

CPM Reviews

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Speaker Index

Identifier	Name / Position	Role
Mr Haggar:	Mr Clive Haggar, Former Secretary	Interviewer
Ms Duke:	Ms Audrey Duke, Former Vice President and Women's Officer	Interviewee
Ms Bannikoff:	Ms Lexy Bannikoff, Former councillor and activist	Interviewee
Ms Baker:	Ms Val Baker, Former councillor and activist	Interviewee

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Mr Haggar: It's Tuesday the 1st of October, 2019 and I'm having a discussion, very informal, with Lexy Bannikoff, Audrey Duke and Val Baker, all of whom were significant activists in the ACT Teachers Federation in its early years and subsequently and Audrey in particular who became a Vice-President and Women's Officer in the Union for many years. I really appreciate the fact that you've agreed to have this chat this morning about the early years of the union and your recollections about it. I'll talk to you later in terms of your own teaching and work experience, but we were exchanging some anecdotes about well known members of the union. Val would like to tell a story in relation to Lyn Harasimiew, another very well remembered activist from the early years.

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Ms Baker: She has two stories actually. One was she went to the annual conference of the Secondary Teachers' Association and it would have been in the early '70s I think, secondary teachers and she was the only woman at it. They broke for lunch and they went – they were at the Workers' Club. The men all rushed into the bar which she was not allowed to go into. So, she had to sit in another room by herself. She could see the men in the bar but none of them came. Eventually one, John Anderson, came and sat with her.

When they came out Ian Alder said 'Oh sorry Lyn.' I think that indicates what the Union used to be like and where we ended up.

Mr Haggar: Of course, the Secondary Teachers' Association was an association of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation at the time.

Ms Baker: Yes.

Mr Haggar: This is the remarkable thing about the dominance of males in the earlier years, but in fact by the early '80s you're getting your first female Secretary in Cathy Robertson. Cathy goes on to be President with Joan Corbett as Secretary. So, in fact over a very quick period you've moved from a situation of very clear dominance, male dominance of the organisation to female representation and support for women's policies at the very highest levels.

Any memories in relation to that struggle or how it was achieved?

Ms Baker: Lyn's second memory was that she went on Council or something for the same organisation and she was a single mother with two children under 15 months or something. She found it hard to get to meetings. Ian Alder said to her 'Lyn, I think you should resign. You aren't coming to enough meetings.' She said there was no suggestion that anyone would do anything about childcare to help at that stage so that she could go to meetings.

Mr Haggar: And of course, one of the things that was done early on was the creation of childcare at Council.

Ms Baker: Yes.

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- Mr Haggar:** **There I can remember significant arguments about the quality of the childcare and the need to have it properly professionalised and supported with insurance and so on.**
- Ms Baker: So, when did that happen?
- Mr Haggar:** **I'd have to check the actual records there, but I can remember the debate. Part of the discussion I've had with Cathy because she was in a similar situation, having young children and finding it extremely difficult to find appropriate childcare and support to enable her to undertake the kinds of roles that she did have.**
- Ms Baker: Yes.
- Mr Haggar:** **But a common experience for female members at the time.**
- In terms of the meetings as well, were they deliberately unsociable hours? The Federation's executive was meeting for very long hours I think on Tuesday nights, on a weekly basis?**
- Ms Baker: That's right. They were still doing that when I was teaching because I can remember the men from the Executive talking about it, late meetings.
- Mr Haggar:** **One of the things that was introduced subsequently was fortnightly meetings and they had to be finished by 9:00 o'clock, no extensions allowed.**
- Ms Bannikoff: It sounds very sensible.
- Mr Haggar:** **So, Lexy, how did you first get involved with the Union?**
- Ms Bannikoff: I came from a background that just assumed I'd be a participant in a union. I think when I first came to the ACT it would have been the Secondary Teachers' Association. But I'd have to think very hard to have very many recollections of that. My recollections would go to the very late 70s, early 80s period when Council had the atmosphere of – well there was a very active, informal women's group who were pushing for issues such as affirmative action, the creation of women's officers' positions. That would be my main recollection I think, and having to go back to, as a representative on Council,

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going back to Copeland College and having to explain at morning tea to a lot of people. As a Councillor, yeah, and having to explain various things that the Union had agreed to, at Council. People getting up and abusing me. I actually was very young, and I thought it was quite fun. I remember saying 'All right, you go to Council meetings instead then,' and they all sat down and shut up.

Mr Haggar: **So, can you put your mind back to the issues of the day that caused that sort of...**

Ms Bannikoff: Well the abortion one was huge, absolutely huge.

Ms Duke: That must have been before I was there.

Ms Bannikoff: I don't know. People like John Bevan was part of Copeland and Val and I were at Copeland along with...

Ms Duke: Rory Brocklebank got involved later, I think.

Ms Bannikoff: I remember John and I remember John Anderson also getting very exercised about it. It wasn't about the issue of whether abortion was a thing that you should have or not have, it was about whether the Union should get involved in those sorts of issues. I can remember a Council meeting where there was a critical vote. I remember – my memories are vague. I remember Joan was sitting at the front of the meeting. So, she must have been Secretary at the time. And it was basically the arguments were about who the members were, and I can remember getting up and talking about the numbers of men and women in the union and in the profession...

Mr Haggar: **Which were largely female?**

Ms Bannikoff: Yes, and therefore what sort of issues should you be taking on in order to support women's working life and teaching life and support their continuity and so on. I can remember that of this very activist group of women from the social weekends, you might tell me I'm wrong, but my memory of them is that they were predominantly secondary teachers in the early years, and that we were worried whether we were too far out in front of the primary school teachers. That Council meeting showed that we weren't.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Right, that's interesting.**
- Ms Bannikoff: That's the recollection and Audrey might say I was wrong about – there were primary teachers in that group but my memory of it is that it was mainly secondary school teachers.
- Ms Duke:** **I'd agree with that.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Yes, and as I say, we thought 'Well, we're out there and we're fighting it but the troops are behind us, and they were.
- Mr Haggar:** **Can I just ask in terms of the radicalisation process, I mean to be a secondary teacher in those days, the most common route would have been a university degree followed by a graduate diploma of education, whereas the primaries were more likely to have gone into a specialised primary qualification.**
- Ms Bannikoff: At a teachers college.
- Mr Haggar:** **Teachers college, three year training and whilst there were four year trained...**
- Ms Baker: Was it three years or two years?
- Ms Duke: No, it was two years.
- Ms Bannikoff: It was two years. A lot of them only had two years.
- Mr Haggar:** **Yes and in fact I think both Peter O'Connor and Keith Lawler talk about only being two year trained initially.**
- Ms Baker: John Bevan came up that way too I think.
- Mr Haggar:** **Right, yes. So that's...**
- Ms Bannikoff: In Queensland where I did my training, most of my friends from school who went into teaching had two years. Even though they went into secondary schools they had one year of university, one year teachers' college and then sent to Cunnamulla.

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Mr Haggar: **Keith Lawler's country service was what allowed him to transition from primary into secondary in I think his second year. No, the thesis that I was tending there was whether or not secondary teachers appeared to be more radical because they'd been exposed to more mainstream university experiences in the '60s and early 70s, but...**

Ms Bannikoff: I think once again this is a broad generalisation, but the core of that group would have also probably marched at university in the anti-Vietnam demonstrations.

Mr Haggar: **Demonstrations, particularly '69 and '70, the moratorium...**

Ms Bannikoff: Yes, and the anti-apartheid campaigns as well, but it would have been just the core, not all of them by any means.

Mr Haggar: **Right. Val?**

Ms Baker: By the time the ACTTF was formed the union win, we already had equal pay, didn't we?

Mr Haggar: **Only just.**

Ms Baker: Only just.

Mr Haggar: **Only just. In the Commonwealth in 1970 you were still getting a differential between male and female employees. A base grade male clerk in the Federal Public Service was getting \$1,760 and a base grade female clerk \$1680. In teaching, in NSW it had happened earlier.**

Ms Bannikoff: And in fact, if you were a married women you had to resign your permanent position.

Mr Haggar: **They had removed the marriage bar.**

Ms Bannikoff: Yeah, but only just. (It was removed in Commonwealth employment in 1966).

Mr Haggar: **Yes again, only just. It was a '60s activity.**

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Ms Baker: Because I started teaching in Canberra in '56, I think, yes, at Telopea Park High School and there were, for some reason demographically a lot more girl students than boys, but at that stage there were a lot more male teachers than women teachers. So, we all had to for the three quarters' pay, the women had to do as much teaching, but they had to do nearly twice as much playground duty and sport. The men had to sit in – there was a men's staff room and a women's staff room, and there were great men there that they thought they were great lefties, like Russel Ward was teaching there then.

Mr Haggar: This is the Historian?

Ms Bannikoff: Yes.

Ms Baker: Yes, who was – he and Eric Fry were both teaching in Canberra, at Telopea because they'd finished PhDs at ANU, but they were both members of the Communist Party. So, they were taking a long time to get an academic job. But my infuriating memory was as much teaching, nearly twice as much playground duty and these male members sitting round in the staff room discussing how terrible it would be if there was equal pay. The reason was that it would reduce their pay if the women had to be paid more...

Ms Bannikoff: That it would slow down everybody's increases, yes.

Ms Baker: Yes, slow down their increases.

Mr Haggar: There's an interesting historical anecdote that I came across from the New South Wales Teachers' Federation about the impact of the Depression in the 1930s, and the New South Wales Government dismissed 900 married women teachers from the service because it meant that that was 900 males that could be employed or continued in employment.

Ms Baker: Yes.

Mr Haggar: The Union effectively in the debate took the side that that was okay.

Ms Bannikoff: Correct, yes.

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Ms Baker: Well there's all the agitation. I was just wondering was the Union involved in equal pay, but they would have got it by the time the ACTTF was formed. Yes, but I wonder what New South Wales was doing because certainly the men weren't getting on it.

Mr Haggar: **So, working at Telopea Park High School in 1956, that certainly tops everybody else I suppose...**

Ms Bannikoff: Yes.

Mr Haggar: **...in terms of the connection with the system. Val, in terms of your subsequent career within the system, you started in '56. When did you finish?**

Ms Baker: In '95 and I came in and worked in the Union part time because I was feeling a bit – Audrey said, 'My mate Val's sort of a bit depressed by not having any job.' I think I organised the library but you also gave me one or two tasks. Liz Dawson had written a PhD and her thesis was that the women weren't getting anywhere in teaching, and you asked me to look at that. My decision was there had been a very significant improvement from the time we got affirmative action to then.

I gave a paper to some conference or something on it, and I recently threw it all out.

Mr Haggar: **Well this paper if my memory serves me correctly was an analysis of the impact of eligibility on the promotion of women in the system. When you say affirmative action of course, there was a great deal of fuss when the Department under pressure from the union, announced that there would be a six-month period in which any short -term higher duties would be given in the first instance to female applicants...**

Mr Haggar: **...because women were not applying for promotion, women were not applying for HDA positions and it was hoped that giving them a taster of that sort of responsibility would mean that in the future you'd get a significant improvement in the numbers of women applying and winning promotion positions.**

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Ms Duke: And also, the Union got that there had to be a union member or representative of the Union on all HDA panels.

Mr Haggar: That had been agreed very early on by the Commissioner of the Commonwealth Teaching Service. There were a lot of gains made by consent in the very, very early period, that since since self-government have been eroded, but yes, you're right, and we of course began the history of the organisation with a preference for union members as well in terms of employment.

Ms Duke: Yes.

Ms Baker: When I was at Copeland it was 100 percent Union membership. What's it like now?

Mr Haggar: I couldn't tell you what it was at the moment, but the percentage of membership across the board is well in the '90s.

Ms Baker: Still?

Mr Haggar: Yes.

Ms Bannikoff: That's very high, isn't it for the...

Mr Haggar: It is very high.

Ms Bannikoff: ...if we're looking at the rest of the union movement.

Mr Haggar: There's never been more members of the ACT branch of the AEU now than we've had in the past. I think 3,800 people belong, so they've done very well in terms of maintenance and recruitment.

Ms Baker: There was a period when it was going to be illegal to go on strike, wasn't it? It was during Cathy's period.

Mr Haggar: Well, when Cathy was Secretary of course was during the suspension of the workforce for taking under the CEEP Act for taking industrial action.

Ms Baker: Right, that's right.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Cast your minds back to that point in 1982 when some 2,000 teachers were suspended from duty by the Fraser Government for taking industrial action in favour of increased salaries.**
- Ms Baker: Yeah.
- Mr Haggar:** **That was resolved through a Commission intervention and an arbitration on salary outcomes.**
- Ms Baker: I remember going on strike and everyone in Copeland went on strike except for one member
- Ms Bannikoff: God, I remember that. We were talking about that individual and why was he so isolated and I'd forgotten that. I'd forgotten that. Oh dear.
- Ms Baker: He had been on Council and things before, but he wouldn't go on strike, yes.
- Mr Haggar:** **The Ceeping (suspension) of the workforce is from my perspective one of the very significant historical moments for the organisation when the employer I think wanted to basically make a political point to its entire federal workforce and the Australian public and we were the targets.**
- Ms Baker: Yes.
- Mr Haggar:** **But of course, the Commission doesn't have the powers that it had then to actually intervene in a dispute. When we had Commission involvement in 2006 for an arbitration, that had to be agreed between the parties that we'd go to arbitration and the government only agreed after 12 months of strike action and campaigning and that was under the Work Choices Act as well. So, we were fortunate to be able to get an arbitrated outcome in that instance.**
- Audrey, can you remember your first involvement with the union?**
- Ms Duke: Yes, I can because it was a very selfish and very personal involvement because I wanted to be part time. I wanted to make my full-time job into part time work and still have the same conditions.

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Mr Haggar: Prorata?

Ms Duke: Yes. I was at Campbell High School. I'd been appointed to Belconnen High School in, I think it would have been '75, maybe '76, I'm not quite clear on that. Then for some reason or other and I think it was because I got very sick, I wasn't able to go to Belconnen. When I came back from being sick, I found I had been moved to Campbell. So, I went to Campbell and I found that I wasn't really well enough to be able to maintain this full-time job and my domestic duties as well.

Mr Haggar: You had two small children?

Ms Duke: Three.

Mr Haggar: Three small children.

Ms Duke: Yes. So, I looked around for somebody who could share the job. So, I got into looking for permanent part-time work and job sharing. I found this woman living a few doors away from me called Margaret Janson's. Do you remember her?

Mr Haggar: I remember the name.

Ms Duke: Well she later became quite active in TAFE, but she agreed to take on half my load but in order to do that I had to give up my permanent position and become temporary and lose my permanency.

Mr Haggar: So, no capacity for permanent part-time work?

Ms Duke: Yes, and that's why I got involved. I remember the branch meetings or sub-branch meetings I suppose we'd call them at Campbell with Bill White who was a science teacher there at the time.

Mr Haggar: He became a vice president of the Union?

Ms Duke: Yes, he did and he also became Principal at...

Mr Haggar: Woden Valley High School?

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- Ms Duke: ...Woden Valley. I think my position, I wish I could remember all the details of this, but our position became one of those that had to be lost because of the numbers of the school or whatever. So our position was identified as being for compulsory transfer and we were still sort of juggling – Margaret and I were very successfully juggling this job share which I thought was really going rather well, but whether that was the reason that our position was identified, I'm not sure because it was a bit irregular.
- Anyway, Bill White got the Principal's job at Woden and I was identified for compulsory transfer. He was the only one, only Principal in the system I think at the time, who would have a bar of us.
- Mr Haggar: As a team?**
- Ms Duke: Yeah. So, I moved over to Woden Valley and I had a number – and Margaret didn't. I think that's when she went into TAFE, but I found about three or four people, secondary teachers who would be willing to job share with me. So that made it – and Bill White was the Principal who accepted that as a viable position.
- Mr Haggar: Having seen it in action previously?**
- Ms Duke: Yes. So that's where I started to go to Council meetings, became a representative from the school on Council and then I decided that you have to be in it to win it, so I maybe should get some sort of position. That's where I became, I think it was Vice President, VP.
- Mr Haggar: Vice President.**
- Ms Duke: Yes, Vice President.
- Mr Haggar: And that meant you were on the Schools Authority...**
- Ms Duke: With Dick – no.
- Mr Haggar: Dick Lee?**
- Ms Duke: Dick Lee, yeah, and Ian Alder and Julie Biles and people like that. That's right, I became a Union representative on the School's Authority.

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Mr Haggar: **That's right, yes.**

Ms Duke: Yes, there were three of us, I think.

Mr Haggar: **That's right, yes.**

Ms Duke: Yes. So, I thought that would be a very good way to get involved.

Mr Haggar: **So, you're then looking at having involvement in systemic issues besides being on the executive.**

Ms Duke: Yes and going to – the school liked it because they got an allowance for me going to school's authority meetings.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. It was a sign of the system's support for union involvement.**

Ms Duke: That's right.

Mr Haggar: **Now you subsequently became Women's Officer in the ACTTF?**

Ms Duke: I did. Before that I replaced Rosemary as EEO Officer. I think that was a bit of, dare I say it, a bit of nepotism on Rosemary Richard's part. She was working in the Department.

Mr Haggar: **She had an EEO's position in the Department.**

Ms Duke: She had an EEO position in the Department.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, and in fact that position was funded 50/50 by the Department and by the Union.**

Ms Duke: That's right. She, I don't know, took leave or she didn't have more children, did she? For some reason or other they were looking for a temporary replacement for her in there and I took that. I was working with Barry Price, when it was still in Macarthur House. Yes.

Mr Haggar: **When did you eventually retire from the Union?**

Ms Duke: When I retired from teaching. 2003 I think it was.

Mr Haggar: **2003.**

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- Ms Baker: It used to be – went back to teaching from the Union, from being a Union Officer.
- Ms Duke: I went back to teaching, yeah. I went back to Canberra High for one year, I think it was. Or maybe it was two.
- Ms Baker: No, it was more than that, I think.
- Ms Duke: Yeah.
- Ms Baker: But when I met you, you were at Lyneham High.
- Ms Duke: I was at Lyneham High, yes, I was. Well I went into the office as a replacement for Rosemary, from Lyneham High.
- Ms Baker: From Lyneham High?
- Ms Duke: I thought you'd been in there.
- Ms Bannikoff: So, we'd all been at Lyneham High at one stage.
- Ms Baker: Hadn't we, yes. I did that transfer where they were transferring people from colleges to...
- Mr Haggard: The mobility arrangements?**
- Ms Baker: Yeah.
- Mr Haggard: What did you think of that?**
- Ms Baker: I loved it, yes. I really was happy to stay.
- Ms Bannikoff: Caused a lot of angst for some people though, didn't it?
- Ms Baker: But the people at Lyneham didn't like the librarian I replaced and said 'No way.' It was very good because she wasn't very popular and so I spent a year being liked by the kids. So that was very...
- Mr Haggard: Of course when the system was in its early days there were only a handful of secondary schools back in the...**
- Ms Bannikoff: Canberra High, Lyneham.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Yep. Deakin opened in '66. Campbell opened in '65. Watson was '65.**
- Ms Baker: Lyneham didn't open 'til, because I remember my stepson went to Canberra High for the first year and then to Lyneham, yes.
- Mr Haggar:** **Okay. Now I am intrigued because there's been mention in the discussion that we've had previously about the informal nature of the women in the Union networking, but nevertheless it was going on.**
- Ms Baker: Certainly was.
- Ms Bannikoff: Yeah, very active.
- Ms Baker: I just thought of one interesting little thing about the formation of high schools. The couple of years I was at Telopea Park right back there, Telopea Park was the bottom of the, you know, the bright kids went to Canberra High. The rest came to Telopea and it was a pretty wild school.
- Ms Bannikoff: To Telopea?
- Ms Baker: To Telopea.
- Ms Bannikoff: No, no, no, because when I went from Canberra High to Lyneham everybody – they practically held a wake for me.
- Ms Baker: Gil Hughson, Dick Caldwell and I were all on the new education fellowship that was active and the main thing we were doing was agitating for non-selective ...
- Mr Haggar:** **So, you're saying...**
- Ms Bannikoff: So, evening it out?
- Mr Haggar:** **...for years Canberra High School was a selective high school?**
- Ms Baker: Yes, yes.
- Mr Haggar:** **And the kids who were deemed of lesser capacity, went to Telopea?**
- Ms Baker: Telopea, yes.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Right. So, with the opening of Lyneham was that...**
- Ms Baker: No. All the new high schools were non-selective.
- Mr Haggar:** **Right.**
- Ms Baker: Comprehensive is the word.
- Mr Haggar:** **Comprehensive.**
- Ms Baker: Comprehensive. I don't know how influential, but we were doing a lot of agitation with Canberra – the Department that dealt with Canberra at that stage.
- Mr Haggar:** **The Department of Interior.**
- Ms Baker: Interior, yes, and then we got – I'm trying to think. I'm remembering about 60 years ago that we got the – I think Lyneham and then Watson.
- Mr Haggar:** **Yeah, well Watson and Campbell opened at the same time in '65 and they weren't selective.**
- Ms Baker: So, Lyneham was probably the first. How about Narrabundah? I think it was pretty early.
- Mr Haggar:** **It would have been.**
- Ms Duke: Lyneham had the Leap Program, didn't it?
- Ms Bannikoff: Well that's a long time later.
- Ms Duke: Is that later, is it?
- Ms Bannikoff: Much later, yeah.
- Ms Baker: Yes. That was when Natalie was there, but she was the year before they started and they called it Lyneham Enrolment Acquisition Plan.
- Ms Bannikoff: But they don't want acquisitions now.
- Ms Baker: No.

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- Ms Bannikoff: You have to fight to get in.
- Ms Baker: Yes.
- Mr Haggar: So, for all three of you the Union was an opportunity to find people with fellow feeling and to work together to change policies that you felt needed change, to introduce new policies and there was a discussion earlier on about...**
- Ms Baker: And to promote women.
- Mr Haggar: ...pro choice but structurally to promote women within the system.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Yes. It was an avenue that was in front of us, for promoting the position of women and to give women much more, a, much better hold on the world of work which then turns around to giving them more independence.
- Mr Haggar: So how important was it and Val, you described it beautifully in terms of the male dominance, particularly the Secondary Teacher's Association, how significant was it for you to get four female senior officers up in relative quick succession?**
- Ms Duke: We campaigned hard.
- Ms Bannikoff: We fought very hard.
- Mr Haggar: Well let's talk a bit about that. Joan Corbett, well Cathy initially is Secretary and then President. So four years as a Senior Officer. Joan was I think close to four years as Secretary of the organisation and then Rosemary, of course, Rosemary Richards, a shortish period as Secretary but then President, the senior position at that time for nine years.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Well that part of it was past my time but it was incredibly important.
- Ms Baker: It provided me with a lot of social contacts and support.
- Ms Bannikoff: It was great fun. It was enormous fun but partly it was good fun because it felt like the right thing to do when you were fighting the good fight!

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- Mr Haggar:** **And you saw your perspectives getting success within the structures of the...**
- Ms Baker: And we saw it too.
- Ms Bannikoff: I can remember when Cathy won. Who did she run against?
- Mr Haggar:** **As the President she ran against Neil Dilley who previously had been in the Primary Teachers' Association President.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Right, well we...
- Ms Duke: I stood for that election too.
- Ms Bannikoff: Did you? Well remember the dinner – do you remember a dinner at that Hungarian restaurant...
- Ms Baker: That was after, yes.
- Ms Bannikoff: What was that after?
- Ms Baker: That was after the big mass meeting of members at the AIS about...
- Mr Haggar:** **This is about the affirmative action debate.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Affirmative action.
- Ms Duke: Yes.
- Ms Baker: Anyhow, we went to this Hungarian restaurant in O'Connor and Barb Sevosi ran it. I don't know if you knew her? She got just chatting with people instead of cooking. So, we drank and drank and drank.
- Ms Bannikoff: Because the food wasn't coming out.
- Ms Baker: Because the food wasn't coming out, got drunk and every 10 minutes someone would say "
- Ms Bannikoff: 'You haven't got the numbers.'
- Ms Bannikoff: Yes, so you see it was a social event and a big fight as well.

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Mr Haggar: Yeah, but I mean in terms of what actually happened at that meeting it was the one and only full-blown members mass meeting that's ever been held as a result of a members' petition and you had to have a petition with so many signatories to actually have the meeting to reverse policy...

Ms Bannikoff: I remember that.

Mr Haggar: And then there was no number in the rules on the quorum to make it a valid meeting.

Ms Baker: There was?

Mr Haggar: There was no number for the quorum and there was a ruling from Peter O'Connor as President, whether it was through executive or not I can't remember, but Peter determined that a certain figure, and it was in the many hundreds, had to be there to make it a valid meeting. When it became clear that that was an issue, the pro affirmative actions supporters, if my memory serves me right, vacated the meeting to make it absolutely certain that there wasn't going to be a quorum and therefore a rescission of the policy supporting affirmative action would not be possible...

Ms Bannikoff: That's right. That was that big – I'd forgotten completely. John Bevan and was it John Anderson as well or have I got that...

Mr Haggar: Yes.

Ms Bannikoff: ...mixed up with those that wanted to rescind the policy by having a...

Mr Haggar: Mass meeting.

Ms Bannikoff: ...mass meeting and the reason we were so happy was the fact that it didn't work which relates back to what I was saying before which is have all of the women come along and identified these sorts of issues as in their interests and worth fighting for? Because John and cohorts assumed that a mass meeting would assert what they saw as traditional union values. The implication was things had changed.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Yes, very signal moment.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Yep. I'd forgotten about that. That's one of the reasons that it wasn't just single votes. There was one of these constant – I'd never heard of the – or none of us knew that you could do that, bring on a mass meeting like that. What did they have to do?
- Mr Haggar:** **Well it was hidden away in the rules and from my memory it required a petition with so many signatures. That was achieved but the issue of the quorum...**
- Ms Bannikoff: Did we walk out, did we?
- Mr Haggar:** **Yep.**
- Ms Bannikoff: Even smarter. I'd forgotten that.
- Mr Haggar:** **So, it was an interesting use of tactics at the time if my memory serves me right. So, from your perspectives having four in rapid succession, female senior officers were very important in terms of consolidation of the influence of women members in the organisation presenting role models for other people to go onto pursue issues?**
- Ms Bannikoff: No, I don't think it's as obvious as that. You might contradict me and go ahead. There was a view among the core group of activists, but it really didn't matter that the point was to get women into the position. Now this did not apply to Joan and Cathy and make sure if you're talking to Cathy that she knows this, that you needed to support women candidates, you needed to have women there, that it was – I don't want to overstate it, but it's almost secondary whether they were going to be women who would further promote the interests of women in the Union. It was simply important to get women up and not many of us would have seen Cathy and Joan as role models necessarily. There was also the view that Cathy was very sort of radical and left as well, I thought. She'd have a go at things, yes.
- Ms Bannikoff: Well, yes. Even people who used to get absolutely bloody furious with her would have voted for her because she was seen as extremely effective and a fighter.

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Ms Baker: A fighter, that's the word. She was a fighter.

Ms Bannikoff: Yeah.

Mr Haggar: I think that's clear from her history

Ms Baker: Yes.

Mr Haggar: In her memoire she's talking about her university experience and early teaching experience and how it did radicalise her. It's a great read and it will be up in edited form on the website.

Ms Bannikoff: I'll have a look, yeah. But I mean I think that's certainly how Cathy was viewed as effective and she wasn't going to wimp out on anything.

Mr Haggar: No, but she had a successful – in terms of her two years as Secretary. People supported her in an election then to become President.

Ms Baker: Yes.

Mr Haggar: But she's the only senior officer ever to lose an election in the history of the Union.

Ms Baker: Who did she lose to?

Mr Haggar: And she lost to Peter O'Connor.

Ms Baker: Right.

Ms Bannikoff: Yeah, okay. I was still friendly with Peter at the time but voted for Cathy and went to the consolation party with Cathy afterwards...

Ms Baker: That's right.

Ms Bannikoff: ...and not to Peter's celebration.

Ms Baker: Yeah.

Ms Bannikoff: Yes, they were very...

Mr Haggar: So, to what extent do you think sexism played a role in that election?

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Ms Baker: Yeah, I don't know.

Mr Haggar: Peter says he thinks it played a part and...

Ms Bannikoff: Does he?

Mr Haggar: Yes, and I told Cathy, I was at a school branch meeting – they were branches in those days – and went to the men's toilets and there was a drawing up on the mirror and it was a little pamphlet to say 'Let's get our union back' and some wag had written on the portrait of Peter, had done some curls because he had a perm at the time...

Ms Baker: Yes. I remember that perm.

Mr Haggar: ...and left a little message, 'Does this mean we've got to get perms as well?' And Cathy's put that in her memoires.

Ms Bannikoff: I can remember. He got laughed at like anything for the perm.

Ms Bannikoff: I mean if you look at it, if all the women in the union had voted for Cathy, then Peter would have lost, and they obviously didn't.

Mr Haggar: Well Cheryl O'Connor ran of course, and Cheryl almost beat Cathy in terms of numbers as well.

Ms Bannikoff: Well that's the primary school women.

Mr Haggar: Yes.

Ms Duke: Yeah.

Mr Haggar: But it's interesting in terms of, that you had Peter for I think about four years, it might have even been a tad less. Then Rosemary comes in and she's there for nine years unopposed.

Ms Baker: Well everyone loved Rosemary.

Mr Haggar: So, what about Joan? I mean Joan was very active pushing part time work as well wasn't she?

Ms Duke: Yes.

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Mr Haggar: **She was the one who actually was – who got it as a part of the actual employment conditions...**

Ms Duke: That's correct, yeah.

Mr Haggar: **Can I say I've really appreciated the opportunity to get your perspectives and we might bring the formal part of the discussion to a close.**

[End of Transcript]