The Greens (WA)

30th Anniversary History Project

[*1990-2020*]

An interview with:

Hon Diane Evers, MLC

22nd June 2020 at her office in West Perth

The Greens (WA) acknowledge that First Nations peoples, as the original inhabitants of this country, have a special cultural and spiritual connection with the land and water. We believe that their rights and responsibilities as owners and custodians must be respected.
We hold that First Nations peoples have a right to self-determination and political representation, and must be partners in the development and implementation of public policies, programs and services that affect them.
This interview was recorded on Noongar land and the Greens (WA) acknowledge that these lands were stolen and sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

INTERVIEWER
David Worth, Greens (WA) History Project Working Group.

TRANSCRIBER
Chilla Bulbeck, Emerita Professor, The University of Adelaide, Greens (WA) History Project Working Group.

NOTES TO READERS
FULL CAPITALS in the text indicate a word or words emphasised by the interviewee.

Square brackets [ ] are used for insertions not in the original recording.

INTERVIEW DISCLAIMER
This is a near verbatim interview, meaning that the transcript follows natural speech patterns. Readers should be aware that how we speak may differ greatly from how we would write and that the evolution of everyday language and speech patterns also provides valuable insight into the culture and history of a place.

INTERVIEWEE RIGHTS AND RESEARCHER ACCESS

INTRODUCTION

When interviewed, Ms Diane Evers was the MLC for the South West region in the WA Parliament's Upper House after being elected in 2017. Diane was not successful in being re-elected at the 2021 State election.

Born in 1963 and growing up in Chicago, Illinois, Diane moved to Sydney, Australia after completing her accounting degree at university.

She later moved to Albany with her family in 1995. Becoming more involved in politics, initially with the Liberals for the Forests, Diane then served on Albany's local council. She was later employed as the State Manager of Green Skills. She joined the Greens (WA) in 2005 and has stood six times as a candidate for the Party. Diane became Greens National Treasurer in 2012.

In Parliament, Diane is the Greens spokesperson for a wide range of portfolios, including forests, agriculture, regional development, water and marine, and fisheries. This list also includes budget and finance, and tourism and small business.

Diane has been an active member of the Joint Standing Committee on Audit and the Upper House's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, which reviews and scrutinises the Government's Budget and departmental annual reports.

Diane's region is very large, covering the whole South West, from Albany through to Mandurah. This has meant extensive travel through the region.

In her first term in Parliament, Diane introduced four innovative Bills involving the State's environment: *Food Amendment (Shark Fin Prohibition) Bill 2019, Royalties for Regions Amendment Bill 2019, Environment Court Bill 2019 and the Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill 2019.* She also introduced the *Forest Products Amendment Bill 2020* after this interview was undertaken.

TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY

60 mins	Rights of Nature Bill	22
1 hour 5 mins	Members' Statements to Parliament	23
1 hour 10 mins	Efforts to amend the Forest Products Act	25
1 hour 15 mins	WA forest management policy	26
1 hour 20 mins	Problems with the Regional Forest Agreement	27
1 hour 25 mins	Impact of social media on campaigns	29
1 hour 30 mins	Frequent travel as a regional MLC	30
1 hour 35 mins	Need for regional rail initiatives	31
1 hour 40 mins	Greens Party future	32
1 hour 45 mins	Family and children	34
1 hour 50 mins	Family support key for MPs	35
1 hour 51 mins	End of Interview	35

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01] DW: My name is David Worth. It's Monday, the 22nd of June, and I'm in the [parliamentary] office of Diane Evers, who is a Member for the South West region in the West Australian Parliament's Upper House. Diane, thanks very much for taking the time for this interview.

EVERS: Happy to do it.

DW: As I mentioned, we're lodging these interviews with the Battye Library. I'd like to start with your early life. Can you tell me where you were born and when?

EVERS: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, the US. Not actually in the city, but in the suburbs. In 1963, July 2nd.

DW: And did you have any other siblings in your family?

EVERS: I did. I was one of five. I was the last of five, all within six and a half years. It was pretty crowded. Quite nice. father was a carpenter, mother was a nurse. And they worked hard and always made sure we had what we needed. A comfortable suburban life.

DW: So you grew up with a, I suppose, a model of a mother at home, but also working at the same time?

EVERS: Very much so. I think I was in kindergarten. She'd been a nurse before getting married. And then she went back for training when I was about four or five, since I got to school. Actually, no, she started working before that. She started by working evenings, working night-times, night shifts, when I was probably only three, four or five, something like that. And then went back to do more training and continued working on after that.

DW: And where in those five children did you sit?

EVERS: I was the youngest. I had three older brothers and then a sister and then me.

DW: So you got to observe all the other siblings growing up and going to school.

EVERS: It was very interesting. We were close but distant at the same time. So I sort of saw what they did. But it was just so far from me. Maybe because there were so many of us, everybody went elsewhere to do their thing and have their time. And so I was always, 'Me too, can I come with you'. I was always wanting to be a part of whatever it was they were doing.

DW: Did it strike you as unusual that your mother was working and being a mother at home? Or was that a normal sort of model in Chicago for women in the '60s, mothers in the '60s?

EVERS: I never really thought much about it. It just seemed like the normal thing. We later moved to another area, nicer, further out from the city. And I think I met some friends who had mothers that didn't work, but that seemed strange to me. So, yeah, it was normal. I never, never assumed that it would be any other way.

DW: Did you then complete your primary school and high school in Chicago?

EVERS: As I said, in the suburbs. We moved one, two, three, four, five times when I was still school age. But yes, I did complete it in the suburbs. I actually didn't think much of high school and finished it in three years because I was keen to get on to real life.

DW: Does that mean they have a system of college in America after high school?

EVERS: The university system is called college in the US.

DW: Right.

EVERS: It was just at my high school, you only needed enough credit hours that you could get in three years plus one extra credit. So I did a summer school course and completed the necessary qualifications to get out and get on to university. So then went straight into university after that. Studying accounting, because I think I was about 12 [years old]- I was always, I like numbers. I was playing poker when I was five years old. My family just played cards all the time, bridge, pinochle, whatever. And one of my uncles had said to me, 'Oh, you know, you should be an accountant'. And I said, 'Oh, what's that?' And I went to the school library, looked it up, and at 12, I said, 'Yeah, I'm going to be an accountant'. And took my brother's university textbook when I was about 14 and worked through that. And thought, wow, this is great. To me, it was like crossword puzzles for somebody who likes words.

And then in high school, you know, my second year, I had to do all sorts of things to make sure that they'd let me do bookkeeping. And this was two years after I'd already done the uni textbook. And then the next year, again, I had to fight with them, because they … it was for certain years, you were supposed to be year 11 before you did it, and I was only year 10. And then in year 11, I had to fight again to do accounting, which was supposed to be for year 12. And then I got to university, University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, the Twin Cities. I think it was in the top three universities for accounting at the time. And again, you get there in the first year, they don't even give you an accounting class. You start with all the …

DW: Humanities?

[00:05:02] **EVERS:** Yeah, well, just a wider, wider coursework. And then I finally got that accounting textbook, and it was nearly the same as the one I'd done six years ago. So, yeah, accounting was the thing for me. It wasn't until I got out and I started working in it that I thought, there's got to be more than this. There's more to it. This is fun. But what's real life?

DW: In terms of your interests and abilities at mathematics and accounting, did your other siblings have the same interests and abilities?

EVERS: No, no, we were all very different and I was probably encouraged by my father a bit when I was young. I think I was only three or four and we were just driving. And he said, ''So what's one plus one, two, two plus two four?', and went up until I was up to 65,000, whatever it is, to the tenth power with, whatever that is. I'm not sure of those numbers, but yeah, you get the idea. And that was really good. But he passed away when I was 14. He was probably my biggest cheerleader. He was quite pleased with what I could do.

DW: What was his name?

EVERS: Don, Donald, known as Doc.

DW: And your mother's name?

EVERS: Mary Lou.

DW: In terms of you going on to university, it sounds like it was just accepted in your family that's where you would go after high school. Was that the same for your siblings as well?

EVERS: Yeah, my brother went for a year and he didn't, my first eldest brother, and he didn't complete it I don't believe. Then my next two brothers, they went and changed majors a couple of times. I followed my sister to the same university. And I think she finished the year before me, and then I finished. We all sort of finished at the same time, too. It was quite interesting, within a couple of years of each other. We all did different things and went off and had different careers. But no, the numbers thing was, was me. It was a fluke.

DW: In terms of playing poker at night with your family, pinochle was it?

EVERS: We played pinochle, played bridge. That was one probably when I was more like six or seven, eight. But poker, that was just, you know, nickel and dime stuff. And I didn't always do very well. I'd cry and then they'd give me a bit more money and, you know. You're five years old, what do you do? Yeah. I was the youngest. You could cry and they'd laugh at you and then do whatever you needed them to. It was just a deck of cards. I would play patience or solitaire endlessly in car rides and stuff like that because it just was a comfortable thing. Earlier on I had people say, 'You should be a dealer in Las Vegas', which isn't really high aspirations, I wouldn't think. But it was something I was known for.

[INTERRUPTION]
DW: We just had a short interruption, back talking with Di Evers about your life. I was particularly thinking about poker and playing those games at night, whether your family talked about politics, or religion as well while you were all together.

EVERS: No, unfortunately, my family was of the sort you don't discuss politics or religion. There wasn't much of that at all. It's more I found out things that my parents might have done after I'd become an adult that they were involved or had political ideas. But no, there is no ambition to go that way. We were what we were. I do remember, though, we must have talked it a bit, because I remember a little chant in kindergarten, 'Nixon, Nixon, he's our man. [Hubert] Humphrey belongs in the garbage can'.[1]

DW: Oh my god.

EVERS: So at five singing that without having any idea what it means. And then in year four the teacher did a poll of students as to who they would vote for. Would it be [Democrat candidate George] McGovern or Nixon? I don't think you [were] supposed to do that in classrooms, but anyway, hands went up and there were only four of us voting McGovern[2].

[1] The two candidates in the 1968 United States presidential election held on Tuesday, November 5, 1968. The Republican nominee, former Vice President Richard Nixon, defeated the Democratic nominee, incumbent Vice President Hubert Humphrey. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968_United_States_presidential_election
[2] Incumbent Republican President Richard Nixon defeated Democratic Senator George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election on Tuesday, November 7, 1972. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972_United_States_presidential_election

So, again, I knew there was something, something had changed, even though we were supporting Nixon, the first but not in the second election, I think that's pretty clever. But yeah.

DW: And in terms of your family, was religion important to your mother and father?

EVERS: Irish Catholic background, my mother. My Dad also. We'd all go to church as a family every Sunday. I usually fell asleep until I was about nine or so. It didn't grab me. I didn't quite understand it. When I did start asking questions, maybe at 15 or 16, pretty quickly shut down. There's not supposed to be questions. So I just didn't get it. But, even my siblings had gone to a Catholic school, primary school. But by the time I was ready for school, my mother pulled us all out of it because she didn't like some of the practices that were going on.

DW: In terms of growing up in a very large city, Chicago, and its surrounds, were there any factors there at school or home that shaped your current views?

[00:10:37] **EVERS:** Definitely. When I was about seven or eight … could have been younger, because it would have been late '60s, so maybe six, seven, I went to a school in a community that was very multi-racial and it was pretty much two communities coming together. So there was more of a white community, more of a black community - coming together. And a number of the people that I got on best with, in fact, the only ones I remember from that time were the black students who were really kind to me. And so I just assumed that we were supposed to be mixed, that we were all the same, even though there were fights, often, racial fights, even in year one and two.

And there was some, I don't know if it's fear or something of 'they're different in some way'. I gathered that from what was happening in the news. But then we moved from that neighbourhood to another neighbourhood which had very few black people. It's just one neighbourhood next to another that are different, I don't really understand how or why, but there, there just weren't many black people. There were very few people of color. I think an Indian family moved in next to us. And that was, I don't know, it just, [sighs] there was very much a separation, the segregation stuff in, that was starting to be … desegregation was happening. I knew about those things, but I never …

DW: It probably wasn't that long after the formal efforts to desegregate the schools.

EVERS: Yeah, yeah, it was during that time. My high school, we had black students bused in from a further distance to try to mix it. But I, I, never ... it was always something different to have a friendship or a relationship with a black person, it seemed. I knew there was a difference to it, but it was always much more comfortable to me as well. I guess I felt there was an honesty there, for some reason, I didn't know.

DW: And I suppose you at that age, you're a bit too young to be wrapped up in the Vietnam War discussions?

EVERS: Again, I saw it. I saw it happening on television. I was aware of it. I knew it was happening, but I wasn't forming opinions, I suppose. Yeah. And then the whole thing, I remember the way Watergate[3] affected me, it was on television all day through the Summer. So you couldn't watch your favourite shows or something. So I was still thinking

[3] A major political scandal in the United States involving the administration of President Richard Nixon from 1971 to 1974 that led to Nixon's resignation. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate_scandal

like a child. And as for [family] discussion, it just didn't seem to come up. Or maybe I just wasn't involved in those discussions. I used to hang around my parents, just sit wherever they were and listen. But, as I was saying earlier, sometimes my memory doesn't hold on to the things that, so they could have been affecting me without me actually remembering it now.

DW: And during high school and then into university, did you have desires to travel outside of America, or to Mexico, or whatever to add to your education?

EVERS: Not so much to add to my education, but just to get out of the US. And it started, I knew about Australia from the [TV] show, 'Skippy'. I remember thinking a kangaroo would have a lot easier time walking, getting from one place to another. Then I read *The Thorn Birds*, and that's hardly a broad generalisation of what Australia might be like, but it made me realise it existed. That was when I was about fourteen, fifteen and I started thinking, that would be nice to go. So when a friend said, 'Well we should do a round the world trip', I said, 'Yeah, as long as we go to Australia', I definitely want to see that. And when that – those plans fell through, I still had it in my plan that when I finished my degree, I would go to Australia and I was on a plane a week afterwards.

DW: To Australia?

[00:15:01] **EVERS:** Yeah.

DW: And only to Australia or around the world?

EVERS: No, just Australia. Just into Sydney. When I was doing my interviews with the accounting firms, the 'big eight' they were back then, one of them said, 'I'll put you in touch with our people in Australia', and I started working here.

DW: So what year was it Di that you arrived?

EVERS: '84.

DW: And so you had a job to come to.

EVERS: Yeah.

DW: That's a fantastic way to get to a country.

EVERS: Yeah.

DW: So 1984 was just the tail end, or getting towards the tail end of [US President] Reagan [first term], and that's that stage, Gorbachev [USSR Presidents Andropov and Chernenko at that time, Gorbachev took power in 1985], I think about the nuclear arms race and so on. Were there any of those issues that you were interested in?

EVERS: Yeah, definitely. Well, in 1980 there was an Independent that ran for President, Anderson, I think [John B. Anderson, former Republican congressman for Illinois]. And let's see, 1980, so I was 17. I couldn't vote yet, but that caught my attention. Just the idea of an independent running for President of the US. What are the chances? And now I've realized just how limited the chances are that that's going to happen. And Reagan became

President. Carter I'd liked, Carter had been good. Really seemed to pull things together and was friendly and …

DW: Put solar panels on the roof of the White House.

EVERS: Yeah, yeah. How about that? I think he had a garden there, too. Reagan came in, and because of my father had passed away, I was receiving Social Security payments. And in the first year that Reagan got in, the next year they were cut by a quarter. The next year, by another quarter, and the last quarter in that fourth year that I was at university. So that's what I saw happening. And my Mom was working, too. We weren't really hurting for funds. Plus, I was working through uni as well, just because that was a thing that you do. I couldn't understand why you wouldn't be working.

Reagan was there and I could see that Reagan was going to get another term. I was completely unhappy with how he was doing things. I think it was the privatisations with [UK Prime Minister] Maggie Thatcher and on the world stage in terms of [pauses] I guess I was very peace-minded from very early on, but I never really thought of it. But I didn't see war as a solution to things. And I saw the way he was going was more aggressive than was necessary. You needed something different.

So that was probably what pushed me to say I needed to find out what's outside the US. I'd grown up knowing, as every American knows, this is the best place on earth and everybody wants to live here. And I had to leave the country to actually check that out. And I understand it a lot better now.

DW: Do you still think is the best? [both laugh]

EVERS: Oh, absolutely not, absolutely not.

DW: You've been in Australia 36 years, have any of your family members travelled out here or come out to live?

EVERS: Not to live. To them, the US is still the best place to be. Why would anyone want to live elsewhere? And when they think of Australia, I think they think of it as a bit of a socialist country. You get free medical care and education is good and it's more equitable. So that sort of scares them. We might be heading down that path. The fears of many Americans is that socialism will lead to communism, will lead to no rights and will lead to terrible things, no choice and so forth. But my mother has come out to visit a few times and two of my brothers have made the trip out here.

DW: How long did you live in Sydney for?

EVERS: 10 years. I came out here, came to Albany in '95. So that's 11 years.

DW: Did you come to Albany for work reasons?

EVERS: Oh, well, no. We had been running our own business in Sydney and the 'recession that we had to have' [quoting then-ALP Prime Minister Paul Keating] happened. Business had been tough. We, my husband [Tony] and I, who I met in Sydney, we had two children and I wanted more children. And it just doesn't happen much in Sydney. Even in '95, very few families had more than two children of the people we knew, in closer

suburbs. And we wanted to get out of the business because it was just … both working full time at it, not so great. We wanted to spend more time with our children.
So just in our own minds, we took out a map of Australia. The North was too hot for Tony. The South was too cold for me. We sort of travelled around and got around to Perth and thought, no, we want to avoid the big cities. And then saw Denmark. And I thought, Denmark looks good. Do you think it would have a good high school? Because I wanted to find a place and then stay there, I guess because my childhood had been so disjointed with moving. We thought about Denmark and then looked at Albany. We'd heard a little bit about Albany. I think they'd had a recent story in the Australian Geographic, I think it was there.

[00:20:38] And we didn't think much of it. And then that Christmas came along. So that was '94, that Christmas came along. And our brother-in-law said, 'So where you going on your next holiday?' And flippantly, I just said, 'Ah, maybe Western Australia'. Again, didn't think much of it. Got back to the business and we were driving to work one day and the radio said two tickets for the price of one to Perth. Okay, I can take a hint. So, we came over here, took a trip down South, took two days to get to Albany. It's long distances back then. And had two very wet, rainy, cold days in February. And I woke up the next night, I couldn't get to sleep the next night planning the house we'd build. And just when my husband woke up, I said, 'So what do you think of Albany? I think it'll work'. We sold the business, sold the house. Took a little while to get over here.

There's one other story there. We saw it [Albany]. We thought, yeah, that'll do. We went back and continued living our life for about five or six months, went to my husband's school reunion, 25th school reunion. That's what it was. And at that school reunion, this was in Orange, New South Wales. At that school reunion, we met a whole number of people that he had gone to school with. And we got three responses when we were saying we think we're going to go to Albany and change our lifestyle. There were the people that said, 'Oh, how can you do that? You know, won't you miss Sydney and everything you've got there?' Then there were the other third of the people that said, 'Oh, what a great idea, I wish I could do that'. And the other third that said, 'Yeah, we did that last year, 10 years ago or whatever. And loved it, best thing ever'. So that idea to step away from the life you were leading and find something really lovely in the country. For us, the coastal area was nice. Just a slower pace, more community stuff. It was perfect.

DW: Did you meet your husband, Tony, in the accounting business?

EVERS: No, no, no. I met him through a friend. I just had my 25th birthday and some friends who'd been there said, 'Oh, do you want to come to our place for dinner?' And I joined them, and I walked in. I was riding a motorcycle at that time. I had my helmet under my arm, black leather jacket, walked in and he was sitting at the table. There were only I think three, five, six of us all up. And I sat down next to him and we laughed a bit about, he'd been given the video of 'The Big Chill' for his birthday. We laughed about that. Started talking about the Beatles. He knew a lot about the Beatles. [laughs remembering] I think I put my hand on his knee within about five minutes. Just a gentle, casual see what happens. I mean, I don't even think I knew what was happening, you know?

DW: The American woman?

EVERS: Yeah, straightforward. After about an hour of just amazing conversation, really connecting, I thought this is this is too good. Better check, make sure I've got him. Stood up, walked to the kitchen, to see what was happening. Came back, sat down at a different

chair. Within three or four minutes, he got up, walked to the kitchen, came back and sat down next to me. I thought, this is looking good. I don't know how much detail you want on that, but he called me. That was Sunday, he called me Wednesday. We went out Friday. And we were engaged [the next] Wednesday.

DW: Wow. Whirlwind.

EVERS: [laughs] Yes it was, it was good. We were ready.

DW: And you said you had two children in Sydney?

EVERS: Yeah.

DW: And their names are?

EVERS: Rose and Jessica.

DW: And then you had two further children here in Albany?

EVERS: That's right. And they're Tia and Carl.

DW: It just seems such a big move from Australia's largest city down to Albany, which is a beautiful city, but very differently in style. And you've been happy living there, obviously.

EVERS: Oh, just delighted. I get to go there, back on Friday, this coming Friday, and I start singing the song. I'm not going to sing it for you, but there's a song at home. Can't think of the name of it. I think it's Simon and Garfunkel. No. Anyway, it just feels right. It was the right thing to do. And that was a considerably bigger move and bigger decision than the US to Sydney [move], because here it was family. I knew Australia was the place. But even now, Albany, if we didn't have such a perfect place to live, we can see going to a smaller place. I mean, even now, we're 10 kilometres out of town.

DW: Smaller than Albany?

[00:25:27] **EVERS:** Well, that that's a possibility, but where we are is perfect.

DW: You're in Albany with your family. You have an accounting business there as well with your husband?

EVERS: No, no, no. He's not an accountant. He originally was a nurse, psychiatric nurse, working with children and then when I met him, he was managing a hi fi retail shop. And then when we came to Albany, as things happen in Western Australia it's who you know. We were invited to a barbecue by some friends of a friend of a friend that we met very quickly, to barbecue in the first week or two we were there. And he meets a psychiatrist who wanted to set up a program for women and their families with postnatal depression, stress and anxiety. He got taken into that and got his first job doing that back in nursing. He's done community health up until retiring.

DW: How then did you get involved with the Greens?

EVERS: Ooh, okay, let's see.

DW: So, it's '95 [when you move to Albany].

EVERS: '95.

DW: Jo's [Vallentine] no longer in Parliament. Christabel's [Chamarette] no longer in Parliament.

EVERS: I heard about the Greens when I was in Sydney a little bit, but coming from the States it was all kind of new to me. And when I got to Albany, I sort of heard these things that were happening, but I didn't have any political ambitions. That wasn't my thing. I didn't really think that I could because it had never been considered in the family or anything like that. But, let's see, it was in '96, I got my citizenship, Australian citizenship, so I could finally vote. And I had been paying attention to Federal politics because I remember a conversation with my Mum when she said to me, she'd come here to visit. And I was talking about politics here. She said, 'Why are you talking about politics? I'm not interested in that. Neither are you'. It's like, oh!

But in Australia, politicians were over the newspaper's front pages all the time. In the US, you just didn't see them, in the past. It's changed now, I imagine. So I got citizenship, I could vote. And then the Albany Shire and City, sorry Town and Shire, were going to amalgamate. And I was a little bit concerned. And this is where my accounting knowledge comes in, that the Shire had, or the Town had lots of pretty things. They would dress things up and make things look nice, but they were in debt, quite heavily in debt. The Shire had a lot of money but had really lousy roads. And I'd say they'd hold things together with a piece of baling twine if they could. It was just, don't spend it, keep it in the bank, country farmer, conservative sort of spending.

And I said to my Husband. This is -, let's see. My son must have just been born, I'm trying to think. Which happened first? He might have been a month or two old when I said this, 'If they amalgamate, the Town's going to get the Shire's money and spend it on useless things. What do you think? Should I run?' And he agreed. And I ran and I got in. I came to the first meeting, I came there and I said, 'Roads, the other shire, Plantagenet, is laughing at us because our roads are so bad'. And within a couple of meetings got through, in the next budget, I think it was, to spend a certain amount of money getting our roads back up to shape. And I have to say, that was money well spent because they were unsealed roads that we're using a lot of maintenance to try to keep them going. They were mostly to the coast, which had a lot of tourism potential. Nobody wants to go over corrugated roads. I don't go on so much about roads now because there are other options and it's a whole different story now.

DW: So you were elected as a local councillor onto the merged body?

EVERS: That's right.

DW: The Shire and the Town. How long are we on the council for?

[00:29:53] **EVERS:** A total of five years. I got in, I think, in '99 and then it was the 2001 election. That's '99, I only got the two-year term. I ran again for another four-year term and got that. And then after two years the Mayor's position came up and I ran for Mayor. Because our Mayor at that time, she was very good, but she had been delaying to have back surgery for a long time. So was under incredible pain a lot of the time. Then she had the back surgery and was on significant medication for a long time and just wasn't able to

fulfill the duties that she probably would have liked to have been able to have done. But it seems like me running against her along with two other people, too, seemed to have built her up. And I think that's the best I've ever seen her was through the campaign. She really pulled it together and continued after that.

And I ended, during that term, though, to take a position as an accountant with the City of Albany. But it was during that time, 2001, where a friend of mine, I was at a rally about the foreshore, the waterfront down there and what was going to happen there. And he said to me, 'We've got this Liberals for Forests group, political party starting up. Would you like to run as a candidate?' I go, 'Yes, sure. I like forests. Good'. Yeah, so I ran as a candidate in the State election knowing that I wasn't going to win. I was just there to raise the profile of the forest, in my view.

And in fact, at one point I went to visit a woodturners' group. And somebody said, 'Oh, well, where would your preferences go?' I said, 'To Labor, of course, because they've got the next best policy for timber, for the forests. And that was when the penny dropped that it was Liberals for Forests with a capital 'L' Liberal Party. And I knew this all along, but again, coming from the US, it's different, just Liberals and Labor. Maybe I just don't always see everything is two-sided. It's not the name of the party. I'm not a hard, stuck to the party. It's more what the policy is, what the program is, what you're looking for?

DW: What State election was that? Was at the 2001?

EVERS: 2001 State election.

DW: Did you have much to do with Janet Woollard and her husband? [Dr Keith Woollard, the couple who founded the party in 2001]

EVERS: Well, yeah, a couple of phone calls, I imagine. But there wasn't a whole lot. I had six or eight people in Albany who were helping me with the campaign. I just had to speak on behalf of them. In fact, I had more to do with Sandy Davis, who was the Greens candidate in Albany at the time. And it was through that connection that I realised how closely I aligned with the Greens and that felt really good to have found a home, found a party that represented what I felt.

DW: So after that election, you joined the Greens?

EVERS: By 2005, because the next election came up and I actually joined. I was listening in, being a supporter, paying attention, but it was 2005 where I said I'd be a candidate. And I put my hand up for that at that time and had to join in order to do it. I've since found that in Western Australia, where it often happens, people join in order to be candidates. Maybe not so much anymore. In the Eastern states, they kind of laughed at that. They couldn't believe that people hadn't been members for some time before they became candidates. But, you'd know how tough it is to find candidates for some places.

DW: At that stage, had you met the other Greens who'd represented the South West region, such as Paul Llewellyn and Chrissy Sharp?

EVERS: I'd met Chrissy Sharp a couple of times. I was pretty impressed with what she had to say. I really, really liked what had happened through that period, 2001 to 2005 with

the change for [logging old-growth] forests[4]. I could see a lot of progress was being made. And then, Paul Llewellyn, met up with him a few times. We're still connected, still see them both.

DW: You were very active also as the co-convener for the O'Connor Regional Group. How much of your time was taken up in those sort of Party positions?

EVERS: In those earlier days, not a lot, although back then, we would meet for a weekend quarterly. Now, I've spent mother's Day with the Greens. I've spent Australia Day with the Greens back when it was still something we celebrated. There weren't a lot of family people in there. They wouldn't necessarily understand that when you have small children, you've got other needs. They would say, 'Oh, we have childcare available for people'. But then setting it up on mother's Day seemed like a little bit of an odd choice. But I could have said something then. So, at that time, four young children, I was quite preoccupied with their school and other sorts of things.

[00:35:21] So, it wasn't until 2011 that I decided to go to the State Conference [*sic* - actually the 2011 Greens National Conference in Fremantle] because I hadn't been before. And I'd run as a candidate twice before that. I'd billeted in Fremantle and was walking to the venue. And there were three other women walking a little bit ahead of me. But I walked pretty quickly and I caught up to them. And I'm not sure if they spoke first or I did, but we connected that we were both going to the same place and within that next minute or two of introductions, and they heard that I was an accountant and had been a candidate. They said would you like to be the [Greens National] Treasurer? I was like 'Wow, okay'.

So that 2011 Conference was an interesting one for me, because all of a sudden, rather than just going there as an observer, all of a sudden I was thrown into the mix. And it was quite interesting in that the current Treasurer had put his hand up again to be Treasurer, but there were a number of States who weren't happy with him. And they were really hoping that somebody else would put their hand up. But rather than putting my name in there, somehow we decided that his name would go up with 'seek other candidate', as it always does. And that occurred and it was chosen 'seek other candidate'. Then we needed another ballot for the Treasurer. And there was a woman from Queensland who put her hand up and the current Deputy Treasurer, back then from Victoria. And I put my hand up and it went to a ballot. And I can't be certain, I didn't win then. But I believe that even WA didn't vote for me.

DW: Ooohh [surprised].

EVERS: Because they didn't know who I was. I'd been a candidate. I'd come in from outside their circle of urban people who do things and they weren't certain of me. And I wasn't surprised because it was very hard through that time to engage with the urban, metro Greens. Zoom didn't exist. Every now and then we'd try phoning in but the equipment wasn't suitable. I would make the attempt to drive up for that [Representatives Council meetings]. But it meant another whole weekend to get up here for a Saturday afternoon meeting. And I never really felt very connected, and I guess they kind of felt the same thing.

[4] After its election in March 2001, the new State Labor Government honoured one of its major election commitments by ending the logging of 99% of remaining old-growth forests. See https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/Gallop/2001/03/Labor-delivers-on-promise-to-end-old-growth-logging.aspx

Now, to a large extent it's changed. But back then, it was tricky. Then I didn't go for the Deputy Treasurer position right at that time, but the next, conference. Oh sorry, it was the National Conference. It was held in Freo in 2011. The next National Conference [2012 in South Australia] they were still looking for a Deputy Treasurer and I put my hand up for that. And then at the next, after six months, then I became Treasurer because the other person stepped down.

DW: So what year was that, you became the National Treasurer of the Australian Greens?

EVERS: 2012.

DW: Fantastic, jump from member to Treasurer of the Australian Greens [Diane laughs]. Did you have any other roles within the WA Greens as well, any formal positions?

EVERS: No. Because, again, because that distance from Albany to Perth. It was easier for me, and even when I would then go to all the meetings with the National Greens, because I still had to be face to face, I would come through Perth and go out to Brisbane or Canberra and Tasmania or whatever without even meeting up with people in Perth. I would meet with them at the National Conferences, so I got to know a few people there. But it was very separated.

DW: Who travelled with you to those meetings of the National Greens, the Australian Greens? Were there other people from WA who went who had other positions?

EVERS: Well, we would all sort of make our own arrangements.

DW: Right.

EVERS: So you might have somebody else on the plane and you'd try to meet up there so you could carpool to get taxis to wherever you needed to go.

DW: I'm just thinking in terms of mentoring you about who you're going to meet, what would be happening and so on, whether anybody took that role from WA to help you?

EVERS: Yeah. Christine Cunningham was really valuable at that time, for my understanding.

DW: What was her role in WA?

EVERS: I can't be certain.

DW: I'll look it up[5].

[00:40:01] **EVERS:** Yeah, she did have a role on the national body as well as on the state body at different times.

DW: Well, I think the thing is, as well, in terms of Albany and Perth, it's such a huge area because the seat, the Upper House seat runs from Albany all the way up to Mandurah, which is really part of urban Perth. It must have been hard just keeping in touch with people like in Bunbury, Greens members in Bunbury.

[5] Greens (WA) National Liaison Convenor 2010-12, Co-Convenor of the Australian Greens in 2014.

EVERS: Well, Bunbury. See, Forrest Greens and O'Connor had been together for a while. So these weekend trips were often like in Bridgetown, Balingup, Margaret River or something like that. And we would meet the Bunbury Greens, we'd meet there. Bunbury Greens, I know a number of them. And they're quite good friends that we've been, that's been a good connection. And we've actually even got the Country Greens going, both at the Australian Greens level, and at the WA level. Now, the Australian Greens Country Greens had been started up. I think Giz Watson was … helped to set that up, 2000, maybe around '14, '15. It could have been earlier, could have been 2012 even. But it never really got off the ground, not much happened with it.

So, let's see, at the 2016 National Conference that was held in in WA, I said I'd really like to meet up with other country Greens, can we do something? And a morning tea would be set aside or something. Anybody that's from the country areas go meet here. And it was great because we had maybe 20 people show up. And also, this is great, we need to talk to each other. We've got to do something because we're not being heard in our metro [groups], in our own States. And from there, we pushed to have it continue.

At the next National Conference, we again set aside another time and then another time and finally we started getting it together, going through our terms of reference, again, getting a Convenor. And now, at this last national conference that was held by Zoom, we were the only group to say we'd like to have a workshop. And we did. We held a workshop on the Sunday, had, oh I don't know, should remember the numbers, but maybe 40 people show up from all the different States and we worked through some of the issues.

Some of the things blocking why Greens aren't being voted for in country areas. And it was great because there's so many connections across regional groups to other regional areas, more so in some ways than we connect with our own State city areas. And we've tried doing the same thing in Western Australia, but it's kind of been stymied. How can I say it? It's, it just hasn't, there's been a bit of a difference of opinion in which way we should go.

Are we regional? Are we rural? … seems to be an issue. Are we saying that we are farming-based, landscape-based and all that? Or are we people living in urban centers away from the big city? And that's not the way I intended it to go. I really look at it, it's got to be regional across the board with all the issues that affect people living regionally, not just sort of people that have chosen to live outside the city in another urban scene.

DW: When you joined the Greens back in 2005, how many members would there be at an O'Connor meeting … workshop … weekend get together?

EVERS: You know, I don't think it's changed much. You know, for a big event, if you really work at it, not a big event, but if you've got a meeting where you really want people to attend, you get 25 to 30. If it's just the coffee mornings, let's get together and chat, you'll get between, say, 5 and 10. If you have somebody coming down to speak to us and you put out advertising and say, 'Come and be involved'. Now, I think the biggest one I remember was when Scott [Ludlam] was in and he came down. We had about 140 people for that 2014 re-election. Now what was it called? Where they just had to run the election over again. The numbers that actually show up don't seem to be increasing much. But I think that, well, even the polls, I think, we're still around 8% down there, overall. That's the O'Connor area. So there's a lot of country areas in that.

We seem to have plateaued and really find it hard to make that next step. And I really don't know what it is, but I have seen the change in the Perth metro area. I used to go there and try to spot the people who didn't have grey hair, and no hair. And there were only a few. We were all 50 plus. Now, something changed around 2014, '15. Younger people started getting involved. And now the ones with grey hair or dyed grey hair are the ones that stand out because there's not many of them. And I just think that's wonderful.

But as much as I talk about it to my counterparts in Albany and Bunbury and so forth, we just haven't hit that dynamic where young people are prepared to get in and say things have got to change. And I don't know what that is. It's sort of like the 25 to 35-year-olds in Perth. And there's not a lot of them in in country areas. And if they are, they're having families and working two jobs or something. I think it's the 15 to 25-year-olds that are going to change things, but they're not there yet. We have to make space for them. We have to actually get them in as positions of Convenor and let them run the meetings.

DW: Well, I suppose also part of it is the dynamic where young people move away or have done from regional rural areas of West Australia, come to Perth or go interstate for their jobs and education, and that then makes it harder to get people.

[00:46:01] **EVERS:** It is, yeah. The young people that stay in Albany are less likely to be the activist type, I think, the ones that really want to change things.

DW: You were elected to your current [Parliamentary] position in 2017. I'm wondering how many previous times you'd stood for election in the WA Parliament.

EVERS: Yeah. Yeah. In 2005, 2008, 2013. Then I also ran in the Federal one in 2013 for O'Connor. And then 2017 came up and Giz had asked me in 2016, early on in 2016, 'What do you think? Are you going to put your hand up for the South West?' And I said, 'Oh, look, I just can't because my job with Green Skills, where I was State Manager, it felt like I was juggling eight balls at once and just couldn't see a break in it all. But then by around August, when the call went out for candidates, I had found two people to take over, one to take over the State Manager role and one to take over the Albany Office Manager role.

And, I thought, 'Well, maybe I should, maybe I could'. So, I put my hand up then. And it just fit perfectly. I'd found somebody to take over my job so I could let that go. My youngest son had just moved, was just about to be moving out of home. My husband was transitioning to retirement. We had time. We had the space in it. And I was ready to commit. So, again I said to my husband, 'What do you think?' He said, 'Well, I don't want you to say afterwards, 'I should have done something else.' So only if you're going to put everything into it'. And we travelled about 12,000 kilometers in three months around the South West, just meeting as many people as we could, engaging people to try to be supporters and help us in the campaign, and so forth.

DW: Can you remember how many candidates put their hand up for that position?

EVERS: It was just me and one other, Nerilee Boshammer. She's a lovely woman, down in Busselton. [Diane spells out the name].

DW: Can you also talk a little bit about Green Skills? Because that's unusual in being based in the South West. It's got its main office there.

EVERS: It's a wonderful organisation. I really love it. It started as APACE in Fremantle. Back around the same time the Greens did, I think, 1989, I think. And then it branched out into Denmark and took up the name Green Skills and also set up an office in Albany. And the one in Perth moved to Murdoch [University], on their campus. And the three organisations, the three offices work together to try to bring on more sustainability issues and abilities for people, really trying to progress that. They'd had a big tree planting time. They sort of went with what was going at the time to keep their funding going, and to keep grant funds coming in, doing the projects that they really liked out of Albany with Louise Duxbury and Basil Schur.

They're just amazing people who had such strong convictions that we had to change [our society]. And, starting local was a good start. And they've worked so hard to try to change things. And that was Denmark's focus, was this project-based stuff, a lot of it. But then the bluegum industry happened and there was a lot of tree-planting opportunities, as well as the natural resource management was picking up, and there were tree planting revegetation opportunities there. So we did a lot of work with that.

Then we did the Green Corps, which was early '90s, and ran a lot of Green Corps teams. That was stopped, I think, for a while. Came back as Green Jobs Corps, but it was very different, and not what we're doing. And then we knew Perth needed to get more happening. They'd been doing some work with local councils and WALGA – the WA Local Government Association - was starting up these panels, tender panels, so that councils could just go to somebody on the panel. And we got lucky enough to have somebody put in the right submission and we got put onto that panel. And now through the Perth office, they do a lot of work with local government, which is great because we can train people up into sustainable regenerative sort of methods of planting and then go out and spread it in all the local governments. So it works, it works really well to spread that knowledge.

[00:50:58] And then in Albany, in the time I was there, I started there in 2008 after I'd been working at South Coast NRM [Natural Resource Management] for a while before that. And when the Green Army program started, we got lucky enough, put in a good submission and got that going. And we ran a total of 12 … 12 different groups, I think, of between 8 and 10 young people. And although it was supposedly a Green Army, it was there for the environment and all, the best thing about that was the social aspects. We got a lot of young kids, it was their first job, it gave them a point to get out of the bed in the morning, to get ready and to learn how to show up for work, ready to go with the stuff you needed in your lunch and so forth.

And they learned a lot of stuff about being on country. We'd have an Indigenous component to it. They learnt fencing and revegetation, did a lot of weeding. Wherever we could get some grant funding to help run the program, and to keep it going. I was just so devastated when they cancelled that program[6], I had just spent three weeks putting in an application for another 15 programs that would just have done so much good for the young people down there.

DW: Was that a nationally-funded program?

[6] The Green Army was an election promise of the former Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott, introduced after the 2013 election, which aimed to create a force of young unemployed people to work on conservation projects. It was funded by a large cut to the Landcare program, and itself was cut by later Liberal PM Malcolm Turnbull in December 2016. See https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/05/tony-abbotts-green-army-expected-to-be-abolished-in-budget-update

EVERS: Yeah, yeah. It was just so disappointing when it stopped. They blamed it on the Greens, too, for stopping it because it was back when the backpacker tax came in. And when we said what a ridiculous idea the backpacker tax was and they cancelled that, they said, 'Well, we don't have the money now for the Green Army program. So, stuff the lot of you'. And the problem was though that the Green Army wasn't run so successfully everywhere. It really came down to who you had as a supervisor, and we had an excellent supervisor at the time, and a whole commitment by the organisation. Other places that tried it, they would get out of work uni students. They might have had a degree or something and here they are doing the Green Army program because that's the best they could find at the time.

So, I mean, nothing wrong with that. But it really could have been a good thing. It's something we need. We've got the ranger program here in WA and that is really good for a lot of people. That has done a lot of good work, and especially with Indigenous employment, Indigenous youth, giving them a chance to be back on country, doing something valuable. And I'm working that into what I'm doing here now, too.

DW: Well, it's a big jump to being a member of Parliament in 2017, especially for such a large region. Did anyone assist you in mentoring you to make that jump into Parliament, and the processes used in Parliament, to run the Chamber, put up Bills?

EVERS: Yeah, yeah, it's an interesting situation. Like I said, I'm still in touch with Chrissy [Sharp] a lot. But then she finished in 2005 and so much has changed. So much is the same, but a lot has changed as well. And I am actually, I learn by doing. I should ask questions more. Well, I shouldn't say I should but I find when I ask questions, sometimes you get an answer but it may not be the right answer, or the answer you need at the time. So that's part of my personality in there. So, I can't … you've got to take this with that in mind.

Parliament put on two or three induction sessions and they're there and available, there's so much support in terms of, if you have a question, you just have to ask somebody. So I don't see that as a problem. And Robin Chapple [then-Greens MLC for Mining and Pastoral region], I share an office with him in Parliament House, and he's just a wealth of information. He has got so much knowledge going back and a really good memory for it. So, I can draw on information from him as well from time to time.

DW: And you've got four members now in the Greens, in the Upper House in WA, you've split up the portfolios. What portfolios are you responsible for?

[00:55:11] **EVERS:** I've got what I think are the best ones. Forests, agriculture, regional development, water and marine, fisheries, all that natural stuff. I don't have environment, which Robin does, but we kind of work together. We share a lot there, and that helps. And then Tim [Clifford's] got climate change and energy. So that kind of works in because the South West is a big energy hub. So, I've also got the South West I can work on. But then I've got the other ones that stem from the accounting side. I've got the Budget and Finance, and then I'm on the committee, the Estimates Committee, which reviews, scrutinises the [Government's] budget and [departmental] annual reports. And that really suits me well.

And then I've got Small Business and Tourism. I've also got Sport and Recreation. And in the Small Business and Tourism, that's just so important again for regional areas and across the State. But when you look at the discrepancies or the disparity between the

regional areas and the city areas, there's just such a difference. Things are done differently, and people like the small businesses down there, they like knowing who they're dealing with. And so we really need to do more to encourage that. And that works along with our agriculture and that we have to do more to add value to our agriculture and then promote that more widely. And probably working through cooperatives, get more of that happening.

So, there's a little bit of it, like there's the hemp group, they've got a cooperative that is really working well. But I feel they need more behind it, more support from the Government to actually make it take off, to make more happen because it's got so much potential. You can build houses with it. You can use it for your paper. You can make clothing out of it, you can feed it to yourself or to animals. There's just a lot of benefits with it. I brought hemp milk into Parliament one day because I'd been at a hemp industry conference and somebody there had hemp milk. And I brought it in, got special permission that I could serve it at afternoon tea. And it's the funniest thing, because it was all still this, almost reluctance, because 'Oh, no, that's bad. We're not supposed to do that. What's going to happen to us?' So, some people wouldn't even try it. Somebody went so far and put it in their coffee and said, 'I could get used to that'.

But the best thing was Question Time happened afterwards and everybody was laughing and giggling and stuff. [David laughs] And I thought, this is really strange. You know, there's no link whatsoever, but just having tried it, you could feel their tension at breaking a rule, it felt like. And we've got to get well over that. It's really got to change.

DW: The minor parties like the Greens get certain allocations of time in Parliament for certain business. And you've just mentioned about eight portfolios. Do you negotiate with the other three [Greens] Members about what you want to bring on and talk about in Parliament?

EVERS: Oh, definitely, yeah, yeah. We do get limited time and I feel I've had a good share of that to bring things on, because during those times you don't make change to any legislation or anything, but you can influence people's way of thinking to some degree. And I think there's a lot of games that go on that I'm still new to, what to expect when those things happen. I think I had one that I wanted to talk about, the other potential industries out of the forest and everybody else just talked about logging, 'You forgot to mention logging. We can log the forest and make money out of it'. It was just in the wording of it, you've got to work that out.

And then I took the opportunity to introduce three Bills. I've introduced four. One was on shark finning products and banning their importation or sale in Australia[7]. But it was a while ago. And then, when did I introduce it? I think at the end of last year, I introduced three more and they kind of all work together. There's the immediate, we could do something in terms of Royalties for Regions[8], taking 10% of that to go to the environment through natural resource management groups, not just the major ones, but all the little groups of people, of individuals, volunteers working to do so much. They just need some support to keep it going so that those volunteers will come out and spend their time doing good things. So that was one.

---

[7] *Food Amendment (Shark Fin Prohibition) Bill 2019*. See https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=0F7684BF1A7AB97A482584100009DAD2

[8] *Royalties for Regions Amendment Bill 2019*. See https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=90B760E16CBE2145482584BD00207FC8

And then the next one was an Environmental Court[9]. This was sort of planning a little bit further ahead. They'd have to put a little more thought into this, an Environmental Court or Tribunal. So rather than having the Environmental Protection Agency, where they just advise the government, having a court or tribunal similar to the State Administrative Tribunal, where they could actually make determinations and say this is what's going to happen.

Now, New South Wales has done that. There's no reason that we shouldn't have something like that, because as we know many bad things are still happening with the environment. And the third Bill I introduced was on Rights of Nature[10]. And this is one we do have an Australian Greens working group, Rights of Nature, but it's sort of not, it's just building. We're trying to build it up again and come up with a paper as to what we mean, where we think we're going with this. And so we're still working on that. But the Bill was just brought in to say, just lay it on the table. Rights should have nature in the same way that Robin Chapple introduced voluntary assisted dying more than 20, 20 years ago, could it be that long?

DW: It was a while.

[01:00:58] **EVERS:** Yeah, yeah. And I think it was brought in maybe 10 years before that by somebody else. It does take a while for these things. So, it was just sort of like, here it is. This is what we should be looking at. Don't say we didn't tell you.

DW: So all four of those Bills would have gone through the First Reading and the Second Reading [stage], so that you and your colleagues could speak to them. Did any of them go any further than that?

EVERS: They actually just go to my Second Reading.

DW: Your Second Reading?

EVERS: Now, if we were to use another time to bring one on and that's what I did for the Royalties for Regions one. And this is where I learned what happens. You introduce the Bill. Everybody gets up to 45 minutes to speak on it, although the lead speaker for the Party can speak unlimited time. We had 80 minutes. I think my colleague Tim Clifford introduced a Bill first and then I brought that one on for the second reading. And the Minister for Environment talked it out. He just kept talking about all the wonderful things they've done for the environment and tried to pick holes in the Bill and stuff. It was just really disappointing because what you want to hear is a wider range of opinions. So that's not the way to do it.

DW: Those Bills, were they drafted by you and your own staff or did you get assistance from the Parliamentary drafting people?

EVERS: The Parliamentary drafters were busy at the time when I wanted to do these. They were doing a lot of legislation for the Government. That's okay though. I actually

[9] *Environment Court Bill 2019*. See https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=89FFC52A032986C1482584BD001FF7D3

[10] *Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill 2019*. See https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=A83E23DAE4373236482584AB002386A7

engaged somebody who actually works for the Environmental Defenders Office, Ruby Hamilton, and she worked with me on that. And she drafted those Bills with some support from the Parliamentary drafters just to check over and make sure she was going alright. And then, also through that time, we got in touch with Michelle Maloney from Australian Earth Laws Alliance. And Michelle worked a lot with Ruby to put that Bill together on Rights of Nature. She's got a whole group and a national group that's connected internationally on rights of nature.

And in fact, through that, I've been invited to speak on a webinar for the US-based group, I can't remember its name [Center for Environmental Rights], just offhand, asking me and Michelle to speak about rights of nature and how it's going in Australia. So that'll be broadcast on the internet and get a wider audience. She had a lot of input into that because there is work being done on it around the world, often only for a particular tree or, at Margaret River, they're trying to get rights of nature for Margaret River, the Great Barrier Reef.

There's people working on that to get rights of nature for the Great Barrier Reef. And what that would mean is that if damage had occurred, maybe even was about to occur, the community, anybody, could put up a challenge, a legal challenge against it and say that shouldn't happen. And it was also put in there that on any challenge, Indigenous people would be able to join because they have a base connection to the environment, and their voice would be very much appreciated. So that's the idea.

DW: Other than the Bills you mentioned, being a member of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and Joint Standing Committee on Audit, how much time do you put into those committee, operations committee work?

EVERS: It's been building. A lot more, it seems like. And also there is one other committee. I was on a local government review committee as well. And then within the Estimates Committee, we had to look at one on local projects and local jobs. So much time? The Estimates Committee, because we look at annual reports and budget statements, that takes a week of hearings twice a year, one for each of those. And then you've got your reports to write after that.

So, I can't really put it into days. But then the other two committees I've mentioned too, they both had their reports being written and they've had hearings. So that actually adds to the time as well. You're probably looking at maybe 40 half-days a year. And then meetings during Parliament sitting weeks.

DW: Do you have staff that you allocate those jobs to to help you get through the committee work?

[01:05:32] **EVERS:** The difficulty with the committee is it's supposed to be kept confidential. So though there's some parts of it that I can get staff to look at, like when we're coming up with questions for the Budget and preparing for those hearings, for the Estimates week or annual reports, they can help me with that. But it's more the [Parliamentary] committee staff that help, and the committee staff are just excellent. They really know their stuff. They're interested in what they're doing. And they do a lot of help for the committee.

DW: I suppose if it's confidential, you can't get advice from your other three Greens Members about what you should ask, where you should go?

EVERS: I can't talk about any committee deliberations, but the preparation leading up to it I can. So, I will ask. In fact, the committee goes out to all Members saying, which agencies would you like to have come in for hearings? And I can discuss that with them. So, it's limited, but there is still some opportunity for it.

DW: Looking back over this first term, you've also regularly made [Members'] Statements to Parliament, about 50. You've done over 100 Questions on Notice and then over 200 Questions Without Notice. How much work do you put into those? Or was that something your staff assists with as well?

EVERS: We're working through that. My staff put most of the questions in. I can give them a couple of lines, I need something like this. Usually it's for a constituent, so I will get them to communicate directly with the constituent. So, there's a bit of to-ing and fro-ing there. But the staff do most of those questions.

The Members' Statements, I'm trying to work it so that the staff prepare more for me and they're getting the idea. But I've asked different staff along the way and we're still working it out because I just need, often I'll just go up there with my own notes with six or eight different points. What I'm looking from them, when I don't know the subject as well, I need them to give me the points and then I can fill in the bits around it. There's only been a few times where they've almost written it for me. But we're not supposed to just read out a speech, and reading out a speech is almost pointless because it just sounds different and you don't engage with people, you're not making that eye contact.

DW: How do you feel getting onto your feet in front of the Chamber, making a speech?

EVERS: Oh, I have to say I love it. I don't have any nerves about it. They can't hurt me there. There's nobody in there that's going to, the worst they can do is yell at me. And that's just annoying sometimes.

DW: Like interjections?

EVERS: Yeah, yeah, that's right. There's all sorts of protections there. Nobody's going to be able to hurt me. I can stand up. And I guess, the hardest thing is when somebody laughs or chuckles. And you think, is that at me? But often they're just laughing about something else, somewhere else. Yeah. In fact, I feel better when I'm leaving at the end of the day, I've always got a better feeling if I've actually been on my feet. It's a good feeling to actually stand up and feel you've been heard. And that's the Members' Statements.

A couple of times, the Members' Statements, I can see people listening to me. I can see them watching and you're just hoping some of it sinks in because some of the things they don't always want to hear. I do go on a lot about how they're just playing a game in there with the two sides, they can swap sides. There are some Bills where, like revenue Bills, who's ever in Government wants the revenue Bill to go through. Who's ever not in Government doesn't want it to go through. And then it swaps and it'll be the same issue 'and they'll just change places and argue the other way. And that's just infuriating because that's just politics and it doesn't help run the State any better.

DW: It's been 20 years nearly since the Labor Premier, Geoff Gallop, introduced protections for old growth forest logging. But it seems over your four years you regularly

ask questions about the forests, the Regional Forest Agreement and so on. Why have you felt the need to continue making those points in the Parliament?

[01:09:35] **EVERS:** I am so pleased you ask this question. This is such a big issue and it is big, if not bigger as it was back in 2001. I am putting forward another Bill to try to change this, but again, it's a Greens Bill and I'll just introduce it. And I'm hoping that the legislation is good enough that they can use it as a guide to do something good because it's about repealing the *Forest Products Act*. Now, the *Forest Products Act* came in place because we had become … Conservation and Land Management who was managing the forest and cutting it down. And the revenue that it raised went back into running the organisation.

So, you've got the regulator profiting from the system. It doesn't work. It's just madness. In fact, there's a report that was done on it by another committee that I refer to now and then that actually explains why this can't continue. Can't remember the name of the report right now[11]. And when that [the *Forest Products Act*] was created, in a way it worked because, in fact it was Beth Schultz who, a longtime forest campaigner, who I think she even put forward the idea to separate them [CALM and the Forest Products Commission]. But what was supposed to be a bit of a body that was just supposed to sign contracts and deal with the logging issues grew a bit bigger and more powerful. And the money that they used, they said, 'Well, we use that for prescribed burning and stuff so it's helping to manage the forest'.

But once those old growth forests were set aside, it's not like they reviewed the entire forest estate. They just knew these ones, or I think they were even nominated by different people to be set aside and they'd review them. So now what we have is each time they go into another forest to log, there are campaigners going in having a look at the forest, checking to see, hoping to stop them and often putting up and saying, 'Has an old growth assessment been done' and in some cases it hasn't or it hasn't been done appropriately. And they can go back and say, 'Oh, yeah, you're right, there is some old growth in there'.

But the methodology they use for determining whether it's old growth is just broken. It's just so wrong. They do it in two hectare squares looking for tree stumps to prove that it has been logged before. But if you've got like a long, narrow area alongside a river, it's not going to be a two hectare square. It may only be half the width it needs to be. So, it doesn't count. And we're just losing too much.

So this Bill that I want to put up is basically repeal the Act and abolish the Forest Products Commission [FPC]. We can't make a profit out of the forest. It just hasn't happened in the past, in that they've been trying for a long time. And the FPC has actually lost money. They tried proving they were making a profit by using an accounting process of revaluing the forest for the amount of growth the forest had each year. After, I don't know, 12 years of doing this or so it turned out they were doing it incorrectly. And they adjusted, the year before last accounts for $130 million. So it didn't even basically break the surface of anybody knowing about it. And I kept saying, 'This is what you've just done and this is the effect on it'. They just are completely ignoring that.

Given we're not making any money out of it, why don't we stop cutting it down, let it regrow, let it do the job that we need it to do for climate, in terms of absorbing carbon, which old forest still absorb carbon and they put it down into the soil. Let's stop burning it just for the sake of burning it. Let's have prescribed burns, but appropriate ones,

[11] 36th Report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies – State Agencies – Their Nature and Function – April 1994.

appropriate ones using the right method for the right forest at the right time of the year. And I'm trying to get this through to them. I'm still working on that and I will continue to work on that. We need our forests. We need more forest than we've got.

And so that was one failing of the FPC. They have three branches within the Forest Products Commission. There's the native forests, which they've failed at because we actually have to stop doing that. Plantations, which they failed at because they treated their shareholders, share farmers abysmally. They didn't pay what they were supposed to have paid them. And farmers, landowners don't want to go into plantations because, it wasn't working and they weren't sure of the amount they were going to get, but it's such a long-term commitment. There are people who have plantations, but we rapidly need to increase that as much as possible.

And then there's the sandalwood industry, because that was the way they funded their organization to a large extent by selling sandalwood by a managed sale of it. They were actually wanting to sell it themselves. They were not allowing native title holders to collect sandalwood off their own property because it was all a managed one. There were all sorts of bad things happening there. There is a review into it. I'm looking forward to seeing that review.

[01:14:52] But I believe that sandalwood can go back in under the management of Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, as can the management of our natural forests, our native forests, because they do manage it and they're guided by the Conservation and Parks Commission, which should have more power, more ability to provide oversight as to what's happening. And then plantations should go back into Department of Regional Development, into DPIRD – Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, because they need to integrate it into on-farm plans. We need to be restoring farmlands through regenerative processes. We need to be reclaiming that farmland that we've walked away from because of salinity or acidity or just that we've worked it to death. And we need to put the microbiology back in there and then we need to extend our farm reach and then extend into areas that we've left, not clearing any more native areas. And then we need to make more plantations to provide timber for our future so we don't have to import it.

Now, one other area, too, that is contentious, I suppose, is we've got a lot of timber mills and there are people who want timber. But unfortunately, right now, most of our karri that gets logged is going to woodchips and exported. And a lot of our jarrah is being sold to Simcoa [Silicon Metal Company of Australia] as charcoal. Both of these things we can do in other ways. And, if we then look after the forest, we manage it on an ecological basis for the health of the forest, the karri forest, self-thinning it should be able to come back in quite good, in good shape and may just be left with a little bit of burning around the edges, prescribed burning to contain what's there and to possibly even build up the microbiology. Well, the fungi in the soil, in the forest, because it's the fungi that breaks down the cellulose of the trees.

Then in the jarrah forest, from our logging past – logging back in the '30s had got to the point where it was locked up. There are so many new stems coming up because jarrah sprouts from a lignotuber. They can live in the ground for 50 years. If you cut it off, it reshoots, it copices to a number of different stems. These processes mean that if you go into a jarrah forest that's been logged, there's just so many trees trying to grow and they don't self-thin, they all just continue to compete. So, if we have a low rainfall year, 2011 and '12, we had massive die offs, you know, tens of thousands of hectares just look dead.

Now, many of those have since come back, they've resprouted again. So, there's even more branches and more stems. Well, in the '30s when they saw this was happening, they sent in, from what Chrissy [Sharp] tells me, 10,000 men to go in there and thin the forest to take out enough stems, enough trees so that other ones could grow up larger. And that's how it was managed. And it worked.

Now we've got a similar situation. But the difficulty is there is no trust in the – you look at government, industry and the environmental movement, there's no trust in any direction it seems like. There's a bit of a connection between the industry and the Government, I believe. But how we would ever get people trained to understand the forest, to know what it needs to be able to help it grow. Now, if we just locked them up, left them there, it could take 500 years for them to recover naturally. What this ecological management might do is make it possible for those forests to become healthy, resilient forests within the next hundred years.

But it's going to take a lot of work. I've had a paper written up by Janette Hartz-Karp. She has done a lot of deliberative democracy work, has worked previously with [ALP Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Food] Alannah MacTiernan. She's connected around the world with different groups that are doing deliberative processes. And I had her write up a paper for the forest for the Minister. And it was brief, about four pages, so that he can understand what I'm talking about. And a lot of my Members' Statements have been on this.

This process is to get people involved, to find out what we should do with our forests, how we should manage them, what we can do. The way it would work is you put it out to the whole State, we're going to be doing this. Who's interested? You might get 4,000 or 5,000 people come back saying, 'Yes, we're interested'. From that, you select … they're suggesting a 100 people randomly, but to meet each of the demographics and actually have a little bit higher number of young people and a little bit higher number of Indigenous people. That was my influence on it, because I think that their stake in it is greater than the rest of us to some degree, and possibly their knowledge or understanding, well knowledge and understanding for the Indigenous component.

Bring those people together, could take two or three days. Bring them all the science. They can call in more people if they need to. They can hear from the environmental movement, the sawmillers, the Government whatever, bring in every bit of information they need and have a facilitated process for them to work through. What are the issues? What can we do about it? And what is our aim? What do we want to do? And then have a few people, delegates from that group write up the final thing for the government to say, 'Okay, this is what the people want'.

It would be nice. I'm hoping, it now comes down to the Conservation and Parks Commission because they are the ones who will make up the next Forest Management Plan. The Forest Management Plan is a 10 year rolling plan for State management of our forests. And they will be creating … the next one is due for 2023, so 2022 they'll be working on it and I really hope that they use this process. I should mention, we also have the Regional Forest Agreement [RFA][12], which is a Federal document that WA has one of these for the South West Forest, and it basically says that logging can occur without review by the EPBC [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act] or the EPA.

[12] See https://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/policies/rfa/regions/wa

DW: That process, my understanding of the RFA process was to bring people together and have some final way that they'd all agree on where the forest would go, and what we would do with it.

[01:21:36] **EVERS:** The Regional Forest Agreement was pretty much to enshrine the rights of logging. I mean, that wasn't their intention, but that's what it turned out to be. We've just renewed that, that's a 20 year rolling document and that was just renewed last year or the year before, 2019, with minimal community, I mean community engagement, but not community empowerment.

DW: Well, that's very different to your '93, I think, [ALP PM] Keating brought the process in, and there was a lot of engagement. People all over Australia were engaged with that process. And you're saying this last renewal, there hasn't been any, or little, engagement?

EVERS: They went out and said, 'What do you think?', but didn't change anything. They still went right ahead and did it. Whereas the other States, I think it's Victoria, maybe, they put off the renewal. I haven't heard recently whether that's changed. But they said we actually need to do some more thorough investigations into this. Because it is just Tasmania and Victoria, and I think New South Wales has one.

DW: Over the last four years, you've also asked lots of questions on other issues like this year, Black Lives Matter, rail freight, main roads, accounting and so on. How do you choose what topic to raise in Parliament at any any particular time?

EVERS: It's kind of what's on my mind most recently. So, it might be things that are getting more State coverage. It may just be someone that I've spoken to, like Just Home Margaret River [Inc], a lovely community group working to find housing for people who need it. And I gave a Members' Statement on that because it needed to be heard. And it was lovely because during the Statement, one of the ministers, Minister [Stephen] Dawson, said, 'Just have them get in touch with the Minister, the Minister for Housing Peter Tinley. So that was a pretty good outcome from it. I haven't heard yet whether he's making his way down there, but that would be nice.

Just today I've decided that tomorrow I'll do one, and this is the second time I've just read in a letter – maybe the third time, read in a letter that somebody has written to me. And somebody has just put the prescribed burning situation in such good words and terminology by focusing on one place down South that was burned with incendiaries dropped from the sky, massive, intense fire. And it got into a peat swamp. Peat takes 5,000 years to form. And a lot of it's gone now. And it's unfathomable how we can continue to do the burning on the scale that we do with so little, [sighs] so little care for the environment.

DW: When you began your position here in Parliament in 2017, did you employ staff who had worked for other [Greens] MPs or did you take on new staff?

EVERS: I took on new staff. I had two people who had worked for other MPs on the selection panel with me, and we put it out there to just see who we could find. And they give us two FTEs [full-time equivalents]. But I hired four people part-time, kind of because I'm a firm believer that part-time work is very valid and a great way to for people to run their own lives. If you can live on lower income, it gives you a lot more time to actually live and that, I feel is a good thing.

So, I put on four people and one of them had been with a previous Member. But she … we parted ways after a while. I've had a few different people come and go, mostly in the media side of it. But now I've got an excellent team. We've ended up, each Member, we now have two and a half full-time employees. And a quarter of that is shared with the other three Members, other Greens Members to have somebody who does all the legislation for us. And she's just excellent. Tonia [Brajcich] is just amazing. We're really, really happy.

DW: What's her name?

[01:25:50] **EVERS:** Tonia. And then I've got four people here. And then some of the electorate allowance, I also used to engage a few more hours. So, to expand that, what would be 2.25 hours. And the four people I have here, Margaret [Gollagher], Rochelle [Preisser], Jack [Hicken] and Joseph [Hubert] … just excellent. They all have skills, different skills. And when we have our usual Monday morning meeting, there's just a really good flow of information and connection and desire to do good. Because that's it, I came in here, I got elected, and my thoughts were, I've got four years to do some good. What can we get done?

Pretty quickly, I learned, too, that as a member of the Greens, my role was also to make sure that Greens get elected again in this role. And that's important. It's one that I always keep in the back of my mind, got to make sure that's happening, but I really figured that if we do some good, if we make some changes and help people along the way, then I'm likely to get back in. And so that's been the focus.

DW: So you stood in 2001 for Liberals for the Forests. 20 years later, what's the impact of social media on your campaigns? Obviously, we didn't have that in those times. It was more printed forms and emails or whatever. How have you found social media's importance to your role as an MP?

EVERS: Very important. And that's probably why I went through a few media people, because I finally have somebody under 25 who actually is in that new world that's happened. I think 1995 something changed and people born since then are different. They're different. It's where the revolution's coming. It's as big as the change of the group that was born post-war [Baby Boomers] and did the '60s [protest]. The '60s changed so much about our culture. Mostly arts and music and attitudes and so forth. And I think that's the change that we're going to see over the next decade. And it's going to be from those people born since '95 [Generation Z].

There's an understanding that I can understand. They just do things differently. They speak differently. They understand differently. And it's not everybody, it's not a complete homogenous group. But within that group, there are people who are just not fixed by the past. And I think people born before that, everything just always was the same, and you just keep doing, and you just keep continuing with how everything's been done before. But I guess technology has changed that now. And the whole COVID pandemic has opened up a lot of eyes to just how much can be done electronically. It's one of the positives that can come out of it, as I believe we will have a lot less flying from city to city purely to attend a meeting.

I know face to face contact is important, but our committees have been able to meet over Zoom. Our Parliament hasn't done that. But I understand some other Parliaments are meeting electronically. And that's what we need. We need a shake-up. So often when I say things need to change, people say, 'Oh, but it's the Westminster system. We've been

doing it for 400 years'. And that is just not a reason, a rationalization for why we should continue to do it. That almost begs the question, why haven't we changed since then?

DW: Talking of flying, you've been based in Albany, you must do a lot of that regularly when Parliament's sitting. What's the hardest thing of being an MP that you've found?

[01:29:31] **EVERS:** It's not the travel. The travel is the best part. I don't fly too often because the flights are only to Albany and back, and only at their times. And often I will go down directly [by car] and come back up through the centre or vice versa. I can't remember how many kilometres I've travelled, but you're probably talking of over 150,000, maybe 200,000 [kms]. And it is the best, best time. I can be listening to a couple of podcasts about things I want to catch up on, about regen ag [regenerative agriculture] or the future, you know, future thinkers type stuff. Regen Narration [a podcast], I'll put a plug in there for that. Anthony James does an excellent podcast, just amazing speakers from around the world. And that's what we need to do, is regenerate our regional areas.

Now, traveling to these places and meeting with people, especially people who knock me on Facebook. I don't get this concern and fear about people saying bad things about me on Facebook because I just see it as an opportunity. This is excellent. There's one, Lefty Hater, who was on my page saying, 'Oh, you got to allow logging' or whatever. Went down, met him for a coffee. We spent an hour and a half in a shop. And he knew the owner and the owner was happy to just leave us there, continue chatting through the afternoon. And we connected on so many different ways. There's so many things we agree with. Even though he can see the need to get timber from trees and how important that is for our society. I see the same thing. I'm just saying let's push and really make the plantations the way we do that. So that was good. And there's other people like that. I just see them as really good opportunities.

But never argue on Facebook. There's no point to an argument there because that disconnection means that things will be said that just shouldn't be said. So the worst part, though. I don't think about the worst things. I get a lot of good stuff.

DW: The hardest thing?

EVERS: The hardest thing is the feeling that you're not making progress. Some days you have a win and it feels really good. And then other days you get an answer that just makes you realise that things are stuck and not going to change. And that the system is holding us back and that we're all just parts of the system. So, with COVID, governments, I would say around the world, but at least governments in Australia, and particularly Mark McGowan in the Labor Government here, listened to science, reacted to what was happening and made some really good decisions. They'll be continuing to do that because this isn't over.

And when you can see that science can be listened to, you wonder why you can't be listened to on a broader scale like the climate change, or more specifically, for prescribed burning. I've spoken to the minister, Minister Dawson, and he's just said 'It's not going to change. That's what we're going to do'. And I can't understand why, if you just see some of the photos that I see and some of the forests I've walked in, especially the forest, the good ones, areas that haven't been burned for 30 or 40 years and there's a little bit of leaf litter on the ground, there's just not that devastating firestorm that you think it's going to be.

But if you were to put a fire through there, the first thing you're going to get is a lot more new growth and that's going to create your fuel for the next fire. Some of them need to be left alone. So that's probably the hardest thing is when you hit the brick wall and you can't see your way through it. But, I'm in it for the long term. I've got to got to come back next term and keep fighting for the things I've been doing because four years just isn't enough to make change.

DW: You mentioned that you are upset, I suppose, and feel down about not making progress, not much change. What is the biggest impact do you think you and the other Greens have had in this term of Parliament, on Government legislation and policies?

[01:33:51] **EVERS:** That's a tough one to just pick out of my head right now, because a lot of the things are small things to actually listen to people. Maybe that's it. I think with this Government, they have a lot of good ideas. They may even have a lot of good values, but they seem to need to be pushed to try harder to put those values into place because the other side of politics and industry and mining are so much stronger voices. You put a voice there that has a few million dollars or a few billion dollars behind them and it's hard for government not to pay attention. I understand. So, we're speaking up for those other people to do something.

And in it, what's really good, there was one Members' Statement I was talking about with regard to the rail system. Our rail system is broken. Liberals gave it away to a private industry and then made it worse when they got back into power. And it's going to be very hard to get out of it and very expensive. But some of the people who really want to see this expanded again for freight, grain freight, are in the Labor Party. And they were able to get a motion at their Labor Party conference for the Government to look into reopening Tier Three rail lines. And one of my staff came across this and put it into the Members' Statement with the notes for me, and we talked about it. And in the Member's Statement I just said, 'This is a motion from your party conference saying to look into this. So what are you going to do about it?' And within a week, they announced that they were going to be doing a review, an engineering study on it, to see where it stood.

Because the idea is, I mentioned roads earlier on. Roads get votes. I have no idea why people continue to vote for roads. They all think if money is spent on roads, 'I'm going to have an easier time getting to work'. And there's been studies done that show that people's travel time to work is one of the biggest influences on their well-being. Not so much travel time, but travel experience, I'd say. So, roads get votes.

It just infuriates me because we've got $750 million being spent on a ring road around Bunbury, which is going to be causing some damage, but it's so far gone, I can't influence that. We've got a $170 million ring road, part of a ring road being done in Albany, which is completely unnecessary. It's up to the standard of a city freeway-type system. It's just unbelievable that they're putting this in place when if they fix the rail system and put probably $20 million is my guess, I'm not an engineer, into the rail system just in the last leg down to the port. They could have this directed to the industrial area, put on rail and transferred to the port as they needed it. It'd be so much easier, so much better, so many less trucks.

But this road, I spoke on it. There's a Members' Statement on it as well. So that $170 million, if they could spend it more on the rail system and fixing up the transport to actually help get trucks off the road. Now I know that means less truck drivers, but truck drivers can drive other sorts of trucks and we can do other sorts of systems where we'll still need

people transporting goods. But that's something that I'd like to see at this point. What was the specific question that I was answering there?

DW: The impact you've had on Government, I suppose, the biggest impact you've had.

EVERS: Yeah, so that one's not having an impact, but I'm hoping to still work on that. We also put in a lot of submissions. One of my members of staff, Margaret [Gollagher], excellent writer, she has a PhD, she reviews other PhDs. She's all into peer reviewed research and she puts in excellent submissions, which I'm hoping that they have had an influence. We have had a couple where we have got the EPA to say they're going to do a Public Environmental Review, PER, which is really useful on projects, because if you don't get that, you've really got no say from the environmental perspective. And I think her submissions help on that. Just a number of all different sorts.

One of those that's currently being looked at – and this is one of the areas where I'm hoping to have influence, back in 2014, '15, an idea was come up within Manjimup to get water to people who didn't have enough water so that they could put in more avocado trees. It was all supposed to be new water, which meant water coming from the forest. It was going to cost $70, 80 million. The Government put in a little bit of money to keep it sort of going. The State Government has promised $19 million to help build it. And at the last Federal election, the Federal Government said, we'll give you another $40 million. And that gave them the money to be able to do it. So, from what looked like it would never happen because we didn't have the money, now it's supposed to happen. And it is the worst system. It is just such a mess. They're going to dam a brook which will inundate 160 hectares of good forest. They're going to clear another hundred and forty hectares for 250 kilometers of pipeline.

The Minister, MacTiernan, now, because it was a Liberal government that put it in place first and Labor had said that they would do it, they'd carry it on, didn't have the money at the time. Anyway, McTiernan, who's got it under her Regional Development portfolio, she says it's an election promise, we have to do it. And she believes the people who have bought into the system, about 70, maybe 90 now, they've been pushing for more people, that they want it, and it should happen and they'll get something out of it. Those people are supposed to put in $10 million, and State tax revenue and other revenues, Federal revenues, put in the other [$]60 [million]. So they'll get an easy $6 return on their investment straight away to get this scheme going.

But they said if the water was new water from the forest, well, very little water is running out of the forest. There's cleared farmland near that. That cleared farmland, they've said, 'Your system's fully allocated, you can't take anymore. And you have nothing to do with this scheme.' You can buy from it, but it's not because of that water that this scheme will be taking that water, they're taking it from the forest. Now, not only do they not have a permanent equipment to measure that water coming in from the forest, they actually just go out there once a month to have a look and see what it is, so they can pick the days they go. And the farmers are actually really starting to keep track of all this. They're saying that, 'Not only are you taking water off our land, but there's less than you thought'. In the hydrology and risk consultancy that did assess a statement on it, for the water flows going into it, they're using rainfall data averaged from 1975. Now, there isn't anyone who thinks that rainfall hasn't changed since 1975.

And the buying and selling of it now has people already gearing up to buy and sell from it. I heard the other day there's somebody who has 10 acres of land who has an allocation

from it. There's no way they could use it all on their own property. They're just getting it so that when water comes out, they can sell it. There's others who have created a series of 500 megalitre dams. So the whole scheme is only going to build and distribute maybe nine or 10 gigalitres in a good year. So this one and half gigalitres in dams just up from the pipeline, more than they probably need for their whole avocado farms that they're putting in so that they'll be able to, not only sell it into the scheme if the scheme doesn't get its full amount of water, but they can buy back too or they can sell it into the scheme so that the scheme can sell it to somebody else. So we're going to have water trading. And I know the Minister is not happy about that. But the only hope we've got now is the EPA is going to do one of these Public Environmental Reviews coming up in July. And we've got to hope that the environmental damage that's going to be done is enough for them to say, no, we shouldn't do it.

DW: And that your submission has a big impact on it.

[01:42:55] **EVERS:** Absolutely, absolutely. Because it's the inequity of it. It's just outrageous in a time when water is going to become scarcer, the Government is going to intervene to support a handful of people when there's so many others that are not getting it.

DW: In terms of the Greens and its future, at the moment you've got four Members of the Upper House, you've got two Senators in WA. It's a very positive place to be for a political party. What do you think the future is? More Members of Parliament? Lower House seats?

EVERS: You say it's very positive and it is positive, but it's been like this for some time. We had five Members in the West Australian State Parliament in 2001. So, as I said, we've hit a brick wall somehow and I don't know how to get past that, and we've got to address that and figure out what's the thing stopping people from voting Green. Because if you got everybody who ever voted Green to do it, in the same go, we'd really make a statement then. But it's like people try it, they think, 'Oh, I'll see what happens if I vote Green'. And because we don't get in government, they feel like they didn't win. We've got to get past that point.

DW: Are there any Lower House seats the Greens could pick up?

EVERS: I don't, I wouldn't say we expect any in this term. We did do that once before. That didn't work out so well. But hopefully that will happen again, that we'll get some Lower House seats. I'd even like to see some of the ones down South. But you've got to get ahead of Labor first.

DW: In terms of preference flows?

EVERS: Yeah. You've got to get ahead so you get their preferences. And they've [ALP State Government] done very well this year in dealing with the pandemic and financially, they've done quite well in terms of holding back on the spending. I think, had we not had Covid happen, we would have seen a lot of Government gifts given out to make things work really well because they had the money in the bank. Now, I guess, they've held it together through the pandemic and coming into the election, I'm sure we'll still see a few goodies on the table.

DW: Can I ask you, in terms of your 20-year commitments at standing for the Liberals for the Forests and 15 years in the Greens, what your family has thought of that and your kids. has it had an impact on their political views and attitudes?

[01:45:17] **EVERS:** It's been interesting because, as somebody said to me, after I got in, I bet your children are proud of you. I'd never really thought that children would be proud of their parents. I didn't think it worked that way. It's just parents are supposed to be proud of their kids. They're very happy for me. They're engaged to an extent. But it's kind of like I'm doing this so they don't need to, whereas it hasn't transferred down because I was late to activism. I think I came to Albany when I was 32 [years old] and probably soon after that started getting a bit more active. But I grew up in a very conservative time, in a conservative place. I went to a conservative university and was an accountant. I just didn't do much.

So when we were raising them, I think we consciously made an effort not to scare them with the reality of what was happening. And I in some ways think that was a mistake, because that's what I was saying with this new generation, the ones that know what's going on haven't been wrapped in cotton wool through their life. They're out there seeing that there's problems. I met a young girl at a rally outside Parliament House and I just knelt down to get a picture of her with her sign, as politicians will do. And she just said to me, 'I've been doing this for a long time'. She's right. It wasn't a long time, I can't remember the exact words. But 'I've been doing this'. This is the thing I do is go to rallies. And she was three [years old]. Thinking, wow, amazing that you think that is just part of your life. That is what you do.

So, my kids, I think, with four of them, and on occasions different ones have attended rallies with us and marched, marching up and down York Street [Albany] is a lot of fun. We've done it for the ABC and we've done it for the peace rally against the Iraq war. And I think, one's now a lawyer, so, I think she holds onto a lot of that stuff. I think they were raised in an inclusive family. We didn't discriminate against other people very much. They went to a school, an alternative school, where I think people were valued for who they were, how they are and their being, what they do.

I would say the impact my husband and I have had on them has been very open-minded and caring and socially interested. We haven't placed money and the economy as the thing that you're supposed to aim for. I grew up … it wasn't until I was about 35 that I finally realized and finally got over the idea that your value was based on the sum total of what you own. It is like, 'Wow'. That was just so ingrained in me that that was the value of a person. And it's just so wrong. So hopefully I've had that impact on them.

DW: Thank you, Di. We've covered a lot of ground in this interview. I'm just wondering if there's anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

EVERS: I think because I've mentioned one of my offspring, I have to mention the others because I like to be fair and reasonable. The eldest is a lawyer, as I said, then a teacher, and she's working up in Broome with Indigenous kids. And that really makes me feel good, too, because she really wants to work out what is the way to teach Indigenous kids and also children with English as a second language, which some of those children are, they've got their Indigenous languages, their first language. And then I've got my third daughter is a data analyst, statistician, working in a bank, and I think that's quite interesting, given I started … I was in banking for a while. She's in there and I just keep encouraging her to learn as much as she can for the next position, whatever it is, whether

it's within the banking sector or outside of that, because it's just to me, with the numbers ability that she has, she's taken a much greater step than an accountant. An accountant just adds, subtracts and multiply. She could do so much more and she could influence a lot more that happens from within that profession.

And my youngest, my son, is a trumpet player, classical trumpet studying at WAAPA [Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University]. And the one of us with an arts inclination, and I might have held the kids back from pursuing arts because it was so foreign to me. And it's only in the last 10 years that I've started coming around to the idea of how valuable it is, and I think through Covid learned again how very valuable it is to people's well-being across the board.

DW: It sounds like you've got a very balanced group of children.

[01:50:30] **EVERS:** I believe so. It's the pat on the back, I can always remind myself I must have done good because they sure are doing well. So I'll take pride in that. And it helps me because their strength, and the strength of my husband Tony, to support me through all this is just phenomenal. To do this sort of job, you really need a healthy, supportive home environment. And I've got that. So, it's been a real trip, the past three and a half years, and I do hope to get the next term in there as well, because there's just so much to do. And with that strong base, with the strong staff I've got and the strong Greens Party with a great range of policies, can't appreciate that enough because they go into all the areas where I might not have a lot of knowledge, so just going through that process. And the strong family, it really helps, makes it really good.

DW: Thank you very much.

[01:51:31] **EVERS:** Thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Link to Diane Evers' WA Parliament Biography page-
https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/Memblist.nsf/WAllMembersFlat/Evers,%20Diane%20Marie?opendocument