INTERVIEW WITH JULIE GROVES
19 June 2000

I = Interviewer R = Respondent

TAPE 1 – SIDE A

I **So this is tape 38 camera, tape 14 DAT. It's 19 June 2000 and we're with Julie Groves at her property Horton Vale near Jundah, and this is the Channels of History project.**

So Julie, can you tell me where and when you were born and what your name was when you were born?

R I was born in Longreach, 11 June 1955, and I was Julie Hill.

I And what had taken your family to Longreach?

R My father's side of the family, they followed the railway line out, um or his mother's side, rather. My grandfather had come up from Victoria as a shearer on a pushbike with his gear with him. On my mother's side, her father had come to Stonehenge. They were early settlers there and he had a mail run that went from Longreach out to W-- just west of Stonehenge. My grandmother's family came from here. It was an actual fact her father had taken up Horton Vale as a block and put it together in the early 1900s. And my grandmother moved to Longreach after they were married.

I So what do you know about your grandmother's life out here on Horton Vale? What was her name and just tell me a little bit about that grandmother.

R Yeah, her name was Mary May Doyle ummm and when they first come here, her father, they'd followed the rabbit netting fence along, and he put, or put about three blocks together here ummm and Nan … I didn't realise in those days that the women worked so much. She used to talk about riding – she was a terrific horsewoman – and mustering and I just thought it was for pleasure but it was for work and I'm just sorry that Nan's gone now because the questions I'd love to ask her will never be answered. And these days women and the kids work but I just didn't think that they did in those days to sort of set blocks up.

I So what would be the questions you would ask of your grandmother if you could?

R Oh just sort of how much they did actually work. It would have been a lot harder because these days if the kids go mustering, they'll either go on a motorbike or otherwise if they go

on horseback you put them, see you put the ponies on a truck ummm because the bottom of the place is sort of fifteen mile or something away from the house and … but in those days they would have had to ride. Everything would have just taken that much longer, and when they come home you didn't have the comfort of the home, they lived in tents. Ah, they just had hurricane lanterns or candles. Didn't have refrigeration. The old meat house is still up there. Just, you know, sort of what it was like to be, I suppose, a teenager and grow up under those conditions, if they went to … I know she told us if they went to a dance in Windorah they'd ride there on a horse, the older children, and then the family, oh well Mum and the children, would go in sort of a cart or … it depended on the number of children. And they'd go for a week, and just what they did to fill in a week in Windorah between sort of race meetings or whatever and gymkhanas. Yeah, all that history's going. But, yeah, I suppose I just want to know about her life here because I've been here and mine's different to hers.

I So where would her … she would have lived in a tent on this property?

R Yes, the site of the old homestead is still up there, just the wire netting that made up the basis of the meat house is still intact. Ummm overhead tank is still on its stand, you can … the homestead was actually burnt down. A kerosene refrigerator started the fire and they lost their photographs and all their history. Luckily there was nobody home. They did have another home in town where her mother had gone to educate the younger children at the school in there. Nan only went to Year 3. So sort of like the older children, their education was sketchy, whereas the younger ones had the advantage of going through, I suppose, in those days to Year 7.

I So your grandmother, living on this land, her husband … you probably told me but I didn't quite catch, he was fencing on this land?

R No. I'm not sure, that's another thing, where Nan met her husband but he was a mail contractor, I think, in those days. I'm sort of sketchy on sort of how far back it was but I know that when they were in Longreach he definitely had the mail run, but I think he could have in those days. But he was, I suppose, more or less what we call a local because Stonehenge is only about 40 miles from Jundah so the people would have, even in those days, they still would have mixed in.

I And if your grandmother was actually living here on Horton Vale with her husband, was that what you said?

R No, no. She left when she was married. Ummm, they moved to Longreach and I suppose she still worked, like they didn't have semi-trailers to cart the wool. My grandfather had the first semi-trailer that was sort of used in the district and before that they just carted wool in little body trucks so there'd be, you know, somebody was shearing or down this way they'd be shearing and it'd be just men going continuously. And Nan cooked for them and then they'd sort of have to provide sort of sandwiches or whatever to take with them and keep their tucker boxes well and truly stocked.

I And talking about your grandmother growing up as a child on this property, did you say her father was shearing?

R No, her father had, he was, used to run the rabbit netting fence and they had a mob of sheep that … I think it was about 500 sheep and they used to drive along, like as he went along the fence, and his wife and children would be living out of some sort of a wagon, I'd imagine. I'm sort of sketchy. That's another thing I'd like to know but they followed along behind the sheep and then my grandfather's brother, he actually had a Cobb & Co. bus run from Longreach – oh, mail run from Longreach through to Windorah and I think my grandfather's got a photo of him – great-grandfather rather – he actually drove the coach for a while so I presume that was after he was on the rabbit netting fence, and then he took up a small block where the old original homestead block is for Horton Vale, and then there was another two blocks that were somehow added on to it, and that made a livable area.

I And what sense did you get from your grandmother of her life here, because it couldn't have been easy, could it? Summer heat in a tent. How did she talk about her life?

R Nan, she engendered a great love of the land ummm in me, even though I grew up in town. We'd be going for picnics and we'd be looking at flowers and grasses and soils but as far as Nan's life here, she never really told us ummm sort of the hardships, but then that still comes across today because the women don't talk about it, like if you haven't say got power, everybody, or most of us, are in the same boat and there just seems to be this sense of you shouldn't whinge about it, you should just tolerate it and I think because everybody

was in the same boat, it was all those generations ago, that you just seemed to be conditioned to it and anybody new that come in, you just had to accept it, I suppose.

I Is there a sense that if you started to whinge you mightn't stop?

R Yeah, I would think so. Like, you have to take life as you find it ummm and if you concentrate on all the hardships, you'd go round the twist out here, I think. But if you just look on the good side, like the hardships will never go away but making a big issue of it isn't going to make it easier to live, so I think sort of there's a tolerance of that and you make the best of what you've got and enjoy that. It's very hard sometimes.

I So growing up in Longreach then, you would hear stories of this area?

R Yeah, because Nan come from a big family, some of her ummm family was still down here. Her brother, youngest brother, was running this place. Nan still had, all the family shared in it but there was still some aunts in Jundah and it was just an extended family. I came down here a lot with Nan ummm you'd just come down for a weekend or that when I was really young, sort of probably up until about six or seven years old, so I suppose it was all familiar to me. Like, when I come down here, it was a wrench leaving home. I'd come down after I was married. I'd never left home before ummm and I was the oldest of six children so we were a close-knit family. But to come down here it was familiar ummm … I went to … Windorah was our local town and I knew one person. Everybody knew who I was but I was made to feel very welcome even though I'd never been to Windorah before, whereas Jundah I always felt comfortable in it. I suppose my grandmother had grown up there and relatives, just make it easier for people.

I And so how had your grandfather gone … he'd been doing the rabbit fencing here on Horton Vale and then you said he bought another property. How has your family come to own this property?

R No. No, great-grandfather … there was ummm, well rabbit fences around much like the dingo … have you heard of the dingo barrier fence? Well they had sort of in the early 1900s, I don't know how long they were there, but he would have been there in the early 1900s and followed … I don't even know what his beat was, but they more or less would have had a beat and they had to go along those fences and check for rabbit holes, etc. and that's sort of what he was doing before he came to Horton Vale. Like, he had his 500 sheep so that gave him a start ummm stockwise. I presume that they would have had to have

purchased more but ummm and as far as buying it, I don't know. I think he sort of, whether he purchased it or actually took it up, yeah, there's sort of just a lot of things, questions, that are coming up that I would love to find the answers to.

I So growing up in Longreach, who were the characters, who were the people that you would hear about out here? Was there much talk about pioneers or who were the names that you grew up hearing, or was it more just like a sense of family history?

R It was, yeah, a family history, and everybody in those days, like I'm only finding out now, people that you called 'Uncle' and 'Aunt' were never actually related to but because, I suppose in those days as a courtesy you couldn't actually call an adult by, or like a child, couldn't by their first name, so … and you were close to them so you couldn't call them 'Mr' or 'Mrs' so that 'Aunt' and 'Uncle', well that's just how I can explain it. The Aunt and Uncle came into being. You could still use their first name but it sort of had something in front of it so you weren't being, to me, disrespectful for those people. But, yes, so I'm not sure where the family part began and ended but those people, to me, yeah they were just all an extended family so you just … I think I was lucky I experienced that extended family situation.

I So it was almost like all the families out here were interconnected and you were part of them from the beginning?

R Yes. Ummm sort of, like to try and track down, I suppose you didn't have the transport so the people stayed here and then the families inter-married and, yeah, you were just related to that many people in the districts and somebody new that came in and settled and that made it sort of bring fresh blood in sort of thing, but yeah, it'd be a sense of family to me.

I And did you grow up … people like the Duracks and the Costellos, the very first settlers out here, did you grow up hearing of that history?

R No. I suppose it was when I first come down here and I read ummm Mary Durack's book *Kings in Grass Castles*. If I had have read that before I come here, I don't think I would have got as involved but because my husband's family, like their property joined, oh I think part of it joined Thalungra, but I was familiar with the properties and the places they were talking about and if I didn't know, I could sort of ask, and I really enjoyed that section of the book and there was still a Costello family. Descendants are still here. And, yeah, it just made history come alive but once they got up into the Kimberleys where I

haven't been and like I know I got a map out and looked at where the places were but it wasn't as meaningful as the stuff that I actually knew about it.

I How about Alice Duncan Kemp's work? Did you ever read it or have you ever read her books?

R No, I haven't read it but I know of her through my husband when he sort of, like people his age and older that worked out west and they sort of, yeah, talk about Miss Kemp and they talk about the family. And, yeah, I think now I'd appreciate reading sort of something like that but, for me, I get more out of it if I can, like a book like that historical book, if you can relate to the places that they're talking about and it really, it brings it alive and it just makes it a wonderful thing to read, because I am interested in that type of work. There are several books here ummm that … there's one *A Well Borer's Daughter* and an old lady, she wrote it, and it just tells about the early life and they shifted from, like they used to dig the wells by hand and that but her mother, everything got packed on the wagon and had its own particular spot and they had a cage under the wagon and the chickens were kept there. But it just, you know, sort of, it was probably something that she put down in words and you can just sort of really relate to it and, yeah, definitely books like that bring things history – alive.

I I don't know a lot of this history but I know this battle, is it called Battle …?

R Battle Hole.

I Battle Hole, here near Jundah, like there was, as I understand it, a very tough frontier between white and black here going back more than a hundred years. Did you grow up knowing much of that kind of history, like the Aboriginal resistance to white occupation and skirmishes back and forth? Was that ever part of …?

R No, it was … I never knew about that till, I suppose, I'd lived here for a long time because sort of everybody lived together. We were never … we sort of grew up, there was no difference between black or white and I don't know whether it was because in those days everybody had to live together or what it was but I think, you know, sort of to me if that had have been kept alive ummm the amount of tolerance, like it could have affected it, whereas to me it doesn't matter the colour of your skin, you're a person, and the skin doesn't affect you and I think if we dwell on things like that and keep going, harking back to them, ummm it's not going to let us all live harmoniously together these days and go

forward together, which is the only way we can go. We can't live in the past. Ummm that happened before my family, or a lot of the families were, well I don't even know if there's any descendants now, ummm so we can't be held responsible just as the Aboriginal people can't be held responsible for the things that their ancestors done, so yeah.

I So you think that histories of conflict are best forgotten to stop them creating distrust in the present?

R Yeah, Trish, I would say so. Ummm because there were horrible things, atrocities, happened on both sides. It wasn't just the white, it wasn't just the Aboriginals. Ummm and I think if people keep harking back to it, we just can't go forward. Like, by all means document your history ummm and that's part of history and we have to learn from that and go forward, and to me sort of people are living together no matter their race, and that's the way it should be. There shouldn't be any difference ummm, or perceived difference, or people treated differently, because that just creates disunity in our little communities. But, yes, I just look on, it doesn't matter who you are, you're sort of welcome to come in and have a cuppa and, yeah, I don't care, you know, sort of I'll look at the person and not the colour of their skin.

I Fair enough. Tell me how it was that you came to be living out here Julie. I guess I'm interested in where you and Ian met or whether you'd come to work out here.

R Ummm I met my husband when he went to the Pastoral College in Longreach. Ummm I was only, I suppose, about 16 when I met him, 15 or 16, and they sort of went up there for two years, the courses ran there, and yeah like, they sort of have a group of, there was only, you know sort of males there at that stage, and they'd sort of have a group of six, I think it was, that they'd sort of work together in that group like a more or less a class in school, and I suppose I got friendly with the group that he was with. Ummm and they come from different walks of life and it was never actually a girlfriend/boyfriend thing on my part at that stage. We were just all friends. And then after he left the college, I suppose, he'd sort of send a card and a letter and one thing led to another and he was working, or sort of worked west of Windorah, and then at Kadillo Downs just over the Queensland/South Australian border in the top corner there, but to me the letters were, they could make a relationship really rosy and we, you'd sort of only see each other … I never had a car ummm, wouldn't have been game to drive down there in those days anyway, and he would sort of come to Longreach and, to me, to build something on it sort of for the future, you

couldn't do it by letters. There were no telephones out there so you'd only ring up the few times he'd get to Windorah, so I was very fortunate, he'd come up ummm, tried many jobs working around Longreach, like bridge on the railway, parks and gardens for the council, did work, casual work on properties around town, sort of two or three months, so yeah like the commitment was there on our part and we worked with it but I would never have got married, you know, though I know people do and did a lot in the old days just sort of through letters and things. To me it was a lasting partnership and we had to put the ground work in and, yeah, so we were sort of comfortable together and ummm we were both working. Then he got a job at the stock and station agents in Longreach – that's where I worked – and his father, through fate, ended up buying, there's sort of two places where my family had originated from ummm yeah, and I suppose, we never expected to go on the land ummm and that he sort of just, it wasn't something that was part of the family. You know, once you get married you come back sort of thing. But, yeah, so once we got married I think we worked for about six months in Longreach and then we came to Coniston just next door to here. Windorah's its local town.

I So you say you two weren't expecting to end up on the land. Why was that? What was Ian's expectations for his future when you and he were getting together?

R Ummm I suppose we never really talked about it ummm and that he was … he never liked living in town and I sort of really admired him for what he gave up, like I know what he means now. He used to say that there were people everywhere, like you could never get away because our children experienced it when they went to boarding school, like trying to be alone, and I know that I've got to the stage now that if I go somewhere where there's a lot of people, like to a city or something, you just get sick of having people there all the time, which I couldn't understand at first. So, yeah, I really admire him for that. But as far as his expectations, he was just sort of going to … we were still sort of trying to find a niche that he fitted into because, I suppose, he worked at the agents for about six months and found that really hard at first because he's a very shy person and having to sort of actually speak, but he was still working with stock. So, yeah, he was sort of settling, gradually settling in, but the land was his great love so …

I Had he grown up … had his family been pastoralists? You said his father had bought two neighbouring properties that had once been in your family but had Ian grown up with his father and mother as pastoralists?

R Yeah, his grandparents were also pioneers. Ummm they'd come up on the train, or his grandmother had come on the train, to Quilpie and then she put her worldly goods on a wagon, ummm horse and cart wagon, and went out – that was just after they were married – and come out to a block called Bodalla just between Quilpie and Windorah, and they had to start from scratch as in the boundary fence and then build a home and all the things that go to make up a property, do all the fencing and waters. And then they sort of went on to develop another two properties from scratch so, yeah, his family on his mother's side, they had a cane farm at Mackay, and that was another case of pioneering. Her father had – he was a Scotchman – he'd come out from Scotland and had actually developed a cane farm from scratch so I suppose on both sides that pioneering spirit was there, ah and Ian's father, they owned ummm he and a brother, and after his mother was married, after they were married, his mother come out there and they were on a property about fifty mile away from here, so it's not sort of that far out of Ian's home stamping ground either, so we were lucky like that.

I So it wasn't as if Ian's family had had one property in the family for three or four generations and he was the son to next take it on. It wasn't that kind of thing?

R No, there was never any expectation like that at all. He just had no expectation of even owning a property to go on the land ummm but when we sort of came here to these two places, they were sort of very run down but nobody had sort of been living here and there was sort of cattle had trampled all the fences and that, so yeah we sort of had a lot of rebuilding and stuff to do and sort of still waiting on the house part but, yeah, the property generates the income so the property has to be producing the money and that, and just as long as you're sort of comfortable and you've got a roof over your head that doesn't leak, ummm yeah, sort of your turn will come one day.

I So how did it actually happen that you two were here? Like did Ian's Dad after a time give it to you two? How, Ian's Dad having bought this property, and when you say 'bought', is it freehold, bought outright, or bought for long lease or …?

R No. There's only leasehold ummm and that but, yeah, you sort of pay the, I suppose, the owner for the lease and improvements or whatever ummm and then we were, we come down in '78 ummm and that and we moved up here in '86 but all the … oh well, sort of like there were two brothers at home at Clifton, well then they all worked together to sort of get these places on their feet ummm and that, and then sort of we had the option of

buying Coniston or, like they sort of had everything valued and that and then Horton Vale was a lot smaller block and that and we took it for the part of, oh well Ian took it as his sort of share of the family partnership and then we sort of purchased the stock, ah the cattle come with it, and then we sort of started from there. But yeah, it was sort of very hard ummm because you had, even though I'd worked in a stock and station office, just sort of the book work and everything. In those days there was no … DPI like run a lot of workshops and that today and you didn't have any of that so you were more or less flying by the seat of your pants and sort of the guidance, to a certain extent, of his parents. Ummm so yeah.

I I haven't actually asked you, Julie, but had you had any education in a particular job? What was your background before you met Ian or you started work straight from school?

R Yeah, I went straight from school. Ummm I worked for, it was called Primary, or Queensland Primary Producers, ummm and it was a stock and station agent. Ummm I enjoyed the work. I suppose it was the love that my grandmother had engendered, I suppose, to me. She'd given me that love of the land. Ummm and through her I'd sort of been on a horse since before I could, oh before I could walk probably, and I went through pony club in Longreach and that, so I was always interested in horses and we sort of went on, a friend of mine that we worked with, to actually run the pony club in town. I think we were only about … we weren't old enough to be office bearers. One of my aunts come in and sort of, she was sort of more or less the senior person, but we'd been going riding with ten or fifteen children of a weekend, just around Longreach, so that love of the land was always there and the love of horses. Ummm and I suppose I'd worked, the next place I worked at was a stock and station agent again with Australian Estates. But I just loved the work and you're, I suppose, mixing with people that you could relate to, so I think I was very lucky in sort of the childhood and youth that I had ummm before my marriage. I … yeah, I just really enjoyed it and I wouldn't change anything for the world.

I And tell me the physical conditions of your life when you and Ian were first living, I don't know whether it was on this property, but in terms of things like power, telephone.

R Ummm Coniston, which is just next door, we come down here and I had a kerosene refrigerator, kerosene deep freeze, a 32-volt lighting plant that didn't work very often, ummm which it was only for lighting. There was sort of an old Mixmaster there which was, I suppose, the same as what my mother used on a 240-volt, but I could never get it to

work on 32 so everything was done from scratch, like if you wanted to mince the meat, you had your old hand mincer. To make a cake or stuff like that, you didn't use a mixer, you just used the old wooden spoon trick. I'd never done a lot of cooking before I was married ummm, like in those days I suppose not many of my age group did, so I sort of found it really hard to sort of be cooking for sort of for about five or six of us ummm and some of the offerings I offered up, one brother-in-law was highly insulted at my first attempt at pastry and I never tried to make pastry again for about 15 years. But their mother was a beautiful cook and I was sort of still learning. My husband, I must admit, he could cook a lot better than what I could and that they'd be cooking out in the camps and that. So I just found it really hard. Ummm coping with no telephone, we didn't have radios in that day. If I wanted to contact my family, I'd have to drive about 14 miles to the property next door, which we'd go there twice a week. Our mail was left up there. We never even had a mail man that come in. We'd sort of have to, one of us would have to drive over and get the mail and, I suppose, yeah, I never … I'd been surrounded by people and a close family ummm all that time and I found it hard because, with Ian and his brothers working, it was considered to be the woman's place in the home and I would have loved to have got out on and about the place and actually helped out there. But, yeah, I was there to cook and clean and that was the place that women seemed to take in those days. There weren't …

I So what date are we talking? Is this late seventies?

R Yeah, late seventies, early eighties. I suppose, during the dry time in '82, I suppose, I helped out a bit on the place but it wasn't till we came up here that, you know, sort of there was … there wasn't a lot of money. There wasn't any money, and there was just Ian and I and the kids and a sheep yard that we didn't have enough dogs or vehicles to patch up the holes in. Ummm so, yeah, we were sort of just starting from scratch and the kids and I would work and I'd be teaching in amongst it, so you'd sort of drop the school to go and help out. But then I was lucky, too, that Ian had come through correspondence. He understood the papers and with the oldest two, ummm they were virtually the same papers he'd worked on so if I went out with the kids and we gave him a hand, then he'd come in the house and he'd actually, he'd teach maths and social studies. But these days nobody can sort of understand the papers to actually come in and take over from us because they just keep changing the way that they teach things and it just makes it really hard ummm for somebody to help.

I **So this is camera tape 39. It's still DAT tape 14 and the DAT is currently on 40 minutes and this is the second camera tape interviewing Julie Groves in her house at Horton Vale, 19 June 2000. Trish FitzSimons on sound, Julie Hornsby on camera. Channels of History project.**

So Julie, I'll come and talk about School of the Air again in a minute but when you said when you were first married you were cooking for you and Ian and you said there were five of you, were his unmarried brothers living in the house with you? What was the structure, if you like, that you married into?

R Yeah, there was … oh, well there was sort of two brothers finished school. There was one still at school but sort of during the holidays they would come ummm but, yeah, like we'd sort of work between the places but because so much needed to be done on these two places – Horton Vale itself, there was nobody living here, we worked it from Coniston – ummm they were sort of with us all the time and I found that really hard ummm because when we were first married, things had been really busy, hectic. It was sort of through the middle of the year and the cattle sales and that, to try and work through those steps that you obviously have to when you first start a relationship with somebody and then all of a sudden I was sort of plonked in this new world ummm with a new experience and I still didn't really, to me, ummm know my husband, like as in spending the time and everything with him, because in town there were that many outside commitments I seemed to have as well. Ummm and having somebody live with you all the time, I really found that hard in a relationship, like we couldn't get away like just to sort of talk over the day and because I was stuck in the house all the time by myself, which I'd never been in that situation before, there was always something to do, ummm that, yeah, it was just hard to come to terms with. Ummm but that was the way it had to be. There was nothing else that could be done but then ummm Ian's parents obviously realised that and the homestead we were in was really old and the kerosene fridge eventually died after lots of tears. It's a wonder my tears didn't put it out. Luckily it didn't set fire, although there was a fair few near misses with me. But when it died, there was a transportable home that come up in two halves and that was his family had sold a block off ummm off their original home place, and the money was put into putting a home, so we sort of shopped around and found one of those homes that come up in two halves. And we were doing that and we had a verandah along the front so I think I was cooking for about 12 men. I was pregnant with my first child and my kerosene fridge died, so I was using the kerosene deep freeze which was a lot more reliable

ummm and the fridge, before it died, it was getting full of these tiny little red ants that get in and they used to pull all the lining out of the refrigerator and it never worked very well. When it was 120 degrees, I wanted a thermometer that went higher and I couldn't find one because it had hit 120 on the side, the cool side of the verandah, every day for weeks while these people were there working. But the ants would be in the jelly and in anything that you sort of … you couldn't really prepare that much ahead. I was terrified of poisoning someone. But then this fridge died so I was trying to use the kerosene deep freeze as a refrigerator and cooking for all these men and that went on for weeks. There was a portable lighting plant. The 32 plant had gone kafoop and you just couldn't get parts for it any more. So we were using candles. It's not romantic to have candle-lit dinners – I can assure you – for two months stretch, especially when you're cooking for that many people. Ummm and they sort of did get some party lights and there was an old, sort of a portable generator which, because, well I couldn't start when I wasn't pregnant but it just was too heavy, you're just not allowed to touch it when you're pregnant. And the refrigerator part, that really got to me ummm and I'll always treasure a man that was next door, he come up one day and found out what was going on and there was, I had had a gas one too, a fridge rather they'd resurrected from somewhere, and it worked, and then it failed on me. But he brought up just an old yellow Electrolux, I think it was, but it just looked like a normal fridge that my grandmother used to have, and it was a gas fridge, and just treasure that day that that man, oh well my husband went down and picked it up, but he come up and, yeah, it sort of just to value something like that seems ridiculous in these days but I can still remember the, yeah, just the feeling I had.

I So Julie there was a way in which you'd married not just the man but the family and the physical difficulties. Did you ever regret it?

R No. Ummm sort of sometimes you'd wonder why you were there. Then the kids. I suppose it was when … I got a telephone when the first baby was born. It took two months … the house … oh, well I was sort of in the old homestead and we were to move into the new house with the new baby ummm because the old house wasn't wired for 240 and the new home was. We waited two months for an electrician to come out from Quilpie to actually hook it up. We had the 240-volt generator was there all ready and the house was wired. We just needed him to run the wires across to the homestead. Ummm but, yes, so I had to wait in Longreach. I refused to come home without a telephone ummm it was my first baby. We didn't have a Flying Doctor radio which, I suppose, we could have got. We

had a Flying Doctor medical chest but no ummm contact with the Flying Doctor. Ummm the phone line they did run sort of virtually, oh post, but tree-to-tree through the river because it was hard through the flooded country, but I did have a phone to come to, but it was just … I had to wait six weeks after my baby was born. I think we were in Longreach … oh she come two weeks early so I was in Longreach for two months. Ummm yeah, and all it was was waiting for somebody to come to actually hook my 240 up. And I thought I was made with that 240. I had four hours of power in the morning and four hours of power in the afternoon. I had a telephone. Ummm it sort of worked, I think, between eight o'clock or nine o'clock in the morning and through till ten o'clock at night but if there was an emergency, it was always plugged through to somebody that you could get hold of. Ummm but yeah, I don't know how the women did it, like rearing children out here without that medical assistance because I used to ring my mother and 'Help', because you don't want to ring the doctor or somebody that you don't know very well and it might be just a simple thing. Because it's a new baby ummm the clinic sister, you had access to them once a week, once a month rather, when they come round for Flying Doctor in Windorah. But, yeah, just those little questions that, funny little questions you're not sure of.

I So this was about 1980 when your first baby was born?

R Yes.

I And just one question I want to pick up that goes back a bit, you said you never actually set fire to the kerosene fridge, you went close. Did you hear of fires starting through kerosene appliances?

R Yeah, my best friend down there, her ummm she'd lost her mother and her two sisters and her grandfather in a fire that was started by kerosene fridges. Ummm I suppose, yeah, through my grandmother and people talking, there were a lot of tragedies where people have been burnt in house fires or, even today, there's women that go to town, and I know what they mean, you come home and hold your breath to have a look to see if your house is still there when you get home, because even when you're there you've sort of got an open flame just over a fuel tank ummm under the fridge and you just have to keep watching to make sure that the flame was still alive and then the thing would smoke and you'd sort of have to try and … you'd have this special utensil you'd clean the chimney with, and you'd sort of just be black, when this … different days Ian'd come home and

there'd just be this black smoke billowing out of the house and they didn't know if I'd set fire to it or not. Ummm but it was the fridge, and I know one day they come home and I was sitting there in tears with the fuel tank of the fridge was actually on fire. Well apparently it could have exploded and gone all over me but I'd never … I don't … never had anything to do with a kerosene fridge before and that, and I suppose Ian had grown up with them ummm and you know, sort of to them it was old hat, but any woman that comes into this situation and you have to deal with, they just seemed like monsters. Ummm and I'll admit, I was terrified of it and there's no way in the world I would have been able to … I would have felt comfortable living in it with a new baby, but then there's women that had to do it and they're still doing it, so …

I So there are still women using kerosene fridges now?

R There's one just on the property next door. I think they might have, they sort of might have set up trying to run a refrigerator off sort of just the solar panels, but they've still got to run it off a diesel generator for so long. But they've still got their kerosene deep freeze. But, yeah, there are still women that I know that are actually using kerosene refrigeration.

I And they're doing that because they can't afford the electricity generation for the whole day?

R No, well there'd be very few family people that would run a generator 24 hours a day. Most of us sort of seem to run it … some run it sort of a morning and turn it off through the middle of the day and then run it for lighting. Ummm and those Mums of us that are teaching, we usually have to line up at night when the generator's running and that's when our housework ummm, things like washing and ironing, they never seem to go away, ummm and stuff like that, that's when it's actually completed. Ummm some sort of run it during daylight, you know, and you sort of go to bed early at night. But no, it's just beyond us to be able to afford it because we get no, you get no subsidy or anything from the government. There's no assistance whatsoever. If you want to run your power 24 hours, then you have to actually pay for it.

I So running your power at the moment, running your generator, eight hours a day or something, how much would your family spend on power each year?

R Well just to average out here, just for the fuel ummm part of it, it's up sort of around $10,000 a year up front. That's what we have to pay and then, like to buy a generator, the

generator over there sort of it needs a major overhaul and we need to purchase another one, they're $12,000 and then, in the meantime, you've sort of got all your sort of filters and servicing. All the servicing's done here, like Ian sort of does it, and he, or the men have to try and fix it themselves because otherwise the nearest place is, if you get to a diesel mechanic in Longreach. Ummm that means that you've got to pack your generator up and take it up to Longreach and sort of have them look at it because it's just that expensive to get somebody to actually travel down. By the time you pay their travelling costs to come, or find somebody that will come, ummm so it's all a very expensive business just to flick a switch and get a light.

I Going back then, to 1980, first baby, electric light, telephone. How was that? How was that time of your life?

TAPE 1 – SIDE B

R Ummm well I thought I was made. Ummm I'd sort of caught up with the twentieth century. It wasn't, I suppose it wasn't easy as in being from an extended family where, you know, sort of I suppose when you look at it these days in town, my sisters you know, they'd sort of have a, over a cuppa you could talk to other people. Ours come about, I suppose you go into the Flying Doctor with your baby to have a check up and it was just a social interaction because there was a baby boom. The year my first was born there was sort of, there must have been about 19 children just in Windorah born within about 12 months. And that was just about unheard of to have that many babies and we all had to go away to have our babies but ummm yeah, to have that many there, and I suppose there were sort of mums of varying ages. Some it was our first, others it was sort of their last child and just to hear different people talk ummm I suppose we picked up things and asked questions and you'd sort of go to the shop and have a cuppa and yeah, like, because it was the first baby I suppose the people, the women in the community, the questions they'd ask was more or less to, looking back, it'd be to draw that new mum out and talk about things, so yeah, you didn't think about it like that at the time but to look back on it, to me that's what they were doing, just helping us out.

I The older women were checking up on you a bit, looking after you a bit, helping you become a mum?

R Yeah, oh looking back, that's the impression I get but I don't think it was ever consciously done. It was just that ummm extended family part. Like, everybody knew, in a small community everybody knows each other's business and some people find that intrusive ummm and, to me, because I'd grown up, to me, in a country town, and you knew it happened anyway, and it sort of as a teenager growing up I think it kept you in line. Ummm there didn't seem to be the amount of problems that there are in the world today. I don't know whether that's why or not but, yeah, and it just sort of overflowed into that, for me, into that small community, and people cared. And I think that's sort of what ummm I suppose, well it helped me a lot. Ummm and that these virtual sort of strangers that weren't part of my family but, yeah, you could sit there and have a cuppa and you'd go to town and it was an occasion you'd look forward to. And then as my oldest went to pre-school, we had a small playgroup and that was, you know, sort of the mums with children were actually doing, you had to teach them pre-school by correspondence and we'd only have it sort of, can't remember now, I think it was once a fortnight or once a fortnight. But that was something we all looked forward to and, you know, even the pregnant mums would come along, all different, varying age groups, and we'd just work with each other's children and that was just another area. I think, I just treasure the memories of that because the interaction with the other mums, it was more than just a playgroup ummm it was sort of, yeah, where we kept each other sane and talked about our problems. Oh, yeah, I suppose, without actually saying you had a problem, you could just talk about something in general terms and if nobody picked up the vibes, nobody knew that it was a great problem and you could just have it solved or suggestions would come out of that without sort of saying, 'I have got a problem. This is what it is. What can I do?' sort of thing and, yeah, I think that gave, to me, that gave me a lot of support and I would think other mums.

I And how about the galah session? At what point did you get a radio and how did the radio intersect with your life?

R I never had a radio. Ummm we first went onto new technology with the telephone ummm but, yeah, I sort of, I suppose to me I never really, well never had, have only sort of rung the sort of for the Flying Doctor, had contact sort of a couple of times, but yeah, like I had more or less a family doctor. I had my children in Longreach. I went to stay with my parents ummm and that, and there was sort of the family doctor from the time I was young, and then sort of there was another doctor sort of through Ian's family. There was always a doctor in Quilpie and I suppose I would contact either one of those ummm because I didn't

want to put the doctor out to me, the Flying Doctor, I suppose it come through my husband, was there ah for emergencies as well ummm and that, and, yeah, like you could still ring them up. There was no hassle and if I went to the Flying Doctor in Windorah and you needed to follow something up or let them know how you got on or whatever, well you'd get back to the doctor, whereas in Jundah with the health clinic ummm, you know, if you take one of the children in to be stitched up or whatever, well then, or a cold or something, well then that sister will usually ring you back, you know, that evening or the next morning just as a follow up to see how the child got on, whereas in Windorah ummm there was a woman there, Ann Kidd. Ummm she was our saviour. She sort of never got a cent in payment from the government or that but she'd sort of stitch people up and if you had a hassle with the temperature of your child or, you know, sort of if you needed something checked, well you'd sort of ring and see if Ann was there. She was always available. She's just a marvellous woman. I've just got that much respect for what she did for the community. Ummm, yeah, and I suppose you always felt safe sort of with her there.

I So going back, you said you wanted to have the telephone partly because of the possibility of medical emergency, what's the worst medical emergency you've had to deal with with your husband and kids out here and how did that play out? I suppose I'm maybe thinking of the mincing story but you tell me.

R Ummm I suppose something that continued on, I had a child who had croup very bad. Ummm the family doctor in Longreach had told me never to put him in a car to take him to town, he'd be dead before I got him there, but didn't sort of make me feel very good but I suppose it made me stop panicking and to stay at home with him. Ummm we didn't, we never ran our power for 24 hours so you'd sort of have to weigh up how sick your child was as to whether you ran the generator or not and I had a sister whose son had croup, lived in town, had 240-volt power, got the vaporiser sort of and in those days it was steam. I had a kerosene heater that I left running in my children's, that child's room. The two boys were in the room, sort of in the wooden house. I had a tin that used to sit on top with sticks in it, trying to run that. I don't know what the kerosene fumes ever done to that child. Ummm then Ian's aunt gave me a little spirit lamp and a little, I remember them in the chemist shops in the little triangular boxes, but you couldn't buy the medication or whatever it was that you put into the top of that lamp, so I suppose, as far as ongoing, that did really worry me ummm with that child because the hot water system with three kids, if

they'd sort of use the hot water I didn't have steam to put him straight into. To this day, the electric frypan sits in a cupboard where I can just grab it. I never ever, I always have water in a kettle so everything's just ready to set it all up and Ian would start the generator. But as far as the worst one, was the same child ummm he put his fingers in a mincer. Ummm he would have been seven year old on Christmas Eve. Ummm it was about sort of seven o'clock or so and I can still remember, I was standing at the clothes line folding nappies. I had a six-month old baby and my husband come out and said, 'Oh, we've got to go to town. Craig's put his fingers in the mincer' and I just thought, 'Oh, yeah, he's sort of just cut them across the top or something' and I sort of just stood there and kept folding nappies. Ummm I suppose, looking back, I must have been in shock. And he said, 'We're going to have to go. Get your nappy bag' and I realised then that it wasn't just to Jundah, it was further on, so I sort of grabbed the nappies and threw them in the nappy bag and went to town. I hadn't seen the fingers at this stage and it wasn't till they sort of put him in the … there was an outpatients centre at our little hospital and there was sort of a narrow table like you get in theatre with the big lights over the top of it and they sort of unwrapped the fingers and I was confronted with a mangled mess. His ring finger of the hand he wrote with, the first thing you thought of was the mum teaching, he'd taken the top joint off. And the middle finger come back to the knuckle. And, yeah, it wasn't bleeding but it was just a horrible mess. It was beyond, you knew it was beyond the sister. We rang for the Flying Doctor but, because they had to find the pilot and the doctor and the plane, etc. it was going to be about four hours. It'd be midnight, eleven or twelve o'clock before they could get there, so my husband said, you know, because it wasn't bleeding they gave him a pain killer, he came back here and got the kids' clothes. I wasn't sure where I was going, to Longreach or Brisbane. I don't think I'd even thought past any, thought through any of that, picked up what he could find of Santa and we headed out to Longreach and he was in hospital and on drips, etc. before the Flying Doctor could have got to Jundah to collect him. And then it was the decision of what they were going to do, whether they patched him up in Longreach or flew him through to Brisbane, but they sort of did do it in Longreach so … but that'd be the worst.

I think for me, coming down here I had no medical training whatever. I was terrified at the sight of blood. Ummm yeah and a couple of times, yeah, one brother-in-law, he come in one day in a … oh, we were out mustering and I was on a horse and the horse had rolled down an embankment ummm and when he was getting up he kicked him and sort of hit him behind the ear and he had all this blood dripping out and he sort of, just sort of had a

cut there and I sort of doctored that up, or had a look at it and said, 'We'll have to go back to the house and clean it up'. I had no idea what concussion was. My husband sent me home and my brother-in-law Robert, he went in to have a shower and he turned the water on and there was a snake dropped out into the shower and both of us are terrified of snakes. So he sort of pulled a pair of jeans on and come screaming out of the shower and that and Ian come home about ten minutes later and we were both trying to find something that we were going to kill this snake with and Ian went in to check this snake out and it was only a python and neither of us had even looked at it. I wouldn't have known what a python was anyway. It was a snake. So we sorted that out but after I'd sort of cleaned up this ear and that, ummm I knew their mother was a matron. We didn't have a telephone. I suppose that's what really brought it home to me. And we were sort of sitting there and then he kept sort of more or less repeating things and I couldn't quite work out what was wrong and I went down to Ian and said about it and he said, 'Oh he's got concussion'. But ummm they still didn't think of ringing the Flying Doctor. It was no big deal. So we drove him next door and called the … his mother would come out here as a trained nurse. She was at the Quilpie Hospital, that's where she met his father. So we went next door and rung her up and told her that he was coming and he hopped in the car and they waited for him to turn up and, yeah, Mum checked out the ear to see if it needed stitches and kept an eye on him, he had concussion, but yea, in those days … whereas today you'd probably ring the doctor or get them to bring an ambulance, but in those days people … I suppose they … they weren't negligent but unless you … they were aware of how much it cost to keep the Flying Doctor flying and that, and if somebody had a broken arm or a leg, if it was in this area, they seemed to take them straight through to a doctor in town as opposed to ringing the Flying Doctor.

I In that story of your son's minced fingers, it was very much you and your husband here together and I take it, because you own this place there's not things like your husband going off on stock camps for a long time. Is there a real difference in women's lives between the family-owned properties or the family-leased properties and the company properties? And how might that affect husbands and wives?

R Ummm yeah, I suppose on the company properties the men go out and camp. Ummm before they used to employ cowboy-gardeners, so there was always a man around the place. These days there doesn't seem to be too many of them about. Ummm the women are left by themselves and, just with the amount of tourists, like you never know who's

getting around. To me, yeah that would be very worrying because I know I worry here. Ummm a couple of times people have turned up and I haven't heard them and they've been talking to my kids outside. It's not something that you're sort of consciously … if you thought about it all the time, you wouldn't live here but, yeah, it's just something every so often it just brings awareness home. But as far as the husband and wife, I think it's not an easy lifestyle but we're best mates. Ummm I don't doubt that that happens on the … well, it does happen on the larger places because I think a lot of women out here talk about their husband as being their best friend and you're there, they sort of go out but they come in for morning tea and lunch and afternoon tea. That's it. They're sort of working close by. But, yeah, and to talk things through, what happens, and then you work alongside your husband as well so that's sort of …yeah, that's just constant but I think a lot of the worry, too, like if you're on a large property ummm you do your budgets and that but somebody else in the long run owns it, whereas on a small family property you're responsible, you know if something goes wrong well you sort of have the worry about where the money's going to come from to pay for it, and to pay for it you sort of go without something else to do that repair and I suppose it comes back to your generator. You know, if you're cleaning children up and they've just sort of had the vomiting and they've been sick all over themselves and their beds and the floor, well you know, sort of you can clean that up with a candle so there's not really any need to start a generator, whereas ummm there's a woman whose son, she's got a family of bad asthmatics and she has to keep oxygen on hand with her children, so you know sort of to run a motor for a machine, but no I think I'd rather be, with all the stress and worries and everything, yeah I know my husband's going to come home most nights, unless he's sort of away at a meeting or something. And I don't think the women on places … there are some whose husbands do work away but there's sort of not that many of them, whereas most of us, yeah, sort of the husbands are there and if something goes wrong, it's not your fault and there's somebody there that'll … I suppose you presume that they're going to fix it.

I When you describe the very early days of your marriage you said you would have liked to have been outside, you'd grown up with horses and so on but it was the woman's job to be cooking and cleaning for your husband and his brothers. Would that describe your role throughout your marriage or have there been shifts according to your family situation and economics and so on?

R No, once we come up here ummm we sort of come in, we went into partnership by ourselves. Ummm the place was very run down, nobody had lived in the house for about twelve years and that, and we didn't even have water sort of to the house. Like, there was sort of a pipeline that used to be there but I think it told a history of poly-piping connections. So the first thing was sort of to get ummm water and power. Ummm we moved here of a Friday and I started to teach for the first time on the Monday and the carpenters left on the Wednesday and my sister arrived to paint my house on the Friday. Otherwise I think it'd be still waiting to get painted. Ummm the sheep yards were full of holes. Ummm they were sort of virtually non-existent and it was Ian and I and the kids. I think the oldest was six and the youngest was 16 months so, yeah, sort of didn't even have, or there was two trees in the yard. Didn't even have a house yard to keep my 16-month-old son in ummm and that, so I suppose my role changed then. I was sort of a teacher as well as being a mother and that was awfully hard. Ummm I've had to lock myself in a room so I could try and get something to do with my oldest child. What I didn't know was she immediately went outside and told the next fellow that her mother loved her more than I loved him and that's why we sort of sat in the room together, so for about three weeks he sat outside the door and howled. Ummm the 16-month-old, well my sister was here for a while painting for two months, which I just treasure, and she used to sort of keep half an eye on him. But, yeah, it just meant that my four-year-old then had responsibility of looking after that 16-month-old, like his baby brother, ummm and he was just my eyes and ears. But I did have to come out of that locked room ummm because it was just too much stress on my children. But I enjoyed the life. It wasn't easy but sort of like long-term, if we worked together, we were going to have something that we could be proud of and something that would provide a livelihood and we were together ummm sort of 24 hours a day, so I suppose that was important. But it was a big strain on my husband who was doing a lot of heavy work. Looking back, you know, at the time I didn't realise, but the things he'd have to do by himself, and it's only brought home to us as the kids have got old enough to help with that part of it, it just sort of makes you aware of what those men must go through today. It's not just my husband. It's other family places where, you know, Mum, Dad and the kids and that's it.

I Why wouldn't you employ … like on the big properties there are jackaroos and ringers and stockmen and so on. Why wouldn't you employ people to help your husband?

R We just couldn't, we still can't afford it ummm today. Like, there was staff around on, even when we come up here ummm sort of 14 years ago, there were different places around that employed staff and they don't. Two older people in their seventies next door, they're running it sort of by themselves. Ummm I think a lot of it is too, like the staff, the worry about litigation ummm and that, you know, sort of you hear some horror stories over that and, you know, we just presume that sort of everybody uses their common sense but it just seems to be these days that workplace health and safety, everything has to be laid down and, to me, workers are … you think a worker's an idiot ummm until they've sort of been through all these regulations and just the time it'd take to sort of ummm keep up with all the changes. Like the big companies, they've got special offices that keep sort of people aware and they have workshops and everything and it's sort of the workshops are all well and good but they take you away from the property and there's just that many of them these days that they expect people to attend. And the property, that's your livelihood and if you're not here to run it, everything just keeps going backwards but, yeah, and I suppose the other thing is the workers don't want to come out here and live without power. Like, if it sort of gets down to cool 30 degrees at night, they're not going to … they'd think that was a hot day in, some of them, in the town or city that they come from. And you can't get a decent night's sleep till usually just on daylight sometimes. It sort of cools down then. Then it's time to get up and you sort of face another day with 120 degrees, oh well, what is it, 48-50 degree temperatures.

I So Julie, traditionally I think it's true that rural organisations like the Farmers' Federation and so on have been males, do you think that there's a way in which women needed to get together, I mean that women needed to get together to have a political organisation, partly because the existing organisations weren't taking this kind of issue that affected women up?

R The power? Or just the women's issues? Yeah. Ummm yeah, I suppose a few women would go to, that were sort of United Graziers now AgForce, ummm but that has always been men. I think more and more women, because we've become so much involved in the operation and the, not just sort of keeping the books, but these days you have to be a lot more business-wise ummm so, yeah, the women are a lot more involved. And in the old days I don't think you sort of needed, like the man, you sort of didn't need things like … well I suppose you did in a way, your budgets and stuff, but like your books might go to the accountant at the end of the financial year in a shoe box sort of thing, well the days of

that have definitely long gone, or they've definitely gone for GST, but I think most of the women were, a lot of the women were sort of doing the books. But if they can do it in partnership with the husband they're a lot more, or we found here, a lot more aware. I'd be adding up the little things and they come to huge amounts. My husband would add up the big things and sort of sometimes they were both equal. But I think we've sort of got a lot better understanding business-wise. We're not just the little housewife any more. And in the running of the properties, probably the women sort of have instigated changes in the way things are done and that, as well.

I Could you give me examples of that?

R Oh well, say the husband, if there was heavy lifting and the husband, like if he was, if he had a worker like they sort of might do it, whereas for the women, you haven't got the strength, and when you're working beside your husband and you sort of see the pressure that they're putting themselves under, so therefore you ensure that, you know, sort of they might take a little bit more time but you get a tractor or you get some other way rather than just relying on busting your guts sort of with brute strength. And I think because the children, I suppose it all comes back to workplace health and safety too, a lot of it's just common sense, like the children are working alongside us so you have to be conscious of how much they do ummm because they'll work themselves sort of, you know, not so much to death but like they will really work, so you've got to be there to call a stop to that. So I think in a way, I don't know whether you sort of temper the work or sort of like the length of the days or something. Like you can't cut it out completely but you just, the woman seems to be a lot more aware, like if the children are working hard, the father might want something done and not really realise that the kids are knocking up because he's still going, whereas Mum's sort of knocking up fast and watching her kids and, yeah, in ways like that ummm. But I think you sort of, women are encouraged to speak out, probably through the support, not through the support of women ummm, to me they're sort of, I suppose looking through just, for instance, the power, but the other issues that come up, men have given support but the women have really, you know, sort of given ideas and encouraged us all along the line. And women that we don't know from a bar of soap.

I Have you encountered male resistance at all? Are there some of the men around who think, 'How come it's the women being politically active when traditionally it's been the men that have done that?'

R No. Oh, well, I haven't heard any different. Most of the men have got right behind us because this issue, it's not you, it's been going on. Jundah's had power for 40 years and that so, you know, people have just been waiting. The power lines have got closer and closer and we've just waited, you know, one day it'll be our turn. And then all of a sudden, you know, we're not doing any more so it's not going to be our turn. Ummm the council have sort of pushed through their channels ummm and, as I said, Women for Power just came out of that one announcement at an afternoon tea and what we can do and, yeah, it sort of , it's rolled on from there. And the men's attitude was, 'It can't do any harm' ummm and the doors, because we're just a group of women who haven't got a clue. We just seem to lurch from one situation to the next. Like there's no planning. None of us have any idea of politics and it's just, you know, people telling us to go here, to go there, forwarding letters on and that, so for the great majority of men, you know, they just say, 'Well if the women can get something done …' and it has raised an awareness of it along with the other issues that we're picking up. So, yeah, in the main, there's the council as far as council, you know, through the channels that … I presume they'd have their set channels that they have to go through ummm and that, whereas as a women's group you're not limited to those channels if you can go to, you know, sort of you can go to different governments and like the church has just stepped in and they've sort of got behind us. The Bishop's spoken out for our region. Ummm I'm to meet with him next week so, yeah, just to get groups like that, whereas the council couldn't go to them.

I Do you ever think, 'My mother …' I mean your mother was in Longreach but do you ever think, 'My grandmother and my husband's mother and other women have done without these resources. I'm somehow less of a pioneer because I need power'. Does that kind of thought track make any sense to you whatsoever?

R Yeah, it did when I first come down here 20 years ago, but not now. Ummm I think with uh TV, ummm people have got and I suppose sort of radio, women are ummm listening more. They realise that there's other things that they'd like to do. But I think the thing that, the crux of the whole lot behind our group is our children ummm children in town, our own children. My 17-year-old son said to me at Easter last year when we talked about you know, what he'd want to do when he finished Senior, whether he would not actually come back here to live but whether he would go on the land. And he said, 'Mum,' he said, 'even if we had the money to go on the land,' he said, 'we'd probably have to go elsewhere to find a partner'. These kids have obviously talked about it amongst themselves. They'd

have to go elsewhere to find a partner. He said, 'We couldn't come home to work as the place wouldn't run two families' so they'd sort of more or less have to raise their children and work elsewhere and then come back and if they came back, he said if the wife didn't … he said women wouldn't live like this. He said, 'People don't have to live like this any more'. He said, 'You women are all special,' and he said, 'If we can't find a husband or wife,' he said, 'that'll put up with it and they come back to this, we could lose our partner. We could lose our family'. And if they'd gone into debt to buy the place, we could lose the place. And they said they'd have nothing. And just there's an awareness, I suppose, more and more … we haven't, well we have been in touch with it here, of youth suicide. Ummm we're really conscious of that and we've never spoken about it amongst ourselves but to me I'd hate to have my, or any of our children, put in the situation that they felt they were helpless and there was only one way out.

I So do you worry that your kids, and other people's kids around you, wouldn't want to come back here? Why, for instance, wouldn't your son be marrying the daughter of the family next door who would have grown up with similar hardships? Just for example.

R Ummm one reason because of the boys outnumber the girls so sort of that ratio is more heavily in favour of males. Ummm but then they've grown up together so much I suppose they think of each other as good mates, sort of brother-sister rather than, I don't doubt the boy/girl thing could come into it but it's more sort of familiarity breeds contempt sort of thing. But no, I just don't think it's there. And plus all our children have to leave the shire to do secondary school, whether they go to the hostel in Longreach, they're at boarding schools, Charters Towers, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Toowoomba. So they're sort of all spread out in different directions ummm and they've seen the way other people live, sort of it's just electronic community, and they realise, to them, I suppose they realise more than me how much the world relies on electricity today. And they just perceive it if they haven't got it, then they haven't got a standard of living and they can't compete, I think more importantly, in today's world. Ummm you just get left further and further behind and the kids … as I said, I think the kids realise that more than we do as parents.

I Do you expect that one of your children will inherit this place?

R No. No. Ummm it wouldn't support two families ummm and the other children involved, there are sort of four children in the family, and the girls are just as important as the boys, so they would need to have a fair share and the place just wouldn't support one child

purchasing it. That child would never be out of debt. Ummm it's just, it's a sad fact but I think that happens in a lot of families today. Some families pass, one child gets everything and the others miss out, and no, our children … they're fully aware of it. They don't like it. I've got a daughter that would dearly love to come home to … one boy has, I think, just wiped it completely from his mind because they've always been aware of that fact. Ummm but, yeah, you have to be realistic and prepare them for it. If something happened and they could stay here, I'd dearly love it to happen but …

I So your kids have to find their own future for themselves not on this land? How about for you? Where do you reckon Julie Groves will be 30 years from now?

R Ummm yeah, good question. I don't think we could live here but, then again, there's people next door in their seventies still operating the property. I'd hate to think that I was still here ummm and we couldn't operate it effectively and things were going backwards. I think it's something that has to be decided ummm as a couple. When I first come here I thought if anything happened to my husband I would never be able to run the property and different ones say well the women would be able to do it. Ummm these days with one of the children you probably could but 30 years from now, I couldn't see myself retiring to the city. Ummm if I still had family in Longreach, perhaps there, it's sort of … this is my home but I suppose the home of your childhood, it's sort of, you know the friends that you made and just that familiar surroundings but, yeah, I might go there but I can't envisage going any further. It's terrific country out here.

I Might there be a big political career for you? Do you think about being a member of parliament, for instance?

R No. No way in the world. No. Just the things that we've sort of seen and the channels that you have to go through and ummm yeah, no, political wise I'm quite happy with where I am. I wouldn't go … teacher to that person. Like all it might be, you just ring … we've got our own support mechanisms amongst the mums and you just ring up somebody and have a whinge and ummm but then it's all forgotten, like you know, you sort of talk to each other and all you need to do is have somebody to listen to you and I just realise what a great benefit that was to me.

I That role of being both mother and teacher, did you take to that easily or were there difficulties in it?

R Ummm I suppose it was just one more thing and it was accepted. I didn't … I had absolutely no training ummm and because you're a mother teaching your child, you expect perfection from your child, so it's sort of … I don't think there's too many mums that aren't in that boat. Ummm but yeah I suppose because I started from Year 1, ummm everything had to mesh around it ummm and you just had, my day is just set up, like for fifteen-and-a-half years now you sort of turn the radio on and you listen to notices and then you sort out your … you sort of start school at eight o'clock. No matter what happens the child is at that desk and I think that just has to be, no matter what happens later on, but no as a mum it's not easy. There's a hell of a lot of tears go into it. Tears with your child, tears from you. You question yourself, you question your ability. I'm lucky with the husband I've got, he ummm yeah, if I'm sort of screaming too much, he'll come in and let me know ahhh and because he's been through it, he's sort of also seeing it through, I suppose for him, through his mother's eyes, and the frustrations. But he'll also come in and he'll cook a meal, you know, he'll just come in sort of different times and you know sort of cook lunch or say, 'Well I've thought of something to cook for tea tonight' and he'll do it. So I have been really lucky like that. But people would come into my house and this is probably the tidiest it's ever been because things just get saved up for the holidays ummm and that, and that's when you sort of catch up on you know you sort of throw everything in a box and you sort it out in the holidays sort of thing. If the cobwebs are there, well, if you don't get time to do them, they get there and you've probably got dirty windows and everything else, but just as long as the floor's clean and there's enough clothes and food ummm but, yeah, so it's definitely not easy.

I How about the curriculum? Have you ever had parts of the curriculum that have been sent to you that you haven't been happy with?

R Yes. Ummm we're sort of as parents we're sort of … I suppose you're that involved with your children's education, we have questioned it. Ummm when they rewrote papers, we sort of had input ummm or not sort of actually the curriculum part, just the time it's taken, because ummm sometimes they just take that long to work that the children just haven't got a hope of coping and, to me, it's sad because our kids are under pressure. We've got them under pressure and nobody's got, because we're not trained teachers, we've got no idea that there's too big a workload on the children and that filters down that gradually, as the mums say we can't cope, well then they come in and our school actually takes ummm part out of it to try and let them, because we work in a two-week cycle. But, yeah, some of

the content ummm you know sort of the community that my children have to live in, there's some of the content that ummm no, I don't teach because I don't agree with what they're teaching.

I Could you give me an example of that? I'm interested in the example we discussed last night.

R Ummm yeah, my children grow up, have lived with Aboriginal children. Ummm to me, my upbringing and my husband, it doesn't matter what colour your skin is, everybody comes into this world the same and goes out the same. We all live and breathe. And ummm my second oldest child, they'd rewritten the papers and they had a segment on Aboriginals and they sort of went into it, and he asked what an Aboriginal was and I had to tell him that his mates were Aboriginal and that really, that upset him because he thought they were the same as what he was. And he didn't even realise that their skin was black ummm so that was how much notice the kids took and after that child, the next two I vowed and declared that I would never name an Aboriginal ummm because there were Aboriginal people come in and out of our family life. Ummm Aboriginal people I think the world of. I really admire them. But to me it's not because they're Aboriginal, they are a person. And then with my last child ummm in Year 5 they studied Aboriginals for over six months and, to me, they were making out that they were a different race of people ummm they were sort of creating segregation and all sort of all the talk of ummm sort of resolving our differences and everything, to me, I could see it splitting our little community and making one race of people seem different to another. So I know I wasn't the only mother that was concerned. Ummm there were mothers from all different areas because there's Aboriginals in all our little towns, like larger country towns as well as our small towns, and stuff was … mothers were taking stuff out of the paper ummm yeah, and I will admit I cut stuff out and I put a note to my teacher and explained that my child lived in a community with Aboriginal children and she was reared to believe that neither child was any different. She was friends with them and that was the way I wanted it to stay and I refused to teach that they were different to her.

I And the stuff that you found problematic, did you feel like it was idealising Aboriginal people or portraying them negatively? What was it in the curriculum that upset you and upset your child?

R It wasn't negative. To be quite honest, the child just got sick of studying the same thing, paper after paper after paper. It just kept coming up. Like there was no variety of it. Ummm I suppose what they were doing, they were ummm portraying Aboriginal people ummm like as in today, but then the child would sit there and watch a video and say, 'Well why are they Aboriginal?' because the person that they knew, they're black, and these people weren't very black at all. Like they obviously had white blood in, they were not pure-bred, and then they had a video clip of ummm a hunting segment and this eight-year-old child sat there and said well, you know sort of the old Aboriginals they sort of walked everywhere, they used a spear, and these people turned up to go hunting in a four-wheel-drive with a gun, dressed in modern-day clothes and that was to show the child today how they ummm how they lived a long, you know, sort of a long time ago and, to me, that was an insult to the people because like you hear some wonderful tale of some, you know, some of the droving trips and some of the achievements of the Aboriginal people and like their ummm just their stamina and, I suppose, things that aren't recorded and yet the children were taught none of that. It was sort of, yeah, like in our home it just seemed to be teaching them that they were separate people.

I Being divisive rather than inclusive?

R Yeah.

I Was there anything … I know there's been drama in the curriculum in Brisbane about presenting white occupation of Australia as invasion, let's say, rather than … was that any part of what was problematic? Whether one presents we white occupants of Australia as having originally been invaders or whether the land was empty. Have those issues arisen for you in curriculum at all?

R I suppose we're lucky ummm talking amongst some other mums ummm we can look at what's being taught. Ummm some of the stuff, I suppose, we were taught differently. I don't think anybody's ever got away from the fact that it wasn't ummm, there wasn't conflict but it's still ongoing.

TAPE 2 – SIDE A

R It's still ongoing in life today ummm in other countries so, yeah, as far as the invasion ummm it depends which side you look at because, let's face it, like sort of the Aboriginal people come through from the north and they come here, then we had sort of Dutch

settlements, or the Dutch sort of come in and like for centuries, just on the fringes, not so much in the interior, there's sort of been people mixing in and my family didn't invade and I can't see why I or my children should be held responsible for something that, in that day and age, that seemed to be, that was the done thing. You know, we can't change history and we have to take what was there ummm work with it, work through it and move forward. But this business of paying ummm you know if it was invasive and sort of paying, who do they pay? I've got a bit off the track here. Ummm yeah, because it's not filtering through, it's not creating jobs for our children. That's not my particular children, but to me our children are the children in our community and that, sort of if it's going to do good for those people and everybody mixes in together well, hey, we're all the same and I suppose that's the way that parents are … I suppose we interpret that curriculum as to where our children live ummm in society. Whereas out here they have to live with the children so we don't teach any different.

I Okay. Let's move on to your political stuff. When did you start to get involved outside your family in political activities, Julie, and I'd love you to tell me the story of that.

R Ummm oh, I suppose it all started ummm I suppose the basis of it was when my daughter come along. We were in Windorah and we ummm the centenary come up and we were sort of catering and that ummm and we had a committee. And the money that we made out of the weekend we wanted to … we were going to put into a park. Like we had a vision that there wasn't a park and a park was needed and all we needed was some ground so the council sort of got a fence built around the block where the park is today. Ummm and there was a shed put there and we wanted, a friend and I, we wanted to sort of go ahead and put the money into putting trees and grass and playground equipment and somewhere for us to go with our children to get them away from the pub, because the only place to go, you had a lawn at the pub and you could go to the pub, I don't know, to have a cup of coffee, and it was sort of like a gathering place, and we'd sit up in the bar and drink tea and coffee. So it wasn't the alcohol part, but then we didn't want our kids there. Like, they could play out the back but you couldn't really see them, otherwise they'd be out in the street, and we just saw a need for a park and when we wrote to the council we were told that it had to be landscaped and approved and everything else and they pulled the fence down. In the meantime, the friend and I that were behind it, she sort of her husband died and she moved away and I was up here and I suppose things settled down for a while but then, I suppose, in January, I suppose you did a lot of whingeing and things you'd like

to see, and in January 1999 ummm we had, there was an announcement on ABC radio that the ummm Mines and Energy Minister of the time – it was a Labor government – had announced that the deal we'd been negotiating through which was the local electricity authority that covered our area, and they were in Barcaldine, or Rockhampton rather, and the head of it, and the previous ummm Coalition government ummm, that had been knocked on the head, that was to bring power into here, this area. And we were to run with ummm RAP power was the answer for us and …

I RAP?

R Remote area power supply, as in solar. And anyway, I think when that announcement was made, I'd had an afternoon tea here a couple of weeks before and, of course, everywhere you went power was an issue for us, and becoming more and more so, and I had about four phone calls from different women saying, 'Did you hear what was said? What are we going to do?' And there was a community cabinet meeting to be held in Longreach in two weeks' time and the ministers of the Labor government were coming out and we didn't, none of us had a clue, knew anything about politics, so said, 'Oh, well, we'll all just write a letter and tell of our hardship, how we have to live, and we'll put them together and we'll take them up' and we were going to target ummm Judy Spence, the Minister for Women's Affairs, because we felt that a woman would listen to us more than a man. We didn't know what you did. I did ring up the phone number and found out that we couldn't book a deputation with a minister. We didn't even know what a deputation was. So we were ummm put our, still collecting letters when we went to Jundah, through Jundah.

There was nine of us went up and there was five of us in our car and I said to the women, 'Well, we're going to have to have some sort of a summary of these letters' and gave somebody a pad and a pencil and they were supposed to go through the letters one at a time and summarise them. But people were shocked at some of the things that were in those letters. Like, we used to whinge about it amongst ourselves but everybody was in the same boat so I suppose we just waited for the government to bring power one day. Ummm and the women got that involved, you know, sort of by what come up in somebody's letter and then … I suppose it was therapy for us in a way, you talk about experiences. So the long and the short of it was by the time we got to Longreach, we didn't have very much written down for the summary. We collected more letters. We met in the park about an hour before this meeting started and we collected more letters and one of the sisters had a computer so she was going to summarise these letters and she sort of had a bit down and

she sort of wanted facts like how far we were from Longreach. Well that was okay but then sort of just the information on how many people in our shire and how many places involved and families, and we realised we didn't know very much at all, but she put together a summary and another sister was waiting to photocopy it, and we had to have it professionally bound, so it had holes punched down the side and a binder put in. So we sort of had three copies of this, so this is what we turned up with but ummm two of the women went off to do that. We were in the park and we had name tags. People were going to have to know who they were talking to. And they said a name and we hadn't thought of any of that, we just thought we'd just have a name tag, and I said, oh, you know different ones that … they said 'What are we?' and I said, 'We're just women here and we want some grid power' and we couldn't put 'Women for Grid Power' on our stickers so we just had 'Women for Power'. And what I was told, people kept saying later on, was that nobody knew who we were. Nobody knew what we were after. Ummm they just thought we were another power group that was sort of different political arm or something, and anyway the Premier went and asked one of the women you know what we were and what we wanted, so through that, we got twenty minutes with the Premier ummm Minister McGrady the Mines and Energy Minister. I'm not sure who else was there but it was all new, like sort of the bureaucratic officials with them. And we were asked to put our ummm point lightly and not beat about the bush because time was short. But that man did give us twenty minutes and he ummm sent us off with the Mines and Energy Minister who women had been writing to for years ummm you know, sort of with their hardships and that, and they'd get a reply back and that was as far as it went. But I think it was just we had to do something rather than write on an individual basis and our letters, nobody told any lies, they just … some of them haven't even told how hard it is for them to live and the stories behind it and, yeah, I just ummm was spokesperson on the day and ummm never done any interviews before and really got thrown in at the deep end, didn't know how you addressed ministers or how you went about it. Ummm and we had our time with Minister McGrady but didn't feel that we were sort of getting anywhere with that and we had gone there to meet with Minister Spence and she was excellent, ummm sort of listening to us. Ummm we went to the Health Minister but didn't get a very good hearing there because her mother had lived without power in the hills behind Maleny and said it was the worst thing she ever did was getting power onto that property. But I don't think the minister in this day and age would like to live without power. But that was her opinion. Ummm and yeah, and we just sort of handed out our booklets and we thought we'd leave it at that and

then it was sort of just on a roll. It's just continued on, it hasn't gone away, and people from all walks of life have just said, 'Don't give up' and 'Keep going' and it's not me, it's the women's letters that are just speaking for them. And ummm …

I So going from that day when Women for Power was created, just tell me what's happened since. So that's a year-and-a-half ago, what has Women for Power done since then and have you had any outcomes so far from your struggle?

R Ummm yeah, we sort of got as far as … we've been lucky in a way ummm Federal government had a community, or had a cabinet meeting in Longreach and we got to meet John Anderson and had time with his advisers. Ummm we've sort of been lucky that the government has these things like the Coalition – Queensland Coalition – we went to Blackall and met the ministers there. It's all really hard because we're just a group of mums ummm that didn't know what you did or anything and then, through Women for Power, it became not the power, we were picking up other issues in the community and you were sort of picking up ideas from the people you met with. And the long and the short of it was that I was encouraged to stand for ummm local council and was lucky enough to get on there. And, yeah, it was just sort of one step forward to just the things that we were picking up on ummm but you've got to get out of your area down here. The information and things we've found out and discovered, people aren't going to come here to this isolated community really, and you know sort of give you answers you have to actually go out and look for them. The power's ongoing. Ummm we have got, or the minister's answer is remote area power supply solar. It's been here for nine-and-a-half years now, it's worked for six-and-a-half. We've just about worn out a $12,000 stand-by generator. Ummm it's sitting over there at the moment but just doesn't work. It needs a major upgrade. It'd cost about $150,000 to replace.

I This is camera tape 41, we're in the middle of DAT tape 15, the ABS is now 36.38 and we're with Julie Groves. This is the fourth video tape and the second DAT tape. It's 19 June 2000, Trish FitzSimons on sound and Julie Hornsby on camera.

So Julie, we're talking about Women for Power and you talked about going on the shire council. How are the two things connected? Why did you want to be on the shire council?

R Ummm I suppose governments these days ummm or, in particular, Federal government, you sort of hear that communities have to drive changes. We know government's

responsible for infrastructure ummm and, to me, it had to come through from the local council and it had to come through from a woman's point of view, perspective. Like the men, I don't think, or they appreciate what the women ummm live without but it's more sort of like, it just all tied in with rearing our family, our quality of life ummm, our health. Our children's education is suffering and, yeah, I just wanted … it just … the power seemed to be behind a lot of things and our children were getting left behind. Our children don't … they want to come back but they don't think they'll find partners that will, and a generational thing like they're just sort of starting to leave school now and there's sort of a wave of them coming on one after the other. And those children are realising what life is like to have 24 hours of power and then, I suppose, the other things that Women for Power, I don't know, we've sort of picked up along the way, and they were things that could be dealt with locally, I suppose, or even the contacts that you get through local government. I didn't know anything about local government but, yeah, it was just perceived that there might have been things that we could do and I suppose it just went on from there.

I So give me a list of the issues, just like a list of the issues that Women for Power is taking on at the moment.

R Well, our children's education ummm because in an electronic age the kids are being left further and further behind ummm and that, like sort of the use of the, well people don't even think about it. But children in Year 1 on distance education this year started reading by telephone with their teacher. There's perceived to be a reading problem, like sort of actually in teaching it. And that's okay. They have to use hands-free telephones and Telstra couldn't see why the school principal was jumping up and down when he received a batch in 1999 because they all needed 240-volt power to operate. I know what it was like. My daughter, last year I watched her try to juggle the telephone and a book. It's bad enough yourself but then they'd sort of be looking for particular words. They'd drop the phone, they'd drop the book, they'd lose the page and that, so definitely needed a hands-free telephone for Year 1. But nobody, things come up and they've got no idea. Telstra said, you know, nobody in Australia lives without power. Ummm then the internet one come up, that was sort of, comes in Year 4-7 have a computer supplied by the school for a term. We sort of pay ummm for the ribbons and stuff that are used but we pay for internet connection and what we use on the internet for that one term. So that's okay but we need to run a generator to use that computer for those children to access it and there was one girl who's ummm handicapped and the family had bought a solar set up to run, to keep the

batteries charged for her electric typewriter that she needed – she was a secondary student – and the School of the Air radio and her tape recorder is an important part of it to listen to tapes and tape stuff to send into your teacher. Anyway, the computer come along. It would run the computer but it wouldn't run the printer so that student was saving stuff to tape. The tape was being sent to the school in Longreach. They only have a weekly mail service. So it could be three weeks to a month … the teacher would print it out in Longreach and send it back, so the stuff that that child put in today, she would have to wait another three weeks or a month to actually see it printed out.

I So all of these are issues that in some way relate to electricity but are there other issues that Women for Power are taking on? You mentioned last night about the containers in which your food got sent to you from Longreach.

R Yeah, that was another thing with the changes in the health laws. Our local supermarket where most of us get our cold stuff from, including the local service station stores and hotel, the woman that's in charge of country orders said that once these regulations come in, she will not be packing our food into either our own eskies which we send up or polystyrene boxes, foam boxes, and I said, 'Well, what do we do?' and she said, 'You will have to drive to town and collect your own' which is a two-hour drive from Longreach. It's sort of two-and-a-half, three hours for some of the women. And I said well, like the women with kerosene refrigeration and if you're not running your generator all the time, you can't keep food for a month. It'd all go off. And she said well, under the regulations, whenever she's brought it up, the people that are running the workshops, they just don't, they just said nobody lives without electricity. So the hardships that that is going to create for women out here, like even, or families, the women in town, it's going to affect all of us because the mailman, like the fellow doing our run sometimes does it in a four-wheel-drive station wagon, other times, which doubles as his wife's school bus run. Other times it's just in an open Toyota, he's not going to be able to afford to put on a little cold room. Like one day, the day I questioned him about it, he said all he had on was, the only cold stuff he had was four bottles of milk for me with the whole run. So, you know, sort of they have to set up for the worst case scenario like how much they'd have. You'd have to keep your frozen stuff separate to your cold stuff. We can't even get eggs or bread at the moment. They come out just packed in a carton but they're going to have to be kept at a certain temperature and the woman at the supermarket just told me she'd be liable. If anything happened, we could sue her, not the firm or anything else, and it just seems like the world's

gone mad, and yeah and just the stress and strain, like healthwise, on women. Like we don't have … we're working outside, helping out as well as inside and then I suppose ummm sort of the stresses are more, and if you can't get a decent night's sleep in summer or ummm you've got children that are asthmatic … the lady next door, she can't start the generator. They sort of come, moved in new, new family came to this district which is really rare for people to move in with a family, and she couldn't start the generator. When her husband was away she used to have to pick her child up and race him downstairs to the car and plug the nebuliser into the car. It didn't matter if it was summer or winter, what the temperature, and that was how she coped with his asthma attacks. There's another woman who has to do the same if her husband's away a bit. If she's there with little kids and none of the older ones are home, kids get terrified when they're left alone in the dark because you've got to run a hundred metres or more to start a generator ummm so you've got a child having an asthma attack, you're not game enough to leave them so they carry them out and put them in a car, and that can't be good for that child's health or stress levels for that mother. So, yeah, it's sort of just all picking up and the other thing different mums have raised is the opportunity of doing teleworking. Ummm one particular mother raised that issue. She had worked in a solicitor's office and would have liked to have continued it on and the opportunity wasn't there. She'd have to have the generator running to actually be able to drive, to power the computer to do the work. Another mother, she was completing her university degree externally and she had a little baby as well but she said ummm she just, like to use the internet to access her lecturers or whatever, she said she was just left that far behind by having to rely on a mail service because she had to have a generator to drive the computer. She also had her husband's grandmother living with them, a woman in her eighties, and had no power and they found nine snakes in this house. Ummm it was in a sort of a four-month period. One fellow had, a friend had come out to do the electrical work or plumbing or something and was in a dark storeroom. The generator wasn't on for a light, got bitten by a king brown snake and they had to send a helicopter from Longreach – I think the road was out – to pick him up. He survived that but she said, you know, she gets up to tend her baby at night or this grandmother, and they're walking round the house, she uses a candle or a torch or something, so you know sort of it also comes in for our aged care as well, so you know, that's just some of the issues. There's probably some I don't know of.

I When you're talking … one of the reasons why I like Women for Power as a title is, of course, it's double meaning. I get the sense that electricity is partly almost symbolic of

women's needs being listened to and certainly this campaign has taken you into the shire council where you would obviously be dealing with lots more issues than electricity. Is there a way that Women for Power represents a new voice for women or something like that?

R I never thought of it like that. We went into it, was just yeah literally for the power ummm but, yeah, I suppose that is coming across because ummm there are other hardships but unless we raise awareness of how hard it is, nobody knows so nobody can do things but I suppose we've also picked up issues, I suppose, the internet and that, or telephone access, and there has been, yeah, other points. That food one, for instance. The health inspector, we share him with other shires and he attended the last council meeting. Ummm other councillors weren't aware what was coming up and I just raised it with him. I'd raised it with our local Federal member and our local state member but I just wanted to know where we should be directing our concerns because, you know, it's really easy to sweep us under the carpet and, you know, there's only a few people there and if they can't get their food, well you know, nobody's going to care sort of thing. And, yeah, so that was one means of bringing a problem that I've perceived was going to affect our local community. And that man did say it was an issue and he was going to pick it up and run with it as a submission. So, yeah, there's instances ummm of raising things like that.

I You refer to this being a small community. How many people are there actually in the Barcoo Shire?

R Oh a few years ago the statistics were 462 but yeah, I'm not sure, sort of like when you work it out roughly with the workers on the larger places and you know, like you virtually know who's on each of the properties and got a rough idea of how many are sort of actually living there. So, yeah, that's … could be a few less if anything but …

I So you've put your submissions to the Coalition, to the Labor state government, to the Federal Coalition government. Have you had any actual, if I say success I'm using the term loosely, but do you feel you're getting somewhere with this campaign?

R Ummm I don't know, the Labor government say they'll only supply RAP. Coalition government say RAP's a waste of money, they'll only look at grid. So we're not getting anywhere there, I suppose. Federally, ummm they've listened to us but power is a state issue. To us, I suppose it might be naïve. I can't see why, or we can't see why the three

levels of government plus private enterprise can't work together. Ummm if solar power is the way to go, build a solar power station in, say, Jundah and then run power lines out. Like, surely in the year, over the years sort of great steps are being made in the development of power lines, and run them out, and because it's a small community over a small distance ummm then in years to come, the things that are learnt out here, it wouldn't cost much to upgrade it and experiment with it and then that could transfer over into larger areas. Another aspect is there's a gas line passes ummm just below Windorah – you would have gone across it on the morning train – ummm and why can't, instead of transferring the gas to the south-east corner or Gladstone, it even goes up, that line, particular line, goes up to power the Mt Isa Power Station, why can't they build a power station out here close to where the gas actually comes from and then, like if it was in Windorah you could go back to the south-east. You could come back up into sort of the Capricorn region out to Rocky or otherwise you can feed it up through Mt Isa to the northern areas. You know, sort of … you don't, it's all clean, you don't have to worry about sort of people living around it and the power station, it might be simplistic but it's sort of right away from you know sort of development in the towns and that, and it's putting stuff, like primary production, everything goes. We export our sheep, our cattle, our wool. It all goes to the east coast ummm, south-east corner mainly, but it all goes out of here to be value-added and it creates a little bit of employment here but it creates employment in our cities. So therefore that must go into sort of their, oh I can't think of the word, what they call it ummm …

I Infrastructure?

R Yeah, like their … it sort of creates jobs and that adds to the jobs in those areas, whereas we're left with nothing. Like the infrastructure's not coming back out into the bush and it's not just … our kids are all going, our youth are our main export as well, so they go to the more populated areas after employment opportunities. Like they just seem to be raping our country, they're raping our resources, the oil and the gas and that are all going out here and governments aren't putting things back into these areas and I just, well we just can't see why. You know, we're not asking for anything that nobody else has had, we're just you know tossing around ideas to …

I I have a family of four. We don't have air-conditioning. We've got a swimming pool and I'm bad at leaving lights on. We pay about $800 a year for electricity. Do you expect to get electricity here at the same rate that I would pay for it in the city?

R Ummm it doesn't matter where you live in Queensland, it's eleven cents a kilowatt hour for domestic power. That's … in Jundah it costs forty cents a kilowatt hour to produce the power, or Jundah and Windorah, and the government, somebody, electricity authority, they pick up on that of 29-30 cents difference in the cost of generation. My brother-in-law is next door and he pays eleven cents a kilowatt hour for his power which roughly works out at about $4.50 a day. $4.00 to $4.50. I just can't see why we are being discriminated against, like solar power costs $2.20 a kilowatt hour to produce and we are asked, under the scheme we are asked to own the system. We either lease it from the supplier or we buy it outright. We have to negotiate the servicing and the maintenance of that system. They need upgrading each seven years. Nobody else in Queensland, once you have power connected to your house, even if you live on a rural property, once that power's connected, if that needs upgrading that is an expense for the government and once you pay your initial connection cost, all you pay for then is the electricity that you use, so I can't see why sort of just a very few of us are going to be asked to live with a system that nobody else is asked to and, yeah, just the huge cost involved.

I And if you got power, Julie, would that be the end of Women for Power and it would be the end of politics for you, or do you think that you've started on a bit of a … 'oddity' is the first word that comes to my mind, but to improve life out here?

R No, I think I would continue on. Ummm sort of just to take forward the women's feelings ummm sort of our letters, we keep getting told, speak for themselves. Ummm it's not just power that comes through those letters, it's to me a lot of other issues as well. Ummm Women for Power, I suppose, is a group. That was why we come together but I think we've also learnt that as a group, if we speak out, ummm you know sort of people don't understand how we live out here and unless we take the time to explain that, ummm and explain our difficulties, and then nobody, you can't say they don't care, ummm because a lot of time it's just ignorance. They don't know ahh so we've sort of taken, Women for Power have more or less been a voice for the women and it's just the other things you sort of pick up, like that Telstra enquiry. Like probably none of us, might have only been one or two that might have filled in the form. I don't know how many did but that was something we picked up on and sort of distributed within our community and encouraged, actively encouraged people to reply to it. So, no I don't think it's just power and as you've met a lot of people also, you might have to travel to Longreach to meet with different ones. Like this afternoon there's a Commonwealth Health, there's a couple of women coming to

Longreach. Well, they're sort of trying to get people like that out into these areas to get a bit of an understanding of how women have to live and I think that's a great step forward and I think if we can meet with those people, Women for Power is itself, if we, when, when we get our power, as a group, you know sort of we might say, but I think the emphasis that brought us together ummm we realise we can make a difference and I think, yeah, the name might change but women will continue on.

END OF INTERVIEW