



The Greens (WA)
30th Anniversary History Project
[1990-2020]

An interview with:

Dr CHILLA BULBECK



14th October 2020 at Subiaco

The Greens (WA) acknowledge that First Nations peoples, as the original inhabitants of this country, have a special cultural and spiritual connection with the land and water. We believe that their rights and responsibilities as owners and custodians must be respected.

We hold that First Nations peoples have a right to self-determination and political representation, and must be partners in the development and implementation of public policies, programs and services that affect them.

This interview was recorded on Noongar land and the Greens (WA) acknowledge that these lands were stolen and sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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INTERVIEWER

David Worth, Greens (WA) History Project Working Group.

TRANSCRIBER

Chilla Bulbeck, Emerita Professor, The University of Adelaide, Greens (WA) History Project Working Group.

NOTES TO READERS

FULL CAPITALS in the text indicate a word or words emphasised by the interviewee.

Square brackets [] are used for insertions not in the original recording.

INTERVIEW DISCLAIMER

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INTRODUCTION

Chilla Bulbeck joined the Greens (WA) in 2010 and became increasingly active until 2019. She was campaign co-manager for Curtin for the 2016 Federal campaign and assisted the Party with field organising in the subsequent 2017 State election and 2019 Federal election campaigns. She was the Secretary from 2011-14 and the Co-convenor between 2017-19. She was a member of the Administration Working Group from 2011-2016 and 2017-2019 and the Quick Decision Making Group in 2017-19.

Using her writing skills developed as an academic at three universities, Chilla was one of the editors of *Green Issue* for a number of years and contributed to expanding the descriptions of current and former Greens Members of Parliament for the Party's web site.

Chilla helped establish the Election Research Group, which was a subgroup of the Election Campaign Committee. She was a candidate for the seat of Mandurah during the 2013 State election.

In 2019 Chilla made a very large donation to the Greens from her father, Francis Bulbeck's, bequest, which along with other significant member donations, particularly from Jay Birnbrauer's bequest, has allowed them to purchase their office in Stirling St Perth in 2020 - the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Party.

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TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01] DW: Okay, my name is David Worth, and I'm here with Chilla Bulbeck on Wednesday, the 14th of October [2020] and the interview is taking place in my house in Subiaco. Chilla, thanks very much for joining us.

BULBECK: Thank you for this opportunity, actually. Yes.

DW: Can we start with where you were born, and when?

BULBECK: Okay, so I was born in 1951 in Adelaide.

DW: And your parents, were they employed themselves or was your Mum in a situation of working at home with the children or ...?

BULBECK: So, I was the first child, and my mother got married when she was 19 and she had me 10 months later, so before she turned 20. She had started going to university and doing mathematics. She was very good at numbers, but she couldn't see the point of imaginary numbers. So, she left university. She was actually working in Salisbury but on the Woomera rocket range thing for a while¹. I think she might have met Dad during that or it might have been after she stopped doing that.

Anyway, she basically married Dad from not being employed. He'd come back from the war. He'd been quite a young pilot in the war and came back and he got into the university doing architecture within an engineering degree as part of the post-war soldier university scheme. And they met because Mum's slightly older brother was also doing architecture. And on her 17th birthday, Newell, my uncle invited Dad to come along. So, they met at that time.

DW: Oh, very romantic. Can you tell me your Mum and Dad's names?

BULBECK: So, he's called Francis Paul Bulbeck and she is called Paquita Margaret, and it was Platten before she married.

DW: So, it's Paquita?

BULBECK: [Chilla spells it out] Douglas Mawson's wife. When Grandma was pregnant, well Newell my uncle has also got quite an unusual name. But when Grandma was pregnant with Mum, which was her second child, Mawson was down in the Antarctic and Grandma was actually up in New Ireland in Papua New Guinea. But anyway, she was an avid reader and she was reading that he would write these sort of romantic letters home to Paquita. I presume they took a long time to get there. But anyway, Paquita Mawson was a sort of known or somewhat known entity. And Grandma just liked the name.

DW: That's a beautiful name. And your own name isn't Chilla, is it?

BULBECK: It's Cachilla.

DW: Margaret Cachilla.

¹ Paquita was a comptometrist at the Anglo-Australian Joint Project established for long range weapons testing after World War II. It was probably known then as the Long Range Weapons Establishment. Facilities at Salisbury, a suburb of Adelaide, supported the design and testing of weapons: https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Woomera_Test_Range

BULBECK: Yeah, that's right.

DW: And your Mum being at university in those early days, there wouldn't have been too many women at university.

BULBECK: No, she never mentioned that as part of the reason why she left. I don't know, I mean the fact that she was good at maths and she was happy to go on with a maths career. She went to Unley High School and went right through to Matriculation obviously to get to Uni. And I'm just trying to think, I've got a picture of her in that high school, and there was probably a ratio of sort of maybe three to one, two to one of men to women.

But I think she wasn't really aware of it, she almost wasn't aware of gender oppression until Dad dumped her for another woman many, many years later. Another woman about Mum's age so it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But, yes, I think she had that sense of you just do what you do. But she wasn't a natural fit for motherhood.

DW: Right.

BULBECK: The story that she has sometimes told was my grandfather on that side was a Methodist missionary and Grandma and Mum had to run away. This is a long, complicated history, we don't need to worry about all of that, but had to run away when the Japanese bombed Rabaul [in PNG]. So, they left. Grandpa stayed for a while trying to get some intel on the Japanese. He eventually got out on a boat and was lucky to get back to Australia.

So, at the end of all this, they never had a house, not until right at the end [after Grandpa left the Methodist Mission, many years later]. And there was quite a shortage of accommodation after the war. So, they were living in the corner of another Methodist member of the congregation's house who Mum and Grandma always felt resented their presence there. But they were kind of obliged to do it because it was the charitable thing you do. And so, my story of Mum is she married Dad to kind of get out of, to have a house of her own, which she did. Half a house, anyway, is what they got basically as soon as they got married.

[00:04:56] And also, you didn't think about whether you were going to get married and have children. Very few women thought about that then. And she was young, she was so young. So, I think she just went that path. And it took her a few years. I mean, she probably did realise that motherhood wasn't the ideal thing for her, but because she was young, she was able to get back to work. And so, my sister, who was the youngest, four years younger than me, was probably about eight when Mum went back and started doing an accountancy bookkeeping degree at the equivalent of TAFE in those days, and she did very well. And she eventually went on to be the Deputy Bursar of the University of Adelaide. So, that's a position she retired from.

DW: Yeah, that's a fabulous advance in those early ages. But I'm also just thinking of her being young and being pregnant with you. We'll get onto your studies later, but obviously, she wouldn't have had the options, I suppose, that women have today in dealing with that situation.

BULBECK: No, although it's interesting. So, that was 1951 she had me. So, it would have been probably the early '60s that she went back and started [studying]. And then she was also doing a bit of part-time work, once she started the bookkeeping, she did some

bookkeeping for different firms and that kind of thing, not a lot of work. I guess that's true. Most of my life growing up, she was working, just studying or working or both.

And in fact, Grandma came round two days a week as Mum was doing too much of this. We obviously weren't being as helpful as we could. And Grandma would do the housework and cook for us and also actually mentor us, which was really beaut for us. But, yes, I didn't see such a stark difference between Mum and Dad, although there were certainly gender messages in the household. So, she chose to go back. But I was going to say Anne Summers wrote her Honours thesis in 1970², and she actually points out that in the early '60s, women were already going back to work.

The story of women's liberation kind of almost starts later than the actuality of some of those movements of women, which is kind of interesting. But Mum would have been the first one in her, the youngest, I think, among her group of friends, but also the first one probably to have the 'problem with no name' [referring to Betty Friedan's book on married women not finding domestic life sufficiently satisfying], to break out of that and start studying.

DW: You mentioned a younger sister. Were you the only two children in the family?

BULBECK: No, there were three. So, I was born, then two years later, my brother David was born and then two years later, my sister Lee or Leslee was born. And there was a miscarriage, which I think was after Lee.

DW: And so your memories of that early childhood, you mentioned your grandmother coming in to help a couple of days a week.

BULBECK: That was quite a bit later. I have a grandfather on either side who's in the church. On my father's side, he became the Archdeacon of Adelaide. So, he was an Anglican. And on my mother's side, it was the Methodists. There's a bit of a class thing in there as well as different religions. Grandpa and Grandma went back to Papua New Guinea. I think they were initially in the church, and then Grandma was really worried about what they'd do in their retirement because the church didn't provide. She was always, actually women in the family were the ones thinking about the family finances. He then did a bit of work for the Australian Government up there in terms of why there was such a low birth rate on this island of Tabar he'd done some missionary work on.

And then they came back to Adelaide. And then my grandfather went all mad with the League of Rights³, which is how my Grandma puts it. But he did get really engaged in it. He'd been a really radical missionary and really into saying the Papua New Guineans' values were not just signs of savagery. They actually had anthropological reasons for that, functional reasons for why they might do certain things and tried to blend it in with the sort of way in which he did his church teachings. So, I think they thought it was a bit like not what they wanted in the church. But then, as I say, he got kind of quite right-wing. And that was very hard for my grandmother, who was always quite radical. She'd been a Catholic, actually, there was a lot of religion. But anyway, so I was saying something there about ...

DW: It was about her intervening in your family.

² *Women's Consciousness of their Role-Structure*. Thesis presented as part requirement for the Honours BA degree in Politics at the University of Adelaide, 1970, 267pp. Anne is an Australian writer and columnist, best known as a leading feminist, editor and publisher. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Summers

³ A far-right and anti-Semitic political organisation founded in Adelaide by Eric Butler in 1946. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_League_of_Rights

BULBECK: So, that was later on.

DW: A mentor for you?

[00:09:32] **BULBECK:** Yeah, so that was really important probably from when I was about 15, but maybe even a bit later because I think I was at Uni by the time she came. So, I was getting really radical by then. A lot of people were, in that age category, and it was really more so at Uni than at school. We were already getting a bit antsy at school, some people. But we didn't really know, I was at a private girls school, which was quite conservative. And so, we were not liking some of its messages, but not really having an alternative story or explanation or narrative. But at Uni, of course, there was lots of alternative narratives, about anti-Vietnam.

DW: All that yes, feminism and ...

BULBECK: And I remember, there were big anti-Vietnam rallies. And I remember sitting around in the living room and saying, I can't remember which one of my parents said this, but I was going on one of those big moratorium marches. And I think it was Mum who said, 'Well, don't expect us to come and get you out of prison if you get arrested', kind of thing. And I think it was Dad who said, 'Don't worry, we'll come and get you'. But so, they were a bit like, 'You shouldn't be so radical'. But Grandma was always like, 'Get on the barricades. I'm too old, but you've got to do it', sort of thing. So, she was much more supportive of that.

DW: That's fantastic. And can you remember any other influences from your early childhood that stayed with you through to being an adult?

BULBECK: So, I don't think I remember them with the same ... like at the time knowing that was an important message. But my father had a theory about a well-rounded person, which he tried to turn his children into with some success. So, we had to do a sport. Ideally, you had to have a musical instrument, but that never happened for me. And you had to know something about current affairs and politics. So, he'd try to get us to read newspaper articles some time during the day and we'd be quizzed on them over the meal at night, which hardly lasted a week. So, his various strategies weren't very successful.

He tried to kind of paint the political scene for us. And I remember him explaining, the Liberals work with their heads and Labor work with their hands and that kind of simple sort of thing. But he himself never fitted into a political framework easily. I think he possibly voted for every political party Australia has thrown up. So, that statement he made then, considering he was an architect, was really saying that we're Liberal. But he later on ran as, he called himself an independent Labor candidate, against this guy, Tommy Stott, who was the Speaker for the House [of Assembly] in South Australia.

And Dad got some votes, he didn't do that well. But I remember running off on his architectural machine that ran off designs, running off sort of brochures, flyers to pin up along the Murray River in the various towns and that kind of thing. So, it's not that I reflected on that at the time in terms of this is a wonderful thing my father's doing. But he was doing it and I was kind of involved in it, at least to some extent. And it didn't strike me as a negative thing to be doing. In fact, I think probably a kind of normal thing.

And my father was so pleased that I was involved politically in a way that I think Mum always disliked me being involved in the Greens. I think she thought it was all part of my

excessive radicalism, that I thought there could be a better world and really there can't. And I was just crying out for something that couldn't be possible. Whereas Dad, I think he saw that as an extension of that civic engagement, finally I got it, that he'd always wanted.

But I remember, he spent his last possibly a year or so in a nursing home. And it must have been the 2016 Federal election. Anyway, I'd go back to Adelaide periodically to visit him and I thought, 'I've got to get him an absentee vote. I bet nobody else has enrolled him for an absentee vote'. So, I got the information and everything, and I got him to fill it out so it could be sent to him in the nursing home rather than the expectation that he'd turn up somewhere [at a polling booth], which he couldn't do. Anyway, the next time I visited him after the election, he said, 'Well, dear, I think I voted for your Greens'. And whenever I tell people that story, what they really like is how Dad said, I *think* I voted, so he was trying to do it. He was a little bit out of it then. But I just think that's so nice, such a kind of endorsement of what I was doing.

DW: A validation. Does that mean also, especially with your parents maybe having different views on things, that you had good discussions over dinner at night time?

[00:14:41] **BULBECK:** Well, I think Mum was always a Labor voter because she had this Uniting Church background, was much more working class, Unley High School. Dad, you know, shifted from one thing to another, one political perspective to another as he tried to find what made the best sense to him, I guess. But Mum wouldn't say, she would never say which way she voted. And I remember when the equal marriage vote, the [2017] postal vote, and I was in Adelaide, when that came out and Mum filled out her vote. She wasn't very mobile then. So, she gave it to me and she said, 'Will you post this for me, dear?' And I felt like saying, 'How did you vote?' And then I was holding it up to the light. [both laugh]

So, when I came back from posting it, I said, 'How did you vote Mum?' She said, 'Yeah, I voted for equal marriage'. But that was it. She'd certainly engage in political discussions right until almost the end. She was listening to the radio. She knew what different politicians were doing. She listened to [ABC TV] *The Drum* and all of that kind of thing. So, she was very much engaged. And she was certainly much more pro-Labor than she was pro-Liberal for those decades that I knew her, politically engaged. But I don't think when Dad, again it's that gender thing, that the discussion of politics was a dynamic of the couple. This was all after they got divorced that she was sharing her opinions happily with me.

DW: I think there's also a culture in the '50s and '60s where couples didn't actually discuss politics very much. They went and voted. I think my Mum and Dad probably voted Labor both, but I never got a sense growing up that they discussed it much. And it really wasn't until, I suppose, Vietnam, [ALP PM] Gough Whitlam, people started saying, 'Well, I'm voting this, I'm doing that', and were more open about.

BULBECK: Yeah, that's true. And I have spoken to a couple of people from different countries, one of whom comes from England, another one who comes from one of the Scandinavian countries. And they've both said it's something that's really struck them in Australia is this you don't ... that somehow talking about politics is rude, a bit like talking about money or religion. And I don't know exactly why we've been raised like that. I mean, obviously, it can create dynamic disagreements. But it's interesting that we haven't been raised to have those disagreements respectfully in families.

DW: You mentioned you went to a private high school. Can you tell me the name of it?

BULBECK: Yeah. So, it was Wilderness School [Adelaide]. From primary school, I went there. My father's sister had gone there, so that was probably the connection.

DW: And did they offer politics and law and those sort of topics at high school?

BULBECK: No, we would occasionally have a sort of current affairs kind of session and we had religion, too. The last couple of years we were beginning to get these new ways of thinking coming in. So, we had this young teacher who I think did oppose the war in Vietnam, and she ran a couple of sort of civics classes. And in one of those classes, I discovered that one of my classmates definitely opposed the war in Vietnam. And she came out and spoke quite strongly. And I thought, wow, that was probably the first time I'd heard anybody talk about it and having a political position kind of thing.

So, that was one thing that happened at school. And then we had this religious studies, he was actually some kind of religious person, but quite philosophical or theoretical. He was really trying to explain about the social construction of reality in a class, when I reflect back on it now. I thought it was so exciting, but I couldn't really grasp it. And that was possibly part of what made me eventually do sociology. So, he was challenging us to think, not just to follow blindly, I guess. I don't know why they let him come in and teach us religious instruction, but anyway they did.

DW: And so in terms of home life, you've mentioned both sides of your family had connections into the church and different churches. Does that mean you discussed religion much then at home?

BULBECK: No, it's interesting, isn't it? So, what happened was initially on Sunday mornings, my parents would send the three of us kids off to Sunday school, or in fact they would drop us off and then go home, and it was nearby and they would try and get us to walk home. We always thought this was a bit rich. Why did we have to go to Sunday School? I think they just wanted to have a good time for a few hours at home. Anyway, one time, this nice man offered us a lift home and he said, 'I know your father, blah, blah, blah'. And so, we accepted the lift home. And then my parents were so worried, they never made us go to Sunday school again. And we sort of had a conversation that, it didn't seem fair that we had to go if they didn't have to go.

So, we'd go intermittently, sometimes at Easter or Christmas or whatever. The school I went to was so-called non-sectarian. So, actually the Jewish families would sometimes send their daughters there. And there were some, although I didn't even know that they were Jewish until later somebody told me. But the school was still Christian. They just weren't Methodist or Anglican or whatever. So, it was still very much training within a Christian framework. And I think that's quite useful to grow up, as it were, knowing Bible stories, because you actually know quite a lot about your culture. But I was, yeah, I'd say I became agnostic quite early, or maybe late teens. I wouldn't say I'm an atheist. I just haven't got that much investment, really.

DW: And I was thinking, you said your Dad's father became an Anglican Archdeacon. He didn't involve his son in that church life?

[00:20:39] **BULBECK:** I don't know. That's interesting. Dad, actually towards the end of when he was in the nursing home, which was the Helping Hand which was linked to the

Anglican Church, my sister, who goes to a Uniting Church, she would sometimes go around and Dad and she would go to like a little sort of service in the local chapel there. Tuesday mornings and stuff like that. I thought, 'Wow, that's really interesting'. He might have just done that partly to spend time with my sister. He might have done it because he still was religiously engaged. It's interesting. I couldn't say for sure he was or wasn't a believer sort of thing.

DW: And then moving on to university, it sounds like your parents had that idea for all their children to go on, like it was a normal thought in the '60s. Let's send our children [to university].

BULBECK: Yeah. Even though none of their antecedents had been to university. Mum eventually, in fact, she graduated with her economics degree the same year as I did. So, she went on. She finished her accountancy Diploma, whatever it was called, and got credit at Adelaide Uni, went on to do economics at Adelaide Uni. And Dad obviously did have this engineering degree majoring in architecture. And he went on to be an architect. But yes, the expectation was that we would all go to uni. And David and I fulfilled that expectation in a way.

Obviously, it's better to expect you will, I guess, in terms of your future career. But it's actually quite hard if you're expected to go as well, because my sister wasn't, she just wasn't ready. And she kept on getting excluded from one course after another. She was just having a great time, playing pool, hanging out with boys. And she eventually got excluded from just about every course ANU [Australian National University, Canberra] offered. That's where she wanted to go. And Dad was really disappointed, but he didn't see that, it wasn't the time for her. She's got a public health degree now. But it takes time sometimes to work out what you want to do. And I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

DW: I think also university teaches you other things, like organising and social abilities and so on in groups.

BULBECK: Yeah, yeah, that's true.

DW: You ended up, or you started with economics at the University of Adelaide. What drove you to that in terms of your later sociological interests?

BULBECK: Yeah, so this story Mum contests or had, well, she can't anymore. But my theory is that what happened was I sat down with Mum and I said, 'I want to do English' because I'd really liked doing English at high school. And she said, 'What are you going to do with your English degree?' I kind of didn't know. She said, 'You can only teach'. And she said, 'You don't want to do that'. And I'd felt so constricted in the last couple of years at school. I went on having nightmares for about a year that I was back in school, breaking some rule or something. So, I knew I didn't want to be a teacher. Then she said, 'Well, why don't you do an economics degree?' We didn't actually explore what I might do with my economics degree as opposed to, but at least I didn't have to teach. And so, I enrolled in that.

But I quite quickly worked out you were able to do one Arts subject. So, I did Politics 1. And I loved it. This was really, the Kent State Eight had been killed and all that kind of

thing⁴. And we had this radical professor, Graeme Duncan, had come across from Monash University, and he was full of sort of standing up to oppression and all that kind of thing. So, it was very exciting. And we got this extra-curricular reading list of all this stuff that was about communism and [China's leader] Mao Zedong and all that kind of stuff.

So, I made this deal with myself that as soon as I failed a subject in my economics degree, I would go to Flinders. And I knew somehow I would do a sociology degree. So, I couldn't do it at Adelaide Uni because they didn't offer it there. They still don't offer sociology as such. It had just started at Flinders Uni and that that would have been Raewyn Connell⁵, it would have been quite exciting. But anyway, I didn't fail. I just kept getting passes and things.

But then I got a cadetship to go to Canberra, which was actually very fortuitous in the sense that I might have stayed in Adelaide like many of my friends. So, when I arrived in Canberra, I decided to enrol in a sociology degree, but I was mentored, you go and talk to people about what you might do, by this guy in sociology. He said, 'Why don't you do a Master's qualifying? Because it will take you the same amount of time as just building an arts degree on top of this'. He might have said, 'And then you could go on and do a Masters' or whatever. So, I was really lucky. I got mentored into a Master's qualifying, and then I got a Masters scholarship, and then I got mentored into converting that into a PhD scholarship. So, I was just very lucky that I had that support at those crucial moments.

DW: I have memories that Adelaide was quite radical during the anti-Vietnam days, especially Flinders University.

[00:25:49] **BULBECK:** Flinders was the radical university and it had radicals, like Brian Medlin⁶, it had these really radical professors. So, I was probably even a bit scared of going to Flinders, and being that radical.

DW: Some of that must have boiled over into the City of Adelaide and the University?

BULBECK: There were certainly the student body, or the people who led the students, the Guild and whatever at Adelaide Uni, were very radical. And I do remember being involved in one student protest, which became quite famous, it was just sort of like marching out of the university on a Tuesday afternoon or whatever. And we went down this quite narrow street and the police on their horses were sort of coming back at us. And then, of course, we all got crammed up and I was further back. I mean, nobody got killed. But, you know, that was quite scary. So, yeah, there was that sort of engagement for sure.

The moratorium marches too were growing. And the thing about that, for people, sorry, I know you were about to ask a question. But, just thinking about political influence. I've often thought since then, if you were young like I was and didn't really know much about the world and you went and marched in these huge marches, and then a couple of years later, [ALP PM] Whitlam gets elected and we're out of Vietnam, you think you can make a political difference. And it took a few years, and then we had the women's movement and

⁴ The Kent State shootings, also known as the Kent State massacre, involved the Ohio National Guard killing four and wounding nine unarmed Kent State University students protesting the Vietnam War on May 4, 1970 in Kent, Ohio. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_State_shootings

⁵ An Australian sociologist who gained prominence as an intellectual of the New Left and was appointed University Professor at the University of Sydney in 2004. She is known for the concept of hegemonic masculinity and her book, *Southern Theory*. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raewyn_Connell

⁶ Foundation Professor of Philosophy at Flinders University from 1967 to 1988 who pioneered radical philosophy and played an active role in the campaign against the Vietnam War. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Herbert_Medlin

that made political differences. It was probably a decade before I realised you don't just always make a political difference, you know.

DW: No matter how small you are.

BULBECK: Yes.

DW: So, you graduated in 1972 and moved to Canberra. That was the year Gough Whitlam was elected, so it must have been quite exciting being in Canberra with the new Whitlam Government?

BULBECK: So, he was elected at the ... I must have moved there in '73, because he was elected in December before I arrived. I arrived in a public service that was just exploding excessively, really when one reflects back on it. That was good for us young graduates who turned up. Not so much me, but some of my colleagues were promoted really quickly because Gough Whitlam was trying to translate the public service out of being Liberal into being progressive. And these kind of young Turks were getting fairly, I mean, I was actually promoted reasonably quickly, but not to any positions of making much difference.

DW: I think the other thing was there was the opportunity for women to be promoted in what was generally a male institution?

BULBECK: Yeah, that's true. So, we had the whole Office of Women and all of that sort of stuff going. And then I was there for the Dismissal [of Gough Whitlam] and that was very exciting. And also leading up to the dismissal, you were getting these different bits of information from, like one of the people I worked with, her dad was a Commonwealth car driver. And, so you were being fed back these sort of rumours and things like that. And then, just going to the steps of Parliament House and us all being dazed and then thinking, because we were in our Canberra bubble, that this outrage would not be allowed to subsist.

DW: It was extraordinary because everyone was, it was mainly the radio in those days, listening to the radio and Question Time and the fact [Liberal Leader Malcolm] Fraser's suddenly the Prime Minister, Acting Prime Minister. And so, it was just an extraordinary time. Now, what department did you get the cadetship to?

[00:29:15] **BULBECK:** So, it was in the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. What happened was, because I was doing an economics degree, they would interview you and if you were kind of clever enough, you would go to Treasury. Well, my results weren't good enough for that! And if you were sort of also-rans, you went to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. And different people would go off to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics or whatever. They were the main recruitment areas.

And when I turned up at the ABS at the beginning of '73, and it always astounds me that I would say these things. Anyway, they interviewed me and they said, 'What would you like to do here?' And I said, 'Well, anything that doesn't involve statistics'. [both laugh] That was true. That's what I wanted to do. And they said 'Oh, well, you can go up to the human relations department'. So, I started getting involved in sort of human development stuff, at that stage, it was working with the training section. So, there was a section that did in-house training, helped run a few courses.

But then I went to the Industries Assistance Commission and they put me in charge of, really, facilitating the induction of the graduates. So, there would be this intake of

graduates every year, economics graduates. And they thought it would be really good, because I had an economics degree, the graduates would take me seriously even though I was doing training, that sort of thing. I was really only in the public service for about three years, while I was doing my Master's qualifying. And then I was on leave for a period of time until I basically resigned.

DW: And you mentioned a real interest in sociology, even going back to Adelaide. Which strand of sociology? Is that where your interest in gender studies and women's studies emerged?

BULBECK: Not really. I don't think I was that gender aware, actually then. I mean, I'd experienced, as many of us had, many women had, and men for that matter, gender differences. But I remember reading, it was one of these books about women's studies. But this woman said you grow up, you can have many years living in the world as a woman. And then finally there's a click, and like there's this kind of switch of your understanding and then it actually makes sense of a whole lot of things in your past that puzzled you. So, you've got that kind of understanding of inequality, of gender inequality, obviously it was inbred in us from birth, or we wouldn't be putting up with it, you know what I mean?

So, it requires that sort of click. So, at some point in the, it probably was in the '70s, it was probably through things like Erica Jong's [book] *Fear of Flying*. It was probably largely through literature initially. And then, Anne Summers' *Damned Whores and God's Police* and all of that. Then it was part of the zeitgeist. But, yeah, originally with doing Politics 1, I really don't know, I know now why I liked sociology, but I didn't know then.

Now I know I like it because sociology understands that there are structures of inequality that constrain our opportunities and also give bigger opportunities to other people. And that's how I believe the world is. And also it's a much broader brush stroke. And I tend to understand in, I'm not a very good detail person, so that sort of big colour picture. So, whether I just started reading some sociology and liked it, I don't know. But I really did enjoy my sociology training.

DW: The other movement that began in the late '60s is the environment movement in Australia, with the [formation of] Australian Conservation Foundation and so on. Did you have any awareness of that when you were going to Uni in Adelaide or Canberra?

BULBECK: Not really. I mean, Dad would take us on driving road trips, the whole family, or sometimes just one or other of the children. And we actually camped in the bush and all that kind of stuff. And that was great. And I do remember actually when we did our trip up to Uluru [in the Northern Territory] and around those gorges there. I just, I mean, it sounds terribly trite and wrong in a way to say it, but going into those gorges, I really felt this really strong sort of spiritual kind of, I think partly because you're just in the desert and then suddenly you go into these magical sort of watery places. And maybe, too, because they are spiritual places.

But, yeah. So, I certainly had that kind of connection with the environment. I remember my grandmother got me to read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*⁷. So, that was probably round about when it came out in the mid-'60s. And I was horrified, as was she. She was probably less horrified because she'd probably read other stories like this. But, that governments

⁷ An environmental science book published in September 1962, documenting the adverse environmental effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Spring

and corporations, particularly governments, could betray us in that way. So, it wasn't all fitting together, but certainly some understanding, yeah.

DW: That was a very powerful book, [it] inspired a lot of people in the world. What was the focus of your PhD?

[00:34:37] **BULBECK:** I was in the thrall of these kind of neo-Marxists. So, it's not something I ever did any research on later on. But basically, the theory was that, as the dominant fractions of capital change, then the dominant piece of the bureaucracy, or organisation in the bureaucracy, changes. And so, because I was in the Industries Assistance Commission, the argument that I pursued was that when it was the Tariff Board and it was very protectionist, that was when domestic manufacturing industry was the most powerful fraction, or you know, element of capital in Australia.

But as it became the Industries Assistance Commission and advocated for free trade, we could see the shift into international or multinational capital being the most powerful influence within the Australian economy and on the Australian government. It all fitted together quite nicely, but it wasn't really my kind of ongoing interest.

DW: No, but that's the thesis you submitted.

BULBECK: Well, that was my PhD thesis⁸.

DW: Wow, okay. When then did women's studies come into it because you end up being an academic Emeritus Professor in women's studies [at Adelaide University]?

BULBECK: I went up to Griffith University [Brisbane] just for six months when I finished my PhD. I filled in for a professor who'd been asked to go to Copenhagen University for six months and they said he could go if he could find a replacement. He'd met me as I was finishing, so he knew I was free and they were willing to put me on. So, it was really lucky for me. I just taught with his colleagues in some courses. I loved Griffith University. Then I got a job at Murdoch University [WA]. I was still teaching this sort of political economy stuff. And I wasn't really any more aware of women's studies or gender issues than probably a number of other women or people.

And I was always trying to get back to Griffith University because it was such an exciting intellectual environment. And I did get back. So, after three years at Murdoch, I got back and there were a couple of people teaching some women's studies, but then they decided to actually set up a women's studies concentration area, or major. And so, we appointed someone and she came along and kind of worked on that. And that was really what drew me into it then, teaching it. So, I had to research it and teach it and so I became much more aware of it then.

DW: Do you remember what years you were at Murdoch University?

BULBECK: So, that was '80 to '83. In the middle of '79 I got my PhD thesis. Until the end of '79 I went to Griffith. Then '80 to '83, I was at Murdoch. Then for about ten years, maybe even 12 years after '83, I was back at Griffith and then after that I was at Adelaide Uni for just over ten years [from 1997 until 2008].

⁸ *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Investigation of the Power of the New Petit-Bourgeoisie in Capitalist Formations.* PhD. 1979. Australian National University.

DW: Because I'm just thinking, it was our local university and it was quite radical, I think in its early years, you know, [Professor] John Raser.

BULBECK: Murdoch wasn't as radical as Griffith though. So, yeah, there were those sort of fringe universities. And Murdoch had been established a bit later than Griffith, and it had that same commitment to a shared first year of interdisciplinary studies and with quite radical professors and things like that. And I mean, John Raser, he ran the *Fremantle Gazette* when I was here. He was the Professor of Psychology there. And even in, well not even in, but in the economics department, they were quite sort of radical, you know, teachers too, at Murdoch. A number of them went into the Labor government, the Burke one, was that the first one? I think that was the first Labor government. They went in and were advisers and that kind of thing. So, yes, it was a radical environment.

DW: And in terms of then moving back to Adelaide, your final academic posting, at the University of Adelaide, once again, Adelaide and South Australia have been very important in the development of land rights and women's studies, but also the environment movement in terms of solar energy and so on. Did you find it exciting for non-academic reasons in being in Adelaide?

BULBECK: Um, no. Because, coming from Griffith University, where also they were quite keen on, they had various people at the DVC [Deputy Vice Chancellor] level or whatever trying to promote women. So, I was encouraged to apply for a promotion to professorship at Griffith University just before I came back to Adelaide. So, for a moment in time, I was a professor professor. My brother said, 'Can I have one of those Professor Bulbecks?' [laughs]

When I came back to Adelaide Uni, that was the end of my career because it was basically very down on women. All those mechanisms for looking after women, promoting women, supporting women, they weren't there. And I ended up actually being the Chair of the Academic Women's Forum, which I hadn't set up, but which had been set up by all these women at Adelaide Uni who couldn't get anywhere. And so, my sort of desire to organise and campaign and whatever, that was my outlet for it. But there was no recognition within Adelaide University. The Sciences and the Medical Faculty had more women being promoted up the ranks than the Arts Faculty did. So, it was really a culture shock for me coming back to Adelaide.

DW: Extraordinary, because most of the other G8 universities, [eg] Sydney, University of WA, would have women in the Arts area [at least].

[00:40:15] **BULBECK:** Yeah, although we often think that. I think if you actually looked at the universities, it might be a little bit more mixed up than that, but anyway. So, what you're saying about Adelaide, yes, it's a much more, particularly compared to Queensland, and Western Australia for that matter, socially it's a much more radical environment, much more progressive. And even though [ALP Premier] Don Dunstan had been dead for ... he actually died when I went back. He was my [local] member when I left Adelaide.

So, the Dunstan years were well behind us, but they had left a legacy, I think, that has survived in South Australia. And so now we've got a Liberal Government in South Australia still pursuing renewable energy and whatever. So, you've got this environment where, as Sandra [Chilla's partner] used to say, she used to describe it as a 'Fabian socialist paradise'. Everybody there was getting around in woolly hats and things like that, which is not true.

DW: It's a good point you make, because last weekend, Sunday, I think South Australia was 100% renewable, and they're a Liberal Government. They've continued the policies of the previous Labor Government.

BULBECK: The Liberals were never as far right as and, you know, they don't even have a, like a National Party or any of that kind of thing.

DW: Where then does the Greens sort of enter your life and the interest in the environment?

BULBECK: The Greens were ... I really knew nothing about them. I had that kind of idea of the Greens as being this mad fringe group that were only interested in the environment and that kind of thing, but I was voting for them. I'm a Whitlam child. And then you see the Labor Party moving away from its radical commitment to what we thought Whitlam stood for, and what he probably did stand for, and fell away over the succeeding years. And at some point in those succeeding years, I started voting Green, but I wasn't thinking of the Greens at all. I was saying to the Labor Party, get back to your radical roots. So, I was voting, one Green, two Labor for at least ten years before I ...

DW: In the Lower House as well as the Upper House?

BULBECK: Probably in both, yeah. I don't know quite how that came into my mind as the way to do this. I knew the Greens were radical and, in a way, maybe not just about the environment. I knew they stood for radicalism and that I was sending a message to Labor, which they were totally ignoring as they moved ever further to the right. And then in 2010, so I was still in Adelaide then, I think that's right, [Julia] Gillard becomes the Prime Minister and she's running her own election. And maybe this is the feminist in me thinking, 'this is going to be different, we're going to be different now'.

Both parties, Liberal and Labor, they go for this small target election. I mean, there's all sorts of reasons, but Gillard wasn't performing very well and she certainly wasn't mapping out a fabulously exciting course for us. And somehow I had got onto the Greens mailing list and I was getting these emails from Bob Brown [Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Greens] telling me about various policies. So, what I learnt was there's more than just the environment. And I kept thinking, 'This is good, I like this policy'. So, then I sort of shifted my attention from 'I'm not telling Labor, I'm going to vote for the Greens'.

Then I got myself on a polling booth and Greg Boland was my contact and he put me on a booth in the Cottesloe Civic Centre. And I went along, like I thought I was brilliant because I did two hours. As June Lowe likes to say, 'You get these volunteers, they think they're wonderful because they do two hours'. [laughs] And I was very excited by the fact there were many more Greens there handing out how to vote cards than there were Liberals, and all the Liberals were old. So, that was very exciting.

And then after that, again, Bob Brown, obviously not Bob Brown, sent me an email asking me to join. And I thought, 'Oh, well, I've liked everything about the Greens'. And I'd sort of come out publicly. I still had that strong perception that the Greens were these mad fringe groups, and I wouldn't really tell that many people I was supporting the Greens. But I thought, 'Well, I can join, I can always unjoin'.

DW: I suppose you can.

[00:44:56] **BULBECK:** If I don't like it or whatever. So, I applied and I became a member of the Greens. Actually, I must have been here, I must have already come here because I was also trying to sort out how to be retired. And luckily you didn't ask me about hobbies because I had none.

DW: Running, I've heard you like your running?

BULBECK: Well, that's a hobby I suppose. I am a jogger of sorts. Yeah, that's true.

DW: And Perth. Why were you in Perth? Was that with Sandra?

BULBECK: With Sandra, yeah. We'd tried to, once we'd met which was just before I left Griffith, and that was another reason why I chose to go to Adelaide because it made it easy for us to commute, she was in Perth. Each of us tried to get jobs, she in Adelaide, and me in Perth, and it hadn't happened. So, I retired early. I was probably 57, I think, either 57 or 58, so, it was quite early and came here. So, I had all this energy left. I was doing creative writing and thinking, 'Oh well, I might learn to paint or something like that'. I'd done a one semester art course in my last year teaching uni. But really, I was trying to find a retirement.

And meanwhile, I got involved in the Greens and they then had very good ways of integrating new people in, which I think we're much more uneven with now. So, Katrina Bercov ran her Greens 101. She got all the newbies [new members] along. And we spent four or five hours actually learning various things about the Greens. It was a really hot day, White Gum Valley, a community centre somewhere. It was 40 degrees or something. And then, about two hours into it, this guy, quite attractive looking man, comes in and comes and sits two seats down from me. And Katrina says, 'I just want to welcome Scott Ludlam, our Senator'. And he'd cycled there, and he was so sweaty. And I just thought, 'Wow, this is so amazing. He's come to sit in the audience, not to come and, like, tell us all about. I'd been in the Labor Party for a couple of years up in Queensland when they were trying to branch stack. In fact, ex-Communists I was involved with for a while. So, I had some understanding of how the Labor Party works. So, that was very exciting.

And then at the end, she sent out an email, 'Are you interested in doing anything else?' and she lists all the, you know, Policy Working Group, *et cetera, et cetera*. And there wasn't really ... I think I emailed back and I said, 'Look, I'm not sure, blah, blah'. And she said, 'Oh, well, I'm running the Fundraising and Events Working Group. How would you like to be involved in that?' And I didn't really have a clear idea of what I would like to do. So, I said, 'Oh, yeah, okay'. So, I became involved for a while in sort of helping organise conferences and events and things like that with the dynamo Katrina at the helm.

And then Kim Dravnieks was the [Greens (WA)] Co-convenor at that time, too, and she, I think, had a knack, too, for identifying talent, or at least people who've got a bit of time on their hands. And she said, 'Look, we're in the process of writing the bios for our politicians and whatever for the website. Would you like to do that?' I was just blown away. I said to Sandra, 'They're asking me to write website stuff, you know. I've only been in the Greens for a year or less or whatever'. And Sandra said, 'Well, they're not stupid. You're an ex-professor. They know talent when they see it'. But I still thought it was just a very welcoming and very engaging strategy. So, and maybe it was smaller, the organisation was a bit smaller then. So, yes, I very quickly got sucked into the Greens.

DW: Well, not just sucked in, but very, very active. You were Secretary I think in 2011. So, within a year.

BULBECK: Yeah.

DW: And you were there for three years, I think.

BULBECK: I did the three years, yeah.

DW: So, that is quite an important role itself. Can you explain a bit about what you did? What are the roles associated with being Secretary of the Greens (WA)?

BULBECK: Well, I didn't do as much as Ryan [Quinn, a subsequent Secretary]. Ryan, in his time, really expanded the role. But, basically, you took the minutes [of the Representatives Council] and they were on the screen as you took them so that people could be checking what was going on. Then you edited them. Then you had to try and collect all the Regional Groups' minutes and put them together in a nice big bundle. And for Admin Working Group, you were also the Secretary basically for that. And that was really all that was involved. It was keeping a record.

The Secretary was then, what was it? Something like the party official or whatever. I was the one that had to sign, there was an election while I was Secretary. It must have been the 2013 State election. And I was the one that had to go down [to the Western Australian Electoral Commission office] and sign various forms on behalf of the Party [so that we were registered to run candidates in the election]. And I remember I'd promised Luke Edmonds that I'd catch the train. I was going with him to do the signing. And the trains were running late that day, so he was beside himself. [laughs] He thought I wouldn't get there on time. But, it was okay. I got there on time and we signed whatever it was we had to sign. But that role can go to other people, it just happened to be the Secretary's role then.

DW: But you then also were Co-convenor 2017 to '19. So, that's a more important role I suppose, day to day in running the Greens. But also one that would take up a lot of time, I would have thought?

[00:50:33] **BULBECK:** So, for a long time I resisted being Co-convenor. And I think I was right about that. I got involved in campaigning. I had all these roles of being, sort of basically assistant to [Campaign Director] Sophie Greer, but with different names in various campaigning roles. And I was doing research. We'd set up the Election Research Group, which was a subgroup of the Election Campaign Committee. And Grahame Bowland was on it, that was really good. When Grahame Bowland was on it, we had somebody else, Norm Stomski who's actually died, but he was really good with quantitative stuff. My expertise was more qualitative. And Grahame was just brilliant with computers. So, we were a very powerful, intellectually powerful group then. And the mapping that Grahame put together, it's just an amazing tool.

DW: I interviewed him recently and he said that software, I think, is still being used by the Greens.

BULBECK: It is. Yes, I understand it is still. I was trying to get access to it just recently to do something for one of the volunteers, Juanita Doorey who's working down in Hilton. And I couldn't, the url I had wouldn't open up or it wouldn't let me in. But yes, they sort of have

shifted it a bit and they are using it. It's actually excellent and requires quite a lot of thinking about. So, for example, you don't know how every household votes. So, Grahame's skill was in turning a point in time, which was the polling booth, into an accurate, as much as it can be, representation of a vote across an area to match it with the socioeconomic data. So, it's quite challenging and quite a skilled kind of task. And different polling booths will have a different spread of votes because the bigger ones in a shopping centre will actually draw people from further away than the little local ones where people go to their local community town hall, every election.

So, I was doing that and then I got involved in doorknocking and then writing scripts for doorknocking and that was very exciting, I really enjoyed that work. And then, when I say it was a bad mistake to become the Co-convenor, part of me kind of thought it was a natural progression. So, I was never going to be a candidate except in extremis and I'd always sort of said, 'If you can't find anybody else, to ask me'. I quite enjoyed being the candidate for Mandurah, but I certainly had no intention of winning. And I remember at one point, the Dawesville candidate, Patricia Armstrong had a house in Dawesville and she was running. So, we were sort of like running mates and we were running these market stalls and things like that. And people were being very nice to us down in Dawesville and Mandurah. And I turned to her at one point and I said, 'What if we win, Patricia?' As though we were going to! We went, 'Oh, this would be terrible'. But anyway, there was no chance of that!

DW: For the 2013 State election?

BULBECK: That's right. And I was really just doing it to support Giz [Watson, Greens (WA) MLC candidate for South West region]. What happened was that June Lowe rang me, probably about a week before the nominations closed and just asked me if I'd do it. And I said, 'Look, I've got no connection with Mandurah'. And she said, 'Well, nobody else I'm asking has either'. At this point she'd had a few local people fall through. And I thought, 'Oh, well, as long as there's no chance of winning it, that's fine'. And, I think it was useful to have been the candidate, not that I was under intense public scrutiny, but just to see how much pressure, in a sense comes to you. Particularly, like I had no campaign team or had the occasional volunteer for a few hours here and there that I really had to scrounge together.

So, it's basically running the campaign myself. That last week, I was basically hysterical and I don't know what kind of decisions I was making, but just trying to do so much because there's your deadline. It's really exciting in a way. And then at the end of, 24 hours later or less, you know whether you've won or not. So, that's the exciting part of it.

DW: I think many members don't understand the need for those Lower House candidates to support the Upper House MLC candidates. Could you explain a bit about that, why it's important, because there's only five or six regions that they have those Lower House candidates there with them?

[00:55:01] **BULBECK:** So, as somebody has said, probably Jo Vallentine [Greens (WA) Senator] or people like that, you want every person in Australia, basically, but certainly when we're talking about the State, in Western Australia, to be able to vote Green. Like, it's their *right* really, to be able to vote Green. And, a lot of people who don't think much about politics, access politics through the Lower House. So, if there's not a Green on the Lower House ticket, they might not make the connection with the Upper House ticket. That's the first thing. The second thing is every vote, well not for the State so much, but

certainly Federally, every first preference vote's got money attached to it. And actually, I think there is a connection between the State [too].

DW: The State, not as much.

BULBECK: It's not as clear. You get a certain amount of money back from your expenses. And the other thing is that I was very capable and happy to go and knock on doors and say, 'I want you to support Giz Watson because she's the best thing for the South West that you can have', as opposed to 'I want you to support me because I'm the best thing for Mandurah you can have'. Like, I didn't believe that. So, to me it was really clear that I was getting them to vote for Giz Watson. Then if you had lots of Lower House people out in electorates, all of Giz's electorates, as it were, saying that, then you were more likely to get those votes for Giz Watson and maybe me as well, if they felt like it.

And usually the Upper House vote, it depends on how knowledgeable the electorate is. But, say, in an [Federal] electorate like Curtin, the Upper House Greens vote is usually, and also we had [Liberal MHR] Julie Bishop for so many years. But it was quite a gap where it was higher than in the Lower House. And after a while, you'd learn to sort of work with that. People would say, 'Oh, my partner works in mining', or whatever, or 'Julie Bishop's quite good', or stuff like that. And I'd say, 'That's fine. Why don't you vote for the environment in the Upper House and vote for your economic future in the Lower House?' Like it's a bit crappy [laughs], but you can sort of say stuff like that, and try and get them to think about different ways of, yeah.

DW: I want to get back to you being Co-convenor, because it's a very important role.

BULBECK: Yeah, sorry.

DW: Matt Roberts and you shared that job. How did you work out what Matt did and what you did?

BULBECK: It kind of evolved a bit. Like I said, I didn't really want to do it. Matt wanted to run. He asked me to do it. Trish [Cowcher] asked me to do it. I think that might have been the only two. And then, as I say, I was thinking, 'Well, given that my Greens career is not parliamentary and I never intended it to be, the apex of a sort of organisational role really is the Co-convenor. So, should I really pull back from it or should I embrace it?' So, I decided to have a go and in fact it was very hotly contested. It wasn't simple, Matt and me getting elected. There was another team running against us, and there was this huge turnout and there were lots and lots of proxy votes. And then people were challenging it, people ringing people up and trying to get them to vote for one team or the other team.

It's a pity, really, because that team, later on they could have been the Co-convening team. But I don't think it's going to happen now. So, two things. Matt still has to work in order to earn enough money, whereas I don't have to work. So, I had a lot more time than Matt. But he had skills that I didn't have. He's on social media much more often and he's got much better social media savvy. So, he sort of did that. I already had a set of roles. By then, I was the Convenor of the Supporters Working Group, so the kind of fundraising role. I had that. I still had the Election Research Group role, so I was connected to that.

We decided, it didn't really work this way, but I was suggesting we be responsible for half the Regional Groups each or something like that. Between us, we got to at least one meeting of every Regional Group. And probably being as kind of explicit as that wasn't, it

didn't have to be as kind of ironclad as that. But it was quite nice that we would develop a relationship with different Regional Groups. And similarly with the working groups, we kind of split those up as well, too. So, he had the difficult ones, like GATAG, the Greens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Group. And then I would have the ones that I'd been involved with, or still were involved with.

DW: How many hours a week do you think that took?

[00:59:49] **BULBECK:** Because I was doing everything else, or not everything else, but I was doing other things, I reckon I was working, from when I got sucked into the Greens until I stopped being Co-convenor, I was probably working at least 30, 40 hours a week on the Greens. But I don't think Matt's done that. He couldn't obviously, because he's got a full-time job and Emma [Pringle, Matt's Co-convenor at the time of the interview] can't because she's got a full-time job. So, I think it's a job that you can expand or contract.

DW: But you also end up with the difficult issues, I would imagine, out of Reps or members?

BULBECK: Well, Co-convenors do. Yes. I mean, I haven't read Grahame's [Bowland, previous Co-convenor] interview and we know Kim [Dravnieks, Co-convenor when Chilla was Secretary] wouldn't be interviewed, but I think a lot of Co-convenors do get burnt out. And they see the seamy side of it. And so, at the end of my time as Co-convenor, I've sort of understood one of our roles really is to protect the membership from the nastiness that's in the Party. I mean, that's extreme. Because you're dealing with, as you say, difficult issues, conflicts, whatever, some of which are just passing differences of opinion.

But we had an expulsion issue while I was Co-convenor, and that could have gone to Matt. But just the way it panned out in terms of the decisions at Reps, it became my responsibility, as the Co-convenor who had carriage of that. That difficulty had been going on in the Party for probably at least a year, maybe two years, before it went into the expulsion issue. So, a very unhappy event. It ended okay in the sense that the person went away. I saw a lot of, because people came and told us what their experiences were, obviously, because we were doing a review of that, expelling this person. And there was crying and people had not been treated well, if you believed what they said, they had been treated very badly and not been protected and looked after.

Over that time, and also the whole stuff of sexual harassment exploding in the Greens nationally, we developed much better by-laws. After the State election, out of which eventually this expulsion committee emerged, we brought in a conflict resolution person and she interviewed a number of us to kind of reflect on the State election. And she said the trouble, not the trouble, well it is in a way, the weakness with the Greens is because you don't like conflict, you don't believe it happens, and you're not experienced in handling it in a productive way. And that's true, I hate it, I just want, 'Oh, no, no, don't have it'. So, that's sort of a weakness that I think is still there quite strongly in the Party because people are drawn to the Greens because they like peace and nonviolence.

DW: They don't like people like Donald Trump being terrible every day and you don't want to be in a party like that.

BULBECK: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

DW: One thing though that you do suggest there is I think the Greens have developed and refined their policies a lot more in the last ten years. Did you get any benefit, having

worked in a university, which is a very structured bureaucratic organization, in terms of developing policies in the Greens?

BULBECK: Well, that's true. They're kind of like organisational politics. I never got involved much except over a gender policy that I had a bit of a contretemps with Alison Xamon about way back at the 2013 State election. But, generally speaking, I didn't get involved in those policies that we went to the election with because generally speaking, we didn't actually get an opportunity to introduce things.

DW: I'm thinking of things like sexual harassment as well.

BULBECK: Those organisational policies. It's interesting, isn't it? The HR or whatever in universities was generally the area in which those policies were developed. But it's true, having been involved in women's issues and whatever, I had, and we had done some good stuff at Griffith University actually around promoting affirmative action strategies to promote women, not that I necessarily was able to introduce them in the Greens. I think that a lot of that stuff is sort of in the background, things I know or are in my experience and probably do inform what I'm doing, but not necessarily consciously.

DW: Right, yeah.

[01:04:41] **BULBECK:** I mean, certainly the difference between a bureaucratic hierarchical organisation and the Greens has struck me, not so much looking back at Adelaide Uni, but say when I go to council meetings, my local Cottesloe Council or even the National Council of Women WA, which one would hope would be better. It's so hierarchical and so organised with the people at the front speaking and people sitting around the side listening. And you think, no wonder the Greens have got this other strategy and it works so much better.

DW: Is there anything you miss from the academic environment, leaving that?

BULBECK: No, I was very happy to leave. In fact, I remember when, a couple of years into being on this Election Research Group, Scott Ludlam got me to do a little analysis and come down and do a presentation to his staff. I don't know which election it was. And [chuckles] he's a pretty clever man, but after that, he said, 'Well, I'm so pleased you're on our side and not theirs'. And I thought, not that anything much came of that, but I just thought, how often does an academic get a chance to prepare something which goes to practitioners or activists or whatever, like straight away is in the hands of people who will, or won't, operationalise it.

Whereas we were writing articles most of the time that you'd be lucky if half a dozen other people read. And that's not actually true of me. I was very lucky. I wrote a number of textbooks that were widely used. And that was an exciting outcome. But I don't miss it in the sense that I wish I was still a university teacher. I'm very grateful for the kind of university teacher I got to be and the fact that I could teach things that I thought mattered for people to learn. Yes. [laughs]

DW: The Greens are 30 this year and they were founded on the four pillars. But one of the other things that survived those 30 years are Regional Groups. They are always seen as a core part of the structure. Have you been active in Curtin in your Regional Group?

BULBECK: I was never the Convenor in Curtin. In fact, I don't think I ever had any official office bearing role in Curtin Regional Group. But a couple of years in, we decided that, as one endlessly decides that people aren't engaged in their regional group, and so we all got involved in doing a survey and then we set up a Members Engagement Group and we'd go to people's houses with curries or whatever, and we'd sit around and talk about stuff that mattered rather than admin things. And anyway, that all did fall by the wayside eventually. But yes, so I was involved.

And then when I was [Greens] Co-convenor and Secretary, to some extent, when you go to Regional Groups with that sort of knowledge of what's going on in Reps or something like that, you can help inform decision-making or provide context for proposals coming through. So, I tried to go to all, more or less, my Regional Group meetings while I was Co-convenor. And also when I was Secretary, but I wasn't in an official role.

DW: The 20 [sic 10] years you've been in the Greens here in WA, what have been the biggest changes you've seen, positive and negative? Have there been any negative ones, do you think?

BULBECK: I think a challenge for the Greens, and we were already talking about this when Adrian Glamorgan was the, whatever he was, Party Development Officer and Party Manager, impossible double roles, was this professionalisation, so growth and professionalisation. And there was, those early, and I wasn't one of them, but those early kind of tree-hugging Greens, [resisting] every change of employing somebody. Well, maybe Rowena [Skinner] was okay, but after that every additional employee was kind of like leaving our roots. I think there is a tension there.

And actually, [former Co-convenor] Stewart Jackson talks about it, too, in his book. He was thinking of it more in terms of the weight of, say, political staff, particularly Senators, because they have a lot of support staff, that kind of weight against a Party that's largely volunteers. Now, that sort of imbalance is really more balanced now because we've had Sophie [Greer] and other paid staff. And I think Sophie's done a lot of work bringing all the different political offices together with the Greens, to work more harmoniously, more effectively. But there is a tension in any organisation with a lot of volunteers in it. Why should some people have paid roles? I mean, all of our paid people work a lot of extra volunteer hours, but that's not always necessarily visible. And then these additional roles or work you want to do, should you be paying for that?

[01:09:50] Paid roles stay over time. So, Sophie was already the State Director just somewhat before Matt and I became Co-convenors. You were saying before about crafting policies, Sophie was often the driver of that. And she never put herself forward or anything like this. But I just thought, well, in a way, if it was a normal organisation, we as the kind of 'directors', I suppose, would be telling Sophie what to do. But we just didn't know enough to be able to do that. And as I say, she wasn't telling us what to do, but she was certainly advising us because she often knew more, or had the longer history and spent more time on it, or whatever. So, I think that's quite a difficult tension that this sort of knowledge and experience and time accrues to people who are paid and the people who aren't paid can easily feel marginalised or whatever. So, I think that's a challenge.

I think the growth of the Greens is a challenge and still being committed to this grassroots democracy. And I'm definitely not opposed to it, but that was something that Adrian mentioned or talked about in his review, is that the old way of producing a ground-up set of solutions, we actually don't do that. Policy Working Group is just, it's mad in a way,

because it endlessly sends out these policies and you can participate and I've had people say to me, 'Yeah, that's great. I don't mind having 20 policies come out like every few days because I can go and participate if I wish to'. But she also said, 'I wouldn't generally because I don't think I have any expertise'.

So, I don't think that's functioning effectively as a decision-making arena. But I don't really know what the answer is. But Adrian, his argument was you should trust, you should give decision-making to particular people or roles, or people in roles, and you trust them to make most of those decisions. And you might have cut off decisions. We do that a bit. We say Admin Working Group can spend money under \$500 dollars or \$1000 or whatever, before that goes to Reps. A bit more of that sort of worked out, I honestly don't know what the solution is, but I do think we often observe our consensus decision-making in the breach more than the observance.

DW: One of the other aspects of the management of the Greens is this rule that you have to resign after two or three ...

BULBECK: Three terms.

DW: So, you lose all that knowledge that you've built up.

BULBECK: That's true.

DW: And then if somebody is, like Sophie's paid and is around, obviously they're going to end up as the font of that knowledge. And the other thing I've seen is that rule doesn't apply to the MPs. So, some people have been in [parliament] for 15 years.

BULBECK: They used to want that rule to apply to the MPs. And I think there have been some periods, at least in some Green parties' history, where it might have applied. Maybe in New South Wales? They're always very radical. And Lee Rhiannon might have been the first one to suffer from that rule, and they decided, 'Well, that's a really bad rule', and got rid of it. And I can see why it is a bad rule in some respects. But I do think the three-year rule is actually quite a good rule because it means the Party has to find someone new. And even just a break of a year, like you could easily become the Co-convenor dictator if you were allowed, if you wanted to do it. And I think if you want to stay there more than three years, you possibly have proclivities as a dictator. [laughs]

DW: In terms of the Greens, and we've come over this 30 years a long journey, where do you think the next ten years will take us? Especially, I suppose, we have the debate around the number of MPs we might end up with. We've [currently] got two Senators and 4 MLCs, is that the limit of our abilities as a Party?

BULBECK: That's certainly been one of the disappointments for me, and I feel quite like, what's the word, weak that I let this get to me, because I think of people like Giz or whatever who've been with the Party for so long, so committed. So, the narrative that Katrina would share with us in Greens 101 in 2010 was we're on the up and up. And Bob Brown was always saying history is on our side. Okay, so it might only be 8% now or 10%, in three years time it'll be 20%. In four or five years time, we'll be doubling, we'll be in balance of power, blah, blah, blah. We've been stuck on 10% more or less for quite some time.

Again, I don't know what the answer to that is, but it either means we need a new narrative or we need new numbers because we can't go on saying we're on the up and up. So, we could say we're the 10% party or until the planet actually burns and people really realise what the problem is, we'll be the 10% party. I would love to know, to work out what it is that stops people. A majority of Australians agree with Greens general policies and framework on a majority of our positions, maybe not refugees, but even that's shifting. And yet a majority of Australians do not vote for us. And it's not even a kind of increase. It is among younger people. Maybe it is just a matter of time. But I think that's very challenging for us. And we fudge, I mean, of course, all parties do, but I think we fudge some of the actualities of what's going on.

DW: So, you're saying it's not the seats that are important, but the number, the percentage of the vote you're getting?

[01:15:45] **BULBECK:** Oh no, I think you should get the seats to go with it. But I guess it's true, if we could get, say Maylands, up to 30% or 40% or whatever. Yeah, you're right. We could start winning those seats. So, it's not the percentage *per se*.

DW: I've pondered this as well, because the jurisdictions where we've entered government, like Tasmania, where there was a joint government, Labor and Greens, the Greens in Germany, they're all proportional representation.

BULBECK: Yes.

DW: Whereas, we don't have that in WA and so we're limited to really the flow of preferences leaning our way each election, which makes it very, very hard.

BULBECK: Yeah. Or you have to get much more of a, like you have to have a Maylands or Fremantle or a Melbourne or whatever. And Melbourne is so demographically, socioeconomically, we don't have a seat anywhere near like Melbourne in Western Australia, with that density of young tertiary educated latte-sipping [laughs] intelligent ...

DW: Basket weaving!

BULBECK: Yeah. So, we're not going to get proportional representation. We're unlikely to get proportional representation. But you're right, that would make it different. But look at, what do they have in the ACT, is that multi-member?

DW: It's like the Hare-Clark⁹, like in Tasmania, it's very similar. They tried one sort of form of voting which didn't work. And they've gone back to the Hare-Clark, I think.

BULBECK: That is a successful government that is, they are the minor partner, the Greens. The ACT is kind of like a large Melbourne. It's nice that the most intelligent, educated people vote Green and the young people vote Green. It's better than the other way round, like the Liberals have got old people. But it would be nice if it were going faster.

DW: So, in terms of your role over the 20 [sic 10] years, what's been the achievement you've been most proud of in the Greens?

BULBECK: I would say the most exciting night of my life in the Greens was the night of the [2014] Senate by-election¹⁰. We were at the Oxford Hotel, I think it was the Oxford

⁹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hare%E2%80%93Clark_electoral_system

Hotel, but anyway, in Leederville. And of course, this was a bit like being in a major party, because there are the results coming in, there's no Lower House to distract you. So, there are the results coming in for Scott Ludlam. And I remember he was giving a speech, everybody likes to listen to Scott Ludlam. But this big green bar went right up on the television screen, and [ABC Election Analyst] Anthony Green was talking about blah, blah. And it just went up and everybody started cheering and interrupted Scott. And he turned around and he said, 'Oh, well, I can see I can't compete with that'.

The campaign had been so positive and exciting. We would walk down the street in our Greens T-shirts and people would give us high fives and he'd done his 'Welcome to Western Australia, Prime Minister', to Tony Abbott. And I would knock on doors and kind of hand over a Scott Ludlam leaflet. And they would say, 'Oh, yes, I read his speech. It was so good'. It was really a totally buzzing campaign. And then you got to be there on election night and to win. And get more than a quota. It was the only time we've ever got more than a quota. So, it was very exciting.

DW: And on the reverse side is the sadness of the High Court thing and the dual nationality [of Scott]¹¹.

BULBECK: Yeah, very, very sad. I have to say, I thought Scott would just come back, but I don't think really ... I think he found it really hard to be in the Senate. And I think it was some of the same reasons the Greens find it really hard to be in a, we were saying before, a bureaucratic conflict-driven parliament. There are committees and whatever where you can work together productively. And the Greens have done a lot of work trying to expand those roles and the impact of those roles. But most of the time, it's really adversarial. I think it's hard. It's like being a feminist in academia and women's studies people went to academia to try and make academia different. That's not what happened. Academia made us more like them. So, I think there's a constant tension, too, for the Greens.

DW: Now, one thing you should be proud of, Chilla, is in 2017, your very, very generous gift to the Greens. Can you describe a bit about what led you to make that decision?

[01:20:20] **BULBECK:** So, really that was my Dad. He thought he was going to die with nothing. He used to be quite anxious for the remaining months that he was in the home, saying, 'I won't have enough money for my funeral'. And I said, 'It's alright Dad, we'll pay for that, don't worry', kind of thing. He obviously had lost touch with his financial affairs. So, we were really stunned to get quite a significant amount of money. I just thought, 'Well, I didn't know I was getting this money. The best thing to do is to give it away, straight away to a good cause, and never kind of think about what I could do with it if it were mine'. But I had been already donating to the Greens and we'd set up the Future Fund in 2014, 2015 when we celebrated Jo Vallentine's 30 years since she got elected to the Senate for the Nuclear Disarmament Party.

DW: It was 2014.

¹⁰ On 5 April 2014 a Senate special election in Western Australia was held six months after the 2013 Federal election. The results of the 2013 election was voided on 20 February 2014 by the High Court of Australia because 1,375 ballot papers were lost during an official recount in November 2013. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Australian_Senate_special_election_in_Western_Australia

¹¹ On 14 July 2017, Scott Ludlam resigned from the Senate after it was brought to his attention that he held dual Australian and New Zealand citizenship, rendering him ineligible to hold elected office in the Federal Parliament under section 44 of the Australian Constitution, becoming the first casualty of the 2017 Australian parliamentary eligibility crisis. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017%E2%80%9318_Australian_parliamentary_eligibility_crisis

BULBECK: 2014. December 2014 was I think when we had the party. And a number of people had put in donations for that and it was a really good initiative that we did and people were very generous. So, we had it in our mind. Dan Loden actually was the Treasurer then. It was only later we realised when Annabelle Newbury went through the figures that this wasn't true. But we had in our mind that if we owned our own office, it would somehow make our ongoing financial affairs much easier to manage because we wouldn't be paying rent. We thought, yeah, this sounds good.

So, when Dad's money came through, I thought, 'I'll give a donation of that to the Greens'. And then shortly after that, Jay Birnbrauer died and he also gave over, I think it was around \$350,000 or something. So, we had enough then to be able to go and purchase the office. I was totally comfortable with doing that with Dad's money because I knew he was proud of me being politically engaged in that way. And I knew he would be happy that that's what happened to his money. So, I never think of it as my money. I think of it as his gift to the Greens. It just happened to pass through my hands.

DW: It was a substantial amount, half a million dollars, and it has secured a home now for the Greens with Jay's donation. You were there at the opening and gave a talk about all the different offices, so I think it will make a big difference having that home.

BULBECK: Yeah, and it is exciting. We are the only Greens party in Australia who do own their own office. Yeah, just the finances of not paying rent. Well, we're not paying rent, but we're paying other things. But I think it's more than that. It's also symbolic, well, it is in a way symbolic, but it is a location now that belongs to us. And poor Rowena [Skinner-Greens (WA) Office Manager] won't be uprooted every three or four years.

DW: Moving around. We've covered a lot of ground in your interview. Is there anything we've missed out that you want added? I do know we haven't got down that you were the *Green Issue* Co-convenor.

BULBECK: I was, yes, on the writing team. I don't think we call ourselves Co-convenor. That was one of the first things I did. A lot of people who come into the Greens with an academic background or writing background, they think, 'Oh, yes, I'd love to write stuff', not usually edit other people's stuff or secure articles of other people's stuff. So, I did that for a few years, but I actually gave that up after I realised that I wasn't really needed there. There were a lot of people interested in doing that. But it was good because it meant meeting a lot of people and trying to get Senators and MLCs and whatever to put in their things.

[01:23:56] I suppose the other tension in the Party that I, again, I know about all these tensions and difficulties, but I don't know what the answers are. So, I think the growing size and how we handle our original commitment to grassroots [democracy] and all of that and engaging people appropriately and quickly. I was quickly inducted or engaged in things that I could contribute to and felt *great* about doing. I don't think we still do that as well as maybe my experience was. Then there was the professionalisation tension between paid staff and volunteers and always being aware of that and dealing with that.

And then the third one, I think, is that it's not the usual practice for shy retiring people to want to become politicians. So, I think there's a tension between the kind of personality, I mean, you're probably more likely, if you're a shy, retiring person to become a Green than, say, go into Labor or Liberal because your chances of being Prime Minister or Premier one day are much reduced if you're in the Greens. But I do think there's a bit of a tension

between the kind of personality and you're dealing with power and you need to be able to get up there and put your case strongly and that kind of thing, those characteristics, and the ideology or values of the Greens. And I think we don't always have a perfect fit between, across the nation, between our politicians and the values of the Party. Sometimes we have a very good fit.

But then even when they get into Parliament, like when Richard Di Natale [Greens Senator for Victoria and Parliamentary Leader] and actually Jordon [Steele-John, Greens (WA) Senator], when Sarah Hanson-Young [Greens Senator for SA] was attacked by David Leyonhjelm a couple of years ago. I think Jordon called him a pig and Richard Di Natale said something else. And there were members who came, I was Co-convenor then, who came to me and said, 'That was really inappropriate, the Greens shouldn't behave like that'. And Giz actually was quite impatient and rightly so. She said, 'Look, they don't know what it's like in Parliament'. It's very difficult not to get embroiled in that. And maybe it's okay. So, that's a sort of minor version of what's going on in that competitive structure and what we, outside and often not really knowing what's going on there, want this idealism.

Actually, and that's the final challenge, I think, for the Greens, is we, people like me anyway so I shouldn't say we all. But I joined and then became so idealistic about all these amazing things that the Greens were going to do, save the world, change the world, bring about peace and disarmament and whatever. And in my lifetime and really soon, and we're all flawed human beings. And so, then you have to deal with, not only do the Greens not bring about all these things in 10 years or 20 years, but there are all these people in the Greens who are similarly disappointed, probably, that their ideals are not being met.

So, you're dealing with high desire and sometimes a much lower level of achievement and us all being human beings who aren't perfect. But, as you said, we wouldn't want to be in a party that had Trump in it, or voted for Trump. So, I think that's also a wonderful thing, is when you meet a Greens person, you can take for granted a lot of things about their values and approaches and whatever, that you do just take for granted without thinking about. And you've almost always got it right that they actually do, they are on the same wavelength as you.

DW: Well, it's a very tough one because the issues that we're dealing with as a Party, Jo Vallentine was in [Parliament at] a time when America and Russia are rapidly building up their nuclear armaments. They were all on a hair trigger, two or three minutes we were in a nuclear war. And today it's about all these signs that the climate is warming very rapidly and we don't have 50 or 100 years. And people do feel that tension, we need to do things quite quickly. And we're in a country that doesn't seem to be actually moving very quickly.

BULBECK: Yeah. And it's not just that we've got a Coalition that's not moving quickly, but I guess it's getting back to what I was saying about only 10% care enough to vote Green. And I think there's been several elections where really, honestly, you'd have to be disappointed that it's only 10% or thereabouts kind of thing. Anyway, sorry. I think I interrupted you.

DW: No, no, Chilla. It's your interview. We're here to listen to your ideas. I just want to thank you for your time. You've obviously contributed a large amount of your life over the last 20 years. Your imprint's in the Greens.

BULBECK: Ten years.

DW: Sorry, 10 years. Yes. But also, now it's permanently there with your donation and our home. So, that's fantastic. Thanks very much again.

[01:28:57] **BULBECK:** Thank you, Dave, and also thank you so much for doing this project.

END OF TRANSCRIPT