Oral Histories: The Hon. Rev. Dr Lynn Arnold AO

Interview held in the House of Assembly Chamber on Monday 11 August 2025 at 2.30pm

Emeritus Professor Clem Macintyre, Interviewer
The Hon. Rev. Dr Lynn Arnold AO, Interviewee

CLEM MACINTYRE: Our interview today is with Lynn Arnold, who was a Labor member for a number of seats in the South Australian parliament between 1979 and 1994. He served in a range of portfolios during the government of John Bannon, mainly in the areas of education, employment and state development, but then of course, importantly, was Premier between 1992 and late 1993 and then Leader of the Opposition for a period before leaving the parliament in 1994. So, Lynn Arnold, thank you so much for agreeing to talk to us today.

LYNN ARNOLD: My pleasure.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let's start with going back to very early days: your home, school, early educational influences and so on, and family. Where were you born and when?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, I tell the story that my parents gifted me an amazing gift and that was the gift to live change, and I explain that story by explaining that by the time I was 12 I had lived in four countries and I had gone to eight primary schools. So, in direct answer to your question, I was born in South Africa. I am fifth generation on my father's side. I left when I was 4½; we moved to Canada on the West Coast. We lived there for nearly 4½ years and then moved to New Zealand, living first in Auckland and then in Christchurch for a total stay in New Zealand of about three years before coming to Adelaide and then pretty much settling down at that point.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What brought your family to Adelaide?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, my father, who was a civil engineer, had always wanted to be an academe and had entered academe in the University of Canterbury at a lecturer level but was not happy to stay at that level. There was this place, unknown to us, called Adelaide that was advertising for a senior lecturer and so he thought why not?

CLEM MACINTYRE: And came to Adelaide with the family then.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you have siblings?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, my sister was four years younger than me. Sadly, she passed away in her 20th year—obviously in Adelaide. She was a student of mathematics and computer science at a time when not a lot of girls were studying computer science.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And those sorts of early impressions of Adelaide in school years and so on, what—we are talking 1960s—

LYNN ARNOLD: We arrived in August 1960 and we had come from Christchurch, which was not a particularly major city. The thing that impressed me as a then 12 year old were the 10-storey buildings in Adelaide. These were so much taller than we used to see in Christchurch, and I was very taken with the built-up nature of the City of Adelaide. Of course, also it was a warmer place and we liked that very much as well.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And family life—were your parents political? Were they interested in public affairs? Were you brought up in a house of political discussion and debate?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, my sister and I were certainly brought up in a household of discussion and debate. We were encouraged to have opinions about things and then encouraged to defend them. We were not allowed to simply get away with cheap-shot statements. They would be countered: 'Why do you say that?' And so it was a very worthwhile, challenging kind of upbringing in that regard because it meant that we very quickly had to work out, 'Well, why do I believe such a thing?' We couldn't get away with some simplistic answers and expect my parents to say, 'That was so cute, so mature.' They expected maturity to be earned.

But in terms of their views, my father is South African, my mother is English. She was brought up in the capital of Ireland, namely Liverpool! So she was brought up with the kind of fighting Irish spirit—Scots Irish, in her case, from Liverpool. So very much a fire in the belly stuff. So, as a child, I observed this fire in the belly that if things were not right something should happen about it. My father, on the other hand, was a much more sedate personality, but he very firmly believed in justice, blind justice in fairness, so a great sense of a fair go came through from him. I actually think he was conservative in his politics but never really talked too much about that. But both he and my mother were very supportive of my interest in politics from the youngest age.

I tell a story that when I was six I wanted to be prime minister when my friends wanted to be policemen and firemen, and we all failed because I never got to be prime minister and they never got to be policemen and firemen. But really to indicate that I can remember from the youngest age politics interested me. In New Zealand—I think I was 10 at this stage—I was keen to go and visit the parliament there and watch question time with Prime Minister Nash being contested by the Leader of the Opposition Holyoake. I remember those names because the whole thing fascinated me, which meant that when I had reached my teen years here in Adelaide I was watching interesting political things happening.

We had the 1961 federal election and I at the age of 12 followed that very keenly; the 1963 state election which was itself just won by Tom Playford, and it stands out in my memory the fact that Tom Playford said when then challenged about the Playmander, the gerrymander, his response at the time was, 'What are people complaining about? The largest seat in the state: yes, it is a Labor seat, the seat of Enfield, with 40,000 voters, but so is the seat of Frome a Labor seat with 4,000 voters.' He didn't see the irony of 40,000 playing 4,000, but that stood out to me.

Then watching on TV news an energetic member of the opposition, a young Don Dunstan speaking, impressed me as a teenager. At the same time as that, if I can go off for a minute on this, was BP Pick a Box and I was really riveted in the fact—and I loved quiz shows—that a young teacher by the name of Barry Jones came on and I was won over, not just by his brilliance and encyclopaedic knowledge but by his attitudes. He could not contain himself with attitudes against capital punishment, for example.

There was one program where Bob and Dolly Dyer just turned the program over to a short debate about capital punishment between him and some very smart banana grower from northern New South Wales, whose name I forget, whose attitude was, 'You cut out cancer, don't you? Well, why don't you—' Barry's attitude resonated with me strongly. I liked that fellow. It would be one of the pleasures of my life that I would not only get to meet him but that we would become and still are lifelong friends.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So your very earliest political memory would be in New Zealand and the parliament there. Again, at the time—

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, of course, in Canada before that. We left Canada when I was eight. There was an election going on there, and I remember talking about it when I got to Auckland, and Diefenbaker had won the election. It must have been against Lester Pearson—I'm not quite that sure of that—but it was certainly Diefenbaker. He was the JFK of Canada of '57, a lot of charisma about him, but there was also talk in Macleans magazine—and I as an eight year old was reading this—about the claims that there was a voting conspiracy, that votes were being piled up. It reminds one of another election much later in the US, the claims thereof.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So, as I say, a very early political—an unusual childhood, I think it's fair to say. Not many children of the age of eight are—

LYNN ARNOLD: I tell the story that most teenagers tended to look for an exciting Saturday night every Saturday night; I had to wait three or four years for election night, when I would busily write down the figures—because computers hadn't spoiled it—and I would be doing my own calculations on the floor in front of the TV.

CLEM MACINTYRE: With those early political memories and recollections, is it fair to say that your political philosophy was set in place relatively early? Did you find yourself reflecting on Tom Playford's election, for example? Were your sympathies with Labor at that stage?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. In fact, I was even more radical than Labor. I think I was a teenage communist—a Christian communist, brought up in a very Christian household, and firmly believed that the gospel called me to social justice. My politics as a teenager I would regard as much more left wing than they are today.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Religion has obviously been a very important part of your life in more recent years, but your family was churchgoing and religion mattered.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. My mother's family were very intensely personal in their religious faith; Jesus was somebody personal in our lives. My father was a much more academic religious person in that sense. When I was about the age of 15, I guess, my parents noted that my politics were becoming very left wing. They didn't mind that, but what they worried about—I look back on it—was that I might throw out the baby with the bathwater and reject religion, as many teenagers did. So they said one day, 'Have you ever read about Quakers?' No, I hadn't. 'Well, you might find it interesting.' I went to the State Library and they had two books on Quakers, and I borrowed both. I was fascinated by it and then ultimately would become a Quaker for about 20 years.

But I am struck by the fact that my parents had decided that they weren't going to press down and say, 'You've got to follow a more standard liturgical, traditional religion.' They were prepared to let me explore and encounter, and thought this might keep me in the faith, so to speak, and of course it did.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Thank you. Let's turn to education. Your secondary school education was in Adelaide.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. I went to eight primary schools and then one high school, and that was what was known as Adelaide Boys' High School.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there friends, experiences or teachers who were especially influential there in shaping the future Lynn Arnold?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. There was a very enthusiastic first-year teacher in my second year there who taught us English, one young Garth Boomer, and he was magical. He was just an invigorating, alive, vital teacher, but also it was quite clear that he had strong personal views, and I liked the way they sounded. He wasn't propagandising at all, but he was encouraging us to debate issues and he would let his own view be known and defend others having their view. So he was one of those who impressed me enormously and, again, years later I got to know him as an adult.

I was very active in the school student Christian movement, but I was also known for my political discussions. There were a few of us who would tend to have long discussions over lunchtime about how to right the world from our different perspectives. We were not all of the same view.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there organised groups within the school in terms of holding mock elections or formal debates and so on, or was it relatively—

LYNN ARNOLD: No, they didn't do that. There was a debating society, which I was briefly a member of, but not like you have since where schools will conduct mock elections. There was no civics education as such, so what was going on was my informal interests and activities in the school.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sounds a bit like you didn't need a lot of civics education, really, from what you have been saying. Okay, so then to the University of Adelaide.

LYNN ARNOLD: First of all, what happened is that in 1965 I'm in what was known as Leaving Honours—year 12. I'm one of the generation that started to see the 6 o'clock news. I always watched the news from the earliest time and the 6 o'clock news was starting to carry reports about a war in Indochina. We subscribed to *Time* magazine and I was reading that from the early sixties.

This actually goes back to before 1963 because it was when John Kennedy abetted, it is alleged, in the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader of South Vietnam. His sister, the Dragon Lady, as she was nicknamed, accused Kennedy of having plotted the destruction of her brother. I was watching that and with my very left-wing views I felt uncomfortable about what happened. Then Menzies introduces conscription and I thought 'I don't like this at all'. He commits us to the war and I didn't like that.

But that then takes us to 1965 and at the end of 1965 we go overseas for a year. My father had a sabbatical and he thought he would take his wife and two children and so it became a gap year for me and then when we came back—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Where did you go for your year?

LYNN ARNOLD: He had it in Sweden, so we went to Sweden. We sailed, because in those days that was the cheap way to travel, to Naples and then travelled up to Sweden and then stayed at the Wenner-Gren

Center for academics in Stockholm, but we couldn't afford to stay. It was costing too much, so the thought was that my father would stay on and my mother, sister and I would have to find somewhere cheap to live or otherwise come back to Australia.

Our first thought had been Rome, because I had so loved Italian Roman history. I had actually done that as a special side subject in high school. I enrolled myself to do ancient history. But I then had the chance to borrow a book by a Greek writer, translated into English, held in the Stockholm Public Library, about Spain in the civil war, Nikos Kazantzakis's book on travels to Spain and Portugal, and it was mind changing. I thought 'This sounds fascinating. Why don't we go to Spain?'

My parents agreed. 'You, your mother and your sister will go to Spain.' Very capable though my mother was, they said, 'You're 17 so you now have the responsibility to learn responsibility. This is the deal: you will lead the trip. You will do all the bookings for the pensiones, for the second class on the buses, for the third class on the trains, for the third class on the ferries and you will travel around Spain for six months and you will have a budget of $5 a day for the three of you for all of that.' That was the days of Arthur Frommer's *Europe on 5 Dollars a Day* for one for food and accommodation only. This was for three people.

We landed in Spain and my job when we got to a place was to go to find the cheapest pensione I could find and see it was not a dosshouse and go back and say, 'Okay, this is what I got,' and then book the transport and so on. So for a 17 year old it was a huge experience.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I'm thinking a 17 year old with quite radical left-wing politics who chooses to go—

LYNN ARNOLD: In Franco Spain.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —live in Franco Spain.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, that was itself fascinating.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was that part of the motivation, do you think, to see that side of politics?

LYNN ARNOLD: Because Kazantzakis had written about the civil war and had written from both sides of the civil war, yes, undoubtedly I was wanting to see what was playing out. The civil guard was very apparent in the streets, with their rather ominous black plastic—although they can't have been plastic, but anyway they looked that—hats and very seriously fascist-looking look. So, yes, I think that certainly was a factor that I was interested to observe.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and an unusual experience for somebody in those years. Let me bring you back to university in Adelaide then.

LYNN ARNOLD: We came back and, in the way the world was then, getting into university was much easier than it is now even though the numbers were much smaller. My year 12 results had not been stunning but they were good enough to get me into enrolling in economics. I very quickly became involved in student politics. I joined the Adelaide University Pacifist Society and would become its president. I formed the Adelaide University Quaker Society. I very quickly started wanting to do something about the war and so I joined—in '67 the CPV hadn't been founded; it was founded in '68, but you had the CEVP in '67.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Which is the committee—

LYNN ARNOLD: For Vietnam protest. I would attend rallies and demonstrations. Also, with another member of the pacifist society, Augustine Moc Chiu-yu (Gus Moc), we organised a Biafran relief campaign—walkathons to raise money for Biafra—so we did that. Then, in '68, I also went to Indonesia for three weeks as a young Asian leader to attend a conference organised by Quakers for young Asian leaders, but, of the 40 or so people who were there, only five were in fact Quakers. All the rest were from other faiths, let alone Christianity.

We met in Bogor in Indonesia for two weeks. We had intense discussions about development and grassroots political involvement—really interesting for Indonesia at the time because they had only three years before had a very bloody curtailment of a left-wing government. Now, in the highlands of Bogor, we were discussing all sorts of really radical things with young Indonesians, young Vietnamese, young Laos and Filipinos. From all over South-East Asia they had come together. That was a real education for me about grassroots involvement.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and it's telling me also that you are not afraid of putting yourself in pretty challenging circumstances at a relatively young age still—

LYNN ARNOLD: No, that's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —and learning from that, and I am guessing that's partly shaping subsequent political positions that you went on—

LYNN ARNOLD: Pretty much so because then I became very active in the anti-war movement: the CPV and later the VMC.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The VMC was the moratorium committee?

LYNN ARNOLD: The Vietnam Moratorium Committee. My first arrest, of five arrests, was in 1968. We were handing out leaflets on the street without a permit and refused to give name and address, so I was arrested. It is probably worthwhile mentioning an interesting story in relation to that because one of the other people had seen me being arrested and thought he had better go and tell my parents. He went to my parents' house and there was my father servicing his own car and busy under the bonnet. Colin came along and was trying to make conversation and finally my father said, 'What's the matter, Colin?' 'Lynn has been arrested.' 'Oh, yes, I thought he would.'

In all I was arrested five times. One of those times we had been on a sit-in the Department of Labour and National Service in Currie Street. We were invited to leave at 5 o'clock and we declined the invitation. Some of us stayed on and then at 7 o'clock the politeness of the invitation to leave changed and we were escorted out to the paddy wagon. I chose to play that one through the full distance. I refused to pay the fine, so that meant I went to Adelaide Gaol for five days. My dread was that somebody would pay the fine and let me out, but they didn't.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So this is all through university times?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And you are studying but perhaps not putting as much energy into your studies as you are to—

LYNN ARNOLD: Certainly not putting in as much energy as I might. I had also moved out of home and four of us, who were all anti-war activists, formed what we grandiosely called the Jaffrey Street Commune in Parkside, 18 Jaffrey Street. We set up house there. We had a silk-screening business outside the back which printed anti-war posters. We organised demonstrations from there. I was rising up in the leadership so that by the time the VMC was established I was initially its vice-chair and then within six months became its chair, so I became very active in that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But you did complete your studies?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, no. What happened is that I am also working at the Barr Smith Library to earn some money to pay for the housekeeping of the commune. I am attending all these activities, so my studies are not going that well, and by 1970 they are not happening at all. I am enrolled officially in one subject only, and I fail that magnificently because I am so involved as a full-time organiser of the moratorium. I would later go back to part-time study, and so I wouldn't actually finish my first degree until 1978, because I would change from Economics to Arts to do History, English as majors.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there any stand-out teachers?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, of course in the Economics faculty, yes, there were, clearly—people like Geoff Harcourt and Derek Healey, who were very active in the anti-war movement. I was at Adelaide University, but I also very quickly got to meet Brian Medlin, Greg O'Hair and Rodney Allen from Flinders. Brian became really a mentor of mine. But Geoff Harcourt, very very influential.

In 1970, I should also mention that the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, based out of Holland, wanted to organise a delegation to go to South Vietnam to meet with the third force, the neutralist, the Buddhists. I was chosen as one of four Australians to go—three were from Melbourne and me from Adelaide—and so we flew to Saigon in July 1970 and we met with the neutralist Buddhists, we met with the students, we met with various people over a week.

Then two days before we were due to leave, we were invited by the students at the University of Saigon to be part of the protest meeting against the war. That was a very big, stirring rally that took place, so much so that the students said that we should march on the street, so we all did. There were 40 of us from the delegation and a couple of thousand Vietnamese students. We marched up that big avenue towards the American embassy. As we got a certain distance, in the distance further up we could see the shields and the combined police and military. The next thing we knew, we could then see little smoke trails landing in the midst of us. Of course, it was teargas, so we were teargassed.

On either side were tall fences with some narrow apertures, so you either squeezed through a narrow aperture—and I was somewhat thinner of girth then than I am now—or climbed over a fence. Some old Vietnamese women would rub our faces with lemon to get rid of the burn from the face. Of course, it doesn't get rid of it in the lungs, and that's horrendous. But anyway, we got away and we weren't arrested.

Some of the Vietnamese were arrested. Some of them had enormous presence of mind and grabbed some of the used shells and afterwards gave us each some, so I've got three spent cartridges. I came back to Australia, and at customs in Sydney—I had put them in a plastic bag. The customs officer opens my bag to have a look and then opens this plastic bag. As he is putting his head in, he says, 'What are these?' I said there were spent, but they were not totally spent, and so he came up with a redness of the face! He wasn't very amused but really, all things considered, was quite good about it, because he said, 'I'm going to confiscate these. What's your name? Where do you want them sent, if you get them back?' So I gave the address of an aunt who lived in Sydney, forgot to tell her, and forgot about them. I never thought I would see them again.

Well, months later, a package comes to my mother from her sister, with a furious letter accompanying it—absolutely outraged that I had given her address for this. But the canisters had come back, and to this day I still have these spent tear gas canisters from Saigon.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That's an extraordinary story. Okay, we need to move on. So after university, which doesn't conclude, in terms of studies, until the mid-seventies for you—

LYNN ARNOLD: I was still not finished with my degree—I was therefore without a degree—and I go teaching. The system was so short of teachers at that stage that they would employ anybody.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Right. You could teach without the qualification.

LYNN ARNOLD: No qualifications.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How long did you do that for?

LYNN ARNOLD: Four years as a classroom teacher.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Whereabouts?

LYNN ARNOLD: Salisbury North Technical High School, now Paralowie. Apparently I was quite good, because in my fourth year I was one of a small group of 40 teachers around the state appointed to be a pilot teacher for health education. In the following two years I was actually put on the education curriculum team as an advisory teacher, writing curriculum, being involved in teacher training, going to the schools—and I still hadn't got a degree. Anyway, so that was happening there. What that also meant was that there was no more political activity going on, though I did, when I moved out to Salisbury North to teach, join the Labor Party for the first time.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So that's in the mid-seventies.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. I joined the Labor Party in 1974.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Would you have had ambitions to become a member of parliament at that stage?

LYNN ARNOLD: Oh yes. In fact, I had forgotten to mention that in my teen years I wanted to—as I had said when I was six—be prime minister. That was the era when politicians were older than average—Konrad Adenauer, Mao Zedong, Charles de Gaulle, Dwight D. Eisenhower—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Churchill.

LYNN ARNOLD: —and Winston Churchill—so my thought was that I would probably enter politics in my 50s or 60s, and I would have to kill time between now and then. So I had never really put a lot of thought

into that, and so I ended up in teaching by accident. But circumstances happened that I would end up in politics much sooner.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let's talk about that process. You are living in the northern suburbs, teaching, and you joined the Labor Party in 1974. Presumably by the mid to late 1970s becoming a member of parliament is a realistic prospect?

LYNN ARNOLD: What happened is that I am teaching until 1974 as a classroom teacher, then as an advisory teacher. I am a member of the Salisbury sub-branch. The local member was Reg Groth, who was not known in wider circles but was a very, very dedicated local member—a superb local member. People would come to him at all hours of the day and night. He was exceptional.

One morning he came to my house and said, 'I need to tell you: I have had to sack my secretary.' I said, 'Oh dear, I'm sorry to hear about that. What are you going to do, Reg?' He said, 'Well, I know what I'd want to do.' 'What's that?' He said, 'Well, you won't take it because it would be a big drop in pay for you.' So I said, 'Well, maybe I would.' So I became his secretary, and in '77, '78 and '79 I'd make his tea and coffee, I'd type his letters, I'd file his correspondence, I'd schedule his appointments—I was his secretary. We only had one staff, and that was me, but it was an apprenticeship because I was able to see how this very impressive local member dealt with local constituent inquiries, and no wonder people loved him. Nobody outside knew about him, but in that area they loved them. I could not have had a better apprenticeship.

Anyway, he was also keen that I should follow him, because we got on well. He came from a union background; I didn't. But he said, 'You should run for the seat because I'm going to retire at the next election.' So I was all ready to do that, and then one day he comes in and says, 'There's a problem.' 'What's the problem?' 'Well, there's a ruckus in the union movement about why is a safe seat like Salisbury'—the second safest seat at the time—'being given to an academic egghead?'—which is ironic since I still hadn't finished my degree—'It should go to a union-loyal person, and he can go and fight it out in one of the marginals.' 'Oh well, that's it, maybe I'll have to do that, maybe I should stand for the seat of Adelaide,' and his comment was, 'That would be stupid because you might win it, and then you'd only hold it one term, or maybe two at best.'

Anyway, he went to Don Dunstan—and Don and I had known each other in the anti-war movement days and finally crossed swords, because 18 September he was very upset at what we did when we stopped at the North Terrace/King William Street intersection—he was very upset about that, and I was the co-leader of that with Brian Medlin, so we had fallen out a bit. But Reg goes to Don and says, 'Would you like Lynn in parliament?' 'Oh, yes I would.' 'Well, you're not going to have him.' 'Why?' 'Because the union movement won't let it happen.'

At the same time, Geoff Virgo was going to Don about another academic egghead by the name of John Trainer, who the union movement was also playing up about. So Don, in regard to my seat—the seat I was hoping for—said, 'Well, who's the troublemaker?' It turns out there had been this Johnny-come-lately from Victoria, George Apap of the Storemen and Packers Union, who was making all sorts of ruckus.

It was decided then that the person who would be the new member for Salisbury would be Malcolm Skinner, an organiser of the Transport Workers Union who lived in the area. I knew him from the sub-branch—good bloke, and he would have been a great local member. But Don says, 'Well, find George Apap a seat.' One of the party officials said, 'Yes, well Royal Park,' which covered West Lakes. Don said, 'He'll lose that; let's give him Semaphore,' which was the safer seat.

George Apap took the bait and backed off and Malcolm Skinner came to see me and said, 'Lynn, I just want to tell you they've been talking to me and they feel you'd be the better member; you have my full support, I will not nominate and I will support you fully,' which was very, very gracious. He could have been forgiven for allowing his graciousness to finish at that point, and yet this fellow, who had the seat in his hands, the nomination in his hands, not that first election because Reg insisted on being my campaign director, but for every other election after that he was my campaign director.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Through each of the seats you represented?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. It was always the western part of Salisbury—it just changed its name. Both of us were still living in the same seat, even though the name changed. He meant what he said, that he would support me, and he did—a true act of political grace. Anyway, so I get the preselection unopposed and I get elected.

CLEM MACINTYRE: In 1979. Don Dunstan's direct intervention, was that something that happened very often? Was yours an unusual story in that regard?

LYNN ARNOLD: This story was distinctive because of the way it finished, because as you know George Apap went on to lose the safer seat. He might have won Royal Park—we'll never know. In fact, Kevin Hamilton went on to win Royal Park. Don must have—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Because he must have been close to retirement himself at that stage?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, one of the things was that he wasn't. One of the things I looked forward to was that I would serve under Don Dunstan as Premier. I get preselection on 4 June 1978. Why I remember that is that 5 June, the Queen's birthday weekend Monday, my wife and I got married—on 5.6.78. So 4 June, in the evening at the convention the preselections were voted on. At that stage Don was still very much Premier. There was the turmoil of the Salisbury affair and there was starting to be a turmoil about nuclear energy. Don was starting to explore the possibility and various people on the left of the party were digging in.

Don went away in early 1979 on a business trip and it all blows up. He is quite devastated and effectively has a breakdown. He comes back and is hospitalised, and we all know the scene of him in his hospital dressing gown announcing he's standing down. This was a shock to all of us. So my dream of serving under him as Premier would not happen. Years later, when I became Premier, I would ask him to come to my office every so often just to consult with him. That's as close as I got to serving with him in parliament.

CLEM MACINTYRE: To working with him. That first campaign, directed by the previous member for the first time—

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were the issues largely local ones?

LYNN ARNOLD: No, no. Well, we had the local pamphlet, myself being introduced by Reg Groth, a photograph of the two of us shaking hands. But that was absolutely irrelevant to what then blew up around the state. Des Corcoran had called an early election, and remember, this was not the first early election: this was the third in a row. '70 to '73 was a full term, '73 to '75 was a short term. '75 was brought on because Dunstan worried that the Whitlam government's odour would bring us down, so he thought he had better get in quick before the federal election. Of course, Neville Wran got elected after the federal election, so Don might have been okay to stay on; who knows?

He only just gets in. He needs Ted Connelly to be the Speaker, and the last Labor member, the one with the least margin, was Jack Slater in the seat of Gilles. That was one seat short of the majority. So then, it was '75 to '77. Don, understandably, says relying on an Independent Speaker, loyal as he was—and by the way, the Independent Speaker had won the seat due to another Labor Party preselection blunder. They had chosen for Port Pirie, I think, Bob Maczkowiack, who didn't even live in Pirie. Well, the locals didn't like him, so they elected Ted.

So Don goes for an early election in '77. It's the second early election in a row. Des wants to have his own stamp, and he goes to an early election. Chris Sumner, to his credit, has never stopped saying that, in the cabinet meeting when Des announced to the cabinet he was going to call the '79 election, Chris swore at him about what a stupid idea that was. The Salisbury affair was still playing out. That had been rather badly handled by the government. The opposition was playing it like a violin, and Salisbury was his own prima donna who just was part of the news headline material. I think he had gone back to Yorkshire at that point, but nevertheless, he was still echoing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: He was a key figure haunting the election.

LYNN ARNOLD: The idea of an early election, Des followed it—or maybe it was the party office; I don't know. Des and the party office followed it up with a dreadful slogan: 'Follow the leader.' A very smart Liberal campaign decided this was a real winner, and the ads ran of Des as a shepherd leading flocks of sheep. So you are all going to be sheep, following the leader. It was merciless.

It then was joined by side campaigners coming in on every possible issue to paint the Labor Party as in the hands of the left. Duncan was mercilessly parodied as being a left-wing hatchet man. Various businesses, Adrian Brien Ford particularly, paid for full-page ads slamming the 'leftist Labor government', that they were really the puppets of the left, the left unions and so on. Nigel Buick from Kangaroo Island put in full-page ads. We still thought we would win.

Then *The Advertiser* starting doing its seat-by-seat polls. The first poll they did was a marginal seat for the Liberals, and it was stunningly bad for Labor. There was no chance Labor was going to win this seat. They then very quickly had to change their polling and now did Labor seats. One after the other, the polling was appalling. Of course, added into all that was the bus drivers decided to go on strike. I would later do a study of the polling booth numbers in the north and see that the polling booths that ran along the railway line had half the swing against Labor of those that ran along Main North Road or the Salisbury Highway.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That's extraordinary. So, election night, even though the government's in trouble and falling, you are elected.

LYNN ARNOLD: It was a pretty drear election night party—hooray, I'm in.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And then did you give a speech? Were there celebrations despite the loss?

LYNN ARNOLD: Oh yes, of course. In Salisbury there were only two candidates: me and the Liberals, so we didn't have to wait for preferences.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No worries for preferences; yes, that's right. So you're elected, a new member.

LYNN ARNOLD: With a 12 per cent swing against me.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, but with a healthy enough margin to survive the swing.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: When you first arrived in this chamber—you had obviously visited the parliament before.

LYNN ARNOLD: The far seat, just underneath that little calendar thing, was my seat. It was as far back as you could get.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. And how long did it take to sort of learn the ropes and get a feel for the dynamic of the—

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, having watched Reg as the local member, I had learnt those ropes, but having him talk about what was happening in the house I was going to get the ropes pretty quickly.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: Now, Jack Wright came to my declaration of the poll, and he would ultimately be John's deputy. Jack was impressed at the way I spoke at my declaration of the poll and said to John, 'This guy should go somewhere.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you know John Bannon before that?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, because John had been a member of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign organising committee, so I had known him back then. When I was teaching, I was part of a group that would go to the Harmstorf British Hotel—it was Harmstorf's in those days (ironic)—on a Friday night, and we would have some beers with Chris Sumner, John Bannon, myself and various other people and then we would go to the Ceylon Hut or some sort of curry place. So I had known him way back then. Jack Wright I hadn't really known that well, but Jack was impressed and Jack said, 'You should stand for the shadow cabinet.' I said, 'I can't, I've only just got in parliament.' But John, in his wisdom, did not have a shadow cabinet, he had a shadow executive which was smaller, and the reason he did that he said, 'After 18 months we'll have a full shadow cabinet to allow the newcomers to prove themselves.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: But you had sort of front-bench ambitions from day one.

LYNN ARNOLD: I did anyway and Jack was encouraging me. Jack said to me, 'You should go for my portfolio of transport, so beef yourself up.' So I worked hard in the electorate and I also worked hard on transport issues. I went to meet people when I travelled overseas at my own expense, I met people involved in transport issues.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am just getting my head around this because it would normally be the case that the Labor Party would effectively elect the frontbench.

LYNN ARNOLD: And they elected an executive of six or seven members.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And they elected an executive, but subsequently not many people on the backbench would be confident about which portfolio they might be allocated, having arrived on the frontbench.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, that's true. But I mean, Jack was so confident I would get in.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and confident that John would give you that—

LYNN ARNOLD: So I became very knowledgeable about roads resurfacing and light rail. That was the time the O-Bahn was being discussed and so I was speaking very often on the O-Bahn.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Right. And where were you doing that research? Was that the parliamentary library and talking to community groups and so on?

LYNN ARNOLD: The library, and my father was a civil engineer, so he pointed me in certain directions and I just beavered away. I'm quite good at that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Tell me a bit about how the house was in 1979 when you were elected. What was the atmosphere because, again, we had a Liberal government at that time.

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, (a) we were shellshocked we had lost. We had not lost heavily but lost, and we had not expected that. We were smarting over the way the campaign went. I mean, this was supposed to be the Dunstan decade that would go on into 20 years and here it was suddenly chopped off. Sometimes little gifts come, and the very first day in parliament we were all sworn in and then there was the election of the Speaker and David Tonkin stands to nominate Keith Russack, the member for Goyder, a lovely guy from the Yorke Peninsula. But anyone can nominate, and Bruce Eastick, the member for Light, also stood up and nominated.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The former leader.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, yes, that's right, before Tonkin. Now, I don't know the story behind that but, anyway, Tonkin was not amused but it was okay, he wouldn't get up, except that of course we all voted for Bruce Eastick and Bruce Eastick voted for Bruce Eastick and somebody else did too, because it was a secret ballot. Eastick gets elected. So we actually win the very first vote of the parliament. It was a little bit of a consolation prize.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, I can imagine the mood.

LYNN ARNOLD: But we were determined. John was an amazing Leader of the Opposition. It's a thankless task. He beavered below the radar and he would involve various of us. I was invited to various of these meetings that he would have with business groups and so on, even though I wasn't in the early stages part of the shadow cabinet. There was criticism in the party that it was very low key, not enough happening. The press was saying, 'Will John be able to do it?' But I could see what he was doing and it paid off, of course.

Kevin Hamilton, the newly elected member for Albert Park, and myself discovered something else we could do to be irritating to the government and that was questions on notice. You didn't always get questions in question time because they are time-limited, but questions on notice are without limit and must be answered at some point. Kevin held the record for something like 400 questions on notice, but I came second with about 200—on anything one wanted to think about. It was juvenile when you think about it but we felt we were tying them down.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Sure.

LYNN ARNOLD: And it was.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So it sounds like you found yourself at home in the chamber reasonably quickly—

LYNN ARNOLD: Oh yes. Oh I loved—

CLEM MACINTYRE: —and you adapted the culture of the place.

LYNN ARNOLD: I loved the environment of the debate.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: Very quickly I loved that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Tell me about the engagement across party. Were there friendships across the floor?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Colleagues in the Legislative Council, were you closely involved with them? I am trying to—

LYNN ARNOLD: I was close with Brian Chatterton—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: —who was in the upper house. He actually asked me when I was still just a backbencher, he said, 'Look, Lynn, would you be prepared to be the agriculture spokesperson in the lower house?' 'How come?' 'Well, your seat is the most agricultural one we've got left.' All the market gardens. So, while I am also beavering up on transport, every time an agriculture bill comes before the house I am the one who leads and I am having to research on barley and wheat and all sorts of stuff I had never known anything about. So that was a good learning experience.

You ask about across the parliament. In the bar there were some members on both sides who you would get on with. I remember Peter Lewis and myself, we were of the same class of '79 when we both came in. We quite quickly developed a good friendship and it would stay for years. In fact, I would have the privilege of doing his funeral because of that friendship. There were other members on the other side who I became easily—

CLEM MACINTYRE: You left the parliament—

LYNN ARNOLD: In '94.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —in '94. Do you think that same level of engagement between parties and amongst members was the same or had it become a bit more clinical and professional by then do you think?

LYNN ARNOLD: That's an interesting phrase.

CLEM MACINTYRE: For want of a better expression.

LYNN ARNOLD: It had become a bit more tense by '94. The camaraderie that existed in the eighties was eroding.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: The years of the nineties had become pretty tense. There were still some friendships across the thing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I can remember myself talking to Peter Lewis who talked about that mood. He lamented the loss, I suppose, of that level of engagement. That is something that other members have said.

LYNN ARNOLD: The other thing that disappeared in that first term—well, they disappeared at the '79 election but they carried on coming in. It was Hugh Hudson, Geoff Virgo and Des Corcoran—no longer in parliament. Well, Des still was. They would come in on a Thursday afternoon while the house was sitting and stand at this end of the bar and that was their end. Nobody would dare stand there.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This was the drinking bar, not the bar of the house.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, sorry, the drinking bar. So that was their corner. The Labor members had this side of the bar and the Liberal members that side of the bar.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Again, in your early days, how much were you dependent upon the clerks and the officers and things like that in terms of finding your way through the legislative process and the logistics of government?

LYNN ARNOLD: When I became a shadow minister, which was 18 months in, I also moved quite a few private members' motions, and I really did need Geoff Mitchell to—David Mitchell, sorry.

CLEM MACINTYRE: David, yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: There was a Geoff, though, as well.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Geoff was a clerk in the mid-nineties.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. I am trying to remember the name of the guy who sat there, but David sat here, so I would often be consulting with him about how I should word it. They were very valuable on points of order and things like that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So the change in your life: you're relatively newly married, you're still living in the northern suburbs, you're commuting by car to the parliament regularly—

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, no, I had the biggest chauffeur-driven vehicle in the world. I bought a house in Parafield Gardens back in '75. It had a bus stop outside the front door that went to Greenfields Railway Station, so more often than not I would catch a bus to Greenfields and catch a chauffeur-driven train to North Terrace and then come in to parliament. We only had one car and my wife would need that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was she working at the time?

LYNN ARNOLD: No. Before I got elected, our first child was born in February 1979. I was elected just seven months later. My wife had given up work at that point. Halfway through that term, in June 1981, a set of twins came along, and at that point I was then elected to the shadow ministry—almost about then. John opened up the executive shadow ministry and I was elected. Then three weeks after the 1982 election, in December 1982, our next set of twins came along, so we had five under three years and 10 months, four of whom were under 17 months, in nappies, and I was a minister of the Crown.

Just coming back to the shadow ministry, I was quite well elected. I ended up ranking No. 5 in the polling, so I polled very well. My seat ended up being that one over there. I went into Bannon's office to be told I was going to be transport minister, and he said, 'Lynn, I'm going to appoint you to education.' You could have floored me. Don Hopgood had been education minister under Dunstan and Corcoran and the shadow executive to that point, and it was clear he was going to be the ongoing, but John said, 'No, I want a breath of fresh air. Don wants to do environment. He wants that.'

So all my homework on transport was to no avail, and suddenly I was shadow minister for the biggest portfolio in the government. In those days it was bigger than health: it had an $800 million recurrent budget plus a reasonably sized capital budget. I very quickly had to get to know the sector. Even though I had been a teacher, that wasn't the same. So for the next 18 months I beavered enormously, going around visiting schools and answering correspondence. I had a couple of people who volunteered to help me as unpaid staff. It was a really interesting time.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There's no induction process for a new minister in a new portfolio.

LYNN ARNOLD: Absolutely not, no. In fact, when I look back on it, I then drafted a policy which ran to 40 pages. I put it to Bannon and he made a couple of changes. I actually look back on it and realise that I didn't really follow party procedure all that well. We had an education PLP committee and I met with them now and again.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Right, so that's Parliamentary Labor Party.

LYNN ARNOLD: Parliamentary Labor Party Education Committee. We had a Party Education Committee, which Lorraine's former husband, Neville McLachlan, chaired and I was part of that and so I took that into the policy. But a lot of the policy was just 'I'd like to do that'.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So were these ideas that you were getting from advisers and—

LYNN ARNOLD: When I went around the field and teachers and parents—

CLEM MACINTYRE: So this was just you, in a sense, feeling the atmosphere and saying, 'This is where we should be going'?

LYNN ARNOLD: Absolutely, I was taking the pulse. Consequently, when we launched that policy—and it had some big ticket items to it—it ran well, so that when the campaign was well and truly underway one of the ads that Bannon ran was with me standing with him as we talked about class sizes being reduced. No primary school student will be in a class bigger than 25. No junior primary student will be in a class bigger than 27. I'm saying this in a dreadful safari suit. Because I'm taller than John—we did it at Royal Park High School in the open—John stands ahead of me and I stand behind him in a little hollow to make our heights more equal. It was just the sort of cinematics of it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So not only did you end up in a portfolio that you hadn't expected but you are moving from opposition into government.

LYNN ARNOLD: Within 18 months, I'm then right there.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, over here. I dare say you can never prepare to become a minister for the first time because it's a brand new experience, but was the experience what you expected, or were there aspects of it that you were really surprised by when you were suddenly running a department effectively as a minister? Were you finding things that just didn't make sense that you had to sort of learn on the job?

LYNN ARNOLD: What I didn't know is that the first day you become a minister you go to Government House and you get yourself there and then when you come out of Government House there is the government car ready to take you and so it takes me to my office. Terry Hemmings and I had had a little private—because Terry and I used to go home on the train when parliament sat so—

CLEM MACINTYRE: And Terry was?

LYNN ARNOLD: Terry Hemmings, the member for Napier. He was a shadow minister and became a minister. We both said to each other, 'When we get in, let's ring each other after we go yes.' So I get into my office in Flinders Street and, yes, and I ring Terry and we just have a bit of a joke. But then life gets real because nobody had really told me—they may have told Terry, I don't know—about the bags, or the boxes in the *Yes, Minister* parlance, but the bags in ours. There they come and nobody tells me what I'm supposed to do. There is a space where I'm supposed to sign, but I have to ask a few questions. 'This document, why am I signing this? What's the relevance of this and what does my signature mean?' But anyway, you very quickly get on top of things. Things sort of make sense.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So how long do you think it was before you felt, 'I know what's happening now. I'm on top of this. I'm actually running the place rather than furiously peddling very fast to keep up'?

LYNN ARNOLD: One thing that was a big surprise was that I had often been struck by the fact that Harold Allison, who was a great guy, I liked Harold, when he was education minister I would stand up and ask a question, 'Minister, Ascot Park Primary School has written to you about this. What are you going to do about that?' And he would say, 'Oh, well, I haven't seen that letter.' I would think, 'But I've got it. They sent me a copy. How come you don't.' I discovered when I got into government precisely why. Every letter that came in never went to him. It would go off to the department for a draft reply and then come back. I said, 'Well, that's got to stop.' 'Minister, you can't stop that. You are going to need research.' 'Oh, okay, well then you do something else for me. You can—this is the eighties, by the way, not this period—you can microfiche them.' I kid you not.

So, each day, in my bags would be an envelope full of microfiche of the day's correspondence that had come in. I had a reader in the car that I could plug into the cigarette lighter that I could then read to see what letters had come in. I scanned most of them but with some of them I would stop. 'Ah ha, that's one I could be asked about.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there any other ministers following this pattern?

LYNN ARNOLD: No, no other minister. In fact, the practice was stopped when Greg Crafter took over. But I just did not like the prospect of being caught short. I felt sorry for Harold.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It's one thing being in the opposition, being able to stand up and throw questions with notice or without notice at ministers and be doing so in the spirit of keeping the government to account and the transparency of government and all the rest of that. When you are suddenly a minister, did, in a sense, the parliament seem a different place in that you were the one, in a sense, under siege?

LYNN ARNOLD: But I liked that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you have a different relationship, I suppose, with the legislature when you were part of the executive?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, yes, because in one sense you were more vulnerable because you were the butt of everything, but in another sense you had more power. One of the things that was frustrating as a shadow minister was, 'I would like to be able to talk about this, if you ask me a question.' While the procedures do allow for opposition members to be asked questions, they are so difficult it was never going to happen. I loved question time; I really enjoyed it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: As much as you enjoyed it from opposition?

LYNN ARNOLD: More so.

CLEM MACINTYRE: More so, okay.

LYNN ARNOLD: Because there was the adrenaline of it. Questions from our side were a bit boring because we knew what they were going to be because we gave them to them, unless they had one they really wanted to ask, but to do the not knowing what you are going to bat—Gavin Keneally was sitting next to me, a lovely guy. He was Minister for Transport. He dreaded question time. He said to me one day, 'You are enjoying this, aren't you?' I said, 'Yes, I love this.' It really was good fun.

CLEM MACINTYRE: If you became 'good' at answering questions—you were doing it with confidence and a degree of capacity and confidence in your own ability to answer—did you find that the opposition tended to leave you alone and pick on the ministers who were less comfortable?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, there was a bit of that. We did that in opposition too: poor Allan Rodda and Harold Allison, of course, because even though he was a good minister he was in a terrible portfolio, given the government policies on budgeting.

My shadow was Michael Wilson. Michael is a really nice guy. He was the member for Adelaide. He and I had a good sparring relationship. It is probably worth mentioning here that at the '85 election we were wondering, in the Labor Party cabinet room, 'Who is going to be Leader of the Opposition now? Who is going to take over' 'Michael Wilson could be.' 'Oh, he would be good.' Anyway, I am in my ministerial office and a phone call comes. 'Minister, Michael Wilson on the phone.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Shadow minister Michael Wilson.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes. 'Hello, Michael. How are you? By the way, can I tell you we are all rooting for you to get the job.' He said, 'Well, I have to tell you I am one vote short: my own. I have just been told I have lost the seat.' He has rung his party office to tell them and then he has rung me. 'Michael, I can genuinely say how sorry I am to see you go. You were a great shadow minister. You really brought the fight in a very good way.' Then he went on to say, 'I've got some material I am handing on to my successor, but really there is a lot of other stuff here that should go into the education department. Are you prepared to receive them?' He offered them to us and of course the answer was yes. Talk about grace in politics.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. You do hear those stories, but they are much less current than the level of hostility and the—

LYNN ARNOLD: Maybe I should give you another story of Michael Wilson. This is probably not helping your timing. I am sorry about that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No, we're right.

LYNN ARNOLD: When I had been a humble backbencher—I wasn't even a minister then—I was very concerned about the transport routes in my electorate. It was growing very rapidly, new areas coming in—no bus service. These households had one car. So I walked, letterboxing down the street. Women would come out of their house because the most exciting thing in their day was a political pamphlet in their box. How tough is life when that's what is interesting? They couldn't drive anywhere because they didn't have a car. So I wrote to Michael saying, 'This area needs you. You really should do something.'

Michael comes back—he is the Minister of Transport in the Tonkin government—and he says, 'Look, Lynn, we haven't got a lot of money, but we've got a bit of money. We don't know how it best should be used. Can I appoint you, as the member for the area, to join a committee with the transport people and with the council and with others to work out where the bus routes should go?', which was an amazing act of bipartisanship. Indeed, we did redesign the bus routes, and some of those still exist today.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. In a sense, you then have a Liberal minister who is working in collaboration with you to provide better services for a seat that the Liberals are unlikely ever to win.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes—and allowing me to get the kudos of it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. Again, reflecting on experience in the cabinet, John Bannon obviously was a very successful leader, certainly in the early years.

LYNN ARNOLD: A very hardworking member.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Things fall apart at the end, but he was a strong and effective leader earlier. The cabinet was working well, united.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, we were a good cabinet.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there factions within the cabinet?

LYNN ARNOLD: I was never a member of a faction. Yes, some of the members of cabinet were members of a faction, but it never played out in cabinet. We were a good team of people.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So it was largely a broad discussion and a consensus, which was led by the Premier?

LYNN ARNOLD: We would always start with a sandwich lunch at the start, where we would have some informal discussion around the table. Then at 2.15 the formal cabinet meeting would start and we would go through the agenda. We would actually take an average of three minutes an item. Why I know that is that I would time them. My papers that are at Flinders have the timings that I put as to when we did each, and that averages out at three minutes.

At the end of the meeting, which normally would be between 5.00 and 5.30—sometimes we would go later—we would have some matters that Bannon would have said he wanted to discuss at the end of the meeting. That was quite a regular feature. So on 2 September or 3 September 1992, it was not exceptional that at that cabinet meeting John said, 'I've got a couple of things I want to talk about at the end.' 'Okay.'

We get to 5 o'clock or 5.15 that day, and John says, 'I went for a long run on the weekend. I've seen the polling. The polling is very bad. We could lose every seat we have. It's time for me to go.' The immediate response from Chris and some others was, 'Oh, no, you can't.' John then said, 'I didn't tell you that I want your opinion. I told you I was going to tell you something. This is what I am telling you. I have decided it will happen.'

He looked up at the wall where the photographs of the Premiers were, and there was in that particular time one frame that had one hollow still to be filled. He said, 'I have often wondered who would fill that. Lynn, are you ready?' So then John left the room to do his press conference, and my colleagues asked, 'Are you going to stand?' I said yes. There had been no planning of this at all.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No, this was new to you.

LYNN ARNOLD: Bannon had not told me beforehand that he was going to do this. I then said, 'Frank'—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Frank Blevins.

LYNN ARNOLD: —'will you run as my deputy? I would like you to run as deputy.' 'Yes.' I said, 'Should I call all the caucus members tonight?' Frank said, 'No, Chris and I will do that. You rest up and turn up tomorrow morning.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there was unanimity within the cabinet almost at the point when John resigned—

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —that you would be the man stepping in?

LYNN ARNOLD: There was no issue.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And you were never in any doubt that that was what you should do?

LYNN ARNOLD: No, it was quite obvious. I mean, it was obvious that Mike was a longer term—

CLEM MACINTYRE: Mike Rann?

LYNN ARNOLD: Mike Rann. But this was not his time; it needed somebody else to stabilise the ship.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It's not unusual in politics, as governments get into trouble and a premier disappears, for someone to come in knowing, in a sense, that their tenure will be brief and that they will take a lot of the flak and clear the water, as it were, for a subsequent successor. Were you thinking along those lines then, or was it something—

LYNN ARNOLD: People kept on using the 'poisoned chalice' bit. I never saw it that way.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I'm trying to avoid that expression, but I suppose I'm asking whether you thought, as your colleagues all looked at you and said, 'You're going to be the next Premier,' that that was you leading the party to an election that would be impossible to win.

LYNN ARNOLD: I knew we couldn't win it, but that didn't fuss me at all.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And you had 15 to 18 months, in a sense to—

LYNN ARNOLD: The camaraderie of this group was such that we knew what we all had to do, and now circumstances had happened and this was my lot. So be it. Can I just extend that camaraderie bit, because it continued throughout my time. People could have been forgiven for jumping ship, and yet when we went into the campaign for '93, a really tough campaign, none of my colleagues—well, he wasn't a member of parliament, but there was one candidate whose campaign director jumped ship, but that's another story—nobody in the caucus jumped ship. They all sailed the same ship under me as Premier.

The election night comes and about half the cabinet have lost their seats. Dean Brown had wanted me to yield on the Sunday, and I said, 'No, we are going to have our cabinet meeting on the Monday. We are still the cabinet until I resign the commission. So the cabinet will meet on Monday with me as the Premier.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did that cabinet meeting include those who were losing their seats?

LYNN ARNOLD: Absolutely, because they were still members of cabinet. They still had the commission from the Governor. And we sat there: we had our sandwich lunch and we discussed the final details. I will never forget the camaraderie around that room. Half of them had lost their seats and could have been bitter about it, but they weren't. That was the calibre of the cabinet under Bannon's time and under me. When things came that were yours to do, it was yours to do. Of course, it became doubly significant to me that that's the team that I had and that Bannon had, but Dean would lose his leadership in two years because his team did not have that calibre of camaraderie.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am jumping backwards slightly here but, on that sense of unity and camaraderie, you mentioned on a previous occasion that there were several instances where you were at odds with your cabinet colleagues and crossed the floor to vote, not against a government whip but against the broad position held by the bulk of the cabinet on conscience matters. There is an issue that came up which was a government bill and you stood firm. Could you tell us a bit about that?

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, my conscience ones were poker machines, casino and Sunday trading of bottle shops.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were you the only member of the Labor Party who voted—

LYNN ARNOLD: Not on the casino; I think there were a couple of others, and pokies too.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And these were moral positions you were taking.

LYNN ARNOLD: Absolutely. Well, moral and also pragmatic. I could see no reason why the government should fund a government-funded laundromat in the form of a casino. Why would people willingly lose money unless they were addicted, and why would others willingly lose money unless it's to—you can't declare it. Anyway, I'll put that aside. Then John Cornwall brought a bill before the cabinet to decriminalise marijuana, and I could not support that legislation.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What year was that?

LYNN ARNOLD: This would be 1985. I had said, 'John, I can't support this,' and John Cornwall said, 'You can vote against it in cabinet, but you've got to vote for it in the house.' I said, 'No, I cannot support it,' and John Cornwall said, 'You'll be in breach of party policy and you'll be expelled.' I said, 'Well, if that's the case, I will have to be expelled'. John Bannon, in his wisdom, then said, 'Well, I will declare it a conscience vote.' But I would seriously have crossed the floor. There were reasons I had very strong feelings about this. I did not want this to be the slippery end of the wedge.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I can understand that, but it seems that, if we go back to you declaring in front of your cabinet colleagues that this was make or break for you, the fact that they were prepared to step back from it being a government vote and turn it into a conscience vote in order to accommodate you speaks volumes for your standing in their eyes and for—

LYNN ARNOLD: Or at least in Bannon's eyes, but I think also my colleagues' eyes. We had great respect for each other and I think they had respect for me. Can I just mention one other thing about 1985?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, please.

LYNN ARNOLD: Bannon had taken us to a majority victory, but a tight one. Peter Duncan had served briefly in the shadow executive and then shadow cabinet and then resigned, and refused to stand for the cabinet after the election. Then, at some point in about '84, he choofs off to Canberra and causes a by-election. The preselections had already happened under the redistribution, and a new seat of Briggs was going to be given to Ray Roe of the Postal Workers' Union, I think. That was to be in '85. Here was a seat just next door on offer in '84. So somebody said to Ray Roe, 'Why don't you go for that and yield the preselection for Briggs?' Ray Roe was tempted and ran there.

A very active local member of the party and mayor, Martyn Evans, was very upset because he wanted to run for it, and he announced that he would resign from the party and run as an independent. In the tradition of Bob Maczkowiack losing Pirie to Ted Connelly, Norm Peterson winning over George Apap, Martyn Evans won over Ray Roe. Ray lost everything and Mike Rann—because Ray was not going to be given Briggs back again—was then put into Briggs. The point to this is we were now a minority government again. We had relied on this one independent and Norm Peterson.

A proposal came up to the education department to have an Aboriginal school, a Kaurna Plains school at Elizabeth. I liked the idea; I thought this was wonderful. I had seen the Alberton Kalatja preschool where Aboriginal kids were in the majority. White kids went there as well, but for once in their life Aboriginal kids were in the majority. This was going to be the same situation: an Aboriginal school that white kids could go to, but the Aboriginal kids would be in the majority. I loved it. I said that, as minister, it's got my support.

The new mayor of Elizabeth, Marilyn Baker, was bitterly opposed to it and ran a campaign against it. She said, 'This is apartheid and we don't want this school in my neighbourhood.' It was a vitriolic campaign. There was a parliamentary committee meeting and I've got evidence on that parliamentary committee defending this, and these other opponents were speaking against it.

Then I'm in my office downstairs, and Martyn Evans comes late one sitting night, knocks on the door, comes in and says, 'Lynn, I have to tell you that there's a lot of opposition. You should back away.' I said, 'Well, if the opposition moves a no-confidence motion, I will support it.' That would then mean I would lose the ministry. Fortunately, the opposition never moved a motion of no confidence in me. Martyn and I get on well now. I haven't raised that with him again, but I will never forget that that's what happened that day. That doesn't have to be embargoed.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No, that's good. Let's just move towards some more general reflective questions as we look to wrap up. Did you enjoy being an MP?

LYNN ARNOLD: My cliche line on this is that I loved it enormously. I was greatly privileged. Few people in society get the chance to achieve what I achieved, both in the titles that I got and what I was able to do with those titles. It was a great honour and privilege to have that. A third of the time was good, a third was bad and a third was terrible, but that's okay. It could have been worse.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Which were the bits you disliked the most?

LYNN ARNOLD: It's not a case of disliking: the terrible times you just have to get through. Life's sometimes like that. You don't necessarily dislike them.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I'm talking more being a member rather than a minister or Premier.

LYNN ARNOLD: It was very busy. I used to work 60 to 70 hours a week, and I was always out. I used to have a rule that on weeknights I could only be out four nights a week. We had five young kids.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That must have been a big strain.

LYNN ARNOLD: I always ran the breakfast shift. I would get breakfast for the kids then take them to school in the government car. My wife would pick them up at the end of the day, then she would run the twilight zone, and it's always the twilight zone: everybody wants everything now, so much so that we ended up employing a daughter of Malcolm Skinner, the one who could have had the seat, who was studying child care. We paid for her to come four nights a week in the twilight zone to help with the showering, feeding,

bedding, reading and all the rest, because I was doubtless not going to be there. For four nights a week I would be out, and one night I insisted I have at home.

The weekends, Saturday morning in most circumstances had to be family time, taking kids to ballet and gym and so on. Saturday afternoon, I could do commitments then. On Saturday evening often I would do a commitment, but if it was Saturday evening, I would be free Sunday afternoon. Sunday morning had to be church, but I was prepared for it to be a church in another electorate. Sunday afternoon, if I did anything, the kids had to be able to come too because I wanted them to enjoy it too. The kids would later on say to me, 'Dad, you don't know how fed up we were of these ethnic festivals that you kept on dragging us to. You thought you were giving us a treat.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did being an MP live up to the expectations you had when you were first elected? Again, I am talking about as a member of parliament rather than as a minister and Premier.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, it did, but remember I'd had an apprenticeship with Reg. I had been able to see it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So with your time over, you would do it again?

LYNN ARNOLD: Oh yes, without a doubt.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The people you served with in the house over that 15-year period: who were the stand-out best performers that you would remember?

LYNN ARNOLD: Bannon was a consummate performer. People like the late Roger Goldsworthy—I was at his funeral.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just recently, yes.

LYNN ARNOLD: A really very crusty, good influence. Michael Wilson would have been one of the great leaders. I just want to tell another story. Graham Gunn, the member for Eyre: one day, he came to me as education minister. He said, 'Lynn, the kindergarten request for Poochera on Eyre Peninsula.' I said, 'Graham, we can't do it. There's just not enough. It doesn't stack up. I'm sorry.'

'Lynn, I know, I know. I know you can't do it, but I've got a proposal for you. There's an RSL hall there, and there's a kitchen at the back which has a big space. You could do a quasi kindergarten there.' 'Really?' 'Yes, it would work very well. Much, much cheaper. You wouldn't have to worry about doing much to the building.' 'Oh, okay. Do you want me to put that?' 'No, don't you do it, they'll murder you.' He said, 'Let me do it.' I said, 'Well, won't they be angry with you?' 'Come on, are they going to vote me out? No, they're not.' And he went and did the deal and they got their kindergarten, I got a problem off my back and Graham delivered it as a good local member.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and that would be a good example of somebody who spent most of their life on the backbench and most of their time in the parliament in opposition who was just able to—

LYNN ARNOLD: Do things for their electorate.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —understand how things worked and got it done.

LYNN ARNOLD: Jenny Cashmore was an exceptional performer. Dale Baker: he and I had a good sparring relationship. My eldest daughter one day was sitting in the gallery and Dale was hammering at me about something—I forget what—probably Marineland. The biggest crisis of my time was not the State Bank—that was Bannon's and I just inherited it—the biggest crisis for me was Marineland. A select committee of the upper house actually voted me down on the Marineland issue and it was a really tough period of some months. That was the toughest thing I ever had in parliament. Anyway, Dale Baker was hammering me hammer and tongs and then I go out with Dale and my daughter sees us. We were virtually arm in arm. She said, 'Dad, the things he said about you!' I said, 'Come on, darling, that's the theatre of it.' Dale and I, after he left parliament, kept up the contact and we actually happened to be on holiday at a mutual friend's house in Spain together, swimming off the Costa Brava.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Again, it's a story you often hear: those friendships that endure. We have left almost no time to talk about your life after parliament, but you were still in your 40s when you resigned as Leader of the Opposition.

LYNN ARNOLD: September the 15th 1994, which was 15 years to the day of my being elected to parliament. I thought I'd be tidy about it. I was then 45.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You've made a significant contribution to public life in a range of areas since. Was that something that you, in a sense, were set upon as you were considering resignation and leaving the parliament? Did you know what you were going to do?

LYNN ARNOLD: Well, first of all, the deal was I should stay as Leader of the Opposition to the following election, lose that and then Mike Rann would take over, which was an entirely reasonable proposition, but after a few months I was dead inside. I was burnt out, I was not serving anybody well. I flew to Canberra and met with Keating in his office in Parliament House and I said, 'I can't do this. What do you think?' He said, 'Lynn, I know what it's like when you're in opposition after being in government. When you're first in opposition before going in government you've got the adrenaline of it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, sure.

LYNN ARNOLD: But when you have been in parliament for as long as you have been in parliament and I have been, what happens is the cricket ball is bowled and you just know where it's going to be.' He said, 'It's all over.' He said, 'If you want to go, you're young enough.' If Hawke had done the right thing by me I would have been Prime Minister'—he got it in—'but he didn't and now I'm stuck with it being this time. But you're 45, you've got time to start again. Go with my blessing.' And so three months later I left.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And did you talk to Mike Rann about that before? I mean, had you alerted the party to the fact that you were—

LYNN ARNOLD: There were just a few people I told. Mike Rann was one of them and the party office, and that's why the timing was—I said I wanted it to be September the 15th. My family heard the night before. My wife knew, of course—I had made arrangements to go to Spain so we could have a time of regrouping for two years—but my family only knew the night before. My parents knew but my kids, I mean.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So in your mind over those few months before that, you had been thinking, 'What am I going to be doing with the rest of my life?' and beginning to put some thought and plans into that.

LYNN ARNOLD: I actually thought I'd go into the business sector because I so enjoyed state development and engaging with businesspeople: 'Oh, this would be interesting.' So, indeed, in Spain I started doing some consultancy work for a company that was investing in Australia and it was quite interesting. I came back and this company gave me a good executive consultant job and it quite interestingly turned out to be not quite what I thought. There's no adrenaline there.

Then one day at church somebody tapped me on the shoulder who I had known from before, an executive with Mitsubishi Motors, Rex Keely, a leading member of the Liberal Party as it turns out, who said, 'Lynn, can I talk to you afterwards?' He said, 'Lynn, what you don't know is while you have been away I have been appointed to the board of World Vision. They are looking for a new CEO and I think you would be ideal.' I wasn't interested because it would have meant a move to Melbourne. My wife said, 'Who knows, maybe this is meant for you.' So I put my hat in the ring and I was chosen.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. So you have had a number of years at World Vision.

LYNN ARNOLD: Eleven.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Eleven, was it? And that was—

LYNN ARNOLD: Seven in Australia as CEO, four as Regional Vice President in Asia Pacific.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Then in your mind it was time to come back to Adelaide?

LYNN ARNOLD: World Vision had actually moved me out of Asia to be head of governance and board development and peer review for the whole partnership. I was wounded by bad governance, so I spent a lot of time thinking about good governance in World Vision boards, so it was a passion of mine. My team was in Los Angeles but I wanted to do it out of Melbourne because my father had not long died, my mother-in-law died a month earlier. World Vision wanted me to go to the US, and at that point because of family reasons I couldn't, so I knew I had to resign.

I then had to look for another job. By coincidence, I come back to Adelaide and Rex Keely rings me up and says, 'Lynn, I hear you are back in Adelaide. Have you seen the ad in the paper for Anglicare South Australia?' No, I hadn't. I applied and of course got the job.

CLEM MACINTYRE: A number of years at Anglicare and then—

LYNN ARNOLD: Four years.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —more recently?

LYNN ARNOLD: Then there was a sort of an epiphany moment: what was I going to do? I was reaching the age when I was going to be singing the song, 'Will you still need me, will you still feed me?' hoping my wife would say yes. Was it going to be more of the same? I had been 15 years in the community services sector, 15 years in parliament, was it just going to be more of the same? I took time out and then decided I needed to be a student again, so I became a full-time student for 18 months studying theology, not knowing if it was going to lead to ordination but it did, and now I am there.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. Thank you for that. Just a couple of questions to finish with. What advice would you give aspiring MPs of today?

LYNN ARNOLD: Advice I used to give to school groups is: if it's in your blood, go for it, but if it's not, don't. I have seen some members of parliament who were never really meant to be in parliament. They somehow ended up there by happenstance and that was a bit sad. That is lesson number one. But if it is in your blood, give it a run, whatever party you want to run for, it doesn't matter.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Even though, and these are generalisations I'm making, but I think the public standing of politicians is a lot lower now than it was 30-40 years ago.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, to some degree deservedly so because the parties have become far too used to appointing apparatchiks which in my day was still not really happening. Union officials were good union officials who would work the hard yards of years, not just having been a union research officer for three years and then they are into parliament.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So the advice might be to do a bit more outside the parliament before looking at a parliamentary career.

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes, and also when you are in parliament my advice to existing members of parliament is: keep your other interests. I still work 60 to 70 hours a week but I had a lot of other interests besides family. I actually studies my second degree while I was in parliament, my Bachelor of Education, which would then lead on to my PhD. Another sadness I have noticed is those who when they have left politics hang around the parties, and it's sad.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. Do you come back to this building very often?

LYNN ARNOLD: Quite often. I often bring people in for lunch and I often go into the library to look things up, but I don't go into the bar to chew the fat—

CLEM MACINTYRE: No, and you are not haunted by the memories and so on.

LYNN ARNOLD: The other thing—that's a very important point. When you have been in a longtime go-away, especially if you have been in leadership, and I had told Bannon he should go away. He obviously didn't. Dunstan did, to Perugia for six months. I went away and what that meant was is that when I came back the ghosts of the past had evaporated. Yes, issues were still there but I was able to be me.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And perhaps a bit more objective—

LYNN ARNOLD: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —on your assessment. Lastly, we have asked you back in today and put you in your old chair—

LYNN ARNOLD: Feels good.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —as Premier on the frontbench. What sorts of thoughts and feelings are evoked by coming back and sitting here and reflecting on your time in parliament?

LYNN ARNOLD: Inevitably, you think back on the things you have done and wonder if you could have done things differently, and, by definition, yes, of course you could have. Would you have done things differently? Maybe, by definition, no, because you did them as you thought best at the time and you don't know the wisdom of hindsight.

But I guess if one could time travel back, my experience out of my 11 years at World Vision taught me a lot more about a different type of engagement with community about community needs. We now give that titles and jargon—co-ownership, co-design and so on—which sounds a bit clinical, but I have seen that work. World Vision had no mandate to force people and communities to work with them; they had to earn the right. Government needs to earn the right to work with communities like the ones that I represented. So I wish I had known that. I might have pushed that a lot more.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Lynn Arnold, thank you very much for your thoughts and reflections today. I hope it has been enjoyable.

LYNN ARNOLD: Thank you. I've had a ball.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It has been great for us, so thank you.

LYNN ARNOLD: Sorry I have been so prolix.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Not at all. Thank you so much for your time and your contributions.

LYNN ARNOLD: Thank you.

The interview concluded at 4.10pm.