



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

An interview with:

Ms JUNE LOWE



22nd October 2020 at her home in Floreat

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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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

June Lowe is a Foundation member of the Greens (WA), having joined in January 1990. However, June had been active in the South West on anti-nuclear campaigns since 1984, when she moved with her family to Busselton.

June recounts the success of events such as the Great Walk in 1988 in engendering a great sense of community among those in the South West who were working on peace and environmental issues. She was a key South West organiser in the Senate campaign for Jo Vallentine in 1984 and later working with the Green Development campaign organising for the Upper House South West region in the 1989 State election.

June managed a number of successful election campaigns, including that of Senator Dee Margetts in 1993 (when she had moved to Perth) and four campaigns for Giz Watson for the Upper House region of North Metro. A number of Greens members have nominated the influence of June in getting them to be active, initially by joining the University of WA Greens, which June had founded.

June also was a Coordinator of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War and the Environmental Defenders Office. She currently campaigns for the rights and well being of LGBTI elders with GRAI (GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc).

TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY

Time	Topic	Page Number
0 mins	Start of Interview	4
5 mins	Growing up in Kent	5
10 mins	Awareness of nuclear threat to the UK	7
15 mins	Supporting Jo Vallentine in the 1980s	8
20 mins	Living in Melbourne	9
25 mins	Joining the Bunbury Peace Group in 1984	11
30 mins	Connectedness of SW Greens	12
35 mins	The Great Walk to save the forests	13
40 mins	Coordinating role in the SW for the 1989 State election	14
45 mins	Working with Giz Watson in the 1990 State election	16
50 mins	Managing Dee Margetts 1993 Senate campaign	18
55 mins	How to be a good campaign manager	19
60 mins	Establishing the UWA Greens	20
1 hour 5 mins	Working for the MAPW and EDO	22
1 hour 10 mins	Supporting aged care for LGBTI people	23
1 hour 15 mins	Future of the Greens	24
1 hour 20 mins	Conclusion of Interview	25

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01] DW: My name is David Worth and I'm with June Lowe on Thursday morning, the 22nd of October [2020] in her home in Floreat. June, thanks very much for having me here for your interview.

LOWE: You're welcome. Thanks for coming.

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

LOWE: Yes. I was born in New Eltham which is in [Greater London] SE9, it's adjacent to Sidcup Kent. So, it's right on the border of Kent and London. And 1954.

DW: And your father and mother, can you tell me a little bit about them? Was your father working, your mother working?

LOWE: My father was born in 1919. He worked for what was then the British Post Office. Well, no, it changed its name. He was working in the Telecom side of things. He was what they called an electrical engineer and he designed the circuitry inside telephones. And later when we went to electronic switchboards, he was involved in the project that made the switchboard, the European switchboard between Europe and England. So, we didn't have operators [manually] plugging us in and unplugging us. I remember that.

DW: He must have seen a lot of change, though, in telephones and telephone systems in his lifetime?

LOWE: Oh, yeah. I grew up, the scrap paper that we drew on, the back of the back of it was all electrical diagrams. Early education into electronics that I never took on board, sadly.

DW: And your mother?

LOWE: My mother was most of the time what they called a homemaker, I suppose. She did work in different things. She worked during the [Second World] War, as women did. And that was probably the high point of her life in that regard, working in some secret war office. And she worked for an optometrist for a while. She was a people person, she liked people, but she also had various stresses, anxiety, things that surfaced from time to time.

DW: And did either of them go to university?

LOWE: No.

DW: So, your Dad's electrical engineering would have been like the equivalent of a TAFE course?

LOWE: No, not even that. [laughs] Remember these were earlier times ... You join the Post Office and you learn on the job, well before formal courses.

DW: In-house training?

LOWE: Yeah.

DW: Do you have any siblings, June?

LOWE: A younger sister, Vivien, and she's three years younger, and an older brother, two years older.

DW: And do you have any memories, early memories of growing up in that part of the UK?

LOWE: Oh, um, in a way I'm less interested in me and more interested in the major project of the Greens. But very quickly, as you've asked, it was an area that was dormer housing for London. So, it was all semi-detached houses in rows, kind of a 'nice neighbourhood' in a kind of middle class-y kind of way, I suppose. There were street trees that went into blossom in spring. They were pretty. My parents bought there because there was an empty lot around the corner that was earmarked for a school. But in the entire time we were there, the school was never built and maybe never will be. So, we weren't that far from a school.

DW: I suppose a bit like Australia, that post-war period ... a boom?

LOWE: Exactly. I was going to say it was recovering from wartime, although interestingly enough, it's only in retrospect that I can look back and see the influences of the War. It was actually very little talked about in that period, where in fact, if you went to London, of course, in central London, there were bits that the war was very evident still. [No doubt adults were still bearing the emotional scars from World War 2, but that wasn't really obvious to a child.]

DW: But also in the UK, probably more than here, there was a big change under the [British] Labour Government in terms of social policy?

LOWE: As a child I wasn't aware of any of that.

DW: No, no. And at what age did your parents come out to Australia?

LOWE: They didn't. I emigrated to Australia when I was 18 [years-old], by myself.

DW: For what reason?

LOWE: It was as far as I could go without coming back.

DW: OK, right. Do you have any ... can you remember what primary and high schools you went to?

LOWE: OK, gosh. I'm not sure why this is interesting to anybody, but, um, ...

DW: We're just doing this with all the interviewees.

[00:04:48] **LOWE:** Yes, okay. I went to, I think Longlands Primary School and that was in Sidcup, Kent. I used to walk there. I don't know how far it was. I was a little person with little legs, so it seemed like a longer period of time than it actually was. It was lovely in the Autumn because there were thick leaves to crunch through. And I went to went to an all-girls' high school, although it was just moving over to co-ed when I was there, I was probably in about the third or fourth year in high school, and they took their first intake of little boys. Poor little buggers, [laughs] can you imagine?

DW: And in terms of your schooling, were there any influences that you can look back now and think, oh, well that helped determine what I was interested in later on as an adult?

LOWE: Other than knowing that I didn't fit in.

DW: Okay, yeah.

LOWE: And I didn't because I didn't have any role models that gave me anything to aspire to. I just knew that, generally, I felt that I was apologising all the time, which is a very English thing to do, I suppose. And it wasn't really until I was 21 when I met people who were, inverted commas, "like me", that I had some resonance. And I kind of realised how different they were from the people I'd ever met before. And I thought, 'Oh, no wonder I didn't feel at home ever'. I never had a feeling of feeling at home.

So, that was, I guess, why I left [the UK]. And when you learn, you're kind of living, it's overstating it to say living on the margins, that's not true because you learn, especially in the sort of type of environment that I grew up in, social skills that mask everything. [laughs, sighs] So, you appear to get by. But that sense of being really at home and understood and seen, I didn't have that until much later in life.

DW: Right. Are you talking in terms of your gender and sexuality?

LOWE: No, no. I'm just talking about understandings about, um, life, the universe and everything, really. I mean, the experience of being a Green is that you've finally met people who have got similar values. But before that emerges, you're not aware that everybody else's values are stuffed. You just know that you're not that comfortable with it.

DW: So before you came out to Australia at the age of 18, the '60s, swinging London ...

LOWE: Swinging London.

DW: ... anti-Vietnam war [protests], did that have an impact on you?

LOWE: Um, so I left school and worked in the travel industry, I was working in Oxford Circus, [around the corner from Soho - the boutiques etc]. So, I was influenced by the dominant cultures. In retrospect, I see that. I mean, we use terms now like grooming, and we're all shocked and horrified that people like Savile, what's his name, Jimmy Savile was openly abusing everybody¹. But like everybody, the entire country, everybody knew. And what I see in retrospect was that all young women of my age were being groomed by everybody. Like a group project, a national project.

And it almost, I do feel a little, well not sorry for, but the men that are now caught up in retrospect because they were rich and famous. But they were only doing what everybody else was doing, really. So, the double standard that was around at the time, I think it was very difficult because you still had morality stuff about sex that was basically Victorian. And yet at the same time, the pressures were on to not behave that way. So, that conflict led to a great deal of unhappiness and self-recrimination, because, as I said, it's taken decades and decades later before I interpreted it the way I do now.

¹ An English television and radio personality who hosted BBC shows including Top of the Pops. He raised an estimated £40 million for charities and, during his lifetime, was widely praised for his personal qualities and as a fund-raiser. After his death, hundreds of allegations of sexual abuse were made against him, leading the police to conclude that Savile had been a predatory sex offender. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Savile

DW: What about movements like CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament], the anti-war movement and so on? Were you aware of them, were you involved?

[00:09:44] **LOWE:** When I was in primary school, there was a group of older boys who sat in a circle in the playground and chanted, 'Ban the bomb'. And it was enormously scandalous. And we were all ordered indoors and weren't allowed to look out the window, but you could hear them. But there were no politics really at home, overtly or obviously. My mother's family were Jewish, so there were religious politics, although she wasn't a practising Jew herself, there were politics like not buying anything made in Germany, for example. But not very much. It was a pretty apolitical upbringing, I would say. My father, obviously, fought in the War and so there were a very few war stories, but hardly any. And he really was pretty clammed up about that.

And it wasn't until I came to Australia really that I became politically exposed - well it wasn't really until I was about 21 and I was travelling by that stage. In 1972 I emigrated [to Australia] and moved to Victoria first, worked again in the travel industry, and then I went travelling. I had saved a princely sum of about \$2,000, which was enormous. And I thought, 'Oh, I'm rich, I'm going to retire early and work later in life'. Little did I know how true that all was. But no, it was intentional. And I started travelling, in 1974 first in Australia - going to NSW and northern Queensland, and going to Darwin just after Cyclone Tracy [December 1974].

And by that time, I had met an American man who was more political than me, which wasn't saying much. [chuckles] I wasn't highly politicised at that time. And we travelled, so really a major influence on my life was travelling, particularly in Asia. I spent several years travelling around, spending very little money, which you could do in those days. You probably still can, but especially then. So that would have been 1976, we left Australia and started travelling overseas. And so, in the late '70s I was in Nepal and we both engaged with Tibetan Buddhism.

And that was the beginning, I think, of my, what I would call politicisation inasmuch that there was a commitment to, or there was an enhanced understanding of how everybody's well-being was tied up together, which is pretty much the essence of decent civic behaviour, if not a decent life. And a commitment to have that in the centre of what I did in life, which I didn't have much opportunity for when you're travelling. Travelling is actually quite a selfish activity. You've got the day-to-day interactions where you obviously try ... and which are as warm and friendly as they can be. But it isn't really until you settle down and put roots down that you can start giving back.

So, it really wasn't until later in life [that I was more politically engaged] - 'later in life' is a funny phrase. We travelled around the world, I'm trying to sort of leapfrog this very quickly, travelled around the world for three years, ended up back in Sydney. I had twins in 1980. And then we travelled around the world in the opposite direction, just because. Again, I can't remember, that was probably about 18 months travelling by that time. Travelling with small children is a different experience, again.

DW: Very.

LOWE: Yes, there's an epitaph in the book by Edmund Hillary's wife², and she puts it, not epitaph, what's the one in the front of the book?

DW: Foreword.

[00:14:27] **LOWE:** Foreword, yeah, where she says, 'There's two classes of travel, with and without children'. And we ended up back in Perth. I fell pregnant with Meghan and then we moved to Busselton in 1983 where Meghan was born. So, in Busselton, that was really, I guess, when I stopped moving location wise. And that was really where I could start putting into practise, if you like, my commitments in a more tangible way to a community rather than just on an individual level. So, Meghan was still a baby when I was by that stage a member of PND [People for Nuclear Disarmament] and was active in the early [Senate] elections for Jo Vallentine, the 'Take Heart, Take Vallentine' election. You were probably involved in that, too?

DW: No, no. I wasn't in Perth in 1984.

LOWE: Right? Yeah.

DW: Can we just go back? With your family, there wasn't much interest in religion. You're saying also there wasn't much interest in politics?

LOWE: My birth family?

DW: Yes, your birth family, I'm sorry.

LOWE: Not really, not really. They, I mean ... I guess I understand it slightly differently in that there's what's said and what's not said, but no, it wasn't a household where they had political discussions around the table.

DW: And then you moved to Australia at 18?

LOWE: Yes.

DW: How did you pick Australia versus Latin America or Canada or ...?

LOWE: Because of where it was located. But also, I mean, it was opportunistic. So, because I was in the travel industry, one of the companies I worked for was called Club 18-30, which did package holidays for people between 18 and 30 [years-old]. They were kind of ... you can imagine really ... and a lot of Australians, because there were a lot of Australians in London doing the rite of passage thing. So, that was where I met Australians through that Club 18-30 package tour organising. And of course, they seemed enormously exciting people, very free and easy. Well, who isn't when they're on holiday? They were also exceptionally naughty and they behaved terribly. Really, I look back. Shocking behaviours.

DW: In terms of alcohol?

LOWE: Well, probably. I didn't recognise it as such. But, you know, if they were in Spain or wherever, anything that wasn't nailed down, they would pinch it just for the hell of it, you

² First wife Louise Mary Rose published two books, *A Yak for Christmas* in 1968 and *High Time* in 1973.

know. And they thought that was very funny. But it must have been exceedingly irritating for the people concerned. But anyway.

DW: And when you come to Australia, you come to Sydney, you said?

LOWE: No. I emigrated to Australia in 1972 and went to Melbourne, because I had met an Australian, a young Australian woman, well she came from Melbourne. And so, I immediately went and stayed with her parents. That was my landing space.

DW: Was it a boat journey? Did you come by boat or was it ...?

LOWE: No, it was a 10-pound Pom³ and I flew. I didn't have enough money to go on a boat because I thought I'm going to need spending money and I haven't got any. So, in answer to the question, 'Why Australia?', it was circumstantial because I met Australians, I had an intention to get a long way away from England from about as early as I can remember. You know, I used to look at planes crossing the sky, the contrails, thinking, 'I want to be in one of those', and one-way, not coming back. So, I knew very early on that I was leaving. And it wasn't a big deal. I mean, people go, 'Oh so brave, you left'. It wasn't. Like when you're 18, nothing's brave. I mean, you're foolhardy or whatever. There's no danger. What's the danger anyway?

DW: Well, we know there's lots of dangers for young people, especially on their own, young women, but I'm also thinking ...

LOWE: Not more or less, it was more dangerous to stay in London.

DW: I'm just thinking emotionally, landing in a city where you know nobody. Well, you said you knew one Australian woman, but you don't have a family.

LOWE: That didn't bother me.

DW: Right.

LOWE: I suppose in retrospect, I was living on the edge all the time, so it didn't make any difference.

DW: Did you find it easy to get work?

LOWE: Oh, this was full-employment days, back in the day.

DW: And it's also the time of the Labor Party, Gough Whitlam coming into power [as Prime Minister]. Did you note any of that?

[00:19:38] **LOWE:** Yes, I did. So, I was in Melbourne for a couple of years, saving up my princely sum of \$2,000, and then I travelled around Australia, ended up in Darwin, I said, around Cyclone Tracy. So, that was interesting because there was all that stuff going on about East Timor. And then there was the sacking of Whitlam, when was that?

³ A colloquial term used to describe British citizens who migrated to Australia after the Second World War. The Government of Australia initiated the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme in 1945 and arranged for assisted passage to Australia on chartered ships and aircraft. The migrants were called Ten Pound Poms due to the payment of £10 in processing fees to migrate to Australia. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Pound_Poms

DW: '75.

LOWE: That was '75, was it?

DW: December, no, [11th] November.

LOWE: Yeah. So, that had just happened and so we would have been, yeah. Because we left [Australia] in '76. So, we were in Darwin at that time, and Darwin was a very interesting place because it had just been blown over basically. [chuckles]

DW: It's very small, and far from anywhere.

LOWE: Well not only that, but apart from the central part of Darwin, the rest was just in piles. And so, there was very little accommodation. And so, everybody was living in group housing. So, we were living with an interesting, eclectic group of people, some of whom were quite political. And of course, when you're travelling, all our companions were travelling-type people, and so there was obviously politics around that.

DW: And along the way, have you been able to go to university and have your own education experience?

LOWE: I went to university. I wouldn't call that an educational experience. I'd call it an expensive waste of time. But I went to UWA [University of Western Australia], but that's much later on in the story. I did Anthropology and Asian Studies in my fifties. But really, I think the classroom learning is overrated. I could call the shots because I had 'mature age student's disease' status, whereas, if I haven't got 99%, I wonder where my marks have gone. It's a terrible arrogance, isn't it? [I did a couple of semesters overseas (in Indonesia) but paid UWA for the privilege of doing my own education!]

I wasn't getting a great deal out of it, really, because you go into tutorials ... I was certainly profoundly disappointed in the University system. I had a romantic image of university being full of jumping up and down radicals. And of course, they were incredibly conservative and incredibly young, and not very much offering. And so, you'd go to a tutorial and you couldn't learn anything with those people, who were children and not very enlightened ones at that.

DW: A lot of the teaching then was moving into the phase of universities as businesses and probably contracting it out to people doing their own PhDs to do the teaching?

LOWE: Not so much. Just a little bit. And in fact, my friendship network at university was with the teaching staff because of the age thing and I guess their life experience. But we've kind of ... getting back, you're really wanting to know what were my influences and how did I get to the Greens. So, having arrived back in Australia, the third time I landed back in Australia. So, there was the first time when I came here in 1972. Then I left in '76 and came back in '79 and the twins were born. We travelled again and I came back to Australia before Meghan was born and ended up in Busselton before she was born, which was in 1983.

And so, I guess my political career, if you could call it that, really started in a more formal sense in Busselton, because I started engaging with the Vallentine Peace Group. I had teamed up with the Bunbury Peace Group because, as you know, there was a network of peace groups around the country, if not around the world, in fact. So, I think we did a

splendid job of keeping in touch with each other, when you look back, because we didn't have computers, right? And yet we knew all the things, all the movement, things that were happening around the world, all the similar anti-nuclear stuff that was happening everywhere. We had magazines, little homemade magazines. You had piles of them from everywhere. And so, we're pretty clued in.

DW: Yeah, well, it was all based on email and telephone trees to contact people.

LOWE: Yeah, and also we knew more. So, you'd get all these magazines from various places and issues were discussed at length in them. You had articles that you read, can you imagine? Remember when the world wasn't 140 characters⁴? I mean, people don't even read articles now, more than about 500 words.

DW: Can I ask why you went to Busselton because if you're in Perth ...?

LOWE: Well, so the kids' father got a job with, was it called Telstra back then? But anyway.

DW: Telecom?

[00:24:45] **LOWE:** Telecom, whatever it was called. It was a country posting, so that's where we ended up. So that was why Busselton. So, I joined the Bunbury Peace Group because Busselton was very conservative and small and there was a little core of people in the Bunbury Peace Group, many, if not most of whom have, I think, been interviewed for this project. And at one of the meetings we were discussing a tour for Jo Vallentine, a South West tour - and deciding where the stops would be. And they were going, fairly classically, Bunbury, Margaret River.

And, I was a little bit shy, not very shy, but a little bit shy, and when I said quietly, 'You know, how about Busselton?', I felt a little bold and they went, 'Oh, yes, okay'. So, then Busselton was put on the map. And of course, then that was my job to organise the thing. And that was the first public meeting that I organised, the first of very many!

DW: So that would have been ... was it 1984 associated with Jo's [Vallentine's Senate] campaign?

LOWE: Probably, yes. Meghan was a baby.

DW: And can you remember how many people turned up?

LOWE: Massive. We had a full house. We did a great job, me and the team, it wasn't me alone, absolutely not. So, we'd formed the Busselton Peace Group by then. And, bless our hearts we had posters which were all kind of hand coloured in, crayons [laughs], oh dear, posted in all the windows of all the shops. It was easier to influence, or to get information to people [then]. There wasn't so much competition for people's attention, I think. And if you put in a bit of effort, and especially in a small town, you actually could reach everybody. There's just one local paper and you get an article in there and put posters up in every window and you're done and dusted.

⁴ Twitter limited the original tweet length to 140 characters when it launched in July 2006 but in November 2017 it extended the maximum length to 280 characters. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>

So, we had a lunch at, the Ship Hotel had just opened, or it had been reopened because it had been fairly derelict and had been renovated. And whether people were just coming to see what the Ship Hotel looked like, I don't know. But it was, I don't know, we had a lot, I think there were about 70 people. It was big [for Busselton] and it was really impressive. And I looked across the sort of big lunch area and the heads were all silver-haired. It was generally the older populace. Of course, Busselton is very much a place of retirees. It still is. And Jo was awesome. And, somebody said, 'Well, what about Russia? They can't protest, they can't do anything'. And her response, I remember it to this day, 'Well, that makes it all the more incumbent on us to do the protesting'. She spoke very well. And, of course, we were involved in little protests against the ships ... because the American ships would come into Bunbury [Port] as well in those days.

DW: I was going to ask you about that, were you involved in those protests as well?

LOWE: Yeah, yeah.

DW: The other thing that the Bunbury members, Marilyn [Palmer] and Jill [Reading] and so on mentioned, were the weekends you'd have away discussing [policy] issues.

LOWE: Well, we called them peace camps. I think the peace camps were very significant in terms of people's, oh, god, do I have to say personal development? Bleah, bleah. [vomiting sound] In terms of how we understood ourselves and how we shared ideas. And, we had an awful lot of fun with that, too. But importantly, we also built networks. And I think that was absolutely the critical thing, those networks. So, when anti-ballistic missiles went from being on the ground to being put up in space, that, well not exactly spelled the death knell of the peace movement, but it certainly poured cold water on it. The energy went out of the peace movement and it was replaced instantly, really by the upcoming energy around the environment movement. So, the Busselton Peace Group became the Busselton Peace and Environment Group.

DW: Right.

[00:29:44] **LOWE:** And I think that captures very much the movement of the time. So, it was the same, exactly the same people. So, once you care about community, once you care about life, once you get the sense of interconnectedness, it just is an automatic part of what you do, it isn't optional. So, then as the environment movement grew and we grew with it, all the strategies that were learnt in the peace movement days just sort of transferred really ... our meeting skills and campaign skills and networking skills.

DW: And there was an early focus on consensus decision-making at the meetings?

LOWE: Yeah, all of those things. Yes, meeting processes were important. But it was also a very friendly time and a very respectful time. And that may be a reflection on the broader society as well. But the emphasis on friendships was, I think, not conscious, but it certainly was the 'grease to the wheels', not only for those immediate campaigns, but what followed afterwards. Because what did follow afterwards was the Greens (WA) Party, which very much grew out of that. And I'm sure everybody else has said similar things.

DW: Were you involved with Green Development which Louise Duxbury ...?

LOWE: Absolutely, totally.

DW: ... was the candidate for?

LOWE: So, before we jump to that, the precursor, and coming out of the environment movement, one of the most important issues was old-growth ... was logging in old-growth forests, of course. And in 1988, we organised a ... I'm sure people have mentioned the Great Walk to you in this history project. And that came out initially of a camping weekend in Cambray [near Nannup], it was called 'Back to Cambray'. And there had been previously - and I don't know how much previously, I'm thinking five, 10 years previously - a camp in Cambray at which other environmental concerns were raised. So, there was a sort of celebration of that event, with people camping together, and at that time the idea of the walk emerged and we said, 'Oh, let's organise a walk along the Bibbulmun Track from Denmark to Perth and carry the message about logging in old-growth forests'⁵.

And we didn't actually realise that the Bibbulmun Track wasn't a thing because you thought that it was, because when you drive around, you keep seeing signs. And in fact, it was just a patchwork of little bits and pieces. So, then the whole walk was divided into, I think, three sections, possibly four, and different people were given charge of different areas. So, I was involved in the section that was closest to the Busselton area. And it was really a most spectacular logistical exercise. When I look back, it was very well done. We did well as a group. I think everybody emerged much cleverer and much smarter, much better organised and much more confident in our capacities.

DW: How many people overall participated in the walk?

LOWE: In total, I'm not sure, but we moved up to 200 people through the forest every day without losing a single person or having injuries more serious than blisters. I mean, there were some impressive blisters. They became a cult, who's got the biggest blister, but it was extraordinary. And there were certain protocols that people observed to keep people safe, the front shepherd and the rear shepherd, and not leaving the track without leaving your bag on the track. So, there's some really simple things. Our food ... our hygiene must have been reasonable. Nobody got really sick. And the children were wonderfully behaved.

DW: And your children participated?

[00:34:17] **LOWE:** Yeah, a bit. I mean, there were babies on that walk, you know. It was a really nomadic experience. So not everybody went all the way through. The whole thing was about four weeks. But when we got to the end, certainly people didn't want to go home because you'd had a four-week experience of living tribally, which isn't an exaggeration. It really was a very tribal experience for people, and living outside walls. And not many of us have an opportunity to live outside walls for that length of time and to do it in a big group. The bonds that were formed there and the systems that were formed there were absolutely the foundation of the South West Greens, there's no question in my mind about that.

⁵ The Great Walk was launched with an Aboriginal dance ceremony to "protect the walkers, and attune them to the country through which they would travel." Over the next 26 days, over 1,000 people took part to express their appreciation and concerns for the environment. These expressions were felt to be conveyed by a document called the Great Walk Tree Charter, which was carried to Parliament House where it was presented to the ALP Premier, Peter Dowding. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Walk_Networking Further similar walks have been organised, the latest in 2019. See <https://startsomegood.com/greatwalkofpeace>

So in about 1989 ... well just shortly after the Great Walk, I remember meeting with some members of the Bunbury Peace Group and others. And somebody had been to see, whatever his name was, David somebody or other?

DW: Suzuki?

LOWE: No, no, no. A Labor Party politician in Bunbury.

DW: David Parker?

LOWE: No, he was in Perth. Smith⁶? Anyway, who had said, 'Well, we know we're not much good, but we're better than the Liberal Party. You have to vote for us'. So, we sat around, and this is classic, kind of what the kids now would call hippy stuff, sitting under a tree somewhere. And said, 'That's not good enough. That's simply not good enough. What are we going to do about it?' And we were sufficiently empowered and probably didn't know enough to be cowed [chuckles] by the enormity of what we were undertaking. We'd already heard of the Greens in Germany. Petra Kelly was already a thing⁷. So, we're going to form our own party. Think about the audacity of it, looking back, but it seemed like the most natural thing, of course we're going to form our own political party.

No idea, so casual, so easy. We didn't think, it was just 'of course we're going to do that', no worries at all. It's wonderful in retrospect to have that confidence, and we did. [laughs] Not too much messing around. So, again, the networks that we had through the Great Walk and so on and all the other things, the peace campaigns, and how the peace campaigns led to the environment campaigns, which led to the capacity to run the Walk, which led to the capacity to form an electoral movement in the South West. The narrative is a bit different in the city, I'm sure.

DW: There's always been a bit of tension, though, between those who want to stay as a social movement, educating, challenging, and those who then want to take the political route to get into parliament. Was there much tension amongst the South West Greens about taking that political?

LOWE: No, because it wasn't winnable, so we were just full of enthusiasm, full of the joys of spring and full of the joy of change and the potential for change and inspired to use the opportunity that elections bring. They're the hook, they give you a platform. You can say things. We knew we were, in the words of the time, I think consciousness-raising was the thing. And that was the name of the game. Winnable seats were in the future, that was yet to come.

I was aware at the time of the idealistic nature of it and how the fact that we could be so free and joyful in our work was probably because they weren't winnable seats. People's more personal ambitions were not a thing. So, it was, if you like, less tainted by ego. But even then, I was smart enough to make a mental note to myself about this is probably a heyday in that regard.

⁶ Phil Smith was the ALP State MLA for Bunbury, 1983-1993.

⁷ A German politician and ecofeminist activist who was a founding member of the German Green Party, the first Green party to rise to prominence both nationally in Germany and worldwide. She participated in numerous peace and environmental campaigns in Germany and other countries. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petra_Kelly

DW: Because there was a big focus on the March '89 State election, from the Green Development, the WA Greens [Party], Vallentine [Peace Group], the Alternative Coalition ...

LOWE: Yes.

DW: ... what role did you play in the State election?

LOWE: What role did I play? I was in touch too with the Perth lot. And, despite having three children under five, um, I don't know how I did that, but made trips to Perth and was involved in what was at one point called the No Name Party. There was this crazy thing about we don't want to put a name on it. We don't know what it is. It was very hard to talk about something you don't have a name for. So, I used to go along to those meetings and I was linked up with those people. And, with the Green Development campaign, I was pretty much in the heart of that, which was a really lovely time, and with great people like Louise.

DW: Planning events, planning, leafletting, market stalls?

[00:39:59] **LOWE:** Sketchy on memory ... media, filling booths, events. I certainly was coordinator for my neck of the woods ... and I think there were other coordinators that were based in Denmark and other regions, a network, such as Lyn Serventy in Margaret River. So, I think I started sort of coordinating locally, but then my footprint kind of grew, and to the point where I would, sort of be playing an expanded role. Networking was my forte.

DW: And you would have met people like Paul Llewellyn [later Greens (WA) MLC for the South West region] I would imagine at that stage?

LOWE: Paul was in Perth at that time.

DW: Was he? Okay. Chrissy Sharp [later Greens (WA) MLC for the South West region]?

LOWE: Oh, yeah. So, there was this really funny moment where we knew, I heard because I don't know how, I just spent a lot of time on the phone that both Louise and, no, Chrissy Sharp and Lyn Serventy and Louise both put up their hands [to be a candidate]. No, how did that go? I told you my memory was rubbish.

DW: I think Louise was number one, Lyn was number two on the [1989 Upper House ticket].

LOWE: Yeah, but they both put up their hands simultaneously and didn't know about it. Everybody was asking around and they both said, 'Yes', but they didn't know the other one had said yes. And so, I think I was the first person to twig that and 'they need to talk to each other'. So, Chrissy wasn't a candidate then? Must not have been.

DW: No, I think she came on the scene a little bit later.

LOWE: But I'm pretty sure she was involved. Yeah.

DW: And then you were also the campaign manager for Giz [Watson] in the 1990 House of Reps campaign.

LOWE: You know everything.

DW: So you're stepping up in your focus. Was it much different for you in terms of the roles you played?

LOWE: No, it's just being on the phone a hell of a lot.

DW: Right. This was before emails, yes?

LOWE: A lot of phoning, a lot of phoning, and a lot of investment, a lot of personal investment in people's lives. We're not talking short phone calls. You're ringing somebody to organise a town hall meeting in Witchcliffe or Nannup or Pemberton. And you're hearing that their child has chicken pox and what's happening. And they're the human things that made it real and important because we were supporting each other in all sorts of ways.

DW: And probably expensive, because in those days, Telecom had a different charging system based on where you were and distance and so on?

LOWE: It was probably my major expense in life. For me it was a connection to the whole world. That network of kindred spirits was totally central to my sense of well-being and place in the world and established, you know, who I felt I was in a constellation of other people. And it was very real and very immediate. And maybe in all those conversations, you know, made that real, and it meant that we could do stuff. Because if you've got that level of rapport and trust and liking each other, if somebody says, 'Well, you do such and such', you go, 'of course', which made organising an easier thing.

And the story of the campaign in which Giz stood in the South West [1990 Federal election for the seat of Forrest] was a classic. So, I was coordinating a, it's probably, you probably have taken this down elsewhere.

DW: No, no.

[00:44:14] **LOWE:** I was coordinating a phone link-up and we had 10 people on the line, from memory. And so, people were invited to speak in order. We canvassed, went north to south sort of. And so, the early conversation was, 'Do we know a candidate? Who would like to be a candidate? Do we know somebody that's got the ...?' And everybody was asked in turn and everybody said, 'No, they didn't know anybody'. So, we said, 'Okay well, we've got a week. Come back on the telephone next week and will everybody recruit in their own groups and in their own areas. Check out this'. That was our equivalent of a preselection process. [laughs] Bless. And it was lucky we didn't get unstuck, really. But I think knowing each other meant that we weren't going to get unstuck.

DW: Yeah. There was a lot of trust there.

LOWE: And people really knew, yeah, a lot of connection, people knew each other very well, I think. So, the second week we came online again, did the north-south thing. And Giz was the last person on the line after everybody had said, 'No, we haven't got anybody here'. And this little voice in Albany went, 'I'll do it'. And we all went, 'Yay, thank you'. And Giz hadn't actually anticipated saying that. It was just because she was the last person on the line and everybody else had said 'No'. And it was like, 'Oh right, okay then'. So, we hadn't actually met in person at that time. She was on my list, my network of people,

because of her association with the Albany Peace Group. I had on my list Ruth and Giz Watson in Albany and I had no idea what relationship they were to each other. But Ruth is her mother.

And so anyway, I was coordinating that campaign and the first time Giz and I met was in Bunbury, we had a Bunbury launch. So, that was, I guess, where we met. And then after the election, we were on the phone talking. We ran a really good election, I think. We enjoyed ourselves enormously, so to speak. [laughs] And we achieved what we set out to achieve. We got our media where we wanted it and had a really good presence at the polls and obviously stirred people up because there were rumours about us being funded by 'Russian gold', because we were obviously being so fabulously effective. I mean, we probably weren't really, but by our own lights, we were, and it was perhaps easier to get attention in those days as well.

DW: I think the media, well, even though we only had *The West Australian* as a major paper, I think they were still more willing to run stories whereas today ...

LOWE: Yeah, you're pushing the proverbial uphill now. But we were relying on local papers more, I think, as well. So, they're a pushover in terms of ... they still are. They're much easier to get media in and people read them. So, they're a really important source of ... we chipped away at getting our ideas out there.

DW: You joined the Greens (WA) right from the beginning, December 1989?

LOWE: Well, we were part of that. So, the South West ... there was this moment where there was the official Greens formation Charter, and debate among us about signing up Green Development. Several key players had this conversation and said, 'Well, we're not actually a formal thing, so we can't actually formally sign because what is this thing that's signing?' And it really does, in a way, put a bit of a spotlight on what organisations are and are not. You know, they're not a natural person. They're kind of an idea or concept. And they're formalised by various mechanisms.

But in fact, are they a thing? We make them a thing. So, I signed on behalf of the South West. I don't know whether I was the only person, I hope there are other people there, I don't recall. But I remember making a little speech saying the reservations that had been made about this. We're in, but are we a thing to be in, we are just a bunch of individuals. Sounds like [the film] *Life of Brian*. [laughs]

DW: When the Greens are formed in 1990, January, you become the Convenor of the O'Connor Regional Group.

LOWE: Do I? Gosh I have no ...

DW: In 1991, according to our records.

LOWE: I have no idea, really. Where's O'Connor? Are you sure?

DW: That's a Federal seat, down in the south, that now takes in Busselton and that whole area still does.

LOWE: Told you my memory was rubbish, gosh.

DW: You also become the campaign manager for Dee Margetts when she ran for the Senate successfully in 1993.

LOWE: Yes, that was big.

DW: Were you still in Busselton then or had you moved?

LOWE: No we'd moved, came up to Perth and made our mark.

DW: Right. Did you find that campaign different in terms of trying to be the campaign manager, like you're running a campaign across a whole State, not just one Federal electorate?

[00:50:15] **LOWE:** Awesome. It was good fun. When I look at the sophistication and the advantages of campaigns now, it's very, very different. So, from a standing start with nothing, I found an office which was in an empty space in an adjacent building to where Jo Vallentine already had an office. And, so we had a blank space, sent messages around, 'We need a kettle, we need a filing cabinet, we need chairs, phones'. And the most important first thing we needed was a kettle. Yeah, and we just did it. Had people sort of allocated to particular areas, just phoned our heads off.

DW: Right.

LOWE: There was a lot of phoning. We took enormous effort, if not pride, in having booths [staffed], no matter where they were, that was a thing, that was a key objective.

DW: Did you get much support from the staff and supporters of Christabel [Chamarette], who was still a Senator, and then Jo, prior to that in terms of Dee's campaign?

LOWE: [long pause] I'm not recollecting that.

DW: Right, okay, but Dee had experience. She'd been the co-ordinator of PND [People for Nuclear Disarmament] I think as well, and so she had some experience in campaigning already.

LOWE: Dee was very much the figurehead. We kind of organised the things and put her in front, she was spokesperson. So, that was basically the way it worked.

DW: And you must be very happy then to have her elected successfully as the third Green Senator [from WA].

LOWE: I think we did a pretty good job. Yeah, yeah. That was good.

DW: Were you offered a position to work for her in her Senate office?

LOWE: I didn't ask. I've never asked for a job in the Greens.

DW: And you don't seem to [have] run for election yourself?

LOWE: Nope.

DW: Is there a reason for that?

LOWE: [pause] That would take me more time to unravel, I think, than we've got now.

DW: Right, because you're obviously a very, very experienced campaign manager in terms of running Giz's campaigns successfully and then Dee Margetts'.

LOWE: There's a certain logic to organising things.

DW: Right.

LOWE: You map it out and you know what you want to achieve. You set your calendar, you set your people, and you have a red-hot contact list. You appoint, you know, get people who are doing particular things, divvy it up. Sort of like a jigsaw puzzle, and they kind of roll out in a particular way. You kind of have a mental sort of matrix of things that are going to slot into place. And you've always got lists on your lists and you know where things go and when they've got to happen. And you just do them. You do as much as you can basically in the day.

And the difficulty is that the more, you get very caught up in it because you think the more you do, the more successful you're going to be. If I do one more thing, it's going to add another brick in the wall. And if you think that the outcome is very important, that means that it's very difficult to know when to stop. So, I guess I was all very, very readily immersed in such things. And perhaps there isn't really time to think about whether, you know, I would be a suitable candidate.

DW: Right. The other, I suppose, aspect of campaigning, as you're saying, it's almost a 24 hour-a-day job, is the risk of burnout. But you have continually helped in campaigns. You must have some magic method of not burning out?

[00:54:59] **LOWE:** I think you need to speak to Giz about that. I think it's helpful not to need a lot of sleep. [laughs] You're as good as your list, basically. If you're not a good list maker, you're probably not a good organiser because there's only so much you can carry in your mind. I suppose that's personal experience. I'm sure there's people who are rubbish at making lists that are still marvellous organisers, but in my experience, if my list isn't in shape, I'm stuffed. You've got to know where you're going.

DW: And in terms of your campaigns, starting with Giz and Dee, everything's done by telephone and paper and so on. And now it's all social media, emails and that huge jump. How have you found that in terms of the campaigns recently you've supported?

LOWE: I don't think phones have been superseded. I think there's an inverse relationship to the ease of getting ... of contacting a large number of people and the effectiveness of it.

DW: Right.

LOWE: You put something on social media, 'Oh, 6,000 people have read this'. Has anybody been influenced? Probably not. [chuckles] I'm generally successful at getting bums on seats for an event. And it's generally because you've phoned a lot of people and invited them. And it's kind of a bit embarrassing because if you go around and say, 'What brought you here?', 'Oh, June said I should be here'. I mean, not just me, but if you reach out to people, they respond to you because you're you, you're their friend. And if you have a connection with somebody, they would do that for you.

So, that's my experience, and I find that effective. And I find it effective on a number of levels. It's affirming for the relationship with people and it's affirming for our sense of community and connection. And it's certainly affirming in terms of getting action because people will commit and they will do stuff.

DW: A number of people I've interviewed have mentioned you as an influence at the UWA Greens, getting them involved. Jess [McColl] and Katrina [Bercov].

LOWE: Well, Jess, I like to think of Jess as one of the great success stories in my life. I'm joking here, please, but I like to think of that because she's been a fantastic asset to the Greens. And who knows whether she would have got there if we hadn't had the UWA Campus Greens? I started the UWA Greens when I was on campus and she and Anthony [Blond] came along and became amazing allies, and they were great to work with. And then there was an election coming up and they were looking for somebody to work in the office. And I asked Jess whether she was interested and she was.

And because she was reasonably shy and I wasn't sure how impressively she would present herself to Trish [Cowcher]. I contacted Trish, (I don't whether it was Trish, it probably was), in advance saying that this person is really good. She's a really good, smart young person. And I was also a little worried about Jess because I knew it was a very stressful environment, and other people don't always behave very well, you know, when they're under stress. And I didn't want her exposed to people's, you know, stressed-out behaviour. But she's turned out to be very resilient.

DW: Now working at the national [level].

LOWE: She is. She's a very fine person.

DW: Do you remember the year you started the UWA Greens?

LOWE: I could look that up for you. I'll get back to you. [2004]

DW: What years were you back at UWA then?

LOWE: Again, I'd have to look that up. I did a very slow degree. I kind of only did a couple of units at a time. And I was full of indecision most of the time about which units I was going to take. It was always, I want to do all of them, and I would audit a whole lot of them before I would decide.

DW: What inspired you to go back to university?

LOWE: Well, it wasn't going back to university.

DW: Sorry, going to university.

[00:59:42] **LOWE:** Well, I was able to because the kids were at university themselves then. They thought it was very comical that I had an essay due and I was working on it when it wasn't due tomorrow. They thought that was the funniest thing. [laughs]

DW: Because you obviously had a deep knowledge of politics and the environment, peace issues. What was it about being at university?

LOWE: Well, one of the reasons I ... there's a number of reasons why I didn't go earlier. I mean, that's the other question, 'Why didn't you go earlier?' And it was because somebody had put the thought into my head when the kids were quite little, but it wasn't possible.. It's partly opportunity. It's actually really difficult with three children, although people do it. But also, I didn't know what I wanted to do. And I suppose by the time I got there, I really also wasn't quite sure even then. And I wanted it to be something that would lead to work. And it didn't, as it turned out, despite my best efforts.

So, I knew that the thing that I was really interested in was culture and cultural change. And that's the, I guess, the key thing that really interests me about this story about the Greens, is the cultural change that we've seen in the last 30-odd years. I think it's astonishing. I think we've done really well despite odds, that we're really only just coming to terms with what we're up against. It's been exceedingly difficult. Basically, all the forces, the pretty well, it's the classic, you know, I think we had the early access because we weren't seen as a threat. We were still novelty value. And then they kind of just ignored you and then they vilified you. And we're a long way to having them capitulate, though.

DW: Yes, yes especially on the environment issue.

LOWE: Climate change, like, how bad does it have to get? But anyway, we were naive because we thought it was all about information. That phrase, 'if only people knew the facts, then they would understand and they would agree with us'. And that is not true. And that's a sad thing. But I remember a few occasions hearing that exact same phrase.

Christabel's classic story when she was going around [Parliament House] in her induction in Canberra with the clerk who was showing her around ... Christabel said, 'Oh, there's so-and-so over there. I just want to buttonhole them and tell them the information about whatever it was. I'm sure if he knew the facts of the matter, he'd change his mind'. And the clerk said that he'd never heard of the facts of the matter making any difference. And it's really true. It's really amazing. We think that if people know the truth and know the facts it'll change their behaviours, and it doesn't, it's much more complicated.

DW: Along the way, you've worked with other organisations. Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

LOWE: MAPW, yes.

DW: And the Environmental Defenders Office.

LOWE: EDO, yes.

DW: What type of roles did you play?

LOWE: I was coordinating those. So, MAPW was the Australian branch of the IPPNW, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which was very influential back in the day, and is a member of the World Health Organisation and as such played a great role in having the World Health Organisation look at the question of the legality of nuclear weapons, the use or the threat of use, whether they were legal and they actually ruled that they weren't legal. Did that make a difference? I hadn't noticed. We thought it was a big win at the time. Didn't have quite the tectonic shifting that we thought it might. So MAPW

again, with some lovely people, some of the doctors were really excellent, Dr [Harry] Cohen and Dr [Fred] Gruaug and Peter Underwood.

DW: What years were you working with them?

LOWE: Oh, that would have been the early '90s because it was when we first arrived [in Perth].

DW: And you probably met Harry through the peace movement, did you?

LOWE: Yeah, yeah. A lovely man. His wife was called June and he used to call us 'big June' and 'little June', which was hilarious because his June wasn't really any bigger than me, maybe an inch.

DW: And the Environmental Defender's Office [EDO], was that after the MAPW?

[01:04:41] **LOWE:** Yes, EDO was a great job. Um, so EDO was formed by the magnificent Margaret Robertson. She's a really awesome individual. I hope somebody interviews her. And it came out of a challenge, a legal challenge - she played a really strong role in helping to do that, supporting the lawyers who were doing that [including Michael Barker]. And then the EDO was formed, and then after a couple of years I took over from her. And so that was a great job because it was a combination of organising events and supporting the lawyers who did the legal side of things. Obviously I'm not legally trained. So, [in addition to legal cases in public interest environmental issues], EDO also did legal education work, for example a brochure that would give advice to forest protesters regarding their rights, so supporting environmentalists ... it was a really ... I think they're a really important organisation.

DW: Yeah. And the Cons Council, Conservation Council, you had a job there as well?

LOWE: A short while. See, I've tended not to go for paid employment, which is interesting. Why go for paid employment when you can do it for nothing? [laughs] My memory is incredibly fuzzy on this. I stood-in for Rachel [Siewert, then Coordinator of the Conservation Council of WA] when she went away briefly, which was very ambitious.

DW: In terms of being the Coordinator at the Cons Council?

LOWE: Yeah, it was only for a short time, while she was taking a break. I also worked with Beth on forests.

DW: Beth Schultz.

LOWE: Yeah.

DW: And also since 2005, GRAI?

LOWE: GRAI. One of the reasons my memory is rubbish is because I'm very immersed in the present and, you know, the event that I've got coming up in three weeks' time and the two contracts that are outstanding and the reports on and the newsletter that needs writing and it all needs to happen by yesterday. So, there's not so much space left for thinking about what happened 10 years ago or whatever. GRAI stands for GLBTI Rights in Ageing. G stands for GLBTI, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex, for the uninitiated.

And GRAI started in 2005, but I wasn't involved until a little bit later. I've been involved for the last 10-plus years. Yes, so, I suppose that's 2009, I would have come on board and I was the Chair for six years. We have three, two-year terms which is the maximum allowed under our Constitution. [I'm just a regular Board member now, but] my workload hasn't reduced - just somebody else is wearing the 'Chair' label now, which is great.

And the work there is really diverse - you can sort of flex your muscles in a number of areas. It's got the political level, the advocacy side. If there's anything happening in law reform work, uh, we make submissions to various government committees. So, if they're having a committee hearing on anything to do with LGBTI we'll be there putting an ageing perspective. If there's anything to do with ageing, we'll be there putting an LGBTI perspective, because the issue was, basically, the invisibility of LGBTI elders. Nobody thought we even existed!

One of my jokes about this was a conversation I had with a young gay man who said brightly, 'Oh, I'd never thought about older people as being gay'. It showed an extraordinary lack of insight. It's also very amusing, but also tells us everything we need to know. Nobody was thinking in those terms [about LGBTI older people] for a number of reasons.

DW: It's a huge issue at the moment with the Royal Commission. Then COVID, where a lot of people in aged care ...

[01:09:19] **LOWE:** Well, people don't think about people who are older in general. And that's ageism. Ageism is at the heart of it all, we're an incredibly ageist society. It's the last prejudice that nobody finds as wrong, still don't object to, or even find offensive. It's most extraordinary. And people, because it's so widespread and most people have themselves internalised ageism, that we find it totally apparently acceptable. And it's so destructive, both on a personal level and also as a society, the things that it leads to. So, if you put in ageism and then throw in ageist erotophobia on top of that. Erotophobia is like 'Aarrhh!', Victorian era, 'you can't be old and have sex' or have sexuality. So, we're not normally talking about sex *per se* or sexuality because that's your identity, in association with older people ...

So, we've got a whole lot of people who are hiding, still in hiding, well, LGBTI people are only 'out' in a few places. There are very few people who are out all the time everywhere, to everyone. But if you're in a vulnerable situation, especially if you're in an aged care facility, chances are you're not out. So, you lose a major part of your identity.

DW: Yeah, yeah. Can I ask, looking back now on your 30 years, or more than 30 years involvement with these issues, what your children have thought about all that time you've spent in trying to change the world for a better place?

LOWE: We should ask them, right? I'll tell you what, I'll ask them and get back to you.

DW: They must have given you some feedback, though, over the years?

LOWE: No, interestingly. It's just who we are.

DW: Have they joined the Greens?

LOWE: Not in a formal capacity. I mean, they vote Green. I know my youngest daughter is sort of talking about it more, but she's tied up with working full time and two small children. They're not active. Well, perhaps in their life choices and the way that they act out in the world. So, Josie studied environmental science at uni and Carl did marine science. And Meghan did physiotherapy. So, you know, maybe in their life choices in the way that they approach things and people.

DW: And what have you seen as the biggest changes with the Greens over those 30 years? We've mentioned technology and communication technology. What are some of the other big changes you've seen?

LOWE: Hmm, I think it's a matter of scale, a scale and, I was going to say culture, but I'm not entirely sure that's true. I think WA, maybe I'm being idealistic, but I think WA has worked very hard to maintain a culture that would still resonate with the early Greens' culture. I mean, I still feel culturally at home in the Greens. They're still good people, they're still the best people. They're still the most intelligent, the best-informed people that you're going to meet. And I mean, perhaps Liberals say that about their people as well. But for my money ...

DW: What's it meant to you personally to have spent all that time with these people, the great people in the Greens and the movement?

LOWE: It's sort of the vehicle, I mean, I think the issues are the vehicle that we're moving on. They're the fellow passengers on this, you're not going to make any journey alone. I mean, in one way, yes, our own individual lives, we're born alone and die alone. But, we're on a journey together with a certain group of people, and these are the ones that are closest to us. And there's a great joy, and people should be excited that other people are sharing this journey with them, because it makes it all possible.

So, I think it's incredibly exciting. I think that the coming together of channeling all that energy in particular directions, perhaps it hasn't had the impacts as far reaching or as quickly as we want, but you can only do your best. I don't think we've missed many tricks, actually. I think we've taken most of the opportunities that have been available to us and perhaps we did underestimate the forces that were going to be raised against us. But that doesn't detract from what we've done. I think we still if we look back, we can say, 'We did what we could whenever we could and however we could'.

DW: What about the future that, especially in terms of politicians, we've got four MLCs, two Senators. Can you see that number increasing greatly, or does it not matter?

[01:15:02] **LOWE:** I know when we got our very first people elected, I was very excited because I thought, now we are going to have access to media, we're going to have an opportunity to get our message out, and people will understand. And all they have to know is to hear the news ...

DW: And see the information.

LOWE: And then they'll understand and then they'll want to do the same as we do. So, knowing now that that's not the case. [chuckles and then pauses] There's a certain amount of self-destruct that is built into the political system, which we're seeing in, say, America. I can't see how that's going to stand up in the next 20 years, I really can't. I think that the Australian political system is more resilient because it's not as bad yet, and it may not be

as bad. And we're not under such hothouse pressures, except that from an environmental point of view, we're right up there in the destruction of the ecosystems. I think we're in the top five places in terms of our ecosystem annihilation. So that is going to force, I can't see how it can't force change. I actually don't think it matters if the Labor Party or the Liberal Party become green.

And for instance, if they did, I mean, the Greens only exist in order to make something happen, they don't have to exist in their own right. That's why I wasn't that interested in talking about me. That's of what interest to who? But what happens to the energy that is intentional to make the world a better place and make it a safer place for everybody and everything, that's absolutely critical. So, however, that energy is channelled and the Greens have provided that channel for people who do care. I think the Greens should exist so long as the other parties are not in that place. If there was some miracle and they all turned green, then we wouldn't need to exist. We could all go and do something else. I can't see that happening in the short term.

But I do think the other parties are going to green up. I mean, they already have. The sort of things that they say now, they wouldn't have said 10 years ago even. So, we are, I think, we're greening the agenda, which is more important than how many people we have in our own right. Although there would seem to be a correlation. If you've got more people elected, you're going to have more influence. And that's slightly challengeable because I think that underestimates the importance of the small 'g' greens and the things that people do when they're not doing party politics

The Greens Party is important and it's the voice, but there's all the other things that we do outside [the Party] are equally important because otherwise you got that broader action in the world. It's the work that happens that isn't necessarily the Party work, that gives validity to the Party work. And that's actually probably much more influential in people's lives and neighbourhoods, and the way things work out. I'd like to see much more focus on local government, for example. I think that's really where the change is happening.

DW: Yeah, that's a good insight because the Greens vote has stuck around 10 or 12%, probably for 10 years. But what you're saying is we're greening the agenda, so other parties are picking up those ideas and people may not vote for us, but the ideas are being rolled out because of the changes.

[01:19:32] **LOWE:** It's what people are doing in their lives. I mean, you might have a 10% vote, average, but what are people doing and what are the conversations in people's lives compared to when ... LGBTI rights, for example, conversations now are entirely different than they were 10 years ago. And in conversations about global warming, conversations about waste disposal, conversations about electric vehicles, they're mainstream. Liberal Party people, you know, they're not going to say I'm not going to get an electric vehicle if it's available.

DW: Fantastic, June. We've covered a lot of ground this morning. Is there anything we've missed that you want to add, make sure we've collected that information?

LOWE: I don't know. I'll probably think of all sorts of wise and wonderful things to say as soon as you're gone, and I thank you very much for coming. [laughs]

DW: Thanks, June, once again.

[01:20:42] **LOWE:** Thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT