going to ask, did you see your campaign change when you left?

HODGE: It was still pretty good. I was pleased that it wasn't abandoned. As I say, I set up a couple of shops called *Health Yourself* shops, one in the city in Perth and one in Bunbury, where they were staffed with health department people, and members of the public could just come in and get advice on health and diet and exercise and given pamphlets and literature to read, all factual information prepared by experts about natural ways that they could improve their health. Now those shops didn't last for very long after I was moved, and that's just one example, but with the smoking, most of my successors pretty much followed my lead. They probably weren't quite as zealous and determined as I was because I mean I had the hard part. I had to get all this up and running against a lot of resistance, and that had all been pretty much overcome to a large degree by the time other ministers took over, but Liberal and Labor governments pretty much kept the campaign going - which I was very pleased about - with varying degrees of enthusiasm, but it kept going, and these days it's still going very well. As I think I might have already said, some other people I hear saying, "We should run a campaign like the *Quit* campaign." When they're advocating for a campaign on other matters to do with obesity or whatever, they're quoting the *Quit* campaign as an example of what you should do, and to me, that's very satisfying because went from total opposition to almost total acceptance.

JB: You were awarded, obviously, recently – the Bob Elphick Award medal.

HODGE: Yes.

JB: Tell us about that and the current Health Minister, Roger Cook. Tell us about that.

HODGE: Well, that award comes from ACOSH, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health and the person running that organisation is Maurice Swanson who was, I think, Mike Daube's deputy. He came and lobbied me when he was a very young man when I was the Shadow Minister for Health, and he's committed his whole life. He ran the Heart Foundation for many years here as well. He's committed his whole working life to this issue, and he's passionate about it and extremely well informed. Anyway, my connection with ACOSH was sort of resurrected. It lapsed for quite some years but I contacted Mike Daube, when he was still working at Curtin University, and said, look I was on the board of Alchera Living, a not-for-profit group that ran four retirement villages in the City of Melville and I was trying to persuade the board to bring in a total non-smoking policy in all four villages. They did have some sort of anti-smoking policy but it wasn't comprehensive; it was just in the public facilities on the properties.

Anyway, I contacted Mike and asked him could he give me some statistics about smoking in multi-units, multi-storey units, and so forth and he did and he also referred me to Maurice Swanson at ACOSH to get some additional information. ACOSH bent over backwards to provide me with all the information I needed, and I was quite successful once I produced all this information into persuading the board to adopt the policy that I was advocating. I think ACOSH was rather delighted that I still had the passion and was still campaigning after all these years on the smoking issue. I think that prompted them to think, oh, we should do something to recognise the contribution Barry Hodge made, so each year they award a certificate to a person who's done something to assist in the campaign against tobacco and so last year they had the minister, the current minister, Roger Cook, give me the award so I was rather delighted.

JB: How do you see the current government and its work on health?

HODGE: I think they're doing a good job. I'm very impressed with Roger Cook. He's had his hands absolutely full with the Covid 19, and I'm very impressed with the job he's done on that: he's right on top of it. I've heard numerous interviews with him and he really understands his brief and knows it, and I think he's done a very, very good job.

JB: His father Hugh was a pretty important doctor in his time.

HODGE: Yes, I understand that.

JB: He came from good breeding. [Laughs]

HODGE: Yes. There's also, at the moment, I'm actively involved in lobbying my federal member of Parliament and my state member of Parliament here. There are reviews going on at the moment by both the state and federal government of their respective tobacco legislation. The federal government is reviewing all their legislation. Their review has been going on since January 19 and they've invited submissions from all sorts of interested groups, and ACOSH and the Cancer Council have made excellent submissions. They asked me would I support their submissions, and I said I would, so I wrote to my local federal member and I asked him

would he find out from his colleague, the minister for health, how the review was going, and when it might be completed and I drew his attention to the submissions from these groups. He's written back and said, yes, he'll do that, that the federal health minister had been pretty busy with the pandemic but he would pursue it and get back to me with any information he can get from where that review is. I did something similar with the state review. The State Health Department is reviewing all their legislation, and I wrote to my state member, who's a Labor member - the federal member's a member of the Liberal Party but as far as I'm concerned, that's irrelevant - and I asked her would she speak to the state minister and ask him how long he thinks the review will go for and make sure that he is aware of the submissions from the Cancer Council and ACOSH and that I support those submissions. I told both the federal member and the state member that, and I've had a nice reply back from her as well.

JB: **Do you see a time when cigarette smoking will be illegal?**

HODGE: I doubt it.

JB: **I mean you can still buy cigarettes in the supermarket for God's sake.**

HODGE: Yes.

JB: **How is that [……inaudible] You can't buy alcohol in a supermarket, or most supermarkets.**

HODGE: Look, it's a practical matter. I used to have that thrown at me often; in fact, I think in one of the editorials thundering against me in the *West Australian*. It's a product that is legal to grow, manufacture and sell, and yet here I am trying to virtually outlaw it. Then, of course, I had many others say to me, "Well, if you were serious about it and you weren't just interested in grabbing the tax, you would ban it." Well, we saw what happened in America during the prohibition period when they tried to ban alcohol – complete and utter failure, complete and utter failure. Once a drug has been legally available on the market for decades, it's a virtual impossibility to then retrospectively ban it; it just doesn't work, and the people who are slinging at you know full well it doesn't work and it's not practical; you couldn't do it. No, I think I can't see it ever becoming illegal, certainly not in my lifetime.

JB: **People talk about E-cigarettes being as bad as and things like that. Look, I admit that I smoked until E-cigarettes came along, and it was an E-cigarette that stopped me from smoking. Why isn't the E-cigarette legal enough to allow, certainly people to stop smoking?**

HODGE: Well, there was a lot of - - -

JB: **Does it really lead to children smoking […….inaudible] cigarettes?**

HODGE: Well, I think that's the fear. I think there are two aspects to the opposition to E-cigarettes. It was very comprehensively dealt with in those submissions, that I mentioned to

you a few moments ago, that have been made to the state and federal government, and they've put in a mountain of evidence about E-cigarettes and vaping, but I think just to simplify it all, one concern is that it will lead to smoking of tobacco and the other is that there is ever-increasing evidence that a lot of the chemicals that are put into the E-cigarettes are very harmful to your body. The argument in favour is what you have mentioned, that in some cases it does help some people to kick the habit, which I acknowledge is a very, very difficult habit to kick, but there is more and more evidence coming to light about the dangers to your health from it and also there's a lot of evidence that it leads, ultimately to particularly young people who think it's fairly harmless, them into smoking tobacco.

JB: You would be moved to the environment. What was it like to sort of leave the health – well, you mentioned in passing – what was it like to actually leave the health ministry behind?

HODGE: I was very disappointed to be shifted. I had no say in it. I just had a letter hand-delivered, to me.

JB: By whom?

HODGE: From the Premier, telling me that he was reshuffling the Cabinet, and he wanted me to take over the environment portfolio.

JB: Do you know why he would have wanted to shift you from a job that presumably you'd been doing quite well into a portfolio that possibly you might not have been particularly suited to?

HODGE: He never gave me an explanation; I can only guess. I never got an explanation and he wouldn't take my phone calls. It was either accept that or not be in the Cabinet. I think I probably did cause him a lot of headaches because I was a pretty determined sort of a character. He said in his book that I saw things in black and white, you know, blacker than black and whiter than white, and that I wasn't very open to compromise. Well, he told me that to my face that I was an absolutist [laughs] and I think I did cause him quite a lot of headaches. I mentioned earlier on that - - - It wasn't just the smoking, by the way, I think I did have some run-ins with the AMA, not over the smoking issue, over other issues.

JB: Did you want to elaborate on that?

HODGE: Well I could, briefly. We had a number of teaching hospitals, obviously, that you will be aware of, the big teaching hospitals. We also had a lot of non-teaching hospitals, which were quite large hospitals in the suburbs, and they took a lot of the workload and cost a lot of money to run. In the main, we had no actual doctors on the staff, and the doctors were local private doctors who came into the hospital and provided the medical services. We had nurses and orderlies and cooks and cleaners and what have you, but very rarely were there any actual doctors on the payroll. The doctor got paid for service, so every service, every patient he saw, he got a fee. I was pretty desperate to try and keep control of the costs of the health portfolio, which were astronomical. I've already told you they took over a quarter of the entire state budget and one of the reforms I wanted to make was to have actual salaried or sessional

doctors on the payroll so the salaried doctors were full-time salaried practitioners; the sessional doctors, we would get a private doctor who would come in and agree to work for a morning or an afternoon or day, or whatever, for a set fee, not on a fee-for-service basis.

Well, the AMA thought this was the beginning of the nationalisation of the health service that they were all going to be eventually taken on by the government and not be private operators, so they fought it tooth and nail. When we advertised for salaried doctors to come and work in the non-teaching government hospitals, they boycotted the ads and put the pressure on any of their colleagues who were tempted to apply, so we got very few applications and very little response because of the campaign from the AMA. I then decided, well, I would take more radical measures, so I got the medical superintendent of the Royal Perth Hospital in and I instructed him to move a number of his salaried and sessional doctors from the Royal Perth out to the first non-teaching hospital that I was working on.

Well, he was not happy about that at all because that put him in direct conflict with his colleagues in the AMA. But anyway, I gave him a written instruction, which he had no choice but to abide by, so he did that and the doctors were outraged but that was how I got around their ban – all the teaching hospitals were required to provide staff for a particular non-teaching government hospital. Eventually, we were able to do without the fee-for-service doctors or they could come in on a sessional basis. That caused a lot of controversy and a lot of complaints about me to the Premier and, of course, the tobacco industry was complaining nonstop about me to the Premier, [laughs] so my suspicion is that he probably thought he needed a bit of a break from me. The only official explanation I got was that for the first three years of the Burke government, the former environment minister, Ron Davies, had been trying very hard to bring in new environmental protection legislation. The old legislation we had was brought in by the Tonkin government in 1971 and it was pretty useless and out-of-date then. It was based on British legislation, which was even older, and it was really next to useless. Ron tried his hardest to get a new Environmental Protection Act up and running for the full three years of his period there as minister. Every draft he had done he'd sent it to the *Greenies* as we call them, the environmentalists, and then he'd send it to the *Brownies* as we called them, the miners and developers and what-have-you. Of course, everyone hated it and no-one would support it so he got up to about nine drafts, I think, and still couldn't get anything that anyone was prepared to support; and so he could see if he put legislation of that sort into Parliament, it wouldn't get through.

JB: Were you able to bring your black and white policies into the ministry?

HODGE: I did.

JB: Tell us what the main issues were that you entered.

HODGE: Yes, alright, I will, but there was a second problem as well, which I'll just mention, then if you're interested I can go back to it. Ron Davies and Brian Burke, together, had decided that there needed to be a new head of the Environmental Protection Authority. The environmental protection authority was a small statutory body with just three members on

it and it was attached to the department of environment The environmental protection authority was there to make policy and to assess applications, and so forth, and the department was supposed to supply the staff and the facilities and the accommodation for this. They employed a man called Barry Carbon, who is a very well-known scientist who worked for the CSIRO, and at that stage, when they were approaching him, he was working for ALCOA as their environmental expert and they persuaded Barry to give up ALCOA and take on the chairmanship of the EPA. It appears that he was under the impression that he, in fact, was going to be in charge, overall, of the department and the EPA, but the department had a permanent head who thought he was in charge of the department and that Barry Carbon was only in charge of this little three-person authority; so there was a built-in serious conflict there. I was told to resolve those two issues. The new Environmental Protection Act, the government felt they were being hammered because they didn't have decent environmental protection legislation and there was this problem of the two people thinking they were both in charge of the one area.

I decided I would resolve that latter problem first. It was the most urgent because both these men had come to see me urgently, as quickly as possible after I was sworn in, to pour out their heart and tell me how difficult it was and it wasn't working that the two of them both were trying to do the one thing and it just wasn't working. Barry Carbon thought he'd been put in charge of the whole thing and the permanent head said, well, he was the permanent head and he'd been there for quite some time and he'd done nothing wrong, which is true – he had a good reputation.

Anyway, to cut a long story short I got them both in and had a heart-to-heart talk with them, and in the end, I decided that the permanent head, I would offer him a redundancy and put Barry Carbon, who I thought was more dynamic and in tune with what the public were expecting of a department of environment in those days. The permanent head, whose name I can't remember at the moment, was bitterly disappointed, and I did feel very sorry for him. He'd done nothing wrong, but we had this impossible position with two well-qualified people trying to do the one job.

I tried to give him as generous a settlement as I possibly could to help cushion the blow, but I don't think he ever forgave me for that. Anyway, once I put Barry Carbon in charge, he and I hit it off very well. He was a very astute operator and right in tune. I then said to him, "Well, our next job Barry is to get up this legislation which the Premier has told me is a very, very high priority," and so we nutted out a way that we thought we could do it. We decided instead of us preparing the legislation then presenting it to the warring parties that we would get the warring parties to nominate people to go on a working party and we would give them experts and assistance. We'd open up the EPA after hours, night time, weekends, bring in staff, and the working party could draw up the legislation, which they proceeded to do. They said, "Well, what do you want us to do?" I said, "It's not what I want you to do, it's what you think the state needs and what you can live with." I laid down a few basic ground rules, one of which - the most important one - is that the final, ultimate decision on any environmental approval will rest with the minister. You can make recommendations. The legislation, the EPA, whatever, can make recommendations which will be public, but the minister and the government will

have the final say; and if we make the wrong decision, the public will know and it'll be on our head.

I was called in once or twice to resolve disputes that they couldn't agree on. I only went in once or twice, as I say. Anyway, in the end, they presented me with a draft that they both supported. I tabled it in the parliament and let it sit on the table of the house for three months to give the public and journalists, and everyone else, an opportunity to peruse it and consider it. It got a very, very good reception and the media ran around to all the *Greenies* and said, "Oh, what do you think of this new legislation? Are you going to rip it to bits? Do you hate it?" and they all said, "No, No. Actually, we are reasonably happy with it. It's not perfect, but it's not bad"; and the same with the other side. They said, "Oh yeah, well, it'd be good to have a bit of certainty and it's a big improvement on what we've got at the moment. It's not everything we wanted but nevertheless we can work with this"; and so it went through Parliament with a handful of very minor amendments made in the upper house, which everyone was happy to live with. They didn't damage what we were trying to do.

JB: So in '86, what were the concerns? What were the main environmental issues facing you?

HODGE: The *Greenies* wanted it all out in the open. They wanted the developers to have to make a submission to the EPA on what proposal they wanted to do and that had to be public, and the EPA was to consider it and if necessary tell the developer or proponent that you'll have to do more research, more study, present more information on this that and the other, all got to be made public, and in the end, the EPA would make a recommendation to the minister and the minister would make the final decision. We also built in an appeal mechanism, again with the final decision being with the minister. The thing that the government definitely didn't want was to have the whole situation bogged down in court cases.

JB: So this was more industrial pollution. If you're going to dig a hole, you've got to take concern of the environment. It wasn't sort of necessarily climate change – watch out!

HODGE: Climate change hadn't, you know, been recognised at that stage. It was mining projects, residential land development projects, anything that was going to have an impact on the river or air pollution, mining and development. What the *Greenies* were most concerned about was they didn't want it all done in secrecy and just be presented with a – and there were opportunities for people to appeal, or at every step the EPA's recommendations were appealable et cetera, and I could make a preliminary decision and then have that open to people to criticise and find out where I'd got it wrong or whatever.

The industry was very pleased that they had something definitive written down in black and white that the government was legislation, that the government had to abide by, everyone had to abide by it and they knew where they stood, they knew what they had to do, what the mechanism and the procedure was, so that was their concern. I had it through by the end of the year. I got sworn in at the beginning of the year, February, and by December we had the

new Environmental Protection Act through Parliament. It was recognised as one of the best Environmental Protection Acts anywhere.

JB: Have you seen that being continued on, carried on?

HODGE: Yeah, the Act is still applicable today. I mean, it has been amended over the years but if you look up now the environmental legislation in this state is still the Environmental Protection Act 1986, which Barry Carbon and I were the sort of designers and architects of it. A lot of people in the EPA put a lot of hard work into it.

JB: Do you see amendments need to be made today?

HODGE: Oh yes - - -

JB: Needs to be updated.

HODGE: - - - things have changed, yes, yes, and **[…….using it for decades**] has shown there are some areas where it could be improved and, yes, it's still a very, very good piece of legislation and has been made still relevant to today's needs because of the amendments that have been made over the years so I'm rather pleased that it's still in use today.

JB: When you look back at your - - - I mean, you would then retain that portfolio into the Dowding government, but ultimately, I think it was '89, you would move out of that area into waterways.

HODGE: No, no. In '86 I was sworn in as Minister for Environment Conservation and Land Management. There was a second department I was responsible for, which was CALM - Conservation and Land Management. Then sometime after that, my portfolios were amended to include waterways, but for most of the period, I had all that responsibility through to '89 when I lost my seat.

JB: In Melville?

HODGE: Yes. I was responsible for the EPA, Conservation and Land Management and there were numerous small statutory bodies of the Swan River management trust and the Leschenault Inlet Management and, oh, various waterways that I was responsible for. It was quite an interesting portfolio; I grew to quite like it. The workload wasn't as crushing as the health department. Obviously, you are dealing with a lot smaller departments, a lot smaller number of staff and expenditure. The workload in the health department was crushing, really. I used to work over a hundred hours a week, a hundred and ten hours a week. If I got half a day off on the weekend, I was doing well. If I got a full day off, well, that was like a long weekend. The environment portfolio wasn't without its controversy. As you can imagine, there were controversial issues blowing up all the time, but it wasn't the same crushing administrative workload. In the health department, I think – I can't remember now – it was either fifteen or eighteen separate unions that covered the staff that I was dealing with, and that wasn't anywhere near as prominent in the other portfolio.

I did have difficulty with the two permanent heads: Barry Carbon was the head of the EPA and a man called Dr Syd Shea was in charge of CALM. Syd was a controversial character, a very excitable sort of guy. He was a personal friend of the Premier's and he had family connections with the Burke family, and Brian has actually appointed him as Head of Conservation and Land Management. He moved out the other previous head and put him into a position in the Premier's department and put Syd in charge. Syd and Barry Carbon, in their younger days, used to be very close friends. I believe that Barry Carbon was best man at Syd's first wedding, but they had a falling out and they really couldn't hit it off at all and I found it very difficult. I couldn't really have meetings with both of them present. I had to have separate meetings, and there was quite a deal of competition between them. CALM didn't really think that their decisions about forest management and conservation et cetera should be subject to EPA approval, and the EPA and myself had other opinions. We thought that everything that they did should be subject to EPA approval and so there was quite a deal of conflict between those two departments, which made life a bit difficult at times.

JB: In relation to your future career, you would move on after leaving in, I think, 1990, leaving Parliament you would - - -

HODGE: Eighty-nine.

JB: - - - move to Land and Forest Commission, being chairman for that?

HODGE: Yes. I hadn't really expected to lose my seat. I only lost it by 32 votes because there had been a pretty radical boundary change. Anyway, I was at a bit of a loose end. I hadn't really planned what I was going to do after, and I was approached and asked would I be interested in chairing the Land and Forest Commission, which was a small body. It's a bit like the EPA and the department of environment. The Land and Forest Commission was attached to CALM, and they provided the staff and resources but the Land and Forest Commission was responsible for managing state forests and reserves, and places like that – national parks and I quite enjoyed - - - That was only a part-time position; I quite enjoyed doing it, and I was able to cope with it quite easily. I did that for a few years.

I was also approached by the federal Labor government Senator Peter Walsh, who I knew quite well. He approached me and said would I be prepared to take a position on the Legal Aid Commission here in Western Australia, a position to represent the federal Attorney-General on the Legal Aid Commission, that they needed someone reliable there to represent the Commonwealth. And so I agreed to do that, and I did that for quite some years, I think from memory about seven years, something like that, and I found that very interesting. I appreciated having those little jobs; they did give me an interest. I decided that I would start up a business as a consultant/lobbyist because I had all this knowledge of how government worked, and I felt that many corporations and other groups in society didn't really understand how the government worked and how they should get things introduced to the government and through all the government procedures et cetera, et cetera. I did that for a few years and got quite a bit of work at times. When the Labor government lost office, I found my work dried up a bit

because I didn't have the same entrée to the Liberal government as I had to the Labor government. I then decided I would study real estate. I was a bit interested in real estate so I went to TAFE and studied and I ended up getting my Associate Diploma of Business Management, which was the real estate qualification, and myself and another student got equal top marks in the state for that and in due course, after I'd done the appropriate apprenticeship, I started my own little real estate business, which I did for a few years. I got sick of that and I started up a business in Fremantle called *Fremantle Cottages and Apartments*. I bought four properties in Fremantle: three of them were beautiful old limestone cottages, a hundred and twenty years old, and one modern apartment; and I let them out for short-term accommodation. These were in the days before Air B&B [laughs] of course. I did that for about six years and eventually I retired altogether.

JB: When you look back on your career, and we're talking mainly about the smoking campaign. When you look back at the success of that, we see WA having some of the lowest rates of smoking in the state. I think there was a 3.3 per cent drop just between 2010 and 2013. When you look at the success – when you were minister you could smoke anywhere literally. At university people were smoking in the corridors and in their lectures and tutes, in the library - - -

HODGE: In the health department, in the hospitals.

JB: Everywhere. When you look at where we are today, what do you say given your involvement, given the success of your campaign?

HODGE: Well, it was obvious what needed to be done, but the task was daunting to a lot of people. Look, it was a bit similar to the task I pulled on with the amalgamation of the three health departments into one. That was obvious for thirty years or more beforehand but no-one felt like pulling on the fight, so this brash and zealous younger man [laughs] came along and could see these things needed to be done and immediately launched into doing them. Well, I mean, the information given to me by Maurice Swanson and Clive Deverell and other people, it was glaringly obvious that it was the biggest cause of preventable death and ill health and yet nothing, or practically nothing, was being done about it. But I suppose a lot of people could see, well, you're going to be in for a *huge* fight, a *huge* brawl, and as I said earlier on, overseas experience showed that the tobacco industry would launch *huge* campaigns against - - -

JB: All-out war.

HODGE: Yes, against the government, and they would try and separate the minister from the rest of the government to show the rest of the government your standing has just been eroded terribly here by this zealot. I mean, I was brash and young and determined and I was just determined I was going to do it and quite frankly, if I couldn't do it I couldn't see any point in being minister for health.

JB: Is there anything you would have done differently, and if so, what would that be?

HODGE: (Sighs) No. No. I can't think of anything that I regretted doing in respect of the smoking. I was going to say perhaps if I'd been a bit older and a bit more mature, had a bit more life experience maybe I would have done things differently but I doubt it. I think you had to take the approach that I took to get it done to overcome the resistance and the apathy and the fear. I think perhaps in some other parts of my administration and my various portfolios, I think if I was administering them now I wouldn't be quite so dogmatic and determined and so forth in some areas. I probably would take it a bit easier and try and be a little bit more circumspect about some of the things I did, but I think in respect of the smoking, you had to take the approach that I did.

JB: And I think most people would agree.

HODGE: Fortunately, I enjoyed the support of my colleagues. They stuck with me; they didn't let the tobacco company divide us and just say, well Hodge, you're out on your own – sink or swim. They all stuck with me and supported me through thick and thin.

JB: Is there anything that possibly a member of the public has said to you in relation to that campaign that sticks out?

HODGE: I used to have a lot of people come up to me in the street and at service stations and restaurants and tell me that they supported me, and it was long overdue. They'd tell me about some member of their family who had died prematurely or was severely ill, and they didn't want their children to do it. I did get the occasional bit of criticism about being a zealot and a wowser and a killjoy, but that was in the minority. I mean, I had tremendous support from the senior members of the medical profession and the nursing profession, virtually all the health professionals - dentists. Everyone supported what I was doing, and that reinforced my resolve to stick with it and do it. As I said, the Premier was the only smoker in Cabinet and he got so embarrassed that he quit, and he just did it cold turkey, cold turkey, and he'd been a heavy smoker.

I've never forgotten – I'll probably just finish off on this one little amusing story. He and I had been out somewhere together – can't remember where – and we rocked up to Parliament House in his car and as soon as we pulled into the carpark we could see there was a massive throng of journalists and TV cameras and radio stations all waiting to interview him about something. He looked at me and I looked at him, and he had his packet of cigarettes and his lighter grasped in his hand. He could see that wasn't going to be a good look when he fronted the media, so he looked at me and he said, "Here Hodgey, you take these!" [Laughs] And so he thrust the cigarettes and the lighter at me and then he got out to face the throng minus the cigarettes and I then had to try and surreptitiously sort of squeeze my way around the crowd and get into the door of Parliament House without anyone seeing me with the cigarettes and lighter [Laughs]

JB: [Classic photo opportunity] of Barry Hodge carrying a packet of fags. [Laughter]

HODGE: I think shortly after that he decided that he would go cold turkey and give up smoking, which he did.

JB: **And you had one other story.**

HODGE: Oh yes. I just thought that I should mention it. I mentioned earlier in this interview that I left school at fifteen and I'd never gone to university. My daughter persuaded me that I should enrol at Murdoch University to do a law degree. I had to do a preliminary three-month course and if you did well in that you got accepted automatically into the law school, which I did. I did it part-time, it took me six years, and just around the time of my seventieth birthday, I graduated with a law degree. I have not practised law, but I found it a good challenge to help keep my brain from seizing up, and I put it to good use doing the voluntary work I do for Alchera.

JB: **Barry, I think we've covered most of the brief and I wanted to say thank you very much for being involved in the project, and on behalf of the State Library I'll just shake your hand.**

HODGE: Thank you.

JB: **And thank you on behalf of all those people who are trying to give up smoking and may have been inspired by a campaign that you got up and running back in the 80s.**

HODGE: Good. It's been a pleasure, John. Thank you.

JB: **Thank you very much. Cheers.**

END OF THIRD INTERVIEW