The Greens (WA)

30th Anniversary History Project

[*1990-2020*]

An interview with:
Mr LUKE EDMONDS

1st of November 2020 at his home in Perth

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
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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
This is a near verbatim interview, meaning that the transcript follows natural speech patterns. Readers should be aware that how we speak may differ greatly from how we would write and that the evolution of everyday language and speech patterns also provides valuable insight into the culture and history of a place.

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INTRODUCTION

Luke Edmonds joined the Greens (WA) in 1999 after supporting the election campaign of his then-partner (and now-wife) Alison Xamon [MLC for East and North Metropolitan regions]. Since 2005 Luke has participated in the Australian Greens National Preferences Team ensuring that there was a common national strategy when the Greens negotiated with other parties before a Federal election. Luke has also undertaken such critical work before State elections.

Luke grew up in the Perth Hills and completed an Arts/Law course at Murdoch University. He developed his skills in negotiating preferences while working on Student Guild elections.

Luke has run as a Greens (WA) candidate in four elections in seats that contained the region where he grew up. While he worked for the Gosnells Community Legal Centre, Luke completed his articles. After he left he volunteered to be on their management committee for the next 20 years.

Luke has worked as a lawyer for four left-wing unions and in 2018 he and Alison established the Greens (WA) Unions and Industrial Relations Working Group.

TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] DW: My name's David Worth, and I'm here on Sunday, the 1st of November [2020], with Luke Edmonds in his home in Perth. Luke, thanks very much for having me in your home for this interview.

EDMONDS: Thanks, David. It's good to be here.

DW: Can we start, in terms of your life, where you were born and when?

EDMONDS: I was born, 15th of September, 1975, Swan District Hospital in Middle Swan, and I grew up in the Hills in Glen Forrest, went to primary school in Glen Forrest and then went to high school at Guildford Grammar in Guildford.

DW: Can you remember the name of your primary school you went to?

EDMONDS: It was the Glen Forrest Primary School.

DW: Yeah, very good. And your father, what employment did he have?

EDMONDS: Well, he was a teacher. I think he was still a teacher when I was born. But shortly after I was born, around the time I was born, he stopped teaching and opened up his business as a cabinetmaker in Midland and Midvale and around that area.

DW: Was he trained or did he do a TAFE course?

EDMONDS: He self-trained at everything. He was a manual arts teacher, so he was good at all of those things. From carpentry, cabinet making, metal working, he could make jewellery, he could do welding, he could fix things. He could make things. He could do all sorts of things. He's very capable. He could turn his hand to almost anything and just figure out how to do it.

DW: And your mother, was she employed part-time or …?

EDMONDS: She worked to help set up the business as well with my Dad and worked in the business throughout my childhood.

DW: And did you have siblings?

EDMONDS: I have got an older sister, who's two years older than me and a younger sister who's three years younger than me.

DW: Okay, and you're the one in the middle.

EDMONDS: I'm the middle child, the peacemaker, the consensus-builder.

DW: Oh, right. I wondered what role, the consensus-builder, for the boy with the two sisters. And your memories, Glen Forrest, I would imagine then, I'm trying to think 40 years ago, it would have been almost like semi-rural, semi-bush?

EDMONDS: Not semi-rural. It was certainly a large bush block with a great deal of bush in the area. There was certainly some paddocks and stuff around the area, but mostly it was

bush. It's certainly the sort of place where the people who worked in Midland and around those areas, they kind of lived up in the Hills and certainly commuted to the metro area to work.

DW: And I would imagine also it would have been fun living in that sort of block? Bush, lots of time outside.

EDMONDS: Yes, certainly lots of time in the bush riding a BMX around in the bush, certainly roaming the neighbourhood. There was lots of bush and parkland and old orchards and creeks and all that sort of stuff, creeks and gilgies [freshwater crayfish] and animals and lots of places to go and hang out without having to be in the middle of the city or anything like that.

DW: And where you aware as you were growing up, that suburbia was encroaching and starting to get closer?

EDMONDS: Yes, yes. I suppose the neighbourhood became denser and denser as I got older. I moved out in my early 20s, so I haven't been there for 20-odd years. Certainly, I was aware in my late teens and early 20s of the real concerns around bushfires and those sorts of things. And every year was a source of some consternation about fires and that sort of stuff in Summer, and Summer got very dry. But it was certainly nice in Winter, it was nice when it was raining.

DW: Yeah. And you said that you went to Guildford Grammar for your high school. Not as a border, but as a day student?

[00:04:24] **EDMONDS:** Yes, I was a day boy. I went there for my whole high school, from year 8 to year 12 and it was an interesting experience. My politics probably didn't fit the school a great deal at the time. But I kept my head down and played sport and, you know, I did my study and got through that way. But, look, it was an interesting experience. And I learnt a lot, probably not what they intended me to learn, but I learnt a lot about people and the nature of power and the nature of how wealth and influence was transferred down through the generations and through those sort of school networks.

DW: You're thinking of the boarders whose parents might have been farmers or whatever?

EDMONDS: Oh, certainly there was a long, in those sort of schools, there's a long history of influence and power being transferred through the school networks. So, from parents to parent, and boy to boy and through those internal school relationships. And access to the powerful networks in the State and in the city, certainly. It wasn't necessarily something I subscribe to, but that's …

DW: You said that it may not have fitted your politics, were you then quite aware of particular political issues that upset you or made you concerned?

EDMONDS: Oh, look, I was certainly aware of social justice issues at the time. Race was still a significant issue around that time. Certainly, race and gender. When you have a school with an absence of women, then certainly gender and approaches to women is a real concern. But race was also an issue, certainly when you have a lot of white boys congregate together with very similar experiences, certainly 40 years ago. Well, it wasn't 40 years ago, but 20 odd years ago, yeah, race is a significant issue. There was a lot of

racism in the school. I don't know if it was more than you'd expect in the era, which was the late '80s and early '90s. But looking back, it was probably significant at the time.

DW: And also Guildford Grammar is in Midland, so that's a lot of working-class people, industry. And I think it's quite a large Aboriginal community around that area?

EDMONDS: Yes. I mean, certainly that wouldn't be true of the school, though. That wasn't the representation of the school. The school's one of the big … at the time it was one of the big private schools, along with Wesley and Scotch and Hale and Trinity and Christchurch and those schools, Aquinas as well. So, it was an expensive private school to go to. And it did have a lot of boarders, a lot of farmers and pastoralists and stuff sent their kids there. There was a lot of wealth in the school, so that wasn't representative, I think, of the Midland population for sure.

DW: And a big focus probably on sports as well?

EDMONDS: Yes, yes.

DW: Were you into any of those sporting?

EDMONDS: Oh, look, I liked to play sports. I wasn't very good at them. But I liked cricket. I still like cricket. And I played hockey and that sort of thing. I wasn't great at sport, still not great at sport. But I enjoyed it. But sport was certainly a big focus for that school and more generally for those schools. Things like rowing and cricket and rugby and those sorts of things are a big focus of the school. It was a traditional English-style private school.

DW: Yeah. I'm also thinking you come from a family, as you said, with two sisters and a co-ed primary school. And suddenly you're at an all-boys' school.

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: Did you feel those changes, in teenagehood, the lack of girls around the school?

EDMONDS: Oh, yeah. Look, certainly with hindsight, I probably wouldn't do it again. But it was just a school you went to at the time. There was a lot of interaction with Perth College, [all-girls private school] which was the sister school. That's where my sisters went. So that was the brother's sister school. I know that Guildford Grammar is co-ed now, but it wasn't at the time. So, there was some interaction and that sort of thing. But with hindsight, I wouldn't have chosen to go there. And as a 12 year-old, I wasn't choosing much. With hindsight, I wouldn't have gone there. But that's not because it wasn't co-ed. That's probably because of the politics were not particularly conducive to me or what I wanted to do with my life.

DW: And both of those schools, your sisters' school, Perth College and Guildford Grammar, I think are Anglican.

[00:10:06] **EDMONDS:** That's right.

DW: So was religion a big part of your parents' life?

EDMONDS: No, it wasn't a big part. The only time I've ever been to church was for school. I haven't been to church outside of that. That was just a coincidence. It was a big part of the school life. It wasn't a big part of my life outside of school.

DW: And what about politics for your parents sitting around the table at the end of the day?

EDMONDS: Um, look, we certainly discussed politics. So, my Dad at the time was a strong Liberal voter. I don't know that he's always voted Liberal. He may well have voted for [ALP PM] Bob Hawke in the early '80s, but he's certainly a more conservative person. I don't think my Mum is. My Mum, I think might have handed out how to votes for Jo Vallentine in her early years when she was running for the NDP, the Nuclear Disarmament Party.

DW: 1984?

EDMONDS: Yeah, I've got some memory of her handing out how to votes around that time. So, my Mum's parents are strong Labor voters. I think my Mum votes Greens and she certainly has handed out how to votes for me before, but I'm not sure. But certainly, there was a great deal of discussion around politics. I certainly was always aware of politics. You always had an intelligent conversation about that. I mean, my Dad, even though he's a conservative, he's not a rabid, unthinking conservative. Certainly, he considers his politics and thinks about it and has strong views about that. We talk about that and we don't always agree and sometimes we do agree. So we always discussed politics growing up.

DW: Yes. Well, certainly 15 [years-old] would be 1990, Hawke-Keating, Labor Government. There'd been a huge number of changes. And big discussion, I suppose, about the GST [Goods and Services Tax]. Were any of that of interest to you as a young man?

EDMONDS: Well, 1990 wasn't GST, '93 was the Hewson GST election. Certainly, that was the time of the recession and that was a source of much conversation. I mean, that was difficult for my Dad at the time, running a small business and being in a recession. Interest rates, I think, were about 21-22%. They were just extraordinary. So, every five years you're paying off the principal. So, that was pretty tough.

So, there was discussion around politics at that time. I certainly think that any enthusiasm that my Dad might have had for Bob Hawke in his earlier times might have waned by that time. So, '93 was the Hewson GST election, and then '96 was when Keating got chucked out and [Liberal PM] Howard started his run, which went for 11 years or so.

DW: And also '93, I think the Mabo High Court decision [on native title]. Another big change in society.

EDMONDS: So Mabo was '92-ish because I remember writing about that in my TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination], which would have been '92. But certainly '93 when I started law at Murdoch, Mabo was a big discussion and native title was a source of much consternation at that time, certainly much consternation amongst the farmers' sons at Guildford [Grammar] in '92.

Suffice to say, I don't think there was much enthusiasm for the concept of native title at that time, but that was a great upheaval from a legal sense and also from a social sense. I

think, as it's shown, it probably hasn't changed a great deal. I think the the move towards justice moves slowly. Even though it was seen as a radical decision at the time, I don't think it's been that radical to the State or to the country, as we've gone on from that.

DW: So you mentioned you went to Murdoch in 1993 to do law. Was that presumed by your parents that all their children, having gone to private schools, would then go on to university?

[00:15:19] **EDMONDS:** Yes.

DW: And you were keen to go?

EDMONDS: Oh, look, I was keen to go to university. I put down law. I think at the time I wanted to be a lawyer. I thought that was a great way to go. I think once I started law, I decided that I didn't really want to do it. So, I did law and then became a lawyer. And I've been a lawyer now for 20 years. I still don't think it's what I want to do.

DW: Right! But you've still got time.

EDMONDS: Yeah, I've still got time. It'll do 'til I find something else.

DW: And was there something at high school that triggered that interest in law?

EDMONDS: Not particularly. I think when you're reasonably astute at those sort of matters and you're doing your TEE, you put down law and you put down medicine and you put down all those things. And then you get into one of them because there's an expectation that that's really what you're going to do is something like that. If you're good at academic stuff, there's an expectation you'll go on and do something which requires a high score to get into. So, I think that's kind of why I put down the law. I can't really recall any great attraction to the law. I still don't have any great attraction or affinity to the law.

DW: And your sisters, were they interested in law?

EDMONDS: No. So, my older sister did an Arts degree. And she's a senior public servant in Canberra. And my younger sister is a public servant in WA. She's also a senior public servant. And they both did Arts degrees.

DW: And was yours a double degree?

EDMONDS: Yeah, I did a degree in Law and in Arts, in history. I started off in sociology and then first year switched to history, which was fun and quite interesting. I focussed on Australian political history since World War Two. So, that was my double major and that's kind of where I ended up spending a great deal of my time. I think my unpaid time is in politics, in Australian political history.

DW: Yeah. And you never thought about having a break, travelling for a year, doing a part-time job?

EDMONDS: Look, I did think about that, but when I finished my degree, I'd hooked up with a woman who was older than me and had a child. And it was, I suppose, a choice between staying in a relationship with her or travelling. And I chose to stay in the relationship with

her. And, we've been married for 18 years, just gone 18 years, I think. And, we've had two more kids and we're sitting in our house right now.
Look, it was certainly an option, but those were the choices that I was making at the time. I was 23 [years-old] when I finished Uni, and so it was a choice between travelling and moving on from that relationship or staying in that relationship and settling down and working hard, which is what I've done.

DW: The other big changes Labor made in the early '90s was introducing a HECS [Higher Education Contribution Scheme] fee for university students[1]. Did that impact you and your family at all?

EDMONDS: Oh, well, it impacted me insofar as I then had a HECS bill. That was, I suppose, my entrée to student politics, was through those sort of campaigns, rent-free education and opposing HECS and those sorts of things. Yes, so that was the early '90s. So, I was certainly involved in protests around that. Our argument at the time was that the introduction of HECS was the thin end of the wedge. What we'd see is an expansion of the student fee system. You'd see differential fees and you'd see poor people or people who weren't affluent being excluded from courses like law and medicine and those sorts of things, which has actually come to pass.

DW: It's exactly what happened.

[00:19:39] **EDMONDS:** Exactly what's happened. HECS has gone through the roof, students are coming out of university now with enormous debts. And one of our arguments at the time was that people would have less time to think about making the world a better place if they came out with degrees and bills of $50, 60, 100,000, they'd have to knuckle down and try and get them paid off. And what we've seen is that's exactly how people are coming out, that's exactly how students are coming out.

I don't know how young people do it these days. It's extraordinary to come out with a debt of $50, 60, 70,000, a requirement to start paying that off, have less jobs and having to work for free when they come out in order to try and obtain some experience that would stand them in good stead to get a job. When I came out, it was relatively easy to find a job. There were two law schools in WA and if you came out, if you wanted a job as a lawyer, you could pretty much pick one up.

Now I think there's four or five law schools, more students studying than there are lawyers in the profession. And when they come out with their degree, they have to work for nothing. They have to pay for their articles. It's now called practical legal training, which is another bill that they end up with. It's extraordinary, it's no wonder these poor students are coming out under the pump.

DW: How active were you with student politics? Was it just education issues that attracted you to getting involved?

EDMONDS: Yes, primarily. I was very active in student politics. It's where I met Alison [Xamon, Greens (WA) MLC North Metro region] and Adam Bandt [Australian Greens Parliamentary Leader] and John Carey [ALP State Minister] and a whole bunch of people

[1] In 1989 the Hawke ALP Government introduced a $1,800 fee for all university students and the Commonwealth paid the balance. A student could defer payment of this HECS amount and repay the debt through the tax system when the student's income exceeded a threshold level. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_education_fees_in_Australia#Introduction_of_HECS

like that who are now still active in politics. It was primarily around those sorts of issues, but it also moved into campaigns around racism, and East Timor was an issue at the time. Workers' rights, all of those sorts of things.

It was primarily around education issues. We were certainly involved in the larger protests at the time around the State's third wave industrial reforms. [Liberal Minister] Graham Kierath[2], the Patrick's dispute in '98[3], we were involved in that as well. Spent some time down at the Patrick's protest [on Fremantle wharf]. We were involved in the workers' embassy up at Parliament around the third wave legislation. So, it was broader than just those education issues. It was a bit broader than that, but that's where it started, I guess. That was my entrée to politics and to social justice. That was the gateway drug, if you will.

DW: Right, okay. [chuckles] And did you do other things, like get involved with the student newspaper?

EDMONDS: Look, I was involved in the [Murdoch] Student Guild and the Student Guild was the publisher of the student newspaper, so, I was involved in that. And would occasionally write stuff for that, occasionally write stupid stuff, occasionally write serious stuff. So, we'd hang out with the editors and help put stuff together. So, I was generally involved in the Student Guild, ran in student campaigns. Even if I wasn't on the Student Guild, I was still around and supportive.

I was on the Student Guild the year they introduced the VSU, the Voluntary Student Unionism in WA[4]. That, I think, was the Court-Kierath reforms. That would have been about 1994, 1995. That's when the issue came in and the student union fees were no longer compulsory. So, we had to rejig the entire organisation.

DW: Did it affect the income very much?

EDMONDS: It significantly impacted the income of the Student Guild. The services that we ran had to become profitmaking. We closed some services, we rejigged some services. We rejigged the fee structure of the organisation. So, there were significant changes that were made at that time. And it's a shame that some of the broader services that had been delivered to students on campus just had to fall by the wayside. Which I suppose was the point of introducing it for the Liberal Party, was that the broader political stuff was not something that was amenable to them.

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[2] Graham Kierath held the Labour Relations portfolio from 1993 to 1998 within the Court Liberal Government which introduced the three 'waves' of industrial relations legislation. The first wave, in the Workplace Agreements Act of 1993, provided for the introduction of workplace agreements. The second wave restricted the right of union officials to enter workplaces to service their members, deal with workplace issues and organise collectively. The third wave dealt with pre-strike ballots, limited State award coverage where unions sought federal awards as well and limited political expenditure by unions. See reference 18 http://john.curtin.edu.au/gallop/career_references.html

[3] In the waterfront dispute of 1998, the Patrick Corporation undertook a restructuring of their operations for the purpose of dismissing their workforce, many of whom were members of the Maritime Union of Australia. The strategy was supported and backed by the Howard's Liberal/National Coalition Government as part of their commitment to weakening labour unions. Patrick's actions were later ruled illegal by Australian courts.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1998_Australian_waterfront_dispute

[4] The *Voluntary Membership of Student Guilds and Associations Act* was passed in December 1994. It stipulated that membership of a student association is to be voluntary and that no student is to be required to pay any subscription or fee that is not directly related to an educational course. This meant they could not be made to pay amenities and services fees, as well as student union membership fees.
https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/hotissueVSU

DW: So you nearly finished a degree in a subject you're not really convinced is your love. What were you thinking towards the end of the degree about where you would go with law?

[00:24:35] **EDMONDS:** Well, I didn't want to be a lawyer. I certainly wanted to be involved more in activism and activist circles. When I finished my degree, I applied for a job at the Gosnells Community Legal Centre to be the tenancy advocate, which was a newly established program. So, I applied for that job. I got that job. That was a great job. And while I was doing that job, I was offered the opportunity to be an articled clerk as well. So, I was employed, I think, three days a week and I got offered the opportunity to volunteer the other two days a week to do my articles. So, I was there five days a week and I got my articles done that way.

DW: So one of the lawyers there would supervise you through that?

EDMONDS: Correct. Yes.

DW: And I'm just thinking in terms of tenancy and advocacy, that was one of the other big things Keating did as Prime Minister was cut social housing budgets. And so, it's remained a big issue for lower income people just getting housing.

EDMONDS: So that would have been … I started that job in '99, so kind of the like part of '99. So, that was well past the Paul Keating years at that point, although I presume the policy had echoed through the State by that point. I think '99 might have been a State Liberal Government as well. So, we had some involvement with Homeswest and some involvement with private tenancies. We'd advocate for tenants at that time, as well as doing a bit of DV [domestic violence] and a bit of family law and bits and pieces around that sort of area, a bit of general law at that time.

So, the Centre was operating out of Gosnells, operating out of a shed, and then it moved to an old bank. Now it's in Lotteries House in Gosnells. So, I finished my job there, or I left that job, would have been about 2001. And I was on the management committee, I think from about 2002 until, I've only just come off the management committee now. So, over 20 years involvement with the organisation.

DW: A fabulous commitment.

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: At Murdoch University, was there a Greens group that you could join and get active on Greens-type issues?

EDMONDS: There was a small Greens group on campus but the Greens weren't actively involved on the campus. I wasn't a member of the Greens until I finished Uni, which was '99.

DW: By then they'd been going about 10 years. Were you aware of what they were doing?

EDMONDS: Yeah. Look, certainly we were supportive of the Greens and I handed out how to votes for Alison at some point. I can't remember when she ran, but she was

running, I think number two on the Senate, or number three on the Senate, supporting Dee Margetts.

DW: That was ‘93 or ‘96.

EDMONDS: Oh. Yeah, I think it might have been ‘96. So, I handed out how to votes for her then. It might have been ‘98 actually, the ‘98 [State] election.

DW: The one she lost?

EDMONDS: Yes. So, I handed out how to votes and was generally supportive, but I wasn’t a member of the Greens at that point. I don’t think I joined the Greens, I’m not sure,

DW: September ‘99 according to our database, but it could be wrong.

EDMONDS: So, that would have been shortly after I finished Uni. So I finished Uni at the end of first semester ‘99. So, that would have been a few months later I would have joined the Greens.

DW: And what caused you to join a political party rather than just being an activist or working in tenancy and so on?

EDMONDS: Alison, my wife, or my girlfriend at the time, now my wife. She asked me to join. She’d been a member for a long time. I think she was a member right from formation. So, she said, ‘You should join the Greens, you should get active and you should come in and support me’. So, that’s why I did.

DW: Okay, and were you active then in your regional group? What was your regional group at the time?

EDMONDS: At that time, my regional group would have been Perth. And I was attending Perth meetings at that time, so that would have been ‘99. I attended meetings on and off. As I say, I joined the Greens for a girl. So, look, I was supporting Alison and I did attend the odd regional group. I don’t think I was particularly active in ‘99. I didn’t get active, I think, until about 2001 in the lead up for the Federal election. I think I was involved in the State preferences team in 2001 for that Federal election and also for the State election that would have been around that time as well.

DW: Yeah, with [ALP Premier] Gallop being elected.

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: What drew you to preferences then? If you are reasonably new member of a party or a lawyer involved in particularly social housing, what was it about the preferences process that attracted you?

[00:30:09] **EDMONDS:** So, I’d done preferences in student politics. So between ‘93 and ‘99, I was involved in preferences each year in the Student Guild [elections]. You kind of figure out in student politics, you kind of figure out little bits about yourself in politics. And I figured out that I wasn’t good at being a candidate because people didn’t necessarily want to vote for me. But I was very good at getting other people into positions. So, I was very good at being a backroom operator, not so good at being a candidate. And people need to

figure out where they fit in terms of politics. Are you a candidate or are you a, you know, a backroom operator? And I was much better at the backroom stuff.
I was good at preferences because I understood the maths, I understood people, and so I could read people very well. And I was very persuasive around convincing people to do things that I wanted them to do and convincing them about the merits of them adopting our position. And I was very good at figuring out what other people were trying to do and reading them without necessarily them having to tell me what they were trying to do. I was very good at picking up what was driving other people's motivations. So, I got involved in the [Greens] State preferences team at that point. Did you want to go into this now?

DW: Yes, yeah, we can do that. So that reported to ECC [Election Campaign Committee] did it?

EDMONDS: Um, I wasn't the convenor of the State Preferences team in 2001, 2004. I presume it reported to, at that time it would have been the SECC or the FECC. So, there would have been a Federal Election Campaign team and a State Election Campaign Committee. So, it would have reported to them at the time. I can't recall specifically now, so that would have been 2001 and then 2004, I would have been involved again. And then in the lead up, in 2005, I was working for the ETU [Electrical Trades Union] or the CEPU [Communication, Electrical and Plumbing Union]. And they were involved in the Your Rights at Work campaign[5] at the time, was that Your Rights at Work?

DW: I think so. It was still a Howard [Liberal] Government.

EDMONDS: Yes, yes. And that was a trade union campaign to throw out the Liberal [Federal] Government and elect Kevin Rudd for 2007. So that campaign started about 2004, 2005, and the ETU was targeting the seat of Stirling and other unions were targeting the seat of Hasluck. I think they were the two target seats in WA. And I saw some synchronicity between my work and my involvement with the Greens, I was on the State preferences team at that time. I applied to get onto the National Preferences Team, of which there were four people on the Team. I made application to go on the National Preferences Team and got interviewed for that.

The members of the national preferences team, when we first started was Richard Dennis, Lesa de Leau from New South Wales, myself and Juanita Wheeler from Queensland. I know that Juanita then went through a pre-selection, which she lost, she was the National Convenor at the time. She lost pre-selection for the Queensland Senate and as a result pulled out of the National Preferences Team. So, it was just the three of us, myself, Richard and Lesa and I took on one of the senior negotiating roles at that time with Richard Dennis. And I've been a member of the National Preferences Team since then.

But also at that time, I switched from being a member of the Perth Regional Group to being a member of the Pearce-Hasluck Regional Group, because Hasluck was one of the target seats, and so I was trying to support the Hasluck Regional Group, which had a long history at that point of being reasonably dysfunctional and reasonably difficult to deal with.

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[5] The Australian labour movement faced an unprecedented challenge to trade union and workers' rights when the Coalition Howard Government introduced the Work Choices legislation in 2005. The unions' 'Your Rights at Work' campaign became the most significant political campaign mounted by a non-party political group in Australian history for its blend of television advertising, mobilizing and grassroots organizing, web-based campaigning and televised national days of protest. The campaign influenced public opinion powerfully against the laws, and in response the Government mounted a fierce attack on the legitimacy of unions. The campaign was a major influence over people's votes and the ALP's victory in the November 2007 election. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00236561003654735

That was in the lead up to Scott's [Ludlam] election campaign, which was in 2007. That was Scott's first election campaign. And Alison was the campaign convenor of Scott's campaign. So, Alison was Scott's campaign coordinator and so I was working with her in part to try and support the Hasluck Regional Group in their campaign. Because it was going to be an important seat in the Federal election, we needed to have a proper presence, we needed to be organised around that. So, I was helping her with that.

DW: What parts of WA does Hasluck cover?

[00:35:27] **EDMONDS:** At the time, it's different now. At the time, Hasluck covered the foothills of Midland, and from the foothills of Midland stretched down to Gosnells. So, Gosnells, Thornlie area. It doesn't cover that now, but did at the time. So, I'd grown up in Glen Forrest, but obviously had moved in circles around the Midland area. So, I was aware of that, had some synchronicity with that northern part of Hasluck. And I worked in the southern part of Hasluck.

DW: In Gosnells.

EDMONDS: Gosnells. I think I might have even run for Hasluck. I certainly did run for Hasluck.

DW: You did. 2001, House of Reps [election].

EDMONDS: 2001. So, I ran for Hasluck at their first, that was the first time Hasluck had appeared as a seat. I ran in 2001. So, I'd had some involvement with Hasluck. I wasn't in the Hasluck group at that time. So around 2004, 2005 was when I moved to the Hasluck Regional Group, the Pearce-Hasluck Regional Group, and got involved through that campaign then.

DW: And you were their Permanent Rep to my records, 2007 to 2014. So, once again, another big commitment too.

EDMONDS: Yeah, that probably sounds about right. You're only supposed to do two years. I'm not quite sure how that slipped through to the keeper.

DW: You changed your name along the way, or something? [chuckles]

EDMONDS: Oh yeah. I think I ended up being the Rep for seven years, just because no one else was prepared to do it, no one else was prepared to turn up to Reps meetings, which at that point in time were on Saturdays and often went for six or seven hours.

DW: They still do, [laughs] speaking as a Permanent Rep. And you also were involved with the Admin Working Group, 2009 and '11?

EDMONDS: Yes. 2009 to 2011?

DW: According to my records, yes.

EDMONDS: Yes, that sounds about right. Yes, so, I was on the Admin Working Group at that time. There was a bit of upheaval around then. We had a bunch of coordinators and Treasurers all quit at one point. And, yeah, we had staff issues and that sort of thing.

DW: And you continued your work on the preferences team?

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: Can you just fill out for me a little bit about how the preferences team work? I'd imagine in 2005 you'd be using emails. Are you splitting up the country in terms of the negotiations or you just come to …?

EDMONDS: So, in 2005, that was just after, Sorry, take a step back. Prior to 2005, the Greens had done preferences on a state-by-state basis. So, it was all state-based, there was no national strategy, no overarching strategy. And what we saw was, the state of Victoria kept getting done over on preferences. If you recall, that was when [Steve] Fielding got elected in the 2004 [Federal] election.

DW: Family First.

EDMONDS: Family First, and he got elected through harvesting of lots of preferences. He got elected from 1.5% or so. But what we saw there was that the real story of that campaign, or the substory of that campaign was not that Stephen Fielding got up. The substory of that campaign was that the ALP were swapping preferences with the conservative parties ahead of us in Victoria in order to secure the preferences of those conservative parties ahead of the Greens to protect their Senators and their Senate spots. And that Family First deal that they did was something they did in every state at that election, except for WA. You almost saw, I think it might have been Christine [Milne], lose in Tasmania.

So that was 2004. I think it almost saw Christine lose and we didn't pick up anyone else around the country. I think we might have picked up Kerry [Nettle] in NSW, I can't remember. But what was abundantly clear was that the Labor Party was approaching their negotiations on a national basis and the Greens was doing state-by-state, which made it easy for them to pick us off and play off one state against the other. In WA we hadn't fallen for the Fielding trick.

[00:39:48] And Bill Johnson, who was the [ALP] State Secretary at the time and said to us, 'Oh, look, there's this small Christian party we'd like to put ahead of you, ra, de ra. It's no big deal. They're no threat to you'. And I recall saying to Bill at the time, I said, 'Yeah, they're not a threat to us, but the ALP is, and you're swapping preferences with them. So, you get their preferences ahead of us. Why would we let you do that? We want your number two preferences'. And Bill kind of went, 'Oh, yeah, okay, fair enough'.

So, we'd spotted the plan in WA, but they hadn't spotted the plan anywhere else around the country. So, everyone else fell for it. And it was only the fact that Fielding got up from harvesting everyone else's preferences, that it became a controversy. Otherwise, the ALP would have just got elected and no-one would have noticed the difference.

But what it exposed to the Greens was a need to have a national strategy and have a national approach. So, in 2005 we formed a National Preferences Team, which then developed a national preference strategy. What that National Preferences Team was required to do was to fly around the country, speak to local groups about their preference decisions, collate those preference decisions, and then talk to other parties on a national basis around preference negotiations, and essentially have a collective bargaining

approach to national preferences, so other political parties weren't able to trade off one against the other.
So, that was 2005 for the 2007 election. The 2007 election was a breakthrough election for us because, even though we didn't necessarily see the senatorial results, what we saw was a national coordinated strategy. And we secured ALP preferences across the country at that time and coordinated our national preferences approaches such that our approaches to minor political parties dealt across state borders and our approach to the ALP dealt across state borders. And we ensured that no one was getting left out of the national preference discussions from then on in, so they weren't able to take advantage of us in one state and do us over in another. So, that was the first time we did that and that's been our approach since then.

We've certainly seen an escalation in preference strategies since then with the emergence in 2010 initially, and then in 2013, more prominently of Glenn Druery and his preference harvesting approach. Because Glenn emerged from NSW. If you recall, people talk about the tablecloth ballot in NSW with Glenn Druery registered 24 political parties or with similar, or with very similar memberships, he registered 24 political parties and then swapped preferences amongst those 24 first, so every little bit of, you know, 0.5% here, 0.5% there, all scraped together actually ended up in a quota. That was the great flaw in the ticket system. The ticket system existed at a national level with the Senate at that time.

So, in 2010, Glenn Druery emerged. That was the [ALP PM] Gillard election. So, we saw Glenn Druery emerge, but he wasn't really a massive player at that point in time, but he was a source of some consternation. But in 2013, we saw Druery emerge and the Labor Party, who at that point in time were then going to lose the Federal election, and they were certainly resigned to losing the 2013 election, then try and grab an opportunity to do us over on the way through and to win back Melbourne [Lower House seat held by Adam Bandt for the Greens].

So, Glenn Druery was working together with the ALP, with WikiLeaks, with the Australian Sex Party at the time, which is now the Reason Party and a whole range of other political parties, including the Liberals, to try and do us over at a national level. This is 2013. So there emerged a plot, essentially, for want of a better phrase, for all of them to swap preferences amongst each other and to lock the Greens out - ALP, Liberals and all those micro-parties. And that was all because of the seat of Melbourne. We managed to head that off successfully.

[00:45:09] We managed to head that off and then what we saw in 2013 was the election of the Ricky Muir's [Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party] and the Clive Palmers and the Australian Sports Party and all that other sort of jibber jabber [into the Senate]. We saw that the Liberals really saw there was a threat to their Senators there as well. And post that election, we changed the Senate voting system, got rid of the group voting ticket and introduced the system that we see today, which I think was a sound approach.

And in 2016, double D [double dissolution of the whole Parliament], we then saw that Senators were elected roughly proportionate to the vote that they picked up, which I thought was a good thing. And we saw the punters, they didn't struggle with the loss of the group voting ticket. We saw people numbering one to six quite easily or one to 12 below the line, and charlatans and con men and that sort of thing weren't able to use that as an opportunity to try and scam the system and harvest preferences and get people up from not much of a per cent of the vote. So, I thought that was a good reform.

DW: Did other States remove that group ticket voting system as well? Because I think WA still have it, don't we?

EDMONDS: It still exists in a form in Victoria. South Australia's got rid of it. New South Wales got rid of it after Glenn Druery's tablecloth ballot. Queensland doesn't have an Upper House. Tasmania has an entirely different system. ACT doesn't have an Upper House. So, the group voting ticket still exists in the same form, as it existed in the Senate, in WA. What we saw at the last WA State election was an effort to harvest preferences and scam the punters. It's a bit harder in WA because the smaller population makes it harder to get parties registered. In NSW it was very easy to register parties with 500 members, because there were so many people there.

It's a little bit harder in WA, but we have seen the advent of a lot of political parties and certainly the last State election campaign when I was negotiating preferences for the Greens, when I turned up to meet with one political party, one of the micro political parties, I went to the boardroom of Henry Heng's water company in West Perth[6], and I think there was about four or five different political parties all sitting in the boardroom all at the same time, all talking amongst themselves and negotiating with us as a bloc. And that would have been Family First. I think the Daylight Savings Party were there, Flux[7] was there and there might have been one or two other political parties. And they all had registered tickets of independents running as well.

So, we were actually meeting with groups of people who were forming, who were putting in tickets for probably 10 groups, and they were all bargaining together at that time, which was not what the system was intended to do.

DW: I'm just thinking, in terms of your role at the State-level with the preference team, you mentioned Bill Johnson, meeting with him.

EDMONDS: Yeah, that was many years ago.

DW: Yeah, I'm just thinking, it must involve, not just one face to face meeting. There must be a number of meetings, you discuss proposals, put up drafts. They get taken away?

EDMONDS: Yes. I mean, I always tell people the hardest thing about doing preferences for the Greens is dealing with the Greens. The most meetings are held with Greens [regional groups]. I'm trying to organise them and trying to organise what they want to do with their preferences. That's the hardest part. But there are large numbers of meetings with other political parties, both face to face and over the telephone. The real nuts and bolts don't really coalesce until the last minute because what happens is there is a ballot draw on the Friday [by the Australian Electoral Commission]. Everyone knows who's been registered. Everyone knows where they sit on the ballot. Then there's frantic phone calls for 24 hours and then group voting tickets are lodged before midday on the Saturday.

DW: Wow. Okay.

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[6] Henry Heng ran as the lead candidate for Family First in WA's North Metropolitan region in the 2017 State election. He is founder and CEO of Refresh Group Ltd, sellers of distilled and purified water. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candidates_of_the_2017_Western_Australian_state_election#North_Metropolitan_Region

[7] A political movement which aims to replace the world's elected legislatures with a new system known as issue-based direct democracy (IBDD). Flux originated in and is most active in Australia, but it is also has groups in the United States and Brazil. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flux_(political_party)

[00:49:50] **EDMONDS:** And then on the Monday, voting starts, prepoll starts. So, there's really a 24-hour period of …

DW: Madness …

EDMONDS: Absolute madness. And then the dust settles and you figure out where everyone sits at that point in time.

DW: But you would have been doing negotiations before then for some time?

EDMONDS: Yes. So, you will have had discussions, you will have sounded people out. You have an idea as to where everyone sits and then at the last minute, kind of everything coalesces together and hopefully you don't find yourself getting locked out.

DW: And do you, once you've reached an agreement, sign a form or contract or letter of agreement?

EDMONDS: There might be an exchange of emails, an exchange of text messages. With the Labor Party in the past, we've actually signed a document. Not so much anymore. The Labor Party wants to maintain plausible deniability by not having a piece of paper signed by anybody. So, in more recent campaigns we've just reached an understanding. So, it depends which political party, depends who you're dealing with, depends who you're speaking to. The Labor Party's pretty transparent in their approach, though. Certainly, any arrangements we might have with them, swap.

DW: But you wouldn't know until the Friday then whether they've carried through on their agreement?

EDMONDS: You wouldn't know 'til the Saturday, after all the group voting tickets have been lodged and then they get published. You don't know who's followed through and who hasn't.

DW: Have you had experiences where people haven't followed through, they've double-dealed?

EDMONDS: Sure. Yeah. It doesn't happen so much to me. But I'm aware in other states, certainly in Victoria at the last election, some of the mobs for whom from Glenn Druery was doing preferences didn't follow through in their arrangements with the Greens. In the past, it might have been 2007 or 2010, the LDP [Liberal Democratic Party] had reached an arrangement with us in WA to put the Greens ahead of a political party. It was Scott's election, and they put the number two, number three, number four ahead of a political party, but put Scott behind them. So that was just them trying to be a smartarse. And then they later posted on social media about how they had done us over, which I thought was silly. But with all these things, you can only do your credibility off once. You don't get the option of dealing it off again.

DW: And do you find in your negotiations because you've been involved for so long, you're dealing with the same people or do you have to deal with new people each election?

EDMONDS: There is some consistency. So there'll generally be a handover, if you will. So, you won't get an entirely new group of people, certainly from the major parties, you

won't get an entirely new group each time, but the membership will kind of transition through different people.

DW: And have you been able to do the same, bring people on in WA, onto the preferences group and train them up?

EDMONDS: Our preference team has been fairly static for a few years, the same sort of group of people.

DW: Because I would also imagine, each election the ground changes. So, whether you're dealing with a Labor Government who's about to lose, or the last election, Clive Palmer throwing $80 million into it. Everything changes, so does that enter your strategy in terms of what you need to change?

EDMONDS: It certainly influences the approach that other parties might take to you and what you need to be cautious about. I mean, certainly the most advantageous situation for us is a Labor Party that's about to win, or a Labor Party that needs to hang on. A Labor Party that knows they're going to thump it, or a Labor Party that knows they've got no chance, there's always a danger they'll seize an opportunity to do the Greens over on the way through.

DW: Which is what we're facing this year with [ALP Premier] McGowan?

EDMONDS: Which is what we're facing this year in the State election.

DW: Although, we're mainly focused on the Upper House, whereas he's I think looking at the Legislative Assembly, and what majority he might have there.

EDMONDS: Yes, but you certainly run the risk of a party that decides that they're comfortable with the numbers they're going to win in the Assembly and they don't need our assistance, then decides to maybe serve us up on the way through. Because the Labor Party's got two enemies, or they've got two opponents in their approach to everything. They've got their opponent on the right, which is the Liberal Party, and they've got their opponent on the left, which is the Greens. And if they think they've sold out the Liberal Party on the right, they might take the opportunity to give us a swipe on the way through on the left.

DW: Okay, and you were talking before about the difficulties of getting Greens, I would imagine regional groups, accepting your proposals, is it to preferences?

[00:55:19] **EDMONDS:** Yes, well, yes. So, the decisions that are made by the Greens are all made at the local grassroots level. So, there's a need to constantly go back to those groups to keep them informed about what decisions are being made, to ask them to make fresh decisions, to really keep them in the loop and deal with those preferences. And that's fine. That's the way the Greens works, and I like grassroots democracy, and I like grassroots decision-making. But grassroots decision-making takes time and it's hard to get everyone in the room at the same time agreeing on the same thing, certainly by consensus.

So, it's certainly progressing. I know that early on in doing preferences, one of the hardest things was trying to convince people that we needed to win. There wasn't even a consensus when I first got involved that trying to elect members of the Greens to

parliament was a good thing. There was an approach that parliamentary democracy wasn't necessarily a great idea and other people weren't necessarily even interested in trying to get Greens in. They didn't necessarily see that as a priority. So, we've moved on from there, which is good.

DW: And along the way, you've also stood for the Greens?

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: Four times, according to my records, including the 2001 we were talking about in Hasluck. Has your preference dealing, sort of advised the way you would approach that as a candidate, those elections?

EDMONDS: Not really. I was certainly never running as a winnable candidate or anyone who had any aspirations to win. I was always running as a support candidate to try and lend support and assistance to the lead candidates, the lead Upper House candidates at that point in time. So, it hasn't really influenced that at all. I'm just … just an understanding of someone credible to be on the ballot paper.

DW: So, you've stood in the Southern River, Lower House seat, here in WA [in 2001]?

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: Gosnells [in 2008], and Gosnells again in 2013. So, in the areas you'd grown up with, you'd worked at. You knew a bit about?

EDMONDS: Yes. Southern River, when I ran for Southern River, took in Gosnells and Thornlie. And it's flipped around as the boundaries have changed since then. It's moved from being part of East Metro to part of South Metro. So, the seat of Southern River moved and then the old parts of Southern River got turned into Gosnells, and then Thornlie, and Gosnells and Thornlie, and back and forth. But I ran for it because it was in an area that I'd worked in and I had some affinity with.

DW: In terms of voting both State and Federally, we've just had the Queensland election last night. I think the Greens got about 9.5%, 9.8% [of the vote].

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: Greens in WA have been around for 30 years and we seem to be stuck at about 10%, even though climate change has got worse. The big issues have continued to evolve. Younger people have come into the electoral roll. Do you have a view of why it is stuck about that?

EDMONDS: Well, I mean, certainly a lot of our issues have become mainstream issues now. So, the major parties have adopted a lot of our politics. And of course, some of that's what we try to do, was trying to make our issues mainstream and trying to get people to pick them up and take them on board. So, for those people who were who were voting Greens, for example, for same-sex marriage, that then became an issue for the major parties. And the major parties embraced it. The major parties went from having a consensus when Mark Latham was the leader of the Labor Party and John Howard was the Prime Minister, there was a consensus that same-sex people couldn't get married and they all voted to change the *Marriage Act* to that effect.

So, we've transitioned from that now to a situation where the major parties embrace same-sex marriage. There was a Referendum on it, then everyone voted for it. So, as our issues become mainstream, I suppose those people who supported us because of that issue, then there's a chance they may peel off and go back to supporting major parties because it's no longer a political issue anymore. Or, I don't know, people transition out. There's a fair bit of churn of our voters. As to why we're stuck on 10%, I don't know. I think there's a natural ceiling to every political party's vote.

DW: Does that mean you don't think the vote in WA in the Upper House, the number of seats we win, will be a bit more than the four we've got at the moment or we will never win any Lower House seats again?

[01:00:22] **EDMONDS:** Ah, well, look, I think there's always a chance of winning Lower House seats, but they're two different questions as to whether or not the percentage of our vote is going to change and whether or not we're going to win Lower House seats. We've certainly seen that the percentage vote in Queensland didn't shift, but the concentration of the vote shifted. The percentage vote in Victoria and NSW has been fairly static for quite a few years, but the concentration of that vote's changed. So, that's I think a matter of different campaigning styles.

I can't rule out us winning Lower House seats in the State again. Of course, we have won one before, but I think that would require probably some demographic changes in WA and some concentration of the population a little bit further.

DW: One of the other great themes of your life seems to be a commitment to unions. You've worked for a number of unions now. You mentioned the ETU and the CEPU.

EDMONDS: Yeah, I worked at the AMWU [Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union] as well. So, I went from Gosnells to doing workers' comp with a law firm. And various various unions were our clients. And then I went from there to the AMWU. That would have been about, perhaps 2003. And the AMWU was a very active union in the ALP. I told them I was in the Greens. They were happy to take me on on that basis. That was good. And I was there for about two, two and a half years. Then I went to the ETU, and I was there for a number of years up until the point that Alison got elected to East Metro.

And then I had to resign that position because we had young children. And so, I resigned that position so I could look after the kids. And then I went from there to work in private practice for a little while. And then I went to the MUA [Maritime Union of Australia]. And I've been in the MUA now since probably about halfway through Alison's first term. So, maybe about eight or 10 years or so I've been in and out of the MUA, or certainly working for the MUA since that time.

DW: They are all left-wing unions. As you say, most of them are supporters of the Labor Party. I think the ETU has [financially] supported Greens in various places?

EDMONDS: Yeah.

DW: Has that made it easier working for them?

EDMONDS: Sorry, has it made easier them supporting the ALP or them being left-wing?

DW: No, you working in that workplace.

EDMONDS: Well, I haven't necessarily picked those unions because they're left-wing. They've probably more picked me because I'm left-wing. They are affiliated with the Labor Party in various ways. I've always been transparent with them about my engagement with the Greens. I think they've all been smart enough to recognise that it doesn't hurt their political interests to have someone in the Greens who can support their interests as well, as well as the ALP. But, you know, they also silo their politics away from me to a certain extent. They don't necessarily invite me into those conversations, and that's okay, I don't necessarily want to be part of those conversations.

DW: They've never offered you an enticement to cross the border and join the Labor Party?

EDMONDS: Oh, they've asked me to join the Labor Party. They've said I should join. And they've variously hinted that, 'If you join, we can run you as a candidate'. But if I go back to that earlier conversation, you've got to figure out whether you're a candidate or whether you're a backroom operator. And I'm certainly not a candidate.

DW: Well, about the time you joined the Metalworkers Union in the early 2000s, you helped set up a special interest group on unions with Alison.

[01:04:37] **EDMONDS:** Yeah. Inside the Greens, there was certainly a sense at the time that there were a number of us involved in trade unions who were also members of the Greens who attended TLC [Trades and Labour Council] meetings or Unions WA meetings at that time, who weren't coordinating across our various unions and weren't coordinating across our activities, in circumstances where the ALP was actively using the union movement as an adjunct to the Labor Party. So, there was, I suppose, an assessment that we needed to get smarter at that approach as well. So, we set that up. It's kind of fell by the wayside to a certain extent now. But that was very useful at the time.

DW: Did it involve many members in terms of …?

EDMONDS: I think it probably involved about a dozen or so. Some of those people moved on from their positions in unions and it kind of evolved a little bit from there. And we haven't really tried to reinvigorate that in any sort of meaningful way. It's probably not particularly necessary at the moment because we've got MPs who are quite active in their engagement with the union movement.

DW: There was also a Unions and Industrial Relations Working Group set up in 2018 for the Greens?

EDMONDS: Was there?

DW: Yes, it was in the annual report. You don't know?

EDMONDS: No.

DW: Right, okay. That's not been brought to your attention?

EDMONDS: No, I don't know anything about that.

DW: Yes, because obviously there has been tensions, as you say, with the Labor Party in terms of the Greens sort of being seen as the left-wing and being left-wing unions. And also, with the revolution in renewables, there's a lot of jobs that could be created?

EDMONDS: Yes, look, certainly the ALP are very hostile to the Greens. Certainly as they lose Lower House seats to the Greens, they become increasingly hostile, as we saw in Queensland. And they try and use the union movement against us. And certainly if you work in the union movement, they try and put pressure on you. The ALP try to put pressure on you through the trade union movement, and the trade union movement tries to put pressure on you themselves. So, it's a delicate line to walk at times.

DW: In terms of your involvement with the Greens over 20 years, what's been the biggest change you've seen the Greens go through in that time?

EDMONDS: Look, I suppose the biggest change in the Greens (WA) is it's professionalised its approach to being a political party, and our vote's grown at the same time. But certainly we've moved on from the earlier days, which involve lots of [pause] alternative discussions and lots of, I suppose, lots of really naive approaches to things, and, as I said earlier, one of the more difficult things earlier in the preference discussions was convincing everyone that trying to win seats was a good thing and trying to have political success was something that we wanted to see and that we weren't just there as a lobby group to try and raise awareness of issues, that we actually wanted to implement those things and that we were a parliamentary party and that was a good thing.

So, I've seen that evolve, which is good. It's made it easier to do preferences. So, that's certainly been my impression, it has become much more 'professionalised' and much more, and I put those words in inverted commas, but it's become a much more professional approach, and a much more diligent approach to getting people into parliament.

Now we work to get people into parliament and we have a strategy, and implement the strategy, instead of occasionally getting someone in, because we got lucky, because we jagged a spot, which was something that used to happen in the earlier years. We'd occasionally jag a spot and everyone would be would be cock-a-hoop, but no-one would quite know how it happened. Whereas now we actually have a strategy, we implement it, and when it happens, we understand why it happened.

DW: I suppose one of the big changes has been joining the Australian Greens in 2002, because, as you said, you could then have a national strategy [for preferences]?

EDMONDS: Yes.

DW: A national approach.

EDMONDS: Look, certainly up to that point, WA was still involved at a national level, and still had engagement at a national level. We got invited to their meetings. But actually forming a national organisation has allowed for more synchronicity and more engagement and involvement and that sort of thing. So, joining the Australian Greens I think was a good thing.

DW: You were there for the 2002 ballot to join. Did you support the proposal?

[01:10:09] **EDMONDS:** I'm trying to remember back. I presume I would have. I can't recall voting, but if I had voted, I would have said 'yes'. But I've got no particular recollection. No real memory of that.

DW: You've had a huge involvement over that time. Your regional group, preferences, union work [activities] and also through Alison as a Member of Parliament. What's it meant to you personally to have that involvement over 20 years?

EDMONDS: I suppose it's a good outlet for politics. It's not the only outlet. It's not the be-all and end-all, but it's a good outlet for your political engagement and to kind of make yourself feel like you're trying to make the world a better place. I mean, I suppose that's the real objective, isn't it? So, certainly that's something that Alison and I work towards, trying to make the world a better place. And parliamentary democracy is one way to try and make that happen. It's not the only way. And look, it may well be that we move away from the Greens moving forward. That's always a possibility. We might do other things, but it's a good outlet for that engagement.

DW: Have your children picked up your interests in the Greens?

EDMONDS: Oh, look, they're certainly aware of politics. My daughter's 24. She's trying to finish her studies and trying to get out because, we've spoken about it before, she's got a huge HECS debt and has to get a job and do all those sorts of things. So, she doesn't have much time for politics and that sort of stuff. My boys are still only very young and interested in computer games and music and that sort of stuff. That's fine. We'll see what comes.

DW: Has there been anything that you've been a part of, a personal achievement that you've been most proud of in those 20 years? An election result?

EDMONDS: Other than getting Alison in Parliament, which has been tremendous, certainly my involvement in preferences and changing the approach to preferences at a national level has been really good, and it's something I'm proud of. I don't like the preference system. I don't like the ticket voting and that sort of stuff, but I'm good at it, and I'm good at figuring out what other people are doing. I was described in the Fairfax press as being one of the most proficient preference harvesters in the country. I don't think that was intended to be complimentary, but …

DW: I think it's a medal.

EDMONDS: Yeah, I took it as that. That was in discussions about the Senate reforms that went through and criticisms were being made of the Greens for changing a system because apparently, because you're good at something, it must mean you support it. So, I'm proud of the fact that I'm good at it, even though I don't necessarily like it. And I think the system needs to be reformed.

But I suppose I'm proud that I've really kind of changed the face of Australian politics in that way, even if it's from the backroom. You don't get that sort of recognition very much. I'm proud that I've really shaped the Senate itself and shaped the Parliament and have done that from a position of sitting over here in Perth in a relatively benign way.

DW: That's fabulous. We've covered a lot of ground in your time with the Greens in your private life. Is there anything that you'd like to put on the record before we finish the interview, that I've missed?

EDMONDS: Well, I it's hard to imagine. I don't think so.

DW: Thanks Luke once again for your time this morning and all those years of meetings and deals and so on. And I think you've done a fantastic, as you say, we are more professional, we have a good range of representatives, State and Federally. So it's been a fantastic career you've had and your time with the Greens. Thank you.

[01:14:37] **EDMONDS:** Thanks, David, cheers.

END OF TRANSCRIPT