

## Stories of working with community in Western Australia



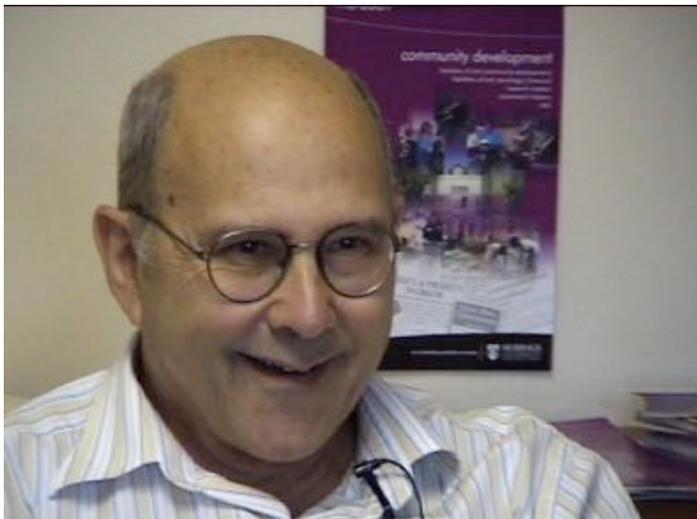
Transcript

Interviewed and Recorded by Dave Palmer & Jennie Buchanan

### **Ken Posney**

Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia

9th February 2004



Ken Posney pictured at Murdoch University, 9th February 2004

**DP** Hello Ken Posney and thank you very much for coming to talk to us about your involvement in this business called community development.

**KP** I passed my first test this morning Dave. I found the room.

**DP** **OK. Can you begin by offering us your recollections about your own involvement in community development in West Australia?**

**KP** Probably my perceptions of what was happening here were partially determined by what happened to me before I came here because, like to a lot of people in WA, I was a migrant and I came from a place called Detroit. Not a place many people visit these days but it was a racially mixed city. It was



something like one third black and two third white and I had a small business like the Fremantle Market at Fremantle selling Maltese crosses and beads and what have you. We had probably the worst riot in the country in 1967 and so

I was out of business and after that I decided maybe I needed a change in environment. I was pretty fed up with the states and so I thought, “Well Australia looks pretty good. It is twelve thousand miles away. I didn’t have any idea and partly to get the money to come here I called an organisation called Aid Dependent Children. It is equivalent to Community Welfare and that was my first exposure to what we know as Welfare Rights. You can imagine in the sixties in the US that was what was happening and so I plunged ahead in this place called Delray in Detroit and I became involved, even though I was a worker, I became involved with the welfare movement and that was based on sort of empowering people and saying, “Well we are not getting enough of the cake. Can we change the system?”

All those things looking back are not very realistic but they gave people some sort of hope at that time and that sort of image carried on with me. Then in 1969 I migrated to Australia and I sort of left the Welfare Rights thing there but it was still, you might say, up in my head and from there I came to Fremantle and I started working as a probation parole officer. I began to realise too that I still had this thing in my mind that if you were going to change society that there was always this issue about what to call incremental change and structural change. It is all academic but at that time it seemed extremely important and perhaps as we grow older those areas seem a bit greyer.

**DP Yes. Who were you working for?**

KP I was actually what they call a Probation Parole Officer. It is Community Justice today.

**DP Right. This was working for the state government?**

KP It was a State Department.

**DP The Children’s Welfare Department?**

KP Well it was part of, it was for the over eighteens and so it was a good grounding because I also covered the bush and other areas. Bunbury, Albany, places I wouldn’t have seen, well unless I took it on my own to go and see them. But I got to know those communities.

**DP Do you remember the name of the Department ...**

KP Yeah. It was probational parole. It was under Crown Law and it was separated from the Prisons at that stage and it was just really a Department that was starting up. We were the first ones to go out of the Prison and ... people for parole. So it took a while to get to know the prison warders. It took a while to get to know that system. They had their own community of prison warders and it hadn’t been disturbed for many years so you could imagine having these newcomers. At that stage if you look at the migration in Australia, particularly West Australia, our service was made up of two thirds of what we would call today as ‘blow-ins’. People from Africa, England, America, Canada and so there was certainly resistance about that and that kind of change. I remember being called the Wanker Yank. I didn’t know the word wanker then. I got to know it very well. (laughter) And then that is what got me really interested and while I was in that prison system I got to know a guy called Alec Stewor, who was a prison officer, and he was collecting all the artefacts, the log books and all the rest of it for a prison museum. That really got me interested in the local history and seeing the possibilities of it and probably during that period too I got involved in a project called The Harvest and that was how I got to know Fremantle Council. We set up a drug house in North Fremantle. Something we wouldn’t be allowed to do today. We’ll maybe touch that later on. Just a



house in North Fremantle and it was a rehabilitation of drug addicts, either coming out of prison or people who were on a drug kick at that time and so that was my, sort of my first community development project.

**DP** **And when was that?**

**KP** It was about, that happened about 1977. In 1976 I did this social work course at Uni and that debate about incremental versus structural change continued in that class. “You know, what is change?” Do you topple the superannuation system, inequity of income and all the usual things that you talk about at that stage and of course, what happens, is that people go out into the community and if there is no base for those views they get quickly swallowed up into the system and that is the last you hear of them. There is a few you hear about after that but you have to work at it.

**DP** **And that was?**

**KP** That was about 1976.

**DP** **That was Curtin or that was UWA?**

**KP** That was UWA. Yeah. I always felt that the Curtin one was a better course but if you already did a degree like myself, I did a useless history degree in the US... Well it is easy to get a degree in the States. It wasn't so easy here so I did the social work degree and then I did it in about eighteen nineteen months here and it was a good system. And it was a good introduction to what West Australia was like and what the issues were at that time. The reason I contrast the social work course at Uni with the one at, I think it was called WAIT then?

**DP** **Yes.**

**KP** (continuing) was because the sort of the radical fringe that people when I started at the Council, I want to go onto that but in a few minutes, most of those people had a social justice viewpoint about the world, about the sharing of resources, financial services, children's services and we just celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of what we know as Community Legal Service, I think it was in the November that I came back from overseas and that service started off as a counselling service in 1973.

**DP** **That is the ...**

**KP** And so a lot of the students, there has to be some basis for how you see the world. You have to share that view with somebody else to keep that sort of fire going and when I joined the Council in '79, the social workers, people I was getting from WAIT were of that ilk and they had that sort of fire in their belly. Sue Hoare, Tony Cook went through that year. Michelle Scott and so it was a coming together of a group of people who, Maggie ... or Maggie ... as she is known now, who went to work for, I think it is, ACOSS in the Capital city so that was sort of the grounding of that.

**DP** **So where were you living at the time?**

**KP** I lived all over but somehow or another I gravitated towards Fremantle in the, probably the late eighties. Yeah. Probably mid eighties. Yeah. I bought a place in Beaconsfield and, but I had always had an affinity and a connection to Fremantle, plus I rented places around Fremantle but I bought my first place in about eighty-five.

**DP** **And you started work at Fremantle Council in the late seventies?**

**KP** Yep. Probably late seventies, just turning 1980. Yeah. You might say the late seventies.



**DP What were you doing?**

**KP** Well it was interesting because at that time Fremantle was, had its' own crisis about what kind of regional centre it was going to become and was it going to follow in the steps of Perth which

had modernised. And fortunately it didn't go that way but there were a number of, what I would call, 'inspired people' at that time, Mary Edmunds, one of my mentors Vern Reed who was the then community, he had the equivalent of my position, Community Development Director and then Jeremy Dawkins came along later on. Certainly during that period on, documents like Preservation and Change were written, Changing Fremantle and all these documents had the same thing, that Fremantle was worth preserving and if it was worth preserving the buildings, it was worth preserving the community that was in them because it isn't just buildings, it is about people who use them. About that time the Arts Centre, the asylum building became an Arts Centre, FTI was, the old Boys School, that became FTI and then the Fremantle Education Centre. A lot of these buildings were recycled for social purposes. And, probably during that period too was the change in the government, in the Labor government, Whitlam, for the first time you could fund community services, you could fund local governments direct. So that got them really started into community services in the beginning of the children's services, there were huge, which started in '71 but they didn't start getting funding until the Whitlam government came later on.

**DP That was the Women's Refuge?**

**KP** Women's Refuge, that was in '71. Well, there was CLAC the Children's Service, Meg Fletcher came in about that time so there was a whole sort of renaissance, or surge., The problem I think at that time too was that we were the only ones doing it and there was a lot of controversy about Local Government being involved in these so we were in isolation, which I think

had its advantages because we were, the council, was always seen as the odd person out.

**DP I am interested in this because Fremantle Council's involvement in community work was very early compared to other West Australian Councils. Can you talk about how this came to be?**

**KP** I think it was a collection of people that came together. It was obviously the beginning of the heritage movement but it was also guys like John Birch who ran what we know as the cultural services and he wrote a paper earlier on about "What is Community Development?" He said community development is about, is really about parades, people participating, community arts projects and right at that time they were just starting to fund those kind of projects. In other words, 'high art' was a factor but it wasn't the only factor and so that meant that places like Deckchair, and later on, Spare Parts ... you know, set up in Fremantle. I had to smile at myself, reading some of what Birch wrote at that time. There was a guy in America called Charles Reicht who wrote "The Changing Consciousness" about America, you know, ... one, two and three, and he was reading Charles Reicht, and the consciousness of three was a cultural consciousness it wasn't just the rights kind of thing or industrial but it was a change in the way people did things.

So he was ahead of the time and he was also the inspiration, one of the inspirations behind, obviously setting up the Arts Centre but later on the community development and the guy that I worked for, Vern Reid, in the late seventies, he was also one of those pioneers. I think at a speech that I gave some time in the eighties, I paid great tribute to Vern because he had an open door policy, anybody who had an idea in Fremantle whether it was about a furniture pool, APACE, the Fremantle Gazette, a lot of the stuff goes back to putting tables out on the pavement, those went back to Vern and that open-door policy was unlike most local governments. If you had an idea, like



alternative technology, which APACE is still existing out there, or starting up a newspaper, a local community newspaper because a lot of that stuff written in the newspaper at that time. June Moorehouse is doing some work on that and she is talking about a lot of the

people that John Razor interviewed, or she interviewed, at that time and that whole reflection is on Fremantle about Peter Newman, John Razor and other people at that time were doing, came through the Gazette.

So a lot of that thinking was happening in Fremantle and you can't contribute to any one cause but it certainly was a cesspool of people saying, "We," I think Vern summed it up to me one time, he said "It was about allowing things to happen." And that is what set Fremantle off from other places and accessible Council really. Council in there, Murray Edmunds was working for council when he wrote 'Preservation and Change.' Today talking about 'changing' Fremantle seems a bit sophomoric. It was written in '73 and you know if you impose a modern building on a roundhouse it wouldn't be Fremantle any more. So it is all that kind of thinking of coming from the community but about what is happening around them.

Now I would be the first to say that doing, and this has been a pattern all the way through, no matter what you do in Fremantle, it is challenged so you know, I am not just brushing over stuff during that period, it was all challenged including the Parry Street extension. I mean I will come to that later on about the America's Cup. So there is also a culture here of people feeling they should be heard, in Fremantle feeling they should be heard. So everything you do there will always be a contingent of people who have the opposite view and that probably, in some ways, is a culture that is worth supporting.

**DP To what extent did that energise people?**

**KP** Oh I think it had a terrific effect, when you look at, I think it was 'Guidelines of Fremantle' that was published later on, that was done by a lot of, about where Fremantle should go in the future as a society, or in a playing terms to, that was done by outside people. A lot of those projects I mentioned, APACE, Friendship Pool, were done by, so people felt comfortable coming forth with an idea.

Jeremy Dawkins was appointed in '78 as a development officer to make, to put some practicality behind some of that preservation and change. In other words that came to fruition with America's Cup. I guess what we are saying about a lot of this too, you say, "Well how did this change happen?" some of it has to be good luck and the good luck in this case was the America's cup. The trains had been shut down in '79 and so Fremantle was left to wither on the vine and when they won that cup and Burke brought those trains back, I think in '83 and then electrified them later on, that put Fremantle back on the map.

**DP So Charles Court shut down the Fremantle line?**

**KP** He did indeed.

**DP Too expensive?**

**KP** Too expensive, we were going to do with buses, trains weren't a transport of the future. I think Peter Newman was involved in the Save the Trains and so a lot of the impetus for a lot of the change came from people at Murdoch and so, and Peter always had a vision about the possibility of public transport, and obviously it wasn't shared by local government at that time or they wouldn't be shutting the train lines down. It was also a comment that modern shopping centres were being built and Fremantle wasn't going to be the place of the future.

**DP A familiar story isn't it though?**



KP A familiar story and that they had gone the wrong way in preserving all the buildings and the wrong policy direction.

**DP Was the cup fortuitous?**

KP I think the cup ... Peter Newman wrote a good paper on the cup saying that a lot of the plans about the Town Hall, the Square, the Roundhouse, had been thought about earlier and so when the cup came along restoration of the Union Stores, the restoration of the Moore's Building. Those buildings had hadn't been touched, Moore's Building was in private hands so the Cup came along at the right time because those plans were on the drawing boards but there was never going to be enough money to restore things like the Town Hall.

**DP At the time were there developers that were keen on doing other things?**

KP There is always developers keen on doing other things and fortunately I think we had a fairly good grip on it. Now there was a film done about the Cup period on SBS called 'Win, Lose or Draw?' and you always get people who felt that not enough was done during the Cup but, you know, in terms of social impact there was 20 million dollars just spent on housing and other projects. It would be one of the few major events that the government actually spent money on it rather than expecting the government of the day, or the state to spend money and the spin off for that became the co-operatives. The First Fremantle Housing and that is the start of not only co-operative but where you've got mixed housing. Private housing and mixed housing in the same site.

But during the Cup it was a very traumatic period and looking back I think that probably the America's Cup office running the Cup was responsible for a lot of the dissatisfaction that was happening at that time. By that I mean there was obviously housing problems, syndicates were buying up units and the

America's Cup kept pulling out the same kind of information. It wasn't until about a year later that I went on the radio with a guy called Peter Newman who is a broadcaster, and said, "Yeah these things are happening. We are buying up lodging houses," because there was a report on lodging houses that said they were going to go for re-development in some cases, it wasn't viable to run them so the government really had to buy them. We bought three. Homeswest eventually bought two.

I think there was that but really, when you come down to it, the real objection I believe to the Cup, and there is no way this can be addressed, was that people were saying goodbye to a former period. Saying goodbye to when they would be at Papa's and have a coffee, saying goodbye to the way the strip was, saying goodbye. I mean Fremantle was always sustained on outside people coming in but suddenly it became a weekend destination and now today of course you have people saying, "Well I don't go into the centre city any more." I mean that is probably a fair comment but cities can't stay the same. They have to keep on moving and so that is probably a very legitimate view about the world but nothing could be done about it that I know of. You can't turn the clock back. You can't pretend the Cup never happened so you have to roll with the Cup and eventually that is what we did. We had a Housing Officer, we had all sorts of other services, emergency services, it was quite generous really how we were funding but the mainstay I think was the housing and eventually that led onto, Homeswest is always committed to Fremantle, but this led on to really I think an improved standard of housing for people who were eligible for Homeswest. It can be a whole cross section of people. I am sure you have people here going to Murdoch who are with Homeswest. There is nothing, there is no stigma about it any more. So the Warder's cottages for example are Homeswest and so it was one of the few areas where you can live in a central city, which I think is fantastic.

**DP When did Homeswest buy those cottages?**



KP When the Prison vacated in 1991 they bought the cottages and they restored them and they kept a stock and so low income, well for all sorts of reasons people can live in those cottages. They can be low income or they can be, you know, paying a part of their higher rent, but nonetheless they have to be eligible for Homeswest tenancies.

**DP During the period that you just walked us through, you were working for Fremantle Council?**

KP I was indeed. Yeah.

**DP Can you talk a little about your involvement as an officer of the Council?**

KP Well maybe if we go back when I first joined a lot of my time, I was the social worker for the Council and I forget what the title was. It just escapes me but I just say I was a social worker and a lot of my time was going on what we call, 'social justice projects'. There was a lot of submissions written at that time about the unfair concessions, we had the SEC action group and, I think we were responsible for government actually putting up concessions for people with energy bills. CLAC really become professionalised in terms of saying, "Well, people on low incomes don't have access to this kind of information so in terms of their financial, legal and all the rest of it."

**DP So Council funded these?**

KP They did indeed. Well they were funded by a combination of grants and a combination of Council having an input.

**DP They were formerly under the auspice of the Council?**

KP Yes. That is exactly right and then it wasn't until probably sometime in the eighties that we realised that part of the commitment, and this goes back to what we call, some people would call what we were doing and put a circle around it the social justice saddle as a form of social development. I mean I was just reading Jim ... about socially disadvantaged and that is one aspect of community development but it is not, it is not how it is defined today. But that time there was certainly, and I think social justice over the years became redefined, not so much as correcting, pulling down the barriers but making do with what you have, citizenship and what have you, but at that time there was a very big push for what we know as social justice. Youth Housing would be another example. So we were very heavily involved in all of that and then later on, probably in '84, that is when the turning point really started, sorry '83 when we won the America's Cup

**DP You were not so much involved in direct delivery of services at this point?**

KP No I wasn't, but I was...

**DP But you were the contact point at Council?**

KP Contact. That is exactly right and so all of those, at that time, took up quite a bit of energy and that is where a lot of my time went but I also got interested peripherally on other projects like local history and libraries and things like that. I mean just the other day we had a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Fre-info and it was Jim Macbeth that did the report here.

**DP Can you tell us about this?**

KP Yes that came out of the Henderson Poverty Report from what I remember. The war on poverty that happened in the states in the sixties didn't happen here until the seventies and one of the things was that people were starved for information. How do



they get information? How did they help themselves? And if they didn't have information. Jim and others did a report about what kind of information people would require and how it should be delivered and the Council had somebody

down at that stage from, what we call the State Library who helped set up the service. She worked out of a shoebox as far as we know and then later on of course it went onto card files. So if a person wanted to know about community development, this is before, by the way, on-line services and all the rest of it.

Now if you wanted to know something about it you would just go onto the web, onto the library page and you can look it up yourself but if you need to know more and you want to probe a bit further you are in Fre-info and so really that was a start of all that with Jim's project. That was basically setting up, "What kind of information do people want?" "How do you access it?" and "How do you empower people with information?"

**DP** So you were involved in initiating or managing of services under the auspice of Council? Any other community related projects?

**KP** I think, when I was employed, I was employed as a social worker in charge of all six core services, the youth, children, aged, ... the

**DP** Legal service?

**KP** Legal service and I must have missed one there but anyway, those were the core services but our system was very fluid at the time and so you cut across a lot of other areas because you were involved and, for example, I was involved in the history museum of the prison at that time outside so that spilled over into the library. The services that I am talking about and at that time it varied but it was also the time that I was involved in what they called the social impacts of the America's Cup and it was a very difficult time, very difficult, but a lot got done at

that time because money was being spent that, you know, we had to get projects up and probably from that point of view things happened that wouldn't have happened otherwise.

A spin off to that was the International Child Care Centre plus the Fun Bus. Those were smaller projects than the upgrading and restoration of the Town Hall, the upgrading of St John's Square, the housing was being built around us, the co-operatives but there were other small projects like that and so during that time all those projects had to get up, get funded and get built and that basically is how it happened.

But that period too was a personal, painful period for me because I mentioned before about people saying goodbye to a period, a number of people stopped talking to me because they felt, this is, you can never discount interpersonal relationships in Fremantle. It is all part of the fibre of what I am talking about and some of them felt that I had a reputation of supporting the social justice projects but suddenly here I was supporting developments and also some of the other things, the displacement of people. I mean we weren't but there was a lot of misunderstanding and I don't blame them for that, I think that the America's Cup Office had a lot to answer for here. It is one that I mentioned earlier, no matter what happened, no matter what is happening in front of you, there is a propaganda machine that keeps on going that says that this isn't happening in front of you so you could see on TV that people were being displaced from housing and it was really stupid to pretend it wasn't happening. The important message there is that we were building more housing in the area, Homeswest housing and we were going to purchase lodging houses but you couldn't stop people, you really couldn't stop the mechanism that was making that happen. You can't stop people from using their private property in certain ways, you have to come up with some other, so there was a jump there and I think it was a jump a lot of people who really confined themselves to social justice were finding it a transitional period of having to think a



bit broader and some of the things that happened maybe shouldn't have happened and there is a lot that happened during that period.

**DP** Were there other sets of complexities?

**KP** Yes, in Fremantle's case we had a study done on housing and whether rents were going up and all the rest of it. It didn't indicate that there was a big jump in Fremantle.

**DP** It didn't?

**KP** It didn't. It didn't indicate that and one of the reasons is that there was a lot of hype about the America's Cup. Really when it came down to the crunch in 1987 ... a lot of people didn't rent their houses, some people did make quite a bit of money renting their houses and you know, a lot of things they said were going to happen, didn't happen and so I think, in a sense, people coming in and saying they were going to rent their houses caused a panic but, you know, to the credit of people who live in Fremantle, they were genuinely concerned about people being displaced. But what was happening with the 'gentrification' is that it was happening anyway.

**DP** Yep.

**KP** Rapidly. And it is still happening so that only way you can do something about gentrification is through a planning scheme, at one level and two is to make it easy for places like Homeswest to do development in central Fremantle and through Fremantle. Today this is happening in Hilton. We know what is happening there, the prices are going up unless Homeswest takes, which they have there, they take a proactive role, people will be displaced in that area and the whole crux, I think, of Homeswest is they at least have a ten percent spread

across the metro area. Those are very hard questions and social development, community development, is, part of it is planning and you really have to make hard decisions in planning. Co-operatives are another example of the trend against what we know as 'major developments' and some of those developments to pay for them were mixed. Like the First Fremantle Housing site.

**DP** Can you talk quickly about the First Fremantle Housing Co-operative?

**KP** Oh right. Well we employed a housing officer at that stage who was an architect. Richard Hamlin. The Steven's Street site was essentially a hole in the ground and we knew that Homeswest wanted to develop that site so with Richard's effort, and through planning, we convinced Homeswest to make it a mixed development. There would be some private housing, some Homeswest and some housing co-operative. Richard got the first housing co-operative together and that means it is an unequity housing project, people do come together and they manage their own housing. They get a Homeswest loan to simplify, for the sake of today, and they set up their own management structure. First Fremantle Housing is still going. They manage the site, whatever loan they have to pay back they pay back, they collect the rents so it is completely self sufficient they just have to follow Homeswest Guidelines. Then as a result of that later on we ended up with a Fringe co-operative in Fremantle and then another co-operative in Fremantle and there is one in Hamilton Hill now, Pinikarri, which is quite imaginative in terms of the colour scheme and all the rest of it. It sort of stands out but probably if we hadn't had the first one it would have led onto the others. So there was, I would say, a planning initiative at that stage and also mixed housing developments at Homeswest at that stage were unheard of.



**DP** Were there controversies?  
Were there people in the community opposing co-operatives?

**KP** Yeah I think having mixed housing, having private housing next to

State Housing there was some resistance about that at the time and you got a variation of opinion across the community but in the end you have to say, “Well OK I have listened to everybody but this is what we are going to do.” And it did work I believe. Housing co-operatives, the Fringe got through by one vote in Hilton because there was a letter drop, which I advised them against but everybody is masters of their own destiny and I think the name Fringe didn’t help so it frightened people in that area. Got some Councillors going but it got through by one vote but now it is a very productive development. In fact my wife, before we got married, lived in the Fringe and it is still going and then one around the corner. They have all had varying degrees of resistance in the community and the all female co-operative has had its resistance as well and I think even the one in Pinikarri. Anything that is new will have this kind of resistance in the community.

**DP** Did you recall any failed initiatives and any counter campaign?

**KP** I don’t know about a counter campaign so much but a lot of the ideas, which looking back were probably a bit fuzzy, in the early eighties failed miserably and that was the food distribution centre and the requirements to make something like that administratively work with people who were also in that category administratively didn’t get up. It just kept failing and that empowering people is not always so easy and it was a great example. Maybe looking back the administration was wrong or maybe we needed to put more staff, I don’t know. It was also an initiative with Wesley Mission and that certainly failed.

**DP** So the reasons for these failures weren’t so much because of counter movements but more an inability for people to organise and to successfully plan?

**KP** Successfully plan and I think that a realistic expectation about people carrying out administration duties who didn’t come from that kind of a background, who didn’t have a background. It was a very fuzzy seventies kind of view that anybody could do anything and of course later on we got smarter but...

**DP** Magic would just happen?

**KP** Magic would just happen you know and there was a lot of magical thinking around then about empowering people, and if you did empower them that things would happen. Well it didn’t come out that way and I think a lot of social justice projects probably didn’t work out for that reason. I would think that some of the Brotherhood of St Lawrence ones, a great promotional thing, I mentioned that earlier but I would think we could all learn by what some of the shortcomings of those were.

Other things, probably if I was to reflect back, trying to find a home for a refuge was an exercise that went on for a couple of years, and maybe I will come back later on. I think that the climate was changing about people’s tolerance, about these kinds of projects. Nobody wanted a refuge near them and we fumbled, I think badly, and probably picked the wrong sites and it just went on for two years until we eventually did find a site, and we had to tough it out. It certainly wasn’t a high point in my career fumbling around trying to find a home because it was at ... street then, it was too small, but it wasn’t going to work.

And when I look back too I think the childcare subsidy being whipped out in ’97 took us a long time to adjust to that and we



let services like Fred Notley run down. And it took a while for us to realise that we had to go on the initiative and put some money into Fred Notley, turn it into a neighbourhood centre as well and that it was just going back to Council and saying, “This is going to cost x

amount of money.” Because we are in a climate right now where there is a lot more scrutiny about spending money on childcare, community services kind of projects, but we ended up making the right decision I believe and as you can see, when you go past it now, it is fantastic, but we fumbled for a couple of years because once they pulled, what I mean by that operational subsidy is that each one of these community centres, childcare were given x amount of money a year, once they pulled that out we were just like any other provider in the private market.

**DP And that was a Commonwealth subsidy wasn't it?**

KP Commonwealth and that certainly, that certainly set us back psychologically and otherwise.

**DP As it did every community childcare centre?**

KP Yeah. Yeah and I think we had it over again we would have done something very quickly but I guess we were wondering what was going to happen and we dithered around and probably doing it quicker would have saved ourselves a lot of time. Probably doing the America's Cup too, if we had it over again I would have targeted the money, a lot of the money was wasted I believe on emergency aid we didn't need, projects that shouldn't have got funded.

We were in a sort of a “We can do anything.” period. I think the phrase was ‘running with it’. Everybody was ‘running with it’ or something and everybody was trying to get part of the pie and there was a couple of things that we funded, which I can't name on tape, but that I regret funding now, regrets but

nonetheless that money could have been better used, I am not talking about the Fun Bus that came out of that or the International Child Care but certainly a lot of things that we funded. It was a lack of, we were in these kind of downtrodden kind of digs that I would describe at that time and the America's Cup office was in this lap of luxury at the other end.

**DP Where were you? Are you talking about the Council?**

KP The Council. Yeah and we were making decisions I think very, very quickly at that time and because money was available and we were being lobbied from all sides and that was the downside to it. I didn't have much to do I think with the criticisms at that time. The criticisms that I got back. We set up the America's Cup Committee of people but it was very difficult because it was already happening and by the time it did happen and people started coming from the metro area it was probably too late for much input.

**DP Can you talk about what used to be called Community Art and is now called Community Cultural Development? It seems to me that Fremantle Council have been paving the way here.**

KP Yeah, the Council is always big on Heritage and the community services but they were never keen on what we know as the Community Arts. They had been helpful to Deckchair and Winter Theatre and a few others and that was because I think they had difficulty seeing the interpretive value and the identity kind of stuff that comes with those kind of projects. So in '87 when we employed Roz Porter, that was probably the turning point. In '88 we took back the Fremantle Festival from what was known at the Chamber and we made it into an interpretative festival.

**DP What is the history of the festival?**



KP Well the festival has been around, I have got films that go back to the fifties but I think it even goes back further than that. Parades. And the parades they were up High Street and, I think there was a lot of community participation because it was a small community,

it was probably more isolated from other areas. But when we took the Festival back, at that stage it was just a kind of commercial festival, you know in and out and it wasn't meant to be interpretative or offend anybody so when we took it back Roz Porter tried to make it a parade which allows people to express anything they want to express in the community.

The festival on South Terrace, Voice Moves, there are so many things that have come up at that festival. There were ... the Aboriginal component to it. There was an Italian women's choir. I mean the list is endless.

Well what it amounted to, it became like any other development project, community development project, a lot of things were starting to come out of the community at that time. Whether it is the history of primary schools, whether it is the Aboriginal component of our Community, Booyeembara park and we were set up to do an interpretive, acknowledge the first owners of the land like at Booyeembara park, there was a ceremony there and so we had a lot of those sort of things starting to happen in the late eighties. So we changed Roz's position to Arts Development Officer at that stage and that to me was the beginning of the interpretation of what the possibilities were of Fremantle. In 1990 we brought a float maker out from Italy, because we had the Italian festival, and he is the one that started to teach the community how to make floats and so we have, it can be the South American group, it can be the Caltex Tanks, it can be almost any topic if you want to make a statement on that day, what you feel is happening here you can make it. We would never want to lose that and that is the same thing with some of the other development projects.

One of the ones that is happening right now is in Hilton, and it is circus skills because we have had severe problems with kids not going to school in that area and really not participating in what is happening. The PCYC is one of the main places where we could see it happening and Penny Cordell, Michelle ... and all the rest of it were doing a lot of good work there. Circus skills and involving them in the PCYC so there is not only a developmental side to it that we haven't seen before but there is also an interpretative side, the Italian Women talking about their culture. So you know as a social action side, because it does make a comment about what is happening in an area.

The whole arts side of it and that, we have devised a plan called Our Place a Cultural Arts Plan and it has got a lot of those interpretative projects into it. Phil Thompson who is working for us now was the Director of Deckchair. He is doing an index of performers in Fremantle and he is also advertising probably digs that wouldn't normally get the full exposure that happens in Fremantle. So I think at that level a lot of things had to happen but the Council's thinking at that time was that the Arts were confined to the Arts Centre and we had to really shift them away from that That is why a lot of the Arts are in the central city so when we have the Festival the whole Council has to participate in some way, whether it is parking, but it has certainly changed the perception of how the community sees us and what the possibilities are out there.

**DP Community development seems to have been a bit slower to catch on in Queensland and WA.**

KP Yeah.

**DP But in Fremantle it happened earlier. Before the interview you spoke about some of the shifts that you have noticed and I am wondering if we can perhaps pursue that in our discussion now?**

KP

Yeah. Well I should say that I am old enough to remember guys like ... Alinski in the States and he made that distinction between a radical as somebody who does something about it and a liberal is somebody who notices it, and so he was into social action and that model was my first initiation into any of this business about social justice.



Probably with Alinski it was a black and white kind of situation. Either you did something about it or you didn't. Of course you realise later on that life is not that simple but when I did start out I certainly started out with a social justice model, and I mentioned the students from WAIT that came in, and all the things that we did at that time. A lot of good work was done but it became obvious during the America's Cup mid eighties that the world around us was changing, that that wasn't the focal point. In fact I think poverty was sort of taken out of the language. Nobody mentioned poverty any more because nobody really wanted to spend money. That is what happens in the States. Nobody wants to spend taxes so we just pretend the problem doesn't exist.

But to be fair here in this country the health system and the income maintenance system I think is reasonably good. It needs a lot of fine tuning all the time but certainly life changed in the mid-eighties and I would say that we went onto to more of a social planning kind of model and that is an aspect of community development and that social planning was because we were looking more regionally at services which is quite sensible. Aged services, children's services and the focal point went onto that and also I think we were probably re-assessing, the Council was having a re-think about our involvement at a service delivery level and so the push with the social planning was for us to say, "Well maybe other people should be doing some of these things that we are doing." I mean earlier we had something like the furniture pool and that was reasonably successful but it was obvious that it administratively wasn't going to go onto the future. But alliance with Saint Pats and then myself and others started the Fremantle Migrant Resource

Centre in the early eighties and so the emphasis was more on getting other people to do things and I think that that was reasonably successful. But I should say that it was also brought on by a re-defining of what was available that what we know as social justice had been changed to, "Let's make do with what we have got. Let's target." "Let's be more efficient." But it wasn't any more that adventurous attack on poverty and re-distribution of income that was there before so that was a big change.

**DP And we are not just talking about those changes occurring in Fremantle?**

KP No those were macro kind of changes and just as we were influenced by the Whitlam era and the things we did then were influenced. We are not in isolation. We are influenced by what actually happens outside Fremantle in terms of the commitments we make and what our emphasis is and that is exactly what happened. Probably, as you move into the nineties, the model we are developing and looking at is the participation model which we have always had in the community arts and the rest of it. But this goes a bit further; it says that all Council decisions should be considered by the community. They should go out for consultation and it is a citizenship kind of concept that the State government is pushing at the moment and we have been pushing it ourselves for a long time where you re-educate people in the community about what local government is about so they can participate across a wide range of planning decisions. This is over and above the individual consultations about South Beach, about the Mills and Wares or whatever it may be, the West End, but this is what we call the precinct system which came in 1996.

Probably at that stage too we, the Council, Mark Randall and Jim Scott, Phil Douglas, Helen ... we had quite a flexible attitude about these issues and so we allowed Mark Randall and a group to go off and come up with a plan. This followed public meeting and it also followed up dissatisfaction with a number



of things that had happened in Fremantle at that time like putting the Justice Centre on Princess May Park and stuff like that. So it was an issue about trust. “Who can you trust?” and I don’t think that there was anything malicious involved but you know there was that and

there was another major development. I forget what it was and people were, there was a lot of disquiet out there and it was probably peripheral things like, “This is a growth zone.” And stuff like that. This corporatisation of Council. When you enter Council there is a sign, who knows what that means any more, especially ... but Mark Randall and others picked up on that.

**DP Can you describe what the precinct system looks like?**

KP Sure. A precinct system is a geographical precinct in each area and essentially the precinct charter spells out the obligations of both the people who enter into the precinct system and the Council. The Council is there to send the information out. We have a Precinct Officer. It is to follow up the information, it is to fund \$1,500 administration fee, cover expenses but certainly integrate them into a system as well as run courses.

**DP So the greater Fremantle local government area is divided off into precincts?**

KP It is indeed. So there is a Hilton precinct, there is a Samson precinct, there is ... ten. There is South Fremantle and South City, which have had a few problems as you know, and North Fremantle, Beaconsfield. This is based on a North Sydney model. Ted Mack came over and addressed the public, which we paid for, we brought him over, it was time maybe that that system would not only help educate people about what local government was about but it would stop misinformation from going out. For example a lot of community associations in my opinion, were sort of saying, “Well we are against this.” but when you look behind it, there are only two or three people.

There were no open meetings in the public so all precinct meetings are supposed to be open.

We have had two assessments of that precinct system and obviously there is varying views, the precincts in some cases don’t feel listened to, they probably in some cases maybe don’t understand their role, there is all sorts of issues with precincts but I think they have been successful in educating people in what local government is about. Educating people in allowing them to go to a local area, like in Hilton, and get a Council officer out, it demystifies the process. If they want information they can go to the local precinct. They don’t have to go to the Council. And I also think it has opened up the Council system because now anybody, precincts can ring and get information and say this is maintenance issues and all the rest of it can be discussed.

The change that has come about is a change that was probably there since the nineties. Can a group of people who come together, as they do, who have property and others who have self interest, and of course if they have a, I am not talking about a conflict of interest, can they make decisions about social justice issues? There is some very strong positives about that. I also believe that they are interested in their own allocation of resources. They say they want to control what happens but that changes the agenda in terms of the number of people I believe that we felt obligated to, the disadvantaged and others in this community so it does change that complexion. But to be fair to them there is a lot of people who do feel that way go to the precincts.

**DP Are the interested in things outside of their own precinct?**

KP Yeah. They are. They are interested in social justice issues, but it does change that complexion but in saying that, I found a lot of support for something like Walyalup Moort, which is the Aboriginal Indigenous Patrol, when I went out to the precincts. I think we have been lucky in a way and here in Fremantle we haven’t got into this law and order stuff, security patrols, se-



curity cameras everywhere and that is because I think there is still an ideology out there that this is not what Fremantle is about. This is not how we solve our problems. But it is a shift.

**DP Yes. I remember in the early 1990s a youth curfew called Operation Sweep. I am sure you remember this.**

KP Yes I do.

**DP It involved a police led initiative to ‘sweep’ young people off the streets. I also remember that many people from Fremantle weren’t very keen on the idea saying quite clearly to the West Australian government at the time, “No we don’t want this kind of initiative in Fremantle.”**

KP That is right and I think that would still be the tone today. The Operation Sweep was a mis-guided missile to put it bluntly and the police love going out and doing missions like that and so a lot of the people, a lot of the police officers were inexperienced and they were, in my opinion, sort of grabbing people off the street. It was a one-night kind of affair and so a lot of people were picked up, a lot of kids were being picked up who shouldn’t have been picked up and it wasn’t the way to target individuals and it wasn’t the way to target, it is not the way we operate.

We have got youth services for example, we have got an outreach service and our way, by targeting, would be Walyalup Moort. We know we’ve got a problem with indigenous people there, not entirely always indigenous, but certainly itinerant people so it is better to target that and say we are going to share public space with them. But we also have to manage that situation but we can’t, there would be no point in getting a patrol here because they are not going to disappear and these kids aren’t going to disappear. It was also this misguided view after that, “If we have other services, other things for kids to

do that they will stay off South Terrace.” They won’t any more than we will. There is a view that this happens because we don’t provide enough things in the suburbs. Kids are like anybody else. They want to go where the action is and if they are eighteen or above, like my stepchildren, including my own son, they will go to Metropolis and the Klink and so the thing is to make those places safe and I think that is where the police effort should go.

So no I wouldn’t support, I don’t support the curfew. I think it is a Mickey Mouse solution to a serious problem.

**DP Some people talk about community development as something that involves finding out community wants, needs and resourcing their own best interests. In some instances people in the community may want things that are not consistent with your own interests and values. For example, I am sure there are people in Fremantle who would like to see a curfew. How have you negotiated those sorts of tensions?**

KP Well it would be extremely difficult for me to negotiate any of those tensions if I hadn’t support of the people who were elected. But fortunately what has happened over the years is that, regardless of what different people may think of some of the elected members, who they didn’t vote for, collectively I think they are all quite sensible and realise that this, a curfew, can’t work, including the Mayor and I have consistently said this, “This can’t work.” So if they turned around and they managed to get some ear, the ears of elected members, I would have to put up a recommendation strongly against that and so I have never really been put in a position of having to say, “Well OK. I don’t go along with this but this is what the Council wants.” Fortunately. That would be a real moral dilemma if I was ever put in that position knowing full well that I don’t think it is going to do any good and knowing full well we started out with Aboriginal Outreach workers as well as other Outreach workers, the Walyalup Moort and suddenly to come up with a solution like that would fly in the face of all that.



I guess an example would be that I put up a report, because it had to be put to rest, that we wouldn't want a security patrol in Fremantle like they have in Melville and I recommended against it because it doesn't do good.

There is (a) no indication that it cuts crime (b) they don't have any authority and (c) usually the people, if it is a private company, you are not paying them enough for trained people to go out and deal with a wide range of issues here and of course, the cost is prohibitive. You are spending \$600,000 on a problem. The \$600,000 could be better spent. Like we just recently got crime prevention money to work with kids who are at risk, now they can be any income level today, it doesn't make any difference. So I would rather us put money into that. I mean that has been funded mostly by the state government than something like a patrol. For example, if they have got a problem in Melville, a social problem but the patrol is relatively helpless to deal with it. I just can't see. A lot of this goes back to, some of these practical solutions and how you solve these problems are not the perfect world we live in, Walyalup Moort for example, at four o'clock everyday, the bus pulls in and they take people back to where they came from. Now we are looking into whether a sobering up centre would be better than just dropping them off at houses. But there is no point in doing a sobering centre, which makes everybody feel better, if nobody is going to go to it. That is what has happened in Midland so you know that is one of the reasons things have improved, we have taken them off the street and they weren't able to get home before and that is a very practical solution.

**DP** You mentioned that one of the things that has been lost has been talk about social justice, poverty and social action. I've noticed a change too .. now more talk about community engagement, capacity building, social capital, partner-

**ships etc. What do you think are the new features of community work talk and practice?**

**KP**

Well I think that is a reflection of the area we are going into. The whole thing about citizenship fits in with the precincts. The whole thing about, there is different ways, whether it be a jury of people, people randomly picked to give feedback on developments. I think all that is helpful, there is no question of that but I would say that there is a lot of money poured into that, into that citizenship, into that kind of "What do people think?" You know it fits into focus groups and all the rest of it. "How do we find out what they think?" We have just put a discussion paper out about the precincts and we are saying, "Are there alternative ways of what people think?" What, sort of, one of my reservations, and it is only a reservation, is, "What do we do with what people think?" "What does happen to it?" We find it very difficult to translate what people think into a coherent direction sometimes. On a major project it is not so difficult but it is, so you engage people not as a whole.

What that citizenship programme does it gives you a whole number of steps about listening to people and that is all good but at the end of the day people will become cynical for this if we say we are going to listen to them and we can't translate it into some sort of practice. How we are listening to them. One of the means, even with our major projects right now, if people make a submission we have to respond to all those and whether the question mark in my mind in future, "How will that change decision making?" and it is a question that is still open ended to me. You know, we go through the check list. We are listening. I am listening to you at the moment. Well what does it really mean in the long run? I think that is as they say, the cliché, "The jury is still out on that." and that to me is the next challenge we face. What does happen to all that? We go through the process and that is what we are going through. Why at this very moment with this precinct discussion paper. "How do you listen to people?" That is what it really comes



down to. “How do I listen to you?” “How do I listen to anybody?” and you translate into making the kind of decisions you make.

**DP What do you think community workers do with that kind of controversy or dissent?**

KP Yes. Yeah. I mean I was called out the other night to Samson Recreation Centre about the programmes being cut and really what it amounts to and nothing much happening there and maybe I should have been paying more attention to this. You asked earlier about decisions that we thought we could do better on, I thought I could have done better on knowing more about this but nonetheless the meeting was that night. What you are dealing with in the audience is free floating cynicism and there are people coming to all these meetings and they are cynical about everything and you have to manage that in a group and you have to translate that to satisfaction from people who are quite genuine into what you can do about it. Now that as a concrete example is not as hard as some of the others but I have got a week to make up my mind what we are going to do about it. The programmes have been cut and people are aggrieved. Was it justified that programmes were cut? I don't know you know. And that is a problem you often face in front of community groups and whether this process we are talking about can help in some cases is a question mark in my mind.

**DP A number of people, particularly Europeans writing about a new wave of communitarian politics, claim that the recent interest in community comes out of either social dissatisfaction, a sense of loss and the fear about outside forces threatening what they have.**

KP Yeah.

**DP The critique really is that emphasis on community is involving a conservative protection of self-interests. What do you think about this?**

KP Yes I would agree with that. An interesting question you know, and it is been raised in a couple of journals about whether local government should be involved in community development and how they should be involved. Mark Randall, who is the originator of our precinct system, I went to a talk he gave, and he gave a really good analogy, we have got an administrative core that has to be rational, we have got local government Acts and we have got accountability and all the rest of it but around that is a chaos element. Now that chaos element is not necessarily a bad thing because it says, “yeah we can do this.” “No we are not prepared to accept that.” And so it becomes a question mark in my mind. Like going back to the precinct systems.

Whether people are better off going off into ... community and non-profit organisations themselves and setting them up and even though I pointed out that one of the reasons we went into the precinct system is so people get better information and they are not as committed then. They are not committed to being critical of elected people and all the rest of it. They have got their own agenda and they can come from a chaos element. The problem with, maybe one of the problems with the precincts is, they are only supposed to come in on decisions, and because we are funding it there is internal problems sometimes between them and elected members and that chaos element necessarily can actually be saying that, “We are a small community and we don't want globalisation and we don't want this. We don't want these kind of changes.” I don't know but somewhere along the line most governments are committed to the changes that we are talking about in the future so how you stop that by going through governments is a question mark in my mind. I mean I have seen a number of corporatisation in my own time, which indicates to me that I think we can make a worthwhile contribution but I think there is another side to it.



The Coogee Action Group is an example. If they were a precinct they wouldn't be doing what they are doing. They were able to take up a social issue and take social action and they seem to be coming from the point of view of lack of access to the beach.

**DP Can you explain this again?**

**KP** Well they wouldn't be able to do it if they were a precinct because suppose they were under Cockburn, Cockburn funds the precinct and they are there to maybe comment on the council decision making but they are not there to run a social action group against a decision council has already made. We have a dilemma in City of Fremantle too. The Leighton Action Group, we eventually agreed, the council agreed that the Leighton Group had a point about the spread of that development and so that was a turning point. Army Barracks would be another one but those groups are outside the precinct system. But I think what you are referring to is that you have this inclusiveness quite often based on excluding others and it can be a conservatism about going back to the past, or about not changing, and if you tell people that change is not going to happen you are telling them a lie. It is about managing change, local governments are prone sometimes to groups who want to hold back the clock because they have elected people and all the rest of it. But nonetheless you can't hold it back.

**DP Etzioni, who many consider to be the father of the recent communitarian movement, believes one of the things that we need to see is a moratorium on talk about rights. For example, bracketing young people's rights by introducing a curfew in Northbridge. What do you think about this?**

**KP** It is an interesting question, for example the bracketing of people's rights in Northbridge. We don't know what, I am unclear what rights they are bracketing there you know, but an example you gave, I think what the author of that view is,

that we are beholden to people who challenge the system and they are using mechanisms to do that to the disadvantage of the wider community and that can be a very difficult question. It can be about gay rights.

If you left it to the majority of the community to determine that they would, so it is really about embedding people's rights and how you protect those rights. He is saying that we have over, from what you are saying, that we have over-protected them and I don't think that should ever be an excuse for trampling across those embedded rights.

For example the policy in Northbridge, I am not sure what that is based on but under the Welfare Act if you think a kid is in danger you can pick up the child. So that should be happening anyway and so you have to ask yourself, "Well what rights is Gallop taking away from them?" and this is very unclear to me. What is he trying to do? What is he trying to achieve? And he is saying, "We don't want to put any more police on the street. We want increase the community development budget." So where, in a policy like that it is very difficult to know where he is going. He is not tramping across people's rights as far as I can see except he is picking up people maybe randomly, and what right he has got to do that I don't know. I mean the Youth Coalition, I think they are going to run a legal challenge on that. But it really should come down to common sense. If a kid is out there and they appear to be in some sort of danger and they are below a certain age they should be picked up and they have been picked up. JAG has been doing this. So is it new skin for an old ceremony, dressed up to look good? I would suggest it is.

**DP I am imagining that there would be considerable support for Gallop's initiative from the community.**

**KP** I mean what is it going to do for a parent that has allowed a seventeen year old responsible person to go out, an eighteen



year old, but I think actually to be fair to him he is targeting a much younger group. It seems to me that what he is saying is that they should have more focus on this younger group and it would be a lot, without making a big deal out of it, it would be a lot better to

talk to the services and see what the problems are about focussing on a group and why are they there rather than say just a curfew. I am not sure what that means and the kids aren't sure what it means either. This is a problem but embedding people's rights is an interesting one. The US seems to have a dichotomy there about saying they are going to do that. This philosopher may come out and say that but people are very, very touchy about their rights in the US as they are here and I would like to know what kind of collective, not knowing much about the author, I don't know what kind of collective protection he is talking about. He is talking about that by protecting people's rights of somebody the general community is disadvantaged, and I am not sure what he means by that.

**DP Etzioni's argument, as I understand it, is that we need to get used to waiting in lines to be checked by security officers when we go into various public events and when we travel on planes. We need to lock out people who aren't citizens or pose some sort of risk to the community.**

KP I guess the asylum seekers would be an example of that. We are talking most time about three hundred people, a hundred of which New Zealand has taken, and you would have to question whether we should be entertaining two hundred or more, three hundred people,, at various parts of the ... and I think there is a couple of detention centres in Australia whether it, and the second question there is, "What are the people's rights?" They have refuge access to the courts and they are trying to cut that off at the moment. I think you have to pick and choose your issues. On this one I would say that they are not a collective danger to anybody if that is the criteria. A few

of them might be but I can't see what the danger is and so it seems to me that that only does happen, like they had the September 11 thing and they introduced a Patriot Act and that took people's rights away in terms of the right to habeas corpus and all that so I understand but you have to weigh it up against, "What is the real danger?" and over a period of time what we will find is that the real danger has been exaggerated. The passing of this legislation and I would hate to see that happen here because we haven't had those kind of problems as far as I know.

This appeal to the wider community, I often have this about crime, is if we lock up people longer we won't have this problem. Well I mean the US and Michigan is just letting people out now because they can't afford to keep them anymore and so with California and so there is other means to dealing with the problem. A lot of it comes back to police and the first contact with an individual who has committed a crime. What do they tell them? I don't know you know. In other words there is a whole apprehension system here and the police, they seem to me, that by telling people that they are in one day, they are out the next is essentially saying, "You can only rely on a court to solve this problem." And I think the courts would have serious concerns about that kind of attitude.

**DP Can we shift slightly again. Can I ask you about the challenges that are emerging for those involved in community development? What might be the things that my students will be confronted with into the next ten to fifteen years?**

KP I think people who are coming into the system now will have to realise that they come into a community and that people have expectations of participation, now the precinct system is an example of that as well as other major projects. There is an expectation that they should be heard and, I go back to what I said before, "How do you translate that into a decision?" There is a whole process now and that to me is one of the greatest challenges that people will face. We are reviewing the



precinct system because there is some question mark for example, well we are reviewing because it is something we should do every two years, but one of the reasons we are reviewing it is obviously, “What part do the precincts play in the council decision making?” “Is it practical?” “Is this the way to go?” and those are the kind of challenges that I don’t know the answers to but we have to work towards in the future.

Probably the third aspect of that is, as we go into density living, there seems to be less tolerance among people and as the price of property goes up, gentrification, there is more expectation about their rights under the noise pollution, the Health Act, planning, you talk about embedded rights, I mean they see themselves as having these rights and Fremantle has changed slightly from that point of view. People are less likely to negotiate the situations between each other and for planning and health and noise. Noise is a constant complaint because, for pub noise for example, if people move in next to a pub and then they complain about the noise then we are in the Liquor Licensing Court. So this sort of coming together in this high-density living is an aspect. I think it is going to be a very, very challenging future and I would see that, knowing more about the planning, knowing more about the health and basically participation across the whole metro area and these projects is the crucial factors for people in these kind of business. I don’t claim to know the answers and in the future this will be, to me the major challenge.

There is probably a fourth thing and that is, this comes more out of a left field kind of situation. If, in a planning sense, you are looking at a de-tox centre or a sobering up shelter and all the rest of it, as property values go up and people’s expectations change it is going to be very difficult to receive planning approval for any of these kind of projects that really are badly needed by our society. But in terms of, you know, we have got the AIDS thing in Perth for example, they had to appeal to the

minister, and I believe those will be very, very difficult to get planning approval for. I mean we haven’t even started up with the sobering up shelter yet but I would assume that that is going to be very difficult.

**DP In effect, “not in my back yard”?**

**KP** Yes. There is a generalised fear. I mentioned earlier the refuge, trying to find a re-location for the refuge and that is that kind of fear. So that is a fourth aspect and a concrete example of that is the Youth Crisis Centre that has just been funded in this area. We have always wanted a Youth Crisis Centre, we have been trying for about eight years ... but obviously they are always going to be up against planning approval and I guess an anecdote there of interest is that the City of Fremantle put a tender in but the guy got stuck in traffic and so we never, our tender never got there in time and they wouldn’t take it. (laughter) ... some are doing a fantastic job and we are very supportive of him but we would have had to be up against that issue, “Where do we put something?” “Where do we put this Youth Crisis Centre” and probably it is in the long term that has been a good outcome because, if we couldn’t find a place in Fremantle, a location, we would have had to find it outside Fremantle and so, as a local government doing that, we would have received quite a bit of criticism and they say, “Why are you putting it here?” you know.

**DP Do you think that many people are expecting more from local government while less inclined to get involved in civic life?**

**KP** Well not just local government, governments across the board.

**DP Yeah sure.**



KP And that affects the funding we get and that is true that people expect to have minimal rates increase and they expect to have minimal tax increase across the state as well as the federal government. Each party will say that they can bring a surplus in and it is not

going to increase taxes and that puts a lot of pressure at the local level because the funding arrangements are constrained but there is a push towards efficiency in all levels of government and local government.

When Jeff Kennett got elected and he came up with a compulsory tendering, interesting, fortunately for us, there was a delayed factor about him introducing it and you know you had to have fifty percent of what you are doing, went out to compulsory tendering. I think this a factor that unseated him in the end because people got fed up in the bush and when he lost that election in '99 that was one of the major reasons. But that is a political reaction to it. We know the globalisation is always going to have some impact on us but he, the administration he had to put into local government to make that happen, ... local government they got rid of their depots and made them a planning, like any other business and went towards a customer service in the continuum rather than the citizenship.

Fortunately for us at this end, West Australian, it was never compulsory tendering but we did go through value for money and all the rest of this kind of business planning and that was probably at the same time introduction of enterprise bargaining. All these mechanisms promised they were going to produce savings, make us more efficient and probably all of them have their failings. Serious failings I would say and with enterprise bargaining, I think that that hasn't really worked for local government. It is a service industry. There is probably ways and means you should get out of services and there is ways and means you should save money but you are not going to do it through enterprise bargaining, at least not to my knowledge. So all these mechanisms have been introduced,

compulsory tendering, the enterprise bargaining, business plans, what will really be produced in the end is a question mark in my mind. And certainly enterprise bargaining hasn't really, it is still going in some local governments, including ours but I don't think it has delivered any savings ratings on a gap. It is probably a clumsy mechanism to be more efficient.

**DP Any other challenges that might face the student who has their eyes set on community development in local government?**

KP I think really the challenge is to find a right course, I mean we were talking this morning, I mean social workers maybe deliver some of this if they want to work in community, but there may be other courses now that can deliver more. I don't know. It is an interesting aspect but the biggest challenge to me for them would be the vocational aspect. How do you go from a situation and secure employment across a wide range of mechanisms in local government, state government and perhaps even commonwealth so the entry point is about how you really get set up. I think is something that needs to be a lot of work done on.

**DP Yes, it seems that today more than in the past people involved in community work are coming together from a broad range of backgrounds.**

KP Well I think for many years social work had a more of a monopoly on this kind of employment but I would see that that has changed over the last fifteen, oh twelve years. A lot of that has changed. There are a lot of other disciplines now that offer something along these lines, community worker analysis and all the rest of it.

**DP What are some of those disciplines? Or potentially some of those disciplines or vocational backgrounds or**



KP Well they can come from, by that I mean they can come from an economics degree, they can come from a commercial side, it can come from almost any variation, it can come from social planning perspective here at Murdoch. I think if you checked across

the disciplines, people who are, for example people doing the citizenship programme, you discover they come from all and it can come from a transport side. You know the disciplines are unlimited now and we have had people with a law degree so there is no one particular area that sticks out.

I think that people now who want to take up the medal can come from any discipline so what I am basically saying is that early on, social work I felt had the, had some sort of monopoly, not monopoly but certainly a much more ... people coming up who had sort of social engineering side to them. But seeing now that people I talk to not necessarily come from a social work background. Maybe the social work schools I can't, this is my problem, I am out of touch with what they are doing but I would guess that the people that I was seeing early on when I started out and the people I am seeing now, their horizons are much more limited about how they see the community and how they see the world. And I think that is a dramatic change. Maybe some of them wouldn't agree with that but that is my perception.

**DP Finally, do you have anything else to a novice who is interested in embarking on a future in community development?**

KP Well the only thing I would say is you need a lot of patience; a thick hide and you need to be politically astute.

If you don't have those three things you are probably not going to make it. But I don't know, the other thing I would say is that in the future we will get people who are interested in do-

ing this kind of work but it won't be the only kind of work they are doing. It will be a variation of things. It won't be exclusively that and they will have to be delving in other areas as well. I think the days are gone when you say somebody is just doing community development or somebody is just doing planning. I think we are looking at a more generic kind of person now.

But last I would say you have to have some affinity with the community, if you don't have that, and people pick up you are not genuine, that is hard work if you work for a government because you always have a political agenda behind you. But if you are not genuine and if they just see you as using them as a stepping stone I guess you are always going to have a credibility problem. They have to really believe in what you tell them and telling the truth today is hard work about everything.

**DP Well thanks Ken very much for that time. I'm really pleased to be able to get snippets of your experience in community work.**

KP OK. An absolute pleasure. See you then.

**DP Cheers.**

End of interview