

CPM Reviews

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Identifier	Name / Position	Role
Mr Haggar	Clive Haggar, Former Secretary	Interviewer
Mr Lawler:	Keith Lawler, Former President	Interviewee

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Mr Haggar: It's the 22nd of May, 2019. I am talking to Keith Lawler, a former President of the ACT Teachers Federation. And, Keith, you were just about to start telling me about how you got involved in the union.

Mr Lawler: Well, I'd always been a member of the New South Wales Teachers Federation. I joined the federation in the second week of my first year as a student in 1959. I still have the card and my very childish looking signature on it. Although I'd always been a member of the union and taken part simply as a member in its activities, including the first ever strike in 1968, I'd never been active locally until I became federation rep at Deakin High School at a very, very difficult time, when one of our members was having a lot of difficulty with the principal, and it led all the way to dismissal proceedings and so on. And, that was a very, very difficult situation.

But apart from that, and speaking more broadly, I happened to go along to a meeting – and I didn't go very often – of the Secondary Teachers Association of the ACT, which was part of the New South Wales Federation. From memory, the meeting was held at Campbell High School. And, it wasn't a very well attended meeting. It was a meeting where they were electing their officers for the year, and they'd almost run out of names when they got to the position of Assistant Secretary, so I was nominated. I accepted. It very quickly became obviously the job of Assistant Secretary was to do nothing. But about two or three months into the year, the Secretary resigned and so I stepped into the position of Secretary, which was a much more active proposition.

So, I was actually secretary of the Secondary Teachers Association at the time all the discussions and movements about a separate union and separate system came about. Now, I'm not very, very sure at all about the sorts of events which led to the local association being involved or who was driving the movement. Certainly, the situation was ripe for movement, because of the Commonwealth Teaching Service legislation being passed and the movement towards separation. And, I think one of the other reasons that we were moving towards a separate union was the singular lack of sympathy or assistance from the New South Wales Teachers Federation, some of whose officers saw it largely as like the American war of independence, sort of carving off one of their colonies, which they resented, rather than seeing it as a possible future sibling.

Mr Haggar: **Parallel to this there were discussions about the establishment of a secondary college system, a 7 to 10 in high school system. Can you remember what the attitude of the New South Wales Teachers Federation was to that kind of restructure?**

Mr Lawler: Well, I don't have any specific things to remember. My impression is the attitude was one of neglect. There was some interest from some people in New South Wales about the college system, and perhaps it's relevant for the New South Wales system, but that was about it. That continued into the '80s, because I remember a visit by Bob Carr and the then Minister for Education whose name escapes me, to my politics class at Narrabundah College where they had a bit of a discussion about colleges with the class.

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But I think the tyrannies of distance really would squash that sort of thing in New South Wales. You saw what was happening in Tasmania later on in year, matriculation colleges and the sort of city/country divide down there, which would be exacerbated in New South Wales. I don't think there was much – there was a lot of interest in the ACT obviously of secondary teachers. This is a bit of an aside, but we really did something very bad with all of that. We spent a lot of time and a lot of effort and a lot of theorising and so on, on establishing a college system without realising that we were establishing a new thing called the high school system. So, they were just left as a rump really.

Mr Haggar: **There were issues of resourcing in particular.**

Mr Lawler: Absolutely. And, we've been paying for that, and more importantly, the kids have been paying for that ever since. Because resourcing was not so much an issue back in those days, because the new system could always get what it wanted, as you can see by what happened with the staffing system in 1974/5. But by the time they were firmly established, the lid had closed on the Treasury pots and you were stuck with what you had or stuck with defending what you had. High schools have always been the second best, and that's the problem. Even trying to identify what they actually do. A lot of people just thought it was a holding pen for colleges, and that's the problem. A lot of teachers thought that too.

Anyway, where was I originally?

Mr Haggar: **Well, we were in a situation where there were discussions going on about the establishment of the union, and New South Wales Teachers Federation – you used the term benign neglect.**

Mr Lawler: Yes. Well, there were some people involved, and we tried to get money out of them to assist us in forming the new union. And, we estimated what would be a reasonable amount. This is again going really off the top of my memory. And, we put it to the New South Wales Teachers Federation, and they gave us a very small amount. You could be conspiratorial and reckon that it would sort of not get going and we'd all go back to mother and everything would be lovely, because they really did try very hard to put forward the view that in

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discussions about the new teaching service and the union's role in relation to it, that they were the ones who had the right to speak for all teachers in the ACT.

Mr Haggar: **Because at this stage there wasn't a separate organisation.**

Mr Lawler: That's true. Peter O'Connor was one of the principal movers in ensuring that that didn't happen. I think he developed a very good relationship with Jock Weeden, the former CTS Commissioner, Acting. Because he was actually something like 70 something, a very little man with a very large brain. I had a great deal of respect for Jock. The CTS Commission, through both Jock and Jack Lenihan, was a major progressive force as far as I'm concerned in the ACT, despite the Authority. All sorts of things the Authority wanted to do that Jock or Jack made sure they didn't. Because whichever he was at the time, believed it wasn't in the interests of teachers, which were his primary responsibility.

Mr Haggar: **Was one of those issues the selection of staff at the school level?**

Mr Lawler: Absolutely. Jock and the federation created the whole system of eligibility, which became a bit cumbersome. I mean they had the idea, the really revolutionary idea that the profession was a profession, and that the profession could be charged with looking after itself, looking after its professional standards, looking after the development of leadership. The whole eligibility system was a bit cumbersome in many ways, but it reflected that philosophy more than anything else.

Mr Haggar: **Just to clarify, what had happened under New South Wales was a strictly seniority-based system? Once you'd achieved the list – and the list meant that you could apply on the basis of seniority for advertised positions.**

Mr Lawler: That's right. I had a secondary list two position, non-graduate, which meant that I could apply for special master. That's about what I could apply for. And, when I graduated, I was put on the list two for history. Because I didn't have any English in my degree, I could only be a history master. And, I went from something like 480 in the state to number 37, but of course the number of positions was very small. In fact the year that I was promoted to band two

history at Narrabundah High School, I was offered a list two special master position at Riverside Girls High, which I declined.

Mr Haggar: **In Sydney?**

Mr Lawler: Yes. In Sydney.

Mr Haggar: **The introduction of eligibility as opposed to the old seniority system under New South Wales – you talked about the leadership of the Commissioner’s office, Commonwealth Teaching Service Commissioner’s Office. How was that received by the members as the new system? Were people encouraging of it? Was there a degree of resentment? Were there sectoral differences to how it was perceived?**

Mr Lawler: I don’t think so. I mean there was a grandfather clause. If you held positions in New South Wales lists, that that carried over. So, my list two eligibility was what enabled me to apply for the band two jobs at the end of '73.

Mr Haggar: **There was an interesting circumstance at one point whereby there was the same number of vacancies at the - - -**

Mr Lawler: I was on the selection panel. I was on the selection panel for that position.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. So, the Assistant Principals and as per applicants.**

Mr Lawler: Well, there’s a back story to that. It shows you how bureaucratic teachers can be when they want to be. There were just enough people eligible for the jobs to go, but one of the applications had come in late. So, in our infinite wisdom we decided we would not accept that application, and told that to Jock, and Jock said ‘Don’t be bloody silly’. So, we went ahead and filled them all. But I got the impression that teachers were, those who thought about it – let’s face it, there’s a large number of people that just swim with the system. Those who thought about it and had a stake in the system really saw it as progress. Later on, there came to be all sorts of concerns about its cumbersome nature and so on.

But except for personal issues, like the bloke who didn’t get band four eligibility and used to stare over his beer at the people who were members of the panel at the time every time they walked into the club – it was terrible –

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there was a general acceptance that this was a step forward that we were involved, that we were selecting people who were going to be making these decisions, that it was the in school information rather than the nod from the principal that was going to be important. I certainly saw it in that way.

Mr Haggar: **So, with that new system came the peer assessment panels in schools, and there was a union representative, generally an assistant principal or principal as chair, and another person from the office.**

Mr Lawler: Who was a teacher.

Mr Haggar: **So, a fully professional panel.**

Mr Lawler: Yes.

Mr Haggar: **And, this was despite strong arguments by the parents and the citizens group that they should have a say in who got a promotion, in fact who got staffed, who was actually placed in the schools. And, that was a long-fought struggle to ensure that the promotion of people was held in the hands of the profession.**

Mr Lawler: Yes. Look, we've had a bit of a love-hate relationship with the parents. I mean throughout the whole business of the development of our local system, the parents organisations were great allies. This was the issue which divided us – almost nothing else. And, there were a few people who were really pushing it in the parent organisations, but I don't think they saw it – although a lot of the propaganda might make me think this way – I think they saw it as an issue to stand at the stockade and die over. I mean eventually we developed the school boards. When I say we, I mean the collective system developed the school boards. They had a role in school boards. They had input in terms of the selection of the principal, and they could then see the principal as the education leader and therefore their representative in the selection of the staff.

Mr Haggar: **That was still a hard-fought exercise in the '80s with secret meetings, school board chairs meeting with principal applicants.**

Mr Lawler: Absolutely. Yes. It wasn't that secret. We would find out.

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Mr Haggar: **So, just going back to the early days again, you've mentioned the very positive role of the office of the Commissioner of the Commonwealth Teaching Service. What about the Schools Authority?**

Mr Lawler: The interim Schools Authority? Well, the people that I had most to deal with – and this is a member of a group, not as a leader of course, because Dick and Peter were the leaders.

Mr Haggar: **And you were Vice President at this stage, or on the executive - - -**

Mr Lawler: On the executive.

Mr Haggar: **As secretary of the Secondary Teachers?**

Mr Lawler: Yeah.

Mr Haggar: **So, you were still structurally divided between secondary teachers and primary teachers?**

Mr Lawler: Absolutely. For quite some time. I mean you look at the history of it, and you can see how we changed our structure all the way through to more reflect what we had. Basically, if you look at our original constitution, it's a mirror of the New South Wales Teachers Federation with all its warts, and all its strengths too. I mean in terms of the objectives, it had significant strengths, except that one we should never have had about establishing the teachers club. But the structure of the whole place was sort of a mini New South Wales. That didn't work, because once you'd finished up with these small meetings with a small group who dominated the meeting, and they got all sorts of rubbish coming through – all sorts of undesirable stuff coming through and taking up the time of executive and council. They were a buffer against the grass roots, so we moved eventually to a more grass rooted organisation, and all for the better.

What were we talking about then? The interim authority. Well, the first principle issue that we dealt with in relation to the interim authority – and that was basically Alan Foster and Brian Peck – was the staffing formula which the new system was going to operate under. And, that was from '74 wasn't it?

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Mr Haggar: **Yes.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Right. Well, I'll just mention one interesting thing that I did. When the Commonwealth Teaching Service Act was passed and they set a date of proclamation, it transpired that there was a certain window in which individuals had to make their choices about whether to join or not. And, there were about 80 or 90 individuals in the secondary area on leave of various sorts. So, I was seconded into the inspector's office, and I had to get in touch with all of them, whether they were in Yarralumla or Vladivostok. We finally tracked them all down and got their answers back. So, they were looked after rather than hung out to dry.

These were the days when the Treasury's pockets were full, and you could put your hand in them without them noticing. So, we did very, very well in the initial staffing formula.

Mr Haggar: **This is the secondary schools?**

Mr Lawler: Well, I was just going to come to that too. In terms of overall numbers, the numbers to which they were prepared to go, which we would then work into a formula. We had a claim formula which had all the things in it about teaching loads and so on that we wanted, and then we were offered 300 or something extra teachers. This is far as it can go. Let's all sit down and work out where they're going to go. And, this is a very clear memory. We sat in a room, somewhat similar in shape to this one. So, a door up there and desks down there. And, we worked for some hours thrashing out how these people fitted in.

Mr Haggar: **So, this is representatives of the Commonwealth Teaching Service of the interim Schools Authority?**

Mr Lawler: Well, the Commonwealth Teaching Service wasn't there. No.

Mr Haggar: **So, it was the interim authority, and at this point in time were you New South Wales Teachers Federation or were you - - -**

Mr Lawler: We were both.

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Mr Haggar: **You were both? Right. So, in a structural sense, you were owning positions in both organisations?**

Mr Lawler: Well, no. I didn't have a position except as member. Both the Commonwealth Teaching Service Commissioner and the interim ACT Schools Authority decided to deal with the local representatives of teachers.

Mr Haggar: **Who happened to be members of the New South Wales Teachers Federation?**

Mr Lawler: And, the New South Wales Teachers Federation were saying 'We should be there. We should be there. We should be there'. But I can't give you a time when the organic link was severed. It may be the time of official registration, which was mid '74.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. '74.**

Mr Lawler: Well, before that, we were doing these negotiations in '73.

Mr Haggar: **But the people coming to the table were coming out of the Secondary Teachers Association and the Primary Teachers Association of the New South Wales Teachers Federation in the ACT?**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Anyway, we cut them all up. What was my role? I was President of the ACT Secondary Teachers Association. They were my electorate. My role was to do as well as I could for my electorate. So, I did as well as I could for my electorate, and we did very well. And, then as we were coming out, the President of the Primary Teachers Association was in the meeting, hardly said a bloody word. As we were coming out, he spoke. He said, 'You've done the bloody primaries in again'.

Mr Haggar: **So, there had been no meeting between the two associations prior to this?**

Mr Lawler: There had been meetings designed to develop the claim. Yeah. We had a whole draft staffing formula, which would have required something like 500 extra teachers. And, even in that – I don't know why it happened. I mean I could hardly claim to have a long history of militancy and skill in negotiation at that time. But maybe because they were more distant. The history was as

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it was. Let's face it. It was only later on that we were able to get some progress. I think they got five percent, or something didn't they?

Mr Haggar: **They got a five percent salary margin that was created.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. The big salary margins. Because we were so ahead of everyone else.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. Writing your own curriculum.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. And, later on of course when everyone had caught up, still people walking around saying 'Where's the bloody margin? There's no margin anymore. But either way, we did fairly well. We walked out, and that was the formula that was introduced. And, that all came out of having a common position, putting a common position up, having the interim Schools Authority react by saying – they didn't come back with an alternative proposition. They came back with a number, and we wrote the formula.

Mr Haggar: **What percentage of those additional 300 staff would have gone to secondary as opposed to primary at the time?**

Mr Lawler: I reckon it was probably about half and half, or probably a little bit of a preponderance to secondary. We already had the edge didn't we, in terms of our teaching loads anyway. We wanted to get rid of this strange thing of the two thirds of staff on 27 and one third on 28, and we wanted to express it in hours.

Mr Haggar: **That was periods per week?**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Forty minute periods. And, then sport always had the anomaly of being counted as two rather than three. It was just all over the place. Particularly Deakin High School. Anyway. I wouldn't be surprised if you looked at those 300/350 and found that what you would probably say is more than a small amount went to the secondary.

Mr Haggar: **There's also interesting elements, that they had many more sites.**

Mr Lawler: Yes. Yes.

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Mr Haggar: I mean there's an example of an internal disruption in relations between the Secondary and the Primary Teachers Associations. So, at what stage was the push to become a unified association or a unified federation - - -

Mr Lawler: Well, that had happened before that hadn't it? Yeah. When you say unified, you mean breaking down the Primary and Secondary Associations?

Mr Haggar: Yes.

Mr Lawler: I was President when that happened. I wrote the constitution. Honestly, I can't remember. We didn't go straight to a branch-based constitution. We went to an area, didn't we? We went to area-based constitution.

Mr Haggar: My memory of it, coming back to teach in the system in 1977, was that I attended the last ever meeting of the Secondary Teachers Association, and that there were some of the members there singing The Internationale, reading the words off the back of a party membership card. So, we were in that situation then of the negotiation and a sense of grievance amongst some of the primary school teachers. So, it still took time to become a unified organisation.

Mr Lawler: That's true. You mean in terms of up here rather than on paper?

Mr Haggar: Yes.

Mr Lawler: Of course. Of course, it did. And, I think the movement eventually – a movement which took away sectoral representation, which was first of all areas and then branches – I think helped that. Also, another thing to help it is although we're fighting again – once the last Labor budget came down, the Hayden budget, it was tough from then on. But we were able to get some improvements through the years of Fraser and so on, and when we started getting improvements in the primary area, although baby steps, because it was difficult, I think that helped. And, there were all sorts of issues on which we had common ground.

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- Mr Haggar:** **Salaries obviously is an interesting one, because you had same salaries at the classroom teacher level, but your promotions positions actually had different salaries.**
- Mr Lawler: That's true. That's a carryover from New South Wales which – I mean let's face it. We were all thinking like New South Wales people. We were all that particular mould. The model we had was a New South Wales model, and I dare say if you looked around the whole of Australia, the model would be the same basically in terms of the primary and secondary divide. And, also there was a sneaking suspicion among secondary teachers I suppose that a primary position wasn't really as complicated as running a secondary school was it.
- Mr Haggar:** **There were also issues around qualifications and gender, because you're in a situation where you had a lot of two year trained teachers, three year trained teachers, various salary based handicaps against people with that level of qualification, and most of those people over time were women.**
- Mr Lawler: Well, I could only speak for myself in relation to this, but I can't think of any situation, decision or discussion which I was involved where the issues of gender were significant, except during the discussions on development and implementation of policies to break down gender bias. I honestly think it was in the mind primary and secondary rather than there's a lot of women out there.
- Mr Haggar:** **Well, I think in terms of an analysis of how the sector's development - -**
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- Mr Lawler: Up until the time we took over. Yes. Well, you still had people around, like Julie Biles, who had to resign when she married. I mean I never knew her then. There were two salary scales for women and men.
- Mr Haggar:** **As there were in the Commonwealth Public Service up until about 1973.**
- Mr Lawler: But I didn't know that until much later. I didn't know that the women alongside me were on a different salary scale. I wasn't interested in those days. I just got my 19 pounds a week and thought it was great.

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Mr Haggar: But you're also in a situation with the union in its early days, particularly the Secondary Teachers Association, from my memory of - -

Mr Lawler: Men.

Mr Haggar: Yeah. It was a male organisation. So, looking at your successor Cathy Robertson and the secretary Joan Corbett, that was a very significant step for the organisation, to take in – from memory, it was what? '83/'84?

Mr Lawler: '83.

Mr Haggar: So, your last year was '82. And, Cathy Robertson came in as secretary under you after a restructure in 1981. So, I think we started to look very seriously at some of these structural issues through a gender - - -

Mr Lawler: And, don't forget the major role Rosemary played.

Mr Haggar: Certainly. I'm very well aware. In fact, one of the issues that comes to mind around salaries with Rosemary Richards was the development of a pathway for two year/three year trained, particularly three year trained teachers on a professional development basis to achieve what was known as Category A (equivalent to four year trained status)- - -

Mr Lawler: I was really interested in that, because my background is I was a two year trained primary teacher who taught primary one year, 1961. I thought I'd beat the system, so I wrote down my first choice. One teacher school, far west. I beat the system alright. I got a one teacher school in the far west. But after that I went Gulargambone Central School, and the boss said 'Keith, you've had one year's experience. You teach the secondary'. So, I've taught secondary ever since. So, I was a two year trained teacher, and then I went off and did part time uni. I think it was '74 I graduated. I was conscious of that sort of thing.

Mr Haggar: And, one of the very strong arguments that largely female teachers coming out of the primary sector in particular put to Rosemary in opposition to this professional development pathway to salary

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equivalence, was that they had to study part time to get their degrees, and that they felt that their – I mean it would have been a very significant effort to achieve a degree at that time part time – was devalued by the proposition that their colleagues should in fact get equivalent salary - - -

Mr Lawler: My recollection is that you couldn't get to Category A through the professional development pathway. You could get to Category B, but Category A had to be the equivalent of a university degree wasn't it?

Mr Haggar: That was I think in the first iteration, and you might have been responsible for that. But in the final iteration you could do the whole exercise.

Mr Lawler: Well, what we were dealing with was sort of a population that preceded the wholesale change to degree of status necessary.

Mr Haggar: So, can we just go back?

Mr Lawler: Sure. You've got to keep going back to what you need.

Mr Haggar: To the interim authority. And, we've talked about the staffing and the staffing formula that established the system. We had three representatives on that interim authority, and they were filled automatically by the Vice Presidents of the union.

Mr Lawler: Yeah. That was written into the constitution of the organisation.

Mr Haggar: And, the parents had three representatives nominated by the P&C, and then you had Ministerial representatives.

Mr Lawler: Were the three nominated by the P&C? Two might have been by the P&C and one by the Preschool Teachers Society.

Mr Haggar: Yes. So, you're in a situation there where if you like you've got half a dozen democratically appointed members of the interim Schools Authority. You then have the Chief Executive, you have the chair, who's a Ministerial appointee. What were the dynamics like on that body in the early years?

Mr Lawler: Well, the dynamics changed when we finally got Richard Campbell as Authority Chair. Well, as I said earlier, unless we're dealing with the issues of parental involvement in selection of staff, the teachers and the parents were most often as one on issues. When we took industrial action – and theoretically we were taking it against the Commissioner, because he was our employer, but usually against something that's happening in the authority, and it was in relation to things over which they really had no control. They had no control over staffing levels. They had no control over the budget. The budget was laid down by the Commonwealth, and that was it, until self-government came along.

Mr Haggar: What about operational matters, for example the Tharwa Primary School issue, where the principal faced disciplinary action, and that the union called a stop work meeting?

Mr Lawler: Sometimes you take action on an issue of principle which may not necessarily be action you would take if you didn't have principles and you just thought about it with a hard head. That was one of them. There's another one where I was active right up to the appeals stage, where a teacher was sacked on probation because she was incompetent, where they just totally stuffed up the whole of the procedures. And, we said natural justice has got to prevail here. We've got to null the whole thing. Under any proper organisation where there are agreed procedures, she would have been sacked anyway, and I think we were instrumental in getting them to finally realise they had three sets of procedures, all issued exclusive, they'd put into one. You probably know the case I'm talking about.

Well, with Tharwa, again that was a situation which was being run by officers of the ACT Schools Authority, not the Schools Authority itself. On the Authority itself, our people put forward the case, but that's all that happened. They just said what was going on. The real problem we had in relation to the Schools Authority, or the real issue that we had, was that the legislation for the Schools Authority allegedly said what it meant, which was three teachers nominated by the ACT Teachers Federation, or whatever it was called at the time. So, the attitude of the other side, and particularly the government, was that these three people were not elected to the ACT Schools Authority. They were names which were put up to them and then the Minister appointed

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them. They were appointees. They were nominees. They were not representative in any way. They just happened to be a mechanism for getting them there. So, particularly with Richard Campbell we had this argument.

Mr Haggar: **As chair?**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Push backed at us the whole time, that they weren't our representatives. And, occasionally of course we passed resolutions. We'd direct our Vice Presidents to do such and such and such, and they would represent our views on the Authority. So, in those situations we had difficulty. But we had our druthers of course. I would have much rather have had a well-meaning Commissioner running the whole show than a Schools Authority with which we had to deal, bit of a dichotomy.

Mr Haggar: **I mean that's an interesting comment in itself, because the Authority, having teachers and parents at one point in majority, and the assumption that it actually had real - - -**

Mr Lawler: Only in the interim were the majority weren't they?

Mr Haggar: **Yes. I think you're right there, and then went one to one.**

Mr Lawler: Then they started adding people.

Mr Haggar: **Yeah. And, then subsequently subtracting people. But that's the sense then of a community run system, which is what certainly the initial parents wanted. Whereas the comment you've just made in terms of the Commissioner running the show as the employer - - -**

Mr Lawler: Yes, I know.

Mr Haggar: **So, there's a real dichotomy there.**

Mr Lawler: Well, that's just in terms of being comfortable. Look, there were two mistakes I made personally. One is way back in the early days not realising that the high schools were a different kettle of fish. And, secondly, that when the Schools Authority was abolished, that it would be all right, that they'd been a

troublesome body, so it would be alright. So, we moved from the cooperative model to the departmental model.

Mr Haggard: **But from what you were saying, it would have suggested too that really the Chief Executive – sorry. I'll rephrase that. The Chief Education Officer and his support team of public servants were in fact, to a much greater extent, running the system rather than the interim Authority and the Authority.**

Mr Lawler: Of course. It's like the government runs, so not the Parliament. We had our clashes. I mean sometimes it became personal. I remember one situation which they got very, very upset because I suggested in a press release that Hedley Beare was taking liberties with the truth. And, between you and me, he was, on this particular thing. I mean I've got tremendous respect for Hedley, but Hedley's problem was that you'd walk in and say 'We're on strike tomorrow Hedley,' and he'd say 'Yes, but in ten years' time it was all going to be lovely'. And, Hedley was surrounded by people – if you had a Chief Education Officer who'd been really education focused, like Hedley was, surrounded by very, very competent administrators, then it would have been wonderful. But there were people there who were good administrators, who had been teachers, people like Pat Thompson and so on who were really good and you could deal with them, and there were other people who really ran the sorts of things that could easily rankle teachers, like resource levels and things like that, who weren't. They might have been good administrators, but they hated teachers – we got the impression.

And, that was where the problem lay, and Hedley was in a typical service situation where he had to back the people up, so he did. I think in those times Hedley found it most uncomfortable. Later on, we got different Chief Education Officers. I'm just sad that the Hedley model, the good well thought of, good thinking, forward looking educator surrounded by very strong, effective, committed bureaucrats didn't work. Because it would have brilliant if it had really worked, because you really did need someone with forward thinking. What we have now is the department.

The mistake I made of course is not realising when the Authority went, that it was a rotten thing to happen. I thought now the lines are drawn. We know

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who we're dealing with. We can just concentrate all our forces on there. But it was wrong.

Mr Haggart: **And, when it went of course, we replaced it with Ministerial control in terms of self-government, and whilst that joint teacher, parent, community voice to the powers - - -**

Mr Lawler: But also, the kinds of people they appointed made a big difference too. The CEO, Cheryl Vardon had a meeting with the principals, and she said 'You're the bosses. You shouldn't be in that union. You should be with me'. 'What's your job Cheryl?' 'My job is to make sure the Minister isn't embarrassed'. Any mention about schools or anything? One principal responded to his eternal credit and said 'Well, I'll stay with the union unless you can convince me that there's any reason not to, and you haven't so far'.

Mr Haggart: **So, we had Dick Lee as the first - - -**

Mr Lawler: Dick Lee and Ian McPhee. Dick Lee and Ian McPhee were elected at that meeting at the workers' club, and Peter O'Connor was appointed.

Mr Haggart: **As Secretary?**

Mr Lawler: Well, initially we had Errol Sweeney was acting general secretary.

Mr Haggart: **Errol Sweeney was the New South Wales - - -**

Mr Lawler: He was a principal of Watson High School, the one famous for threatening to kick an inspector down the stairs.

Mr Haggart: **That's a bit of history I'm not aware of.**

Mr Lawler: Anyway, Errol Sweeney we had for a while. He was a retired principal, a man of impeccable integrity. He worked out of an office somewhere. He eventually had an office in the old Canberra High School. We turned up for a meeting there once, and Janette who was one of our staff, had to climb through the skylight, because no one had a key. But yeah, Errol Sweeney was the interim general Secretary, and that was because we hadn't got many arrangements whatsoever to have people released or anything like

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that. Dick Lee didn't become a full time President until his last year with us, which was 1974.

Mr Haggar: Peter O'Connor though was full time?

Mr Lawler: In '74. But not '73.

Mr Haggar: As Secretary. Right. Okay. He was quite young, then wasn't he?

Mr Lawler: Yes.

Mr Haggar: You all were actually.

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Well, I first met Peter in 1966. We did psychology 1 together at the ANU. '66? I'd been out five years, he'd been out two. So, he's probably about 75 now isn't he?

Mr Haggar: Probably actually a bit younger. He was 26 I think when he became Secretary of the ACT - - -

Mr Lawler: And, how old was I? Well, in '75 I was 33.

Mr Haggar: So, you get your full time officers and you set up at Canberra High. You eventually wound up in what was the old MLC building in Woden.

Mr Lawler: Yeah. That's right. Eventually. But '75 we were still meeting at the old Canberra High School, because I recall quite vividly we were meeting on Tuesday afternoon, the 11th of November, 1975 when Geoff Bates (Administrative officer) rang up to tell us that Whitlam had been sacked, and we said 'Get stuffed you bastard, we're having a meeting'. About two minutes later Mick March rang up, so we believed it then. So, we adjourned to the lawns of Parliament House.

Mr Haggar: Along with many, many others. So, you're in a situation there with your first two full time officers, plus an organiser. You've got Geoff Bates as the administrative officer. I'm just trying to remember who the first organiser was.

Mr Lawler: It wasn't Ken Greenway was it?

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Mr Haggar: **No, it wasn't. Ken was second I think from memory.**

Mr Lawler: Can't remember sorry.

Mr Haggar: **So, you've got full time officers, and they're spending a lot of their time visiting schools?**

Mr Lawler: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr Haggar: **And, again, those visits are non-sectoral?**

Mr Lawler: Absolutely. We really concentrated on getting out to the membership. So, that meeting in August '72, the people who were members there had paid a dollar.

Mr Haggar: **This is the meeting with the - - -**

Mr Lawler: That we elected Dick and Ian.

Mr Haggar: **Now, when was the decision taken for – again, New South Wales figures in this, because they're pretty neutral about the establishment of the separate organisation. They're still collecting fees from New South Wales Teachers Federation members. From my understanding, there was a real break when you introduced the eligibility arrangements and you were able to argue preference for union members. So, people were faced with the consequence if they remained in the New South Wales Teachers Federation but were not members of the new union, that they might find it hard to have people sitting on their assessment panels.**

Mr Lawler: I can't comment on that.

Mr Haggar: **Because of course in those days there were very clear preference rules for the registered organisations. And, of course you're in the federal arena now, being employees of a federal body as opposed to - - -**

Mr Lawler: New South Wales had no – we argued New South Wales had no right to represent any of the teachers in the ACT. We were the registered organisation, and that was that.

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Mr Haggar: **So, what forums were you arguing with? With the Commissioner?**

Mr Lawler: No. No.

Mr Haggar: **With the membership?**

Mr Lawler: Well, sorry. We were putting our argument to the membership. We weren't arguing.

Mr Haggar: **So, it's a recruitment exercise.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah.

Mr Haggar: **And, from what my understanding was, those people that chose to remain with the New South Wales system, which included a few principals, made those decisions largely on a superannuation basis.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Some of them did. Some of them made it on other things. There was one principal, for whom I have a great deal of regard – who I had a great deal of regard. He's passed now. His name's Roy Wheeler – who was principal at the time when people had to make decisions, of Lyneham High School. And, there was a teacher there on probation who he got rid of, and of course we intervened on the basis of appropriate procedures. And, she was a catalyst for violence in school. So, we had to intervene on the basis of procedures, because we'd negotiated these procedures for probation, and he just said 'Well, look, that's the way the system is going to work, and I as a principal can't deal with people who are really dangerous. Then I'm leaving'.

Mr Haggar: **That's fascinating. Because I understood from other discussions that I've had over the years that his decision was made largely on superannuation. So, that's quite an eye opener.**

Mr Lawler: Well, let's put it this way. He may have had some concerns about superannuation, but this certainly tipped him over the edge. It was right at the time.

Mr Haggar: **Yes. He went off to be principal of I think Moruya High School.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

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Mr Haggar: So, I'm just thinking in terms of getting the real boost, was to get your registration finally done in '74, where you became the only organisation entitled to argue on behalf of salaries and conditions.

Mr Lawler: Despite the objections of the Fourth Division Officers Association.

Mr Haggar: Is that right?

Mr Lawler: Paul Wright. Yes.

Mr Haggar: Was that a political exercise because they were affiliated with the National Civic Council?

Mr Lawler: Possibly. I mean I don't know who they were playing the political exercise out for, because it didn't make any noise anywhere else except the Commission had to deal with it. It was basically that when they looked at the constitution of our organisation, it looked as though we were going to try and recruit clerical staff in schools.

Mr Haggar: Which of course we subsequently did - - -

Mr Lawler: Of course you did. Well, the Fourth Division Officers disappeared and went into the ACOA. What's it called now? CPSU. So, how were you able to steal them away?

Mr Haggar: It was during the Bill Kelty era of the formation of big unions.

Mr Lawler: They were already CPSU people weren't they?

Mr Haggar: Yeah. But there was minimal coverage of them in terms of on the ground, resources - - -

Mr Lawler: That's a CPSU story all over isn't it?

Mr Haggar: Yeah. And, the first step was to get joint coverage. Anyway, that's a different story. So, you're off and running, and were they contested elections, Dick Lee and Peter O'Connor's?

Mr Lawler: No.

Mr Haggar: So, the first contested elections then were when you were elected.

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Mr Lawler: That's right.

Mr Haggar: Peter O'Connor is still secretary.

Mr Lawler: Yep. Yes. It was for the Presidency, and there was John Bevan, John Gelling, me.

Mr Haggar: I wasn't aware John Bevan had stood for the President's position at that time. Was he an organiser at that time?

Mr Lawler: I think he was. Well, it went to preferences, and I won on John Bevan's preferences.

Mr Haggar: And, John Gelling was a principal at that time?

Mr Lawler: Yes.

Mr Haggar: Right. So, you're then President, Peter O'Connor Secretary. John Bevan picks up at that stage - - -

Mr Lawler: Still an organiser. He's an organiser for me.

Mr Haggar: For how long? A couple of years?

Mr Lawler: Yes. I think so.

Mr Haggar: And, then he was replaced by Ken Greenway?

Mr Lawler: Right. Yep.

Mr Haggar: Who had come from a primary background?

Mr Lawler: Yes. He was at a primary school over in Belconnen. What was it called? I can picture the particular principal's face, but I can't give you his name. Sandeman. Ron Sandeman's school.

Mr Haggar: Yes. I remember him. Charnwood Primary? No. That might have been his final placement. Yeah.

Mr Lawler: Anyway, Ken came from there. I didn't know much about him. I soon learnt a lot about him. Larger than life individual. Very good organiser. A way of

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talking to people which won them over. Sociable. Very, very deeply committed to it as well. Really great organiser.

Mr Haggar: **So, we're now in a situation where there's full time union office and you're changing the structure of the organisation to a branch-based structure.**

Mr Lawler: When did that come about?

Mr Haggar: **I'd have to check the dates on that. But I suspect it was by '77. You were winding up the Secondary Teachers Association.**

Mr Lawler: Well, I still think that there was a regional situation before we moved to branch.

Mr Haggar: **Yeah. I don't remember a regional one, and I came back to the ACT in '77.**

Mr Lawler: When the Secondary was going. Perhaps I made that part up. Never know. When you get old you do these things.

Mr Haggar: **So, we're looking – I mean you've come through the Whitlam era now. Fraser's running the show in terms of resource space. But you're also in a situation of action being called on a national level, your own political issues. I mean I think in '75 there was the Medibank strike, national strike, the ACTTF was called on to participate in.**

Mr Lawler: Yes.

Mr Haggar: **Not well supported.**

Mr Lawler: No. You've got to remember that in these early days we were dealing with people who weren't particularly au fait with the notion of striking.

Mr Haggar: **Because the first one had been in '68 in New South Wales.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. And, we did a lot more striking than New South Wales did. We became fairly successful at it. Like the Easter Tuesday thing.

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- Mr Haggar:** **And, in terms of the settlement of that one, there was the number of holidays were maintained.**
- Mr Lawler: No. Basically they came at it with a different perspective. They said let's standardise the number of school days, and we did our mathematics and said this is all right. So, we accepted that.
- Mr Haggar:** **Because over time there was an advantage, or at least the preservation of conditions.**
- Mr Lawler: There was an advantage. So, both sides won. It's a win-win situation.
- Mr Haggar:** **What about some of the other disputes? I mean we've talked about the Tharwa dispute and the Medibank dispute. I mean there were regular calls from the far left of the council for - - -**
- Mr Lawler: To bring down the government and bring about a socialist government dedicated to socialist principles.. Yes. We had that.
- Mr Haggar:** **This is after the general strike.**
- Mr Lawler: Yeah. That's right. The general strike to bring down the government. Well, see, they were an interesting group of people. Sorry. They were an interesting group of people, because there was sort of six or seven activists ranging from John Collings down through Hosking and Robinson and the Hirds. But they were all from different parties. They did not get on. So, people used to say to me 'You go to these mass meetings, and all you hear from is a bloody far left'. And, I used to say 'Yes, and the executive motion gets up'. But I remember the principal of Ainslie Primary getting right up me after a meeting. He had his hand up all the time. I said 'Mate, your hand wasn't up first. You can accuse me of bias, but I do not admit to bias.' He said 'You gave it all the left. I said 'Well, I can't help it'. That was a meeting at Ainslie Oval.
- Mr Haggar:** **Do you think they in the end had something of a role other than just guaranteeing that the executive position, which was always more pragmatic, would get up?**
- Mr Lawler: I'm a little bit joking about that.

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- Mr Haggar:** Yeah. I appreciate that. But I have given some thought to this, as to whether or not – particularly someone exercised a degree of, not consciousness, but they had a role in demonstrating that there were broader issues. And, then more pragmatic and realistic options would come into the consideration of the executive if they were arguing against anti-war positions or they were arguing in favour of - - -
- Mr Lawler: No.
- Mr Haggar:** Right. You just think that their position - - -
- Mr Lawler: I'll tell you why. Because they didn't do it. I don't recall – probably my memory. I don't recall people like Hoskin and Robinson and so on getting – the only person whom I had a lot of respect for politically was John Collings. But I don't remember these people getting up and arguing those positions. Their modus operandi was to listen to a motion from an executive member or from the floor and get up and argue about it. It (the executive motion) didn't go far enough. We should have a general strike, etcetera, etcetera. I didn't see them as putting up an alternative or more progressive agenda at all.
- Mr Haggar:** Right. So, they weren't in an educative role?
- Mr Lawler: No. No. They basically said 'Here I am on the high moral ground. Look at me. Look at me'. That's about it.
- Mr Haggar:** We did have from John Collings on a regular basis the 'You promoted them' approach.
- Mr Lawler: That's true. Which was basically again not particularly progressive. And, we had from Hosking, who I liked personally, occasionally, attacking 'the rotten leadership'.
- Mr Haggar:** I'd forgotten that phrase.
- Mr Lawler: One thing we did do in terms of industrial action, some people would charge us as we were too quick to move to industrial action. I think if you look at history, of all the things where we decided to take action, that all sorts of attempts were made to get resolution before we moved to that. However, with the one exception. I was quite confident that when we took action, that

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the membership would understand that we tried to do all we could and we saw this as a last resort. The two times where that was not the case in my mind was the action in relation to Tharwa Primary, where I thought we had no option on principle but to do it, but I didn't think it would be well supported. And, the other one was where I grossly mis-underestimated the strength of feeling of the membership.

When they stood us all down in 1982 - - -

Mr Haggar: **This is the CEEP ACT?**

Mr Lawler: Yep. That week I wasn't here. I was in an ACTU executive meeting.

Mr Haggar: **Chaired by Bob Hawke?**

Mr Lawler: No. '82? No. He was a member of parliament by then. Anyway, we got the message through, and actually Ian McPhee spoke to me Monday night or the Tuesday night. And, I realised I had to get back to Canberra. And, he said 'What do you think?' And, I honestly thought 'I think they've stuffed us. We'll have to get on back to work I think'. Luckily he was the only one I spoke to. When I came back and I got off the plane, I got a taxi out to the union office at Parkinson Street, and I saw all the cars and all the people.

Mr Haggar: **We had 200 people in the building.**

Mr Lawler: I thought Christ, this is good. So, we'd beat them.

Mr Haggar: **By pulling out the entire membership. You were then suspended.**

Mr Lawler: Yep. And, then we had a meeting at Bruce Stadium, and Cathy Robertson and I went off to meet the Public Service Board halfway through, and came back and said – they said if we go back, they'll give us an increase. And, as it transpired, they'd already spoken to the parents and told them it was going to be five percent. Anyway, then to her eternal credit, Judith Cohen intervened, and we held a hearing and she took us outside in the middle, and said 'Look, I'm not supposed to do this, because you're still on strike'.

Mr Haggar: **Or suspended.**

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Mr Lawler: Yeah. Well, you're on strike and suspended. She said 'I'm going to offer you an interim 12 percent, and you better take it. You better get them back to work'. So, we went back, and we did. And, that's where another fundamental error was made, which you'd be fully aware of.

Mr Haggar: This is relation to the TAFE - - -

Mr Lawler: Yeah. You was standing at the door keeping them out remember.

Mr Haggar: Keeping an inebriated individual out.

Mr Lawler: A drunk individual. Luckily it turned out alright. Jesus Christ. What a terrible error of judgment. Still, you get caught up in these things, and we're not perfect are we.

Mr Haggar: Well, you could also argue that there's only 24 hours in the day, and in terms of the time we had to prepare - - -

Mr Lawler: No. No. I wouldn't argue that. I'd argue it was my terrible error of judgment.

Mr Haggar: Well, feel free. Actually, that leads on to a question in relation to TAFE, because we've talked about primary and secondary and pre-school, but in terms of how the TAFE sector was brought in to the organisation – because there would have been members of the New South Wales Federation working in the ACT TAFE.

Mr Lawler: Absolutely.

Mr Haggar: And, at that point you had three TAFE colleges.

Mr Lawler: That's right.

Mr Haggar: Or two TAFE colleges at that point.

Mr Lawler: Well, Jack ran the Canberra one, Jack something or other, and then there was one in Belconnen.

Mr Haggar: Mr Ibbotson.

Mr Lawler: Yeah. Phil. Bruce. Is that all we had? Just the two?

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-
- Mr Haggar:** Yeah. I think the Woden one was open subsequent to that.
- Mr Lawler: Of course, it was. Because it was Woden Valley High School.
- Mr Haggar:** No. Because it got started - - -
- Mr Lawler: It started somewhere else did it?
- Mr Haggar:** Starship Galactica in Woden.
- Mr Lawler: Of course, it did. Yes. Right. Well, I can't talk very much at all about that, because I made a conscious decision that that would be Peter's bailiwick.
- Mr Haggar:** The Secretary's responsibility?
- Mr Lawler: Yep. And, when Ian came on board, it was Ian's bailiwick.
- Mr Haggar:** Okay. Alright.
- Mr Lawler: Which I could tell you a story about putting the case forward at the Industrial Commission, but I won't.
- Mr Haggar:** I'm aware of that. Okay. Alright. So, how are we going for time?
- Mr Lawler: It's half past 11:00.
- Mr Haggar:** Right. Good. So, let's get back to – I mean the most significant event really, to have your entire workforce, apart from a few...
- Mr Lawler: Conscientious objectors.
- Mr Haggar:** Having the entire workforce suspended by the Commonwealth Government in what was ostensibly a political reaction to the Lowe by-election in New South Wales, how did that feel for you as an individual?
- Mr Lawler: Well, as I said, when I was sitting down in isolation in Melbourne and just hearing they'd all gone (several hundred suspensions of members undertaking a morning rolling stoppage.) and all this sort of stuff, I was quite worried, even though I knew it was maybe on the cards. However, when I got back to Canberra and saw how the membership had reacted, I knew we

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were right. They couldn't outlast us, the strength of the membership. What they hoped that this would push us back to work, and that could only happen if the membership had folded. They didn't fold. People who were conscientious objectors the day before went on strike the next day.

So, when I got to the union building, I knew that we were right, and we had to see it through and we would see it through, and the membership was with us and we were with them.

Mr Haggar: **But as you described, you had a Commission that had the capacity to intervene.**

Mr Lawler: We knew that. Well, theoretically it wasn't supposed to, but yes, we knew that. And, when finally, the call came from Judith Cohen on the Sunday night, I knew we were right. Because we had a person who knew what the situation was. We had little respect for the Commonwealth Public Service Board.

Mr Haggar: **And, Judith Cohen?**

Mr Lawler: Yeah, but who was a fixer in the real sense of the word.

Mr Haggar: **And, in terms of the ACTU and the ATF?**

Mr Lawler: The ACTU, when I went back, sent an organiser to help, but he didn't do much. Well, he couldn't do much. He did a lot of work with the people in the office, but not externally. The ACTU carried a resolution supporting us.

Mr Haggar: **And, this wasn't the dispute where Kelty came up?**

Mr Lawler: No.

Mr Haggar: **No. That was another - - -**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. No. We did it all by ourselves.

Mr Haggar: **In terms of public support in the ACT?**

Mr Lawler: Well, as all things happened all so quickly, I think the parents' organisation was saying that the teachers should be given a pay offer. That's basically

their position. And, they deplored the need for strikes. They said that teachers deserved a pay offer. When it came to a head, I think things moved so quickly that it was just us and them.

Mr Haggar: What about the media? Same story?

Mr Lawler: I think so. Well, I think the media just reported what was going on. I can't remember the Canberra Times being - - -

Mr Haggar: Editorialising.

Mr Lawler: No. I can't remember. I've actually been through a trove at the library and picked up a lot of headlines from those days, which are on my iPad, but I can't recall it. They kept using a terrible picture of me. The other activist by the way, when you're talking about the comments and all that, was Bernie Hearn of course, who occasionally used to move votes of no confidence in me on the executive.

Mr Haggar: Who of course became a union organiser.

Mr Lawler: With that big smile on his face. Supported by Cathy Robertson.

Mr Haggar: Now, once you had retired from the position of President after eight years, you actually transitioned as Deputy President, and held that for a number of years. One of the – and this is taking in a historical context, but nevertheless I still want your perspective on it. Very early in Cathy's tenure there was a motion of no confidence passed at the executive, and it was directed as her as President rather than including the General Secretary. Have you ever reflected on that particular exercise?

Mr Lawler: Yes. I think it needed to be done because of what Cathy was doing and what Cathy was not doing. But in terms of the way in which it worked out politically, she totally outflanked us. She did a very clever thing. She got the council together that night and pushed back. But I think it needed to be done. I think people needed to know how this affected some people with a long experience in the union were about the way things were managed. I mean

from my perspective; she and I didn't get along personally. Although we've had a number of coffee meetings since in the last year or so.

I didn't see a philosophical – I didn't see that she was philosophically inclined to be committed to what the union was all about, and that tactically what was happening was that we'd passed some sort of resolution at council, she'd go off and do the negotiations, she'd come back with negotiations, and we'd have an amendment to the policy until eventually the policy looked like what the boss wanted, and then she'd announce victory. As far as the union was concerned, I suppose there was a period there where we were far too inward looking. I don't think on reflection, looking over the period, that the union suffered because of it. I don't think it prospered necessarily because of it, but we maintained our strength in membership. We maintained our position in putting things forward, our negotiation and bargaining position. It was unfortunate though.

Mr Haggar: **And, then of course Peter O'Connor comes back in two years later.**

Mr Lawler: Yes. I could never understand why he did that. Anyway.

Mr Haggar: **I mean from – and I wasn't an outsider at the time, but looking at it with say an outsider's lens on it, you have your first female President elected, and within months there's a motion of no confidence.**

Mr Lawler: Yes, I know.

Mr Haggar: **And, overturned with a message to the Executive basically, 'Get on with it'.**

Mr Lawler: Yeah. That's true. I've got this problem. Even though I'm 77 years old, I don't see things in terms of women and men. I just don't analyse things like that. But on the other hand, if she's not doing what I think was to the benefit of the union and doing things basically to the detriment of the union, does the fact that she's a woman save her from that? She's a woman. I can't say anything about that. I didn't do that, because I just didn't see it that way.

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- Mr Haggar:** It's an interesting debate, and probably not a part of this exercise. But you had left the position with I would think a significant degree of respect.
- Mr Lawler: And, I didn't king make.
- Mr Haggar:** And, you didn't king make, and that's another discussion.
- Mr Haggar:** Well, look, this is as far as I'd like to go today, if that's okay with you.
- Mr Lawler: That's alright.
- Mr Haggar:** Is there anything you'd like to comment on?
- Mr Lawler: No. Except to say I don't think I could have done the job you did or the job Glenn's doing.
- Mr Haggar:** In what sense?
- Mr Lawler: Just so different.
- Mr Haggar:** Well, I look at the job Glen's doing and think ten years on, gosh things have changed dramatically.
- Mr Lawler: Yeah.
- Mr Haggar:** Social media and what have you.
- Mr Lawler: Do you think he's doing a good job?
- Mr Haggar:** Yes, I do.
- Mr Lawler: When I think that he went to school with my son Peter.
- Mr Haggar:** He has reminded me of. Actually, that's something I should have said. One of the circumstances – holding that job down as you did for eight years, did your kids experience any negativity?
- Mr Lawler: They often say there were long periods where I didn't see them much.
- Mr Haggar:** But you had the ACTU role as well.

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Mr Lawler: Yes. But that was only three or four meetings a year. But there were lots of times where I'd be off at seven o'clock in the morning and home at 11 o'clock at night and things like that. It wasn't as bad as being a member for Perth or something, but it was their formative years.

Mr Haggart: **Do you think it handicapped you in terms of your subsequent career?**

Mr Lawler: Well, when you consider whether it handicapped me or not, if I hadn't had that reputation for being a fire brand unionist, I may have been principal of Kaleen High School.

Mr Haggart: **But there were actions taken by a senior bureaucrat to manipulate the promotions process to stop you becoming a principal even though he hadn't actually met you at that point.**

Mr Lawler: No. Not at that stage. He met me a little bit later in the grounds of Narrabundah College. I said 'So, you're the one'.

Mr Haggart: **I actually noted you had difficulty as a member of the ACTU executive attending the Accord Summit called by Bob Hawke - - -**

Mr Lawler: No, I didn't. At least, I don't think so.

Mr Haggart: **No. I know you attended, but wasn't there an issue about whether or not your principal would sign off your leave to attend?**

Mr Lawler: I don't recall that. The biggest issue was the fact that the member of the union staff that I had a role in having sacked was assigned as my (Commonwealth car) driver.

Mr Haggart: **Right. Okay. Well, thanks very much Keith.**

Mr Lawler: That's okay.

[End of Transcript]