

Clem Jones Oral History Project

Interviewee: Sister Angela Mary Doyle

Interviewer: Lindsay Marshall

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LM: This is an interview for the Clem Jones Oral History project being conducted by myself, Lindsay Marshall, with Sister Angela Mary Doyle at her home at Nudgee in Brisbane on Thursday the 8th of March 2018. Sister Angela Mary, thank you very much for participating in this project.

AMD: Thank you Lindsay, I'm happy to do that, yes.

LM: Now look if we could start at the beginning, a little bit about your background. You grew up on the family farm in County Clare in Ireland. You were one of nine children, a big family. Yet at 15 years old as you say in your book, *Mercy, Mater and Me*, your book, that you had a calling to work, to take up religious work, to take up, become a nun and to join the Sisters of Mercy. Just explain a little bit about how that happened.

AMD: That's strange but it's very vivid with me still, Lindsay. I was just walking along out on the farm and something in my head said to me, I don't know what, I didn't have a vision, I don't believe in that sort of thing. But something came into my mind, why don't you give your life to God? And that stayed with me and it still has stayed with me. But when I mentioned it to my mother, she was very dubious about the whole thing, she wasn't so keen. She thought, you know, I wouldn't last as a nun. And I waited for about 12 months and then the question came up again and I said, yeah I still want to be a nun, and my mother wasn't all that keen still. But my father said, why don't you give her a chance? Let her try it and if she doesn't like it she can always come home. So that's how it happened. And then there was a difficulty because I hadn't at that stage any secondary education. The three in the family that were ahead of me had all been educated but there was no money when it came to my turn.

LM: So you're more or less the middle child in the nine.

AMD: I was, I was, that's right. But I wasn't unhappy, I knew they had no money, I just knew that. But my mother took me to a neighbouring convent, two neighbouring convents, but they wouldn't take me because I didn't have a secondary education. And then I heard about these nuns in Cork and they were looking for girls that were willing to come out to Australia and to be teachers or nurses, or whatever. And I made enquiries and they accepted me. So got there when I was about 17. And I landed in Australia in 1947.

- LM: And why the Sisters of Mercy, was it simply because that convent would accept you or did you have some desire to join the Sisters of Mercy?
- AMD: No I didn't, I didn't know anything about any nuns. I hadn't been taught by nuns up to that stage and didn't know anything about them. And it's just that they were there and they were willing to take me and I went to Australia. They were taking girls to Australia to train as nurses or teachers, or whatever, and to give our lives to God here in this country. And I went and reluctantly my parents agreed. Reluctantly because Australia was a very distant land in those days and we left, you know there were nine others, there were 10 of us in the group and, you know, we knew, we believed we would not ever get back to Ireland again so it was goodbye to our family for good.
- LM: And you say you joined the Mercy convent in County Cork which was some distance from your farm, your home.
- AMD: Yes it was, yes.
- LM: And what was the connection, the historical connection there with Australia?
- AMD: There was... the Sisters of Mercy from Brisbane had set up a training school there for girls to prepare them for Australia and they happened to be Sisters of Mercy. And they accepted girls and there were quite a crowd of us went there and many, most of them came out here to Australia. But now 70 years have gone by and there aren't many of us left. And out of that group of 10 there are only two of us, another Sister and myself and she's in a nursing home.
- LM: And you made the, it was a five-week voyage in 1947 when you were only 21 years old.
- AMD: That's right, yes. It was very tedious. We were on a troop ship so it didn't have much elegance in it. And a great big dining room, we'd never seen anything like it. And you know the steward came around with a great big tureen of soup, wheeled it along the dining room and he'd come along and dealt a big dash of soup onto our plates. That was alright except when there was a lot of seasickness. We got onto the Bay of Biscay and to the Indian Ocean. They were both very rough. So when you look at soup going one way and another way and another way on your table you decide you might be better without anything. So yeah it was tedious. But then we landed in June 1947 and got off the boat in Sydney and we travelled then from Sydney to Brisbane in the train. And it was only when I was in the train coming up to Brisbane that I thought, why did I do this? Why did I... why, what did I think I could do? What can I offer? What have I got? I've got nothing. So I was looking out at the trees and I believe, said they must be gum trees but they were very, there were tiny windows in the train and I couldn't see the tops of the trees and I thought, that's sort of like my story, I can't see the future. But there was lovely greenery underneath and I said, maybe I can just do small things and maybe, you know, will be useful in that way and bring some pleasure maybe and joy and helpfulness. So that's how I landed.
- LM: So more or less you rationalised that everyone plays their part?
- AMD: Yes, rationalised it. And interestingly I had rosary beads because I was praying, rosary beads and a banana in my pocket and I slept on them in the train and so they became inextricably linked. So I landed and you know it was a very grand place, a lovely place All Hallows

Convent, and nobody knew that I had that mess in my pocket, I had to hide it. But anyway it was...

LM: In these days of modern communication and modern travel, that's a huge journey to take and a huge severing of ties with your family back home.

AMD: It was. I found it very hard and it took three months for a letter to come and go. And I know that, you know, it didn't happen to me because they were... what do you get, what do we use? No, it wasn't faxes, what is the other thing we had?

LM: Telegrams.

AMD: Telegrams, telegrams I think it was. Telegram. So I know one Sister got a letter and her mother had died three months before. She didn't know anything about it. So there were lots of hurts connected with it. But then you know I got, I was teaching for a while and then I got sent to the Mater and I never wanted to go to the Mater actually because I thought I'd be a teacher and there were teachers in my family for some generations.

LM: And where were you teaching in Brisbane?

AMD: I was teaching at St Joseph's Convent, Kangaroo Point, and I had 42 in a class of Grade 2, 42 in a class. And they were delightful children, they were lovely but I was terrified, you know it was frightening. And I finished qualification as a teacher at the end of that year, I'd done a great deal of it. And then I got dispatched to the Mater because in those days you did what you were told, you didn't question anything. And I thought, if I go to the Mater I'll see sick people, might even see dying people, I might even see blood, wouldn't that be just awful? So, yeah, that's where I landed.

LM: Did you ever find out why they chose you to do that?

AMD: No, I'd been asked that every often and I don't know. I don't know. There were other Sisters picked and they were very experienced teachers so I was pleased. I said, well it wasn't that I was a hopeless teacher or something like that, there must've been some other reason, something that they saw in us that we'd be... I don't know. I think maybe we had some stability or some... I don't know what it was. I don't... I never found out. And I didn't ask.

LM: And again, in your book you mentioned, similar to when you were on the train to Brisbane that you sort of, again, rationalised what you thought was your inability to do this job.

AMD: Yes. I suppose I... what I had to do was try and see how useful can I be here, and I saw the old Sisters, I thought they were very old. I think they were about 50 or 60 years of age then and I thought they were very old. And I used to see them work very long hours, you know get to the ward about quarter past seven in the morning and they mightn't, they'd have meals in the middle of the day and the evening and they wouldn't get back to bed until quarter past 11 or half past 11 at night. And they were totally devoted to the patients and the patients loved them. And in those days, you know, for a gall bladder the patient would stay in hospital for a month. It's hardly worthwhile getting sick now, you get tossed out in a day or two. So they would stay. We got to know the husband and the wife and the children and about their farm in the country or wherever they were from and it was very happy, you know it was... But I used to stand on the balcony of the Old Mater Private at night and I recall looking out at the lots of small timber houses around South Brisbane at that stage and I used

to look out and I'd think not a single person in Brisbane knows I even exist. And that was true, I didn't know anyone, I had no relatives, I had no anyone. And so you know when that happens you have to either fall in a heap or you've got to make the best of it. And I made the best of it. And I grew to love what I was doing. Watching the Sisters, you know, their utter devotion. And then, you know, I got to know the people of Australia and I got to know the country and occasionally, you know, I'd get on holidays out to the country. Once a year we got holidays and one of the Sisters who knew the west would come with me and I got into a shearing shed once, which was an extraordinary experience for me, yeah. So I grew to love Australia and I love Australia, love it very much. And it is now my home.

LM: You talk about the distance that you were away from your family and the time you're away and in one particular part in your book you talk about the last time you saw one of your brothers, he was in short pants and then you didn't see him for 20 years and didn't recognise him.

AMD: That's right, no I didn't. We were coming from New York in Aer Lingus, an Irish plane, and there were lots of other nuns too and we were all dressed in veils you see, that was the dress of the day. And we landed in Shannon Airport and several of my brothers and my mother were there. My father had died in the meantime. My mother was there and the other members of the family. Then this handsome looking young man came towards me and I thought, I stepped back because he was going to give me a big hug and I thought, you're making a mistake, there must be somebody else. And he said, but I'm Jim. Yeah it was Jim, my youngest brother.

LM: Your own brother.

AMD: Yeah I didn't know him. But that was a very short visit, so I only got 14 days. But it was painful again to leave. Very, very painful because I got to know them as adults and I was very much an adult. That was hard.

LM: One of your own sisters did end up following your path here too, didn't she?

AMD: She did. Nuala came, she did. And that was the best thing. If Nuala hadn't come I think life could've been very lonely for me. And we were very close. Very, very close. And she taught music for 37 years at All Hallows and I was at the Mater, so we could meet from time to time. We lived in different buildings for a long time. But then after a while we lived in the same convent and so we lived there for oh 30/35 years together. Then she got sick and then she had to come here to a nursing home and she died just about, nearly three years ago. That was very hard. That was very hard.

LM: Now by 1966 you were appointed a Sister Administrator of the three Mater hospitals, the Mater Adult, the Mater Children's and the Mater Mothers. What were your feelings when you heard that you were taking on or being asked to take on that role?

AMD: Oh I protested loud and long. I said, this is the time for protesting. I said, this is carrying the will of God too far. I said, no, I don't know anything. I said, I was never in charge of anything much. Academically I'm not prepared. I had a lot of diplomas and various things, you know in nursing, management and things like that but I said, no I don't know anything. And I named, in desperation I named some of the Sisters that I felt knew everything and I said Sister so-and-so and so-and-so. And they said, no, we have chosen you. And I thought, well look... and I remember looking up at the Mater Mothers which had 14 storeys and I thought,

I'll be responsible for that building. And so I had to turn round then and I went to university, went to QUT because it was near from the Mater. I was living at the Mater. And four nights a week I'd go out to lectures and then I'd get up, learning the job that I was on, studying to do a degree in business and majoring in health administration, do a Fellowship. And I thought, I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning so I worked very well in the morning, got to bed at a reasonable time, ten o'clock or something. I'd get up at four o'clock and that's when I did the assignments. And I loved studying. I just loved it. Except maths. Very bad at maths, ever since I was a child. I don't know why. And I was doing it in the exam, the final exam, and I went to the tutor and I said, look the exam, I said, as you know is in three days' time. I said, I didn't understand anything that you were saying. I said, I don't know what... I said, I fear I won't be able to pass the exam. I had flying colours with the others, no problems. And he got me help. Anyway when the results came out I got a pass, it was like high distinction. It was wonderful. Oh a pass was, I thought that was P A S S, wonderful words, wonderful letters. I said, this, I rejoice. And I got high distinction and distinctions on the others. But that was the thing. But of course there were, we had accountants and all that that did all that. I understood the bigger thing, I can understand funding and bigger fundings and dealing with government and all that, the higher flights of that were no problem. But the mechanics of doing it is still a problem to me.

LM: Now we tend to, if you drive past the Mater or, you know, have had some involvement with it as a staff member or a patient or know someone who's been one of those two, we do these days sort of tend to take it a little bit for granted that it's there. What's your thoughts on like its significance particularly in its early days to the Brisbane community and also to the state community?

AMD: Yes. For many years the Mater was the, we had the Mater Adults public, Mater Children's and the Mater Mothers. We were the only hospital on the south side of the river. Isn't that interesting. There was nothing outside of the river. And when they... I wasn't there when they built it in, you know, 1906. And the people of the day, the knowledgeable people of the day said that nobody would ever live south of the river. And the doctors said, we're not going to cross the Victoria Bridge in our sulkies, that's how they travelled because everybody was on the north side. But the Sisters said, we're going to the south side precisely because there is no hospital on the south side. They wanted to build a public hospital, that was it. But when they, they thought even if we got the money, raised the money to build a public hospital, how will we keep it running because there was no government funding. So they built a private hospital and with the profits from that they built in a very short time a public hospital. So it was, I've always thought that the community has always supported the Mater, it's always liked the Mater. And I feel to this day that, you know, when we were really badly off at the beginning that if anything happened to the Mater the community would rally. They would help us. And it's as if the community owns the Mater. I still feel that because they have helped us down the years with all sorts of funding when things were difficult. So there's a bond there between the Mater and the community. We've aimed for the highest standard of professionalism but equally importantly, friendliness. You know one without the other is no good because when people come in, and whenever I'm there I always think anyone that walks into the hospital is frightened about somebody, frightened about a relative, frightened about themselves, and you know you need to make them welcome and let them know you're happy to see them and then what help. We have a lot of volunteers and they're lovely, can I help you, you know on their... and they smile, they're lovely. A lot of them are retired people that have, you know, weathered business and weathered everything in professions and they know what it's like for somebody to come in and be worried. They just create a wonderful atmosphere there.

LM: Now I understand your first dealings with Clem Jones came when you were running the three hospitals in the time of the, or the wake of the 1974 floods. Were you aware of him as Lord Mayor prior to that? And had you had any dealings with him?

AMD: Well I knew he existed. I knew he was there and I knew he was somebody who got things done. That's as much as I knew about him. And we discovered that there was the connection between the supply to the Mater to the tanks on the roof had broken.

LM: The water supply.

AMD: The water supply. And our engineers, the Mater engineers contacted the engineers at the Council and the engineers there said, look we understand what you're going through but there's no way, we are inundated, the whole of this city is inundated.... we haven't, we can't help you. And that meant that the whole of the Mater, the Children's, the public, the Mothers and the private hospital and all the laboratories, the radiology, everything that went, all the necessary departments would have to be folded up and all the patients would have to be evacuated. We thought, where would we send them? You know we thought the adults could go to the PA [Princess Alexandra] but could they take them? That was it. And then the mothers, would the Royal Women's be able to take all our patients 'cause we were very busy. And the children's, you know what we would do with them? One of the nurses said to me, why don't you ring Clem Jones? Now I'd never spoken to Clem Jones. I rang and I got put through to him. I don't know whether this would happen today or not, so easily. His secretary put me through to him. And I told him the situation and I said, what can we do? I said, I doubt that we'd be able to find beds for all the patients in the other hospitals. And he said, leave it with me. And just over an hour and a bit the trucks with the tanks, water tanks, rolled up to the Mater, filled every tank and the disaster was averted. I was so grateful to him. I left him, you know and I don't know that I even thanked him but I made contact with him after that. And I met him and I thanked him from my heart and I said, what would we have done if you hadn't come? I knew that he was a man that acted, that something... he wouldn't call a committee, you know he wasn't great on calling committees. He did something, whatever had to be done, he did it. And I thanked him for that and I said, I recognised that you are quite an unusual Lord Mayor. And I said, I will never forget it for you. I will never ever forget this for you. And so he knew the genuineness of acknowledgement. I don't think I even wrote him a letter, I don't think I did. I just met him and I thanked him.

LM: And it was a significant crisis averted, as you mentioned.

AMD: Absolutely. And without Clem I don't think it would've happened. So we somehow kept in contact and at every chance we had and we became friends. And there was mutual respect, you know. I watched him more and more what he was doing and he never, he was somebody who didn't look for recognition. He wasn't looking for that. He just got things done. And then he used to hold a party every Christmas at his home and he used to invite me there and we've have a lovely get-together, it was just nice and I'd always sit wherever he was sitting.

LM: These are the fairly famous pre-Christmas parties.

AMD: Yeah, pre-Christmas, yes. And I used to come there and I'd say, oh my goodness, these are all Labor people that are all in there because I never belonged to any particular party. You

don't you know because you work with every, the Mater works with every party of every persuasion. And then Leneen Forde who had been the Governor used to come, we used to always meet there, and because we'd say, will we know anyone else here? But we always met up with Clem. But I remember, yeah that was several years and I got there always and I wouldn't miss it for anything because I always had a chance of talking to him and seeing he was in his element. And I don't, apart from those parties I noticed how he cared for his wife. You know there were functions at the City Hall and I'd get invited to them.

LM: This is Sylvia Jones.

AMD: Sylvia. And he would come in, he would wheel her on her wheelchair, on her, I think it was a wheelchair himself. They didn't have somebody, he wheeled her up the centre of the City Hall himself. And he was just, to me, through and through a very good human being.

LM: And did you ever have any discussions about religion with him?

AMD: Yes I did, I chanced it. I knew that he didn't believe in God, he didn't believe in anything. And I used to say to him, Clem, you know where do you think... all the good that is in you, where does all that come from? You know where's it come from? He'd give me a punch and he'd say, forget that, forget that. And I'd say, forget that. And I'd say, I won't forget it. I won't forget it. But, you know, we were a strange couple to be friends but we were friends. At least I believed we were friends. And I was very sad when he died. But it didn't lose one bit of my admiration for him.

LM: And in your position as, or the various positions you had in charge of the Mater and various positions and titles you had there, you would've had a lot of dealings with other politicians, particularly in the state government?

AMD: I did.

LM: And how did you find those in contrast to like, you know, the Clem Jones approach?

AMD: Yeah, it would've been a different approach there because when I was dealing with the state government it was mainly with the Treasury, but mainly with the Minister for Health. And you know there was nothing definite about the money that was coming to us. We weren't certain of anything. We had to rely on our own efforts. We had the Mater Prize Home and that was really very important with whatever money came in, we'd raffle a home every month, every five weeks or six weeks, and that money was, it was critical to us for the public hospitals. And I just.... remember on one occasion, I used to straight out to the Minister for Health and I remember having one really almost an assault on a particular Minister for Health, verbal assault. There was reluctance to give us any money for the Children's Hospital. I'd already been to somebody in the department and I'd written in and said, you know, why I needed a certain amount of money and the purpose of it and, you know, measured out how much, you know got it costed and everything. And then I got a phone call to say come in and talk to us. So I went in and a couple of others came with me, Chairman of the Board I think was there. And....., no, the Chairman of the Board wasn't there that day. And this man said to me, very well. He said, we'll give you what you're asking for this time but don't come back again asking for more. Now you can imagine what that did to an Irish woman who knew that the children needed the money. But I could do nothing, I could say nothing, I just got up and I went out, I had to take the money, I couldn't refuse it, I had to take it even under those circumstances.

But then there was other occasions, one particular occasion when I was talking to the Minister for Health and a number of things, unfairnesses had crept in in our relationships and the Chairman of the Board was with me and another, an accountant was there, and just three of us. And we were talking to something, whatever it was, I must've been looking for help. And it was very reluctantly being listened to even. So I really got very cross and I spelled out all that was happening. I said there were so many nuns, there we're about 70 nuns working at the Mater hospitals and not one of us ever took a salary or a wage, we never took anything, not even a stipend. Whatever money we could've got went into keeping, maintaining the public hospitals. And I said that to them. They must've known it but I said it in case they didn't know it. And the various other things that, you know, what we had to do to get some services and how we had to rely on our own resources and that if we were... if the government, state government had to look after all these patients that we look, I had the numbers and everything, it would cost them a great deal of money because they would have to pay salary and the doctors were on honoraries. They were honorary visiting medical officers. And so I had thought of everything. I let it let fly. And I didn't regret it because it had to be said and it was all truth. And I'll always remember the Minister for Health looked at me. He listened, he didn't interrupt me, he listened. He said, of course I never knew any of that. And I believed him. And, you know, it gave me a respect for politicians in that I believe that public servants don't always inform them of the information that is vital for their understanding the situation.

LM: And I guess it's also a bit of an element in there I guess is what I said earlier is about the, you know, people do tend to take these things for granted if someone's delivering a service.

AMD: Yes, that was right. And that would've been the point I was making, that we were taken for granted, exactly. And that, you know, that it couldn't go on, that you know we just couldn't keep that going and we couldn't upgrade the services we were offering. And we wouldn't be given anything that the corresponding state hospitals didn't have. You know they didn't want us to get ahead of the state hospitals. And you know if you've got good surgeons and good doctors and good nurses they know what we should be doing. And they will tell you and you want to do that because if that's going to improve the condition of patients and their recovery you want to do it.

LM: You also had a battle with politicians in the state government, or some politicians in the state government at the time of the AIDS crisis in the 80s.

AMD: We did, yes. Yeah that was a very hard time. The Premier of the day announced in *The Courier-Mail* that nobody should help people who have HIV/AIDS and he wrote this, it was quoted, their illness is a direct punishment from God. Now that really left us speechless and we didn't, nobody believes, well few people must believe that God does evil things. They happened because of things we do, you know, or circumstances. And we waited, we thought somebody's going to show the doctors, the churches, somebody is going to say this is wrong or something. And Sisters of Mercy were founded for the poor and for the sick, for education and to provide relief, you know, where there's unmet need. Something is, you know, hurting. People are sick and nobody's doing anything about it. We're there for that. But this was a very difficult situation and nothing happened. So the Queensland AIDS Council approached our Sisters of Mercy boss at the time and said, could we do something. So she said, she asked me and I was the public face of the Mater at the time so I thought, you know, what will I do? At the time I knew nothing about AIDS. I didn't know how the

virus was or not transmitted. Didn't know anything whatever about it and I wondered how I could help people about whose condition or lifestyle I knew nothing.

But anyway then I spoke to the Deputy Director-General of Health in the Department of Health. I knew him and I knew that he was not thinking the way the Premier was although it was risky for him. And I said, look, we'd like to help the people who have the virus. But I said, they mightn't want me because dressed as I am and as I was they might think I'm just going to preach to them and then just start saying holy things to them as a prerequisite for any help that I might give them. And he said, I don't think they would. He said, anyway I'll find out. So they accepted very well that I wouldn't be doing that. And so I met with the senior people at the AIDS Council, many of them were sick themselves, and they knew that I was only there for some, just to be there for them. You know we didn't come out and say, we're going to help you. We didn't know what to do. So we put a notice in the paper and we said, we'd like to walk alongside those who have HIV/AIDS, to be there should they need us and if we're able to help we'll be here. So we just left ourselves open. And we were able to do a number of things. We were able to give them three houses, little houses, you know timber buildings rent-free, they pay the...

LM: Ongoings sort of the outgoings, yeah.

AMD: ... ongoing telephone and power and we warned them to keep the place tidy and neat because if the neighbours knew about it, the neighbours would come and boot them out because people are afraid if you touch somebody, touch their clothes you'd get the virus in those days. So anyway we kept on doing that for about, we kept with them for about seven years but it wasn't all smooth sailing. The state government wouldn't give any help to the Queensland AIDS Council. Men were sick, they needed medication, they needed accommodation, they needed all sorts of things but the government wouldn't do it. And we were approached by the federal government. I was approached by the federal government asking me if I would accept money for the Queensland AIDS Council, accept it and pass it on to them without letting the state government know. Now that was a risky, I mean we were badly off as it is, we weren't getting enough from the government. But if the Premier heard, you know, that we were doing this we could be cut off completely. But you know something had to be done and there had to be a risk taken and we are risk takers, and that's a fact. So we did that. And then that lasted for about two years I kept taking the money and passed it onto them. And then I thought... oh yeah years later I found out that Dr Neal Blewett, the Federal Minister for Health, mentioned us as being the most altruistic of money launderers. I thought just as well I didn't hear that at the time, I might've stopped everything. But anyway I didn't. But I had a lot to learn, I didn't know what to do.

But there's one particular incident remains in my memory. I got, I was asked to come to a unit in Dutton Park where a man was dying of AIDS. There was a priest going to say Mass for him in his little room. And I went there and when I got there I realised there were only about four or five in the room and some of these were volunteers. And I knew then what had happened because what used to happen in those days, say somebody in Perth knew, discovered he had the virus, he'd tell his family but got this marvellous job in Queensland. He'd head off for Queensland and they thought he was working in Queensland. And somebody from Queensland would go to Perth, and all this you know. So I knew then that this man that was dying had no relatives here. But when it came to the end of Mass the man had died then and his partner threw himself across the bed sobbing aloud. And I looked at them, I still didn't know how to help them, how to do anything, but I looked at them and I thought, look at these two men, they're loved by God as much as everybody else and myself

is loved. And I bent down, I put my arms around him and I raised him up and I held him while he sobbed. And the strange thing was that at that moment all my fear about not knowing how to help them and what to do for them disappeared because I realised it was a matter of love. So we stayed working with them for about seven years until they were strong enough, you know, and the community attitude hadn't changed that much but it was changing. And then so we...

LM: And the attitude of, the very hard-line attitude of the Premier of the time, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, as you've mentioned there, very uncharitable attitude for...

AMD: Yes.

LM: ... and he was a person who's professed to be a Christian.

AMD: A Christian. Yes, he was often seen reading the Bible and so on and, you know, I don't know because how that can coincide with being a Christian because those men needed help. He was in a position to help them. He could've helped them. And you know, he didn't. But so we had to do something about it and we risked our very existence, the existence of the three public hospitals but, you know, we would do the same again if something like that arose.

LM: What I did find interesting in your book, you mention that you approached Russ Hinze, one of Joh Bjelke-Petersen's Ministers...

AMD: I did.

LM: ... for support and he actually arranged a house.

AMD: It did. The Queensland AIDS Council told me that they were short of houses. The men were sick, they needed to be cared for, they needed to learn to cook for themselves and so on. And they told me that there was a house in Rode Road, Chermside. I've forgotten the number of the house and I often wish I remembered it to see if it's still there, and they said it had been subsumed by the government for some purpose but that purpose had fallen away and would I ring Russ Hinze and ask him, could they have use of that house under the same conditions as we had given them, you know no rent? And so I'd never spoken to Russ Hinze and I rang him and once again I got put through to him. And I told him what we were doing. And he was very important in the government too and they used to call him the "Minister for Everything". And I told him what was happening and I said there's this house in Rode Road, Chermside, and I said, I'm wondering if you could give it to the Queensland AIDS Council under the same conditions as we've given them the three houses that we have 'cause I said they haven't got the money to pay rent, they wouldn't and they might get, you know what they have... couldn't tell you how they survived. But he said, I'll think that over. And I gave him the phone number of the President of the Queensland AIDS Council. Two weeks' time they rang me to say they had the house. That's how I remember Russ Hinze. I will never forget Russ Hinze. I will never forget Clem Jones.

LM: Maybe Russ Hinze didn't tell the Premier what he was doing.

AMD: I don't think he did. Oh I don't think he would have. I don't think he would have. There's no way that he would have.

LM: You say that you won't forget Clem Jones. How would you sum up his character and approach to public administration and, you know, the way that he helped people out?

AMD: I think he was a man of great integrity, Clem was. He had heart. He saw a need and he didn't waste time calling committees together. If he could do it, and he did most things, he would do it without delay because he didn't believe in delaying. And he understood, he seemed to understand peoples' needs because I think he was a man of integrity himself and he was responsive. He was responsive whenever a need was presented to him. That's what I admired about him. And he didn't put himself forward looking for notice. He didn't, you know, make a lot of noise about the things he was doing. Actually it was better I think that he didn't because he got so many things done quietly without telling everybody. But it was done with generosity and he was effective, he was effective in whatever he set out to do, and he saw a thing through.

LM: In your time in charge of the Mater you developed a reputation for getting things done too. Is there a bit of common ground between you and Clem Jones?

AMD: Well maybe, maybe.

LM: In terms of your approach to your jobs?

AMD: Yeah, I suppose that's it. Maybe. Maybe. I wouldn't put myself in the same category as Clem Jones. He was one...

LM: But there's some element of...

AMD: Oh there is, I think we understood one another in that way, that if something had to be done, go and get it done, you know. And probably that's it, we clicked. Clem and myself clicked. And we were an odd couple if you can put it like that to be good friends, but we were. I respected Clem. I liked him very much. And whenever we met we were always happy to meet one another. We'd, yeah, made for one another and be glad to see, yeah.

LM: Okay, look thanks very much for talking today and thanks for telling those stories.

AMD: Thank you very much, Lindsay, thank you very much.

[End of recording]