

CPM Reviews

Transcript: Research Interview

SENSITIVE: Personal

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Speaker Index		
Identifier	Name / Position	Role
Mr Haggar:	Mr Clive Haggar, Researcher	Interviewer
Mr Lee:	Mr Mal Lee, Former Director of Schools	Interviewee

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Mr Haggar: Right, it's the 11th November 2019, the anniversary of the sacking of the Whitlam government, and I'm interviewing Mal Lee. Mal was involved early on in the establishment of an independent teacher's union in the ACT and finished his career in the system as a director of schools before becoming an educational consultant, a much publicised and consulted consultant too. So Mal, thank you for willing to contribute to the AEU's History Project.

Mr Lee: It's a pleasure.

Mr Haggar: I thought we might begin if you wouldn't mind by outlining your early years as a teacher.

Mr Lee: I began my teaching in 1965 at Lyneham High School in the ACT, which was part of my New South Wales country service. Which puts the ACT in context from that period of time. And yeah, spent – worked there through to 1970,

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but in the latter '60s started to sit in on and listen to the various discussions that were taking place in relation to the creation of an ACT – separate ACT education system. Such that in 1971 I secured a job at Scots College in Sydney to basically complete a master's degree before coming back and joining – with a plan to join the Commonwealth Teaching Service, and that's exactly what I did. So, I returned to the ACT in 1973 and was appointed to Melrose High School as a teacher.

Mr Haggar: **And at that stage with the establishment of the Commonwealth Teaching Service of course there was the parallel development of the ACT Commonwealth Teachers Federation. But you actually held at one stage a position in the New South Wales Teachers Federation in the ACT system, didn't you? It was connected to the Secondary Teachers Association? Association.**

Mr Lee: Oh no. You name that better than I, but I was, in '73, on the executive of the new ACT body, ACT Union.

Mr Haggar: **Right, but still – still in the context of a Secondary Teachers Association, or secondary teachers' component?**

Mr Lee: My heavy involvement in the union at that stage was on what was affectionately known as the ~~ship~~-Ship committee, that was chaired by Dick Lee, which was geared towards preparing things for the new system.

Mr Haggar: **The ship committee?**

Mr Lee: The ship committee.

Mr Haggar: **Can you remember what the acronym stood for?**

Mr Lee: Ship – launching.

Mr Haggar: **Oh, launching, right.**

Mr Lee: It was, can I say, a typical dickism, it was penned by Dick Lee, and that was the role of the committee, was to – and Mick March was on it but it was heavily the executive plus a few other folk were drawn into the exercise.

Mr Haggar: Right. Now with the establishment of the organisation there's – I mean, there's some very, in retrospect, obvious reasons given the federal industrial system that we were about to enter into, and the need for a federally registered union. But can you put your mind back to those developmental days and give us an insight into the relationship with New South Wales at the time, both the education system and the New South Wales Teachers Federation. There had been a lot of disquiet in the community and in the profession with the New South Wales department, and that in part, if not in whole, drove the early discussions about an independent system.

Mr Lee: Yeah, I think it's probably worthwhile – considering the – that question in light of the wider ACT community shift towards a separate education ~~system, insofar system, insofar~~ as one thinks back 50 odd years, in many ways the time of uncertainty I expressed just a while ago was reflective of the fact that the whole thrust of the period was towards the creation of the new system. And whether – and in some ways, being appointed as I was, a CTS officer in the latter part of 1972, being part of the CTS was emblematic of the fact that you were part of the – were the new guard and part of the preparation group for the new system. So the fact that you were – it all had to do with a very different mindset, I think, of those who were desirous of creating a new system and those who were in New South Wales that were about to take their goods and return to the other system.

Mr Haggar: Right.

Mr Lee: I'll come – I'll elaborate a bit later on. But as a classroom teacher teaching in a school administered by New South Wales in the later '60s you clearly got the notion that New South Wales was packing its bags and moving out. That by '68 – '69 you're starting to experience a lot of short term teaching positions being brought into the schools, senior staff moving, taking advantage of their – the New South Wales kind of system of seniority to move elsewhere knowing that the ACT is coming into existence.

And New South Wales you sense – and I'm saying this not as an administrator but as a recipient – that gone were the quality appointments of before, and the increasing reliance on short term local kind of contracted

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positions into the system, which exacerbated, you know, the vicious cycle and the desire to see the end of New South Wales, if you get what I mean.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. So there – first – reasons like, well, superannuation figured for some of the New South Wales principals that – that remained in the New South Wales system. But did this mean a loss of significant leadership? Or did it mean the creation of opportunities for a younger generation?**

Mr Lee: Oh yes, it ultimately was a whole host of opportunities. But I think probably it's worthwhile kind of adding to the point you mentioned before, you had a contrasting mindset between the New South Wales Teachers Federation and their way of doing things, and the embryonic ACT system.

Mr Haggar: **In what sense?**

Mr Lee: The New South Wales system in terms of operations was a direct and controlled operation. As a member of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, with our work policy coming from Sydney, your job as a member was to do as told, you really had little say in the thing. Edicts were handed down and there was a sense that advancement was made almost by conflict with the – between the union and the employer.

Mr Haggar: **Are you suggesting that they basically moulded each other in terms...?**

Mr Lee: They moulded each other; they went hand in hand together.

Mr Haggar: **Right.**

Mr Lee: And this was probably well expressed in the thinking about high schools and the possible creation of a secondary college system.

Mr Haggar: **Just before we move on to that aspect of the...**

Mr Lee: I won't go into that but go on.

Mr Haggar: **I just wanted to take you back for a moment. One of the significant elements of your time as a teacher would have been the 1968 New South Wales school strike which was the first time in the history of**

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public education in Australia that a teachers' union had taken significant industrial action of that kind.

Mr Lee: It wasn't hugely – I wouldn't suggest it was hugely supported in the ACT. It wasn't a huge issue in the ACT context, because there was a sense that we wouldn't be with you much longer.

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Mr Haggar: Even as early as 1968?

Mr Lee: Even as early as 1968. Really, from about '67 onwards you start picking up the discussions that were taking place, at least I did.

Mr Haggar: Right, right.

Mr Lee: And I was fortunate enough to have as principal, a chap called Gill Hughson who was one of the, I suppose, progressive educational thinkers in that New South Wales scene. He was at odds to the conventional autocratic principals from New South Wales at that time in the ACT. So, he was involved in the Currie Committee, those kind of discussions, and I got drawn into that as well.

So I would say particularly by '69 – '70 the – you're starting to get an ACT – a group of teachers, administrators, but particularly teachers, younger teachers, who are embracing a more student focused collaborative working with the decision makers, empowering teachers, trusting teachers, concern for the educational agenda that was at odds with their New South Wales department.

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Mr Haggar: Okay. And obviously in terms of that trust the capacity for teachers in the new system to write curriculum, as opposed to having to follow the New South Wales syllabus, must have been a substantial incentive for teachers.

Mr Lee: Well, that's right, but that was – that didn't – if I kind of hark back a bit. When I came – when I went to Melrose High in '73 there was a mixture of – there were CTS staff and New South Wales staff, and New South Wales staff who made it clear that they were going to return to New South Wales. There were some older New South Wales staff who were getting near retirement who

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couldn't bother but they were still very much of the New South Wales ilk, and that's how to run schools.

But there was an example at Melrose, there were things happening in pockets educationally that were emblematic of what would transpire down the way. For example, Doug Morgan and Peter Kefford, who both featured in the new system, had introduced team teaching into social science and taking advantage of open spaces within the school and stuff like – a different, very different approach to the teaching of social sciences than elsewhere.

There were – in addition to the union, there was a whole swathe of subject associations.

Mr Haggar: **Professional associations, yes.**

Mr Lee: Professional associations who were starting to gear up to the courses that you mentioned. They were kind of positioning themselves to have a say, be they in languages, be they in industrial design, be they in history, be – whatever. For example, on the history association I – I was there with Barry Price, and as a group of historians we were starting to gear up our thinking towards the new system. So, in a way what we then – when I went into the new authority and had acceptance of the notion of school based school-based curriculum development, in a way the origins are before that.

Mr Haggar: **Right, but not in an organised sense.**

Mr Lee: Not in an organised sense, but that was the scene at the time.

Mr Haggar: **So, what they were – what they were trying to do was to try different teaching methods but still with the overall umbrella of the New South Wales syllabus?**

Mr Lee: They were starting, yeah. They were doing their homework. And as I mentioned before the ship committee was of a similar ilk, in a way. It was a recognition of – you know, the changes – the handover's going to occur, and we need to be ready in so many regards for the changeover.

Mr Haggar: **One of the obvious features of the development of the new system was of course the separation of the components of secondary education**

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into high – four year high schools and a two year secondary – senior secondary colleges. Can you talk about your involvement in terms of that development?

Mr Lee: Well, in 1973, in October '73 there were quite literally eight of us, and were, as it were, hand picked because of our involvement in those kinds of activities I mentioned before, to create the new system. As so in '74 my job, and then quickly with the support of Helen Strauch who was brought in to work with me, my job was – is in essence, was to gain acceptance of the underlying principles for secondary education in the ACT, and the notion of the school based curriculum design, school based management, the trusting and empowering of teachers, and the – then a running of programs to ready teachers for the new situation, that was my brief.

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Similarly, Liz McKenzie was given the brief to look after – Liz and Laura Turnbull – were given the brief to look after the primary. So, in essence '73, when you think about it, you had four people as it were, both identifying and implementing the principles that would underpin the new system. And then in '75 Helen and I then moved our focus to working with the early identified principals of the new secondary colleges that were to open in '76. And working with them to create the new structures, the new courses, the approval of those, the new assessment process, and all of those bits and pieces that would combine to provide the packages and culture for the new secondary colleges.

Mr Haggar: **~~And did this e~~One comment with this development, of course, is the use and relatively low level of promotions positions held by the people in these crucial roles. I mean, how old were you when this was going on?**

Mr Lee: You're talking people in their latter twenties.

Mr Haggar: **In their latter twenties? And this of course is mirrored in terms of the development of the union where you have a General Secretary in Peter O'Connor, who I think was 26 when he took on the role.**

Mr Lee: That'd be right, yep.

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Mr Haggar: **Keith Lawler in his early thirties.**

Mr Lee: That's right. It was – it was a young, and I'd use the term advisedly, a young and naïve group who saw no barriers to changing the world. Also, with – what you've got to recognise, these were the Whitlam years, and that's the other part of the context.

Mr Haggar: **And prior to the Whitlam years you'd all had a relatively radicalising experience in your tertiary education.**

Mr Lee: We'd had that, and for a number of us, and in my instance, and then I experienced a school education that I would look back with, you know, great relish. It was, you know, the typical stereotypical hierarchical control over high school in New South Wales, where I was the only person who went off to university after a leaving certificate. So that was – so, I mean, I – you made the point the ~~contr~~acts with the New South Wales and the ACT, I suppose I brought that to play, but many others who came into the system came with that similar antipathy towards the elitist hierarchical academic focused system that we'd experienced.

Mr Haggar: **The point's been made to me that a lot of recruitment for the new CTS to fill those vacancies with people leaving, going back to New South Wales, or retiring, was done from Victoria, and secondary education that had the radicalising impact of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association.**

Mr Lee: Yes. and the leadership of Ron Reed as Director General. So, the likes of Victoria in particular, with, you know, the VSTA and the development within the tech schools, the trying of different approaches than you had – similar out of South Australia, similar kind of progressive education agenda driving things. Similarly, out of Queensland. And then you also have the ~~CTS~~ ~~because~~CTS ~~because~~ the CTS embraced both the ACT and the Northern Territory, at that stage Hedley Beare was the director of the Northern Territory with his highly kind of progressive thinking in the Territory.

Mr Haggar: **And he then brings that to the ACT.**

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Mr Lee: And he then brings that to the ACT. And that's consonant with a collaborative approach where teachers are regarded as professionals, not minions to be – who will kowtow to the inspectors. You might be aware that in latter '73 the then brace of New South Wales inspectors who were physically housed in the ACT offered their services to come across to the ACT system, and that offer was declined insofar as they were an anathema to the kind of thinking that was basic to the ACT. That said, a couple of the consultants, the likes of Noelene Narr and Keith Curry, who were very much of the kind of value that was being held in the ACT, were embraced and were important in those early years as well, but the inspectors weren't. So yes, so how – the union therefore emerges in that climate. And right from the outset it adopts a very different working arrangement with the decision makers than was experienced in New South Wales.

Mr Haggar: **But of course, you're talking about commonwealth bureaucrats, or commonwealth administrators, establishing the new interim authority and the new Commonwealth Teaching Service. And a number of people I've talked with have emphasised the very different approach of those individuals. And it was not necessarily because it was the Whitlam years, but rather because as Canberra residents they were very sympathetic to the sorts of concerns being articulated by parents, by the union, and by principals and others in the service.**

Mr Lee: That's correct because it was part of the total atmosphere. So, the union, the ACT Teachers Federation, emerges out of that atmosphere. You have people like Alan Foskett, Brian Peck, Bruce Milligan. All of them who had – and again, the comment you made before, they also were younger, that's what we tend to forget.

Mr Haggar: **With the exception of people like Jock Weeden and...**

Mr Lee: Oh, I mean, you had a number like Jock and Jack Lenahan who were towards the end of their career, but Alan Foskett is still around today. And so you had that group who were – a number of people were involved on the Campbell Committee.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, yeah, I'm aware of that.**

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Mr Lee: The Phil Satlers and ~~[0:24:45] they~~ and the Brian Pecks, they were all of the view that the ACT should be – so they weren't paying the traditional control over game. Most of them were facilitators.

Mr Haggar: I think that's a very good point when making the comparison with New South Wales. There's a couple of elements though, in retrospect, stand out as to the way in which the union was put together and operated. It was a very heavily male dominated organisation in those early years.

Mr Lee: It was. I don't know if it got – know that it consciously was insofar as...

Mr Haggar: I'll give you a couple of examples.

Mr Lee: Yeah, yeah, yeah – I mean, that that's borne out, but very early – one of the things that the ACT very quickly – and I haven't done the numbers – but from very early in the piece, in contrast to New South Wales, the number of female principals, particularly in the primary school ranks, particularly in the primary school ranks, was inordinately high compared to New South Wales.

Mr Haggar: Well, I would say if you looked at the secondary sector, we were in a situation of having no female secondary principals...

Mr Lee: That's right but part of that had to do – recognise that the ACT was a very small sample, smaller system. And there was only, what – how many high schools in 1973? There was only about 10 high schools and you had New South Wales appointees there for quite some time, and you also had – as part of the negotiation that the union had to undertake was to look after New South Wales staff. And so, in a way the New South Wales seniority system held sway for a while.

Mr Haggar: Even though we introduced a system of – let's use inverted commas – "peer assessment and eligibility".

Mr Lee: Yes, we did, but it took 'X' years. There was an agreement, and you might want to check it out, there was an agreement to place those New South Wales staff who were on List 3, deputies.

Mr Haggar: Yes, and in fact the List 3 deputies, all of whom found places as assistant principals in the schools in '73 – '74, that promotion roundte.

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- Mr Lee: That's right. So, they – and because they came from a seniority system which was male dominated, there were some nice chaps in that period.
- Mr Haggar: It did take until the mid '80s before we had our first female secondary principal.**
- Mr Lee: That would be right, that would be right. But the – the other, I think – see, and again I haven't done the history on it, but I would suggest one of the significant breakthroughs was the recognition of the old New South Wales infant's mistresses as school leaders.
- Mr Haggar: And Margaret Dempster was, I think, in that role early on too.**
- Mr Lee: Margaret, yep, but there was a quite a few – , a lot of the early leadership came from those ranks, from women who had a strong commitment to students as learners, and at the centre are bringing, as it were, their educational expertise from those early childhood years into the schooling. So, a number of them came across.
- But going back even to the union, my mind goes back to the likes of people like Chery O'Connor and Julie Biles.
- Mr Haggar: They came – they came to particular prominence though in the early '80s – late '70s, early '80s.**
- Mr Lee: That's right, that's right, and one of the realities of that stage, a number of those folk were also having kids.
- Mr Haggar: That's true from that particular generation but...**
- Mr Lee: From that particular generation, at that stage.
- Mr Haggar: Yes.**
- Mr Lee: See, we – bear in mind we – the other factor that there is that that generation of teachers were having their kids much younger than now.
- Mr Haggar: And we were also in a situation where it was common practice for them to resign from the service to access...**

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Mr Lee: Well, in New South Wales at least up until around – I suspect it might be the Whitlam years – but they had to resign when they had a child.

Mr Haggar: Yes, well we had – yeah, we had the marriage barrier – or marriage bar whereby married civil servants, teachers etc, had to resign if they got married.

Mr Lee: Was that – I'm not sure – yeah, that – was that a New South Wales or an ACT?

Mr Haggar: Well the commonwealth date for its removal had – was in the '70s under Whitlam. There were also issues of equal pay.

Mr Lee: Yeah, and I in fact was reading – a rather poor I must admit – history of Australian education that made the assertion that New South Wales went onto equal pay in '67, and I don't believe that's so.

Mr Haggar: I'll have to check that with a particular date. But, you know, structurally you were in a situation where you could be running a small secondary school and be in promotions positions in that small secondary school and being paid more than somebody running a very large primary school.

Mr Lee: Yes.

Mr Haggar: Because of this view that somehow it was more complicated.

Mr Lee: And I think also you were contending in the '70s, and into the '80s, and possibly even into the '90s, in both the primary and the secondary sector, that the senior kids were more important than the junior kids.

Mr Haggar: And this was reflected in staffing formula and the like.

Mr Lee: That was reflected in staffing formula, in appointments, that it took the ACT, like many other jurisdictions, many years to recognise the significance of early childhood education, and it's reflected also in class sizes.

Mr Haggar: Yeah, good point.

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Mr Lee: Reflected in – and if one looks at the – if one was to do a kind of a graphing of the class sizes, then you would see that change. I do remember in my role as the director we did get into a fight, dare I say, with the college principals because we had the audacity to remove resources to the early childhood years.

Mr Haggar: The – in fact primary class sizes was very early on a significant issue for the union and it wasn't until, in fact, 2000 that that was addressed in a significant way with a change of the ACT government at the time, but I'll be dealing with that more thematically as the project progresses.

Mr Lee: Yeah, yeah. But yeah – so, yeah – yeah, we're talking about – in relation to the role, the gender disparities, the thinking about early childhood years, we're still in the 1970s and in a sense the ACT was well to the front compared to other Australian jurisdictions.

Mr Haggar: Yeah, I think that's – that's a point that's going to be debated on the website in terms of people's perceptions because another perspective that's been put to me is you can look at the New South Wales Teachers Federation and there were significant women from very early on in leadership positions.

Mr Lee: Oh, that's – in terms of the union, I can't comment on that, I just don't know. Because then – yeah, I mean...

Mr Haggar: But they were reflecting too though, and acceptance of women in leadership whereas if you're looking at our first experience of it locally in terms of the union with Cathy Robertson and Joan Corbett, gender, it's argued to me, it figured to a significant degree in some of the difficulties that they had in their role as union leaders.

But just – I'll give you two brief anecdotes that were given to me, one you're familiar with from Mick March where he talked about himself and three other individuals, Dick Lee, Barry Price and Peter O'Connor, having a beer at the 'Wello' (Wellington hotel) and deciding that they needed to set up a separate union to the New South Wales Teachers Federation.

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Lyn Harasymiw who was a classroom teacher throughout her career in the ACT went, as a single mum with two kids, to a meeting of the Secondary Teachers Association. It may have been even the sort of annual conference equivalent of that body. And the break at lunch time came and Lyn, who was the only female at the meeting, was left in the saloon bar while the male members of the association retired to the public bar, where of course, women were excluded.

Mr Lee: Yeah, and I don't doubt that. But then on – and I think we had – what you're looking at is a series of contrasts. One of the programs that we ran in '74 was called Instructional Design Program, had about 35 folk in it and it was aimed at identifying change agents in schools. And from the outset we consciously – and that's Liz McKenzie, Helen Strauch and myself, in setting it up – we aimed for a balance of men and women. ~~{0:37:40}~~and we had that as an agenda item at that stage, in identifying those change agents.

Mr Haggar: And how was that received?

Mr Lee: It was no problem whatsoever. That involved, you know, as I say, the Julie Biles and staff like her – they had a clear role, a lead role in that exercise. And on Julie's death I remember Cheryl commenting, Cheryl O'Connor, commenting on the importance of that early stages departmental point of view I was involving the women in that exercise.

So, I'd suggest then you've probably got pockets Clive, as you kind of reflect on the total scene. And – I mean, clearly it was, and here I can speak, but as a white male, it was a blokey atmosphere in the scheme of things. There's probably no denying it. But then I think of a work situation and when I had around me the likes of Liz McKenzie who clearly could express her views, Helen Strauch, Laura Turnbull. Laura was on the executive.

Mr Haggar: Laura...?

Mr Lee: Turnbull.

Mr Haggar: Turnbull, right.

Mr Lee: Laura died quite some time ago, but Laura was on the ship committee. Yeah Laura's one to do some more homework on, particularly in the north side of

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Canberra, she was involved in many ways in a similar kind of activities to – that Joan Kellets, the Cath Blakers and the women associated with the parent groupings.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, yes, okay. Well look – I mean Laura is at the moment not known to me, but I'll obviously try and do some work...**

Mr Lee: Yeah, she's an – she was an important one in the scheme of things. So, within that early group of staff – early body of staff within the authority, there were sizeable numbers – but they weren't – well, the one who did play a role in the piece was Di ~~Milberr~~Mildern.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, well Di's name has come up regularly. And one thing that became obvious is, with the establishment of the union, was that the women began to get themselves organised.**

Mr Lee: Yes.

Mr Haggar: **And, you know, that subsequently led to Cathy Robertson's election first as the deputy president then secretary, 2IC to Keith Lawler, and then subsequently to being president of the organisation with Joan Corbett as her secretary.**

Mr Lee: But, yes, I think – it's yeah, it's probably opportune just to reflect on the number of women who were involved in the authority, and from the parent point of view, to mind. As I say, Joan Kellets, Cath Blakers. Now, you're talking in a way very, you know, well educated, well connected women who know how to play the networking game.

Mr Haggar: **Well, it's interesting in terms of Elizabeth McKenzie's PhD thesis on the establishment of the system, that she talks about the very powerful involvement of parents – and the role of class as well. And we are talking about a very middle-class parent leadership group in terms of pushing for the early establishment of the system, and that being responded to by bureaucrats and politicians who could understand and sympathise the perspectives that they were putting forward.**

Mr Lee: Yeah, they were – and then – I can reflect back to a meeting that we had with Professor Phil Hughes and Cath Blakers on the wording of Information

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Statement No 1 for the Authority. And there was never a question that it was Phil as the academic elitist who would dominate the discussion. Cath was of that kind of mind, that she just happened – her husband happened to be a professor of mathematics. Her son now is one of the world leaders in – what's the technology associated with pumped hydro– Larry Blakers is one of the world leaders in that. So yeah, yes, you had that very intelligent, learned, involved in that scheme of thing, but that was a significant involvement in the system, in contrast to New South Wales in the departmental ranks. Within the unions for sure, you may well have in New South Wales, but if you look at principalships, directorships, then – but it's not only here Clive, I think that's the other thing in the context. I was – I know that recently that in 1975 in the US 95% of superintendents were male, 1975, 95% were male superintendents. Now still in – it's still something like 80% males in the US, superintendents are males.

Mr Haggar: **Just to sort of change direction slightly on this, one of the features of the early establishment of the union was it seemed to mirror image the actual structures in New South Wales. And how appropriate that was when we were a much smaller organisation.**

Mr Lee: Yeah. Yes, it's – it's undoubtedly questioned. But I think part of the – part of the scene one was dealing with was not to be overly concerned with structures but get about doing things, if you get what I mean.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, yes.**

Mr Lee: I don't think in the probably first three, four years, because there was so much to be done operationally from awards all the way through, I don't think a lot of thought was given to where was the union going in the longer term.

Mr Haggar: **Elizabeth McKenzie in her PhD thesis talks about – talks at length about the vision with the establishment in the early years of the system and particularly the parental vision, and she feels that much of that vision was lost once the system was established. But she – she points the finger to an extent at the union in not recognising or accepting parental involvement in the selection of professional staff. And I think it's Chapter 9 of her thesis she...**

Mr Lee: That – I don't think that's an unfair observation.

Mr Haggar: Do you want to comment further on that?

Mr Lee: I'm not kind of excusing the ACT but I'm just – I would say that that scenario was pretty symptomatic of the nature of schooling worldwide, that schooling, if you look back worldwide, from roughly the 1920s is as it were, caught up in the scientific education movement where the learned experts take control and they standardise schooling across the world, they make schooling more efficient and you'll find, be it in Scotland or the UK or the US or here, that any kind of lay involvement is supplanted and the experts are put in control. And that's a kind of global movement so that what – what was being espoused in the ACT by the parent groups and – but academics like – in fact the Phil Hughes' and Dick Johnsons, Don Anderson, their views are not of that 1920s views, that new progressive school view, but rather their views are about community involvement. And so, from very early in the piece the boards were to be written into the new authority.

Mr Haggar: The school boards?

Mr Lee: The school boards, which are still kind of an anathema in the likes of New South Wales. The trouble was, as you – as Liz indicated, when it came to the crunch the union played the old game, reverted to the status quo and wouldn't have them having a say. So, when it ~~comes~~ comes to ~~the~~ the crunch at expressing the opinions, that kind of bureaucratisation had won out. And in a way after a period to time the boards were largely euhred.

Mr Haggar: Except of course the School Board chair has an involvement now in the selection of school principals.

Mr Lee: But in the ACT context he does have a say, but as one who's sat on many of those committees, that say can be neutered pretty quickly.

Mr Haggar: Can I just take you back to the establishment of the colleges. The union was very supportive of that and New South Wales Teachers Federation substantially less so. But one of the features that really stands out with the college's establishment was the lack of focus in some people's

eyes on the high schools, so that we wound up with a bifurcated secondary system.

Mr Lee: It's a hard one to – it's a hard one to answer Clive. As one of the designers of that setup, when came the end of '74 and as it were the general homework had been done on principals and professional development, it then got down to the nitty gritty as to what to do with the new high schools and what to do with the colleges. And when the staffing was done there were two – I'll correct this slightly. There were, as it were, two staff appointed to support the early identified principals for the colleges, and there were two staff appointed to look after the creation of the high schools, Ray Livermore and Jim Rickwood, and they quite literally worked beside us. Doug Morgan had responsibility for the certification, bearing in mind we had to get – we still had the Year 10 certificate, and a number were of the view that we should get rid of the Year 10 certificate. The principals vehemently opposed that idea, the high school principals vehemently opposed that idea. We saw we were going to get nowhere with that. We wanted some – some of us wanted a more portfolio kind of scenario. But they wanted to use – the high school principals wanted to use it as a control mechanism, but we couldn't control the classes to the end of Year 10 if we didn't have an exam. Do you get the thinking?

Mr Haggar: Yes, I know, in fact I was going to propose that as being one of their underlying reasons.

Mr Lee: So, there was – yeah – in a – and whether it was the personnel, I don't know. Yes, the colleges, the new colleges, were all kind-well resourced of [0:54:57] but there were some very new, very well resourced new high schools going up around the place at the rate of knots too.

Mr Haggar: Yes, in terms of physical infrastructure and so on, yes.

Mr Lee: So, it – yeah, it is still an issue, it is still an issue. It was an issue then. All I can say is from the decision makers point of view, see in bear in mind you had Hedley had come in then and Hedley was very conscious about looking after the high schools, and the resourcing and the support that they got was the same as the colleges.

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- Mr Haggar:** If you – well, if you – there are ways of doing the analysis in terms of how they were staffed, and also too with the growth funding provided to the new system by the commonwealth that, you know, I think that there are strong arguments that the colleges were well favoured.
- Mr Lee: Oh, there was – in terms of the – the amount of staffing that was given to the secondary colleges – I know I'll differ slightly with Mick March with this, that the colleges were very well resourced.
- Mr Haggar:** And of course, these negotiations were done by the union leadership and approved of by the executive. I was just – what I was going to say was that, you know, the colleges were very well resourced, the high schools were well resourced and the primary very clearly had the view at the start, as articulated by leaders of the Primary Teachers Association of the time, that they had done quite poorly in comparison.
- Mr Lee: Oh, there's no question of that. But then again, as I say, it related to that thinking, not just New South Wales but across Australia, and kind of manifested – well using the primary schools, I'll come to that in a minute – but here was that general thinking that the final years of schooling were where the resourcing had to go. But I still find fascinating, if you look at most – many primary schools today it's the males. who run Year 6 classes.
- Mr Haggar:** The senior teachers?
- Mr Lee: Yes.
- Mr Haggar:** Yes, yeah. Well I think...
- Mr Lee: It still holds in schools that know the importance of those early childhood years.
- Mr Haggar:** Yes. And if you're looking at the numbers of early childhood specialists of course they are overwhelmingly female.
- Mr Lee: Yes.
- Mr Haggar:** Just to change direction was...

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Mr Lee: And I have to say, bear in mind, I made mention of the fact that I did a masters' degree at Sydney University, but in opting for units I wanted to do an early childhood unit. I was not allowed to, as a male.

Mr Haggar: Yes, you were ahead of your time.

Mr Lee: I was not allowed to do that. So that was – that was the climate of the time.

Mr Haggar: Yes. Now you of course progressed from your time in establishing the authority to being a deputy principal and then principal, and then of course became one of the early directors, ~~schools~~schools' directors, in the system. In terms of your position as a school administrator and then a system administrator, how would you have described your relationships with the union, both within the workplace and more broadly?

Mr Lee: Oh, I think it was generally good. But in any organisation, be it a school, be it a union, be it a church group, that one always has challenging members at times. And I do remember having to negotiate the acceptance of the International Baccalaureate about a college, and having some – Gwen McNeil and myself having some quite sizeable dustups with a member or two from the union, but – who was the same person one would have dustups when one was wearing one's AEU hat in general meetings, trying to negotiate with those individuals.

~~SeSo~~. I – I would just say organisationally at times you represent the organisation and you – you wear your hats accordingly. One of the roles that you didn't mention, one – I was also the principal executive officer of the accreditation body for a period of time.

Mr Haggar: That's right, you were too.

Mr Lee: And in that time there was a decision made by the authority to give three extra points to females on their tertiary entrance score, and I was the front person who had to go out and explain that to the public. And there was at that time very strong opposition from one of the main new academics, a Mr Daly, who pointed out the shortcomings of this. And I happened to catch up with him a year or so ago and he said Mal, let's not continue our

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argument. I simply said, Darryl I was protecting the views of the organisation they were not Mal Lee's views. I think it was a daft decision, but one's job is to protect those views. And at times you – particularly in a smaller system at the time you have to wear various hats and you just learn to accommodate those roles, and hopefully people understand. At times it gets very difficult, particularly – and then I think one of the challenges for anyone, who moved into the principal role, for example, is that they still see themselves as themselves, as Tom, or Mary, or Joan, or Van, whoever, without realising they are now a different entity in that context.

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Mr Haggar: **And there've been a number of chief executives over the years who've attempted to persuade principals not to belong to the union, with minimal success.**

Mr Lee: Yeah, yeah. Now, so I mean – as you know, in some states, for example, in Victoria, some of the principals are in a different union and know it was discussed only recently in New South Wales. So, they're the kind of issues that come to play. It's that inevitable conflict within a hierarchical scenario.

Mr Haggar: **Yes, yes. Well Mal unless there's some further comments you'd like to make...**

~~Mr Lee: No, I think I've run out of brain power.~~

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~~Mr Haggar: I'll edit that line. But thank you very much for your considered contribution this morning, and I'll bring the formal part of the interview to a close.~~

Mr Lee: Thanks.

[End of Transcript]