

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH WENDY THOMPSON

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Interviewee: Wendy Thompson

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[00:00:02]

PASCOE: This is an interview with Wendy Thompson by Caroline Pascoe with Katie Murphy recording for the Women's Information Service Oral History Project at the State Library of South Australia on Wednesday the 31st January 2018.

Hello Wendy thank you for coming in.

THOMPSON: Hi.

PASCOE: Can you give us a brief overview of when and where you were born and grew up please.

THOMPSON: Sure. I was born in January Nineteen Sixty Six in Elizabeth [South Australia]. I grew up mostly there moved over to Bangkok [Thailand] followed my Dad with work. Lived there for a couple of years and then ended up back in Elizabeth when I was about nine or ten.

PASCOE: And stayed there and had your schooling there.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Yes. And when did you start working or volunteering at WIS?

THOMPSON: I first started --- I got a casual contract position and that was in nineteen ninety-six when we were in Kintore Avenue days. So Margaret Porter was the Manager then and it was three months and then I left to take up a business opportunity in Queensland.

PASCOE: What were you doing in Queensland?

THOMPSON: I bought into a bottle shop.

(Both laugh)

PASCOE: Ah great, okay. That's a bit different.

THOMPSON: It was. I didn't like it.

PASCOE: So then you are going on to tell me that you came back because it wasn't just three months that you worked for us. Yes.

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah. So I worked initially for three months and then I think I disappeared for about, just trying to look it up here, for about three years, and then I came back as a volunteer, and then got a Project Officer job in, that was in Nineteen Ninety Nine. And then I was made permanent in August of Ninety Nine as a Project Officer, Information Officer.

PASCOE: Information Officer. And you came back to the Railway Arcade.

THOMPSON: Yeah, we moved at that stage. Yeah, yeah so moved while I was gone.

PASCOE: So how did you come to go to WIS in the first place and what kept bringing you back.

THOMPSON: I just loved it. I felt at home there and I felt as if everything that I believed in and wanted to achieve from a social point of view, it was all happening in that place. It was really supportive environment to work in, the women were fabulous and it was --- you could do what you wanted to do and

how you wanted to do it, kind of, and what I wanted to do fitted into the model of WIS and I just loved it. It's like I found myself, I found my wings.

PASCOE: So you had a degree of autonomy.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Yeah. And who was your Coordinator at the time?

THOMPSON: Margaret, first time was Margaret Porter and then when I came back it was Linda --- Forrest.

PASCOE: Forrest, Forrest okay. So the first time you got involved you were --- it was Kintore Avenue. So you just answered an Ad or you walked past and saw it.

[00:03:21]

THOMPSON: No. It was --- it's --- it was a bit like an Adelaide moment where it --- the woman I was working with at the time her partner worked at WIS and there was an opportunity for a three month contract to come up and I wrote an application for that, got an interview. Totally and absolutely bombed at the interview. But the Manager who Margaret Porter knew, someone of my referees and called up the referee and went 'Surely she can't be that bad' yeah. And she went 'No look she was obviously just nervous, you know, its three months I think you should just give her a go'. So they did and the rest they say is history.

PASCOE: Were you a feminist at that time did you ---

THOMPSON: Absolutely.

PASCOE: So that was the backbone of your application and your desire to work there.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Okay, so what were the days like. What was your typical day, say when you were at Kintore Avenue first?

THOMPSON: We were all in the same room. So the phones were in one kind of corner and there were four desks back to back. And that's where the volunteers sat and then it was at the head of the table where the kind of paid staff member sat and then the Project Information Officers sat kind of just away a little bit from the room. And it was the start of the Internet as well. So it had just yeah come about. So there was brochures everywhere, there was an area where people would walk in and could take a seat and grab a cup of tea or coffee and have a look around and it was all --- everyone could see everything that was happening in any one given time.

PASCOE: But what were you using to find your information at that stage when you joined.

THOMPSON: It was cards and folders that we --- that were made up and there was very few kind of websites at the time so the Internet was something that wasn't really used. There was a database but that wasn't an online database. That was done through --- it was --- trying to remember --- they were on computers but it wasn't Internet based so it must have been a program that was downloaded, downloaded on each of the computers.

PASCOE: And uploaded by Women's Information Service or someone, who ever ---

THOMPSON: We paid for that service ---

PASCOE: You paid for that service, so it was done from someone else. And you said you had the Coordinator there and then the volunteers and you

seemed to be seating somewhere a little bit differently, a little bit away from that.

THOMPSON: Yeah, so you were, the paid staff there was someone that was rostered on to oversee the calls that were coming in and anyone that was walking in and then if you weren't rostered on for that you were working on kind of project work. But because I was only there for three months I wasn't -- - I didn't have a specific project so mine was all about kind of tidying up the shopfront organising some of the written pamphlets that were coming in that kind of yeah, general stuff.

[00:06:30]

PASCOE: Not policy or anything like that.

THOMPSON: No, not at that stage.

PASCOE: Did you answer the phone or ---

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Talk to --- you did that. Well when you were rostered on to be the paid staff member you'd be talk ---you'd be taking a phone call.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Who took the first phone call or did --- I mean it --- that's a

THOMPSON: It was the volunteers generally took the phone call.

PASCOE: That's an obscure question, but you know that now if the phones ring the volunteer answers the phone even if there are two paid workers in the office she'll answer the phone.

THOMPSON: And it was still the case then. It's just if the phones were busy then you kind of got the overflow from that.

PASCOE: Then you'd get that. Would, would you listen out to what was going on and maybe try ---

THOMPSON: Absolutely.

PASCOE: Yes, yes as happens these days, yes.

THOMPSON: Yeah and then it was the --- then legal service that was offered I think was that on a Tue ----

PASCOE: The Women's Legal Service.

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah that was on a Tuesday night I think.

PASCOE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And was it on a Saturday as well?

PASCOE: Tuesday night and Saturday morning when I came so I guess that was happening earlier.

THOMPSON: So we just use to work back on a Tuesday and do it that way as well. I don't think any volunteers did that though. We use to stay back yeah on a rostering and do that.

PASCOE: Okay. Who was the Director do you know for the Office for Women?

THOMPSON: Carmel O'Loughlin.

PASCOE: Carmel O'Loughlin, okay.

THOMPSON: And I think they were still in --- they were still in Roma Mitchell House at that point but we were in Kintore and every time we had a meeting we had to walk down the road.

PASCOE: That was a long way away, so if they had a meeting you had to walk over there.

THOMPSON: Yep.

PASCOE: Did they come over there much to Kintore Avenue do you or where you aware.

THOMPSON: Not that I saw. But I was only there for three months as well, so.

PASCOE: Alright now we will go on to when you --- when you went to --- when you came back.

THOMPSON: Just going back to Kintore.

PASCOE: Yes okay.

THOMPSON: We use to have Friday drinks after work and we called ourselves the Lush Club.

PASCOE: The Lush Club?

THOMPSON: Yeah the photo that I've got is the lush --- a meeting of the Lush Club.

PASCOE: Okay. Well I was going to ask you do you have memories of the times shared with, with other workers and volunteers at Kintore Avenue and then in the other place, but say at Kintore Avenue. Well that's one, any others that you shared with --- did the volunteers come to the Lush Club.

THOMPSON: I don't think so because it would have been after work on a Friday. So I mean if --- whoever was rostered on on a Friday afternoon. Like it wasn't any exclusive thing it was just whoever was there, yeah kind of after work on a Friday.

PASCOE: They could have come.

THOMPSON: Oh yeah absolutely.

PASCOE: If it wasn't any

THOMPSON: Yeah, it wasn't any formalised thing it was just kind of happened.

PASCOE: And where did you get you go?

THOMPSON: Oh we stayed in WIS, yeah.

PASCOE: But had a drink.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: An alcoholic drink---

THOMPSON: Absolutely.

PASCOE: To be clear.

THOMPSON: Yes

PASCOE: Any, any, any food

THOMPSON: Not that I remember.

(Both Laugh)

PASCOE: That's great. Okay so now we will move on to Station Arcade when you came back and you came back as a volunteer, you said.

[00:09:20]

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah so I moved back to Adelaide after living in Queensland and I just --- I loved my time there so much that I wanted to kind of work there again. But one of the reasons I'd come back from Queensland is cos my health wasn't great and there was no way I could kind of work full time

and I applied for a position and there was none around so I went back as a volunteer and was happy to do that and kind of build my health up and yeah did that.

PASCOE: So who did you approach to come back.

THOMPSON: Linda Forrest.

PASCOE: Linda Forrest.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: And did you have to do a training course with the, with the others or did you just come back because you had worked there?

THOMPSON: I think I just came back because I had previously worked there, yeah.

PASCOE: And what did you do when you were at Station Arcade from the --- in the --- that three months as a volunteer. Three, three months did you say?

THOMPSON: I can't actually remember how long I volunteered for. I don't think it was actually very long. And then I became a casual and then there was a position within OFW [Office for Women] for a Policy kind of support Officer and I moved over there and was doing paid work there.

PASCOE: So what, what was your function at --- you work in the shopfront and the phone room I take it and just did the normal work that we know still from today.

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah it was just ---

PASCOE: So you had your shift in the phone room and then okay

THOMPSON: Shift out the front.

PASCOE: And so how long do you think you were there and then before you moved to Policy?

THOMPSON: It was only a couple of months I think, yeah. I think so. I'm not a hundred percent sure. So yeah no that was January Ninety Nine so I would have come back, yeah, at the beginning of Ninety Nine and then by the end of Ninety Nine I had yeah got employment.

PASCOE: And how long were you up with OFW.

THOMPSON: Not long, I think I was only there for about nine months, yeah. And then won the Information Officer job within WIS and became the Volunteer Coordinator at that point.

PASCOE: And the Volunteer Coordinator, okay. So were you dissatisfied with your work I mean you've gone --- you've moved from various parts was that just seen as a trajectory of your work or---

THOMPSON: There was never any kind of any permanent position so I just went out to kind of help --- I think it was --- ah it was the women's --- ah there was a --- I was helping out --- was it the women's network, women's --- ah there was a group that was formed --- what was it ---.

PASCOE: Not the Women's Support Group, the Women's Information Support ---

THOMPSON: No, nah, nah it was the Women's Network or something or other. I'd have it written down somewhere at home.

[00:12:22]

PASCOE: Was that made up of various people like Women's Health Service and those sorts of things, the Women's Legal Service and okay. And what did you do with that?

THOMPSON: And business as well. So I was just the Admin Officer. So I took minutes and coordinated meetings and yeah prepared documents.

PASCOE: And as the Women's Information Service Coordinator what, what your role there?

THOMPSON: As what sorry.

PASCOE: When you were the Coordinator, the Manager of Women's Information

THOMPSON: Okay so ---

PASCOE: So what was it called Coordinator or Manager?

THOMPSON: Manager.

PASCOE: Manager, sorry, it swaps. I've been there 15 years and sometimes it's a Coordinator it seems to me and sometimes it's a Manager. But however you were the Manager, right.

THOMPSON: Maybe that's judged how much they're going to pay them ---

PASCOE: Maybe.

THOMPSON: On the level of responsibility

PASCOE: I don't understand that. But yes.

THOMPSON: I know that the Manager before me also did Policy work and would have got paid at a level higher than what I got. But I didn't do the Policy work attached to that. So I think that's how they, they did it from a Public

Sector, you know the ASO levels. I think that's how it works out. And then I think they dropped it down after I left as well.

PASCOE: So can you fill us in on what you did as the Women's Information Service Manager.

THOMPSON: Mostly I managed people and it was more about the management of the volunteers and the staff. Because there was about --- I think there was twenty five volunteers at the time and six paid staff. And so a lot of it was yeah coordinating that and then just overseeing what the role was of WIS and just keep trying to keep that relevant and feeding into other services and promoting WIS amongst other Government kind of Agencies and spreading the word throughout the State to community based services.

PASCOE: So your role would be to make it a viable concern with the idea that it might lose funding. Was that the thing in the back of your mind?

THOMPSON: Look, yeah, yeah I think it was --- WIS was originally formed because women had a very limited capacity to get information and you know the Internet was, was kicking off and a lot of the reasons why WIS had formed in the first place was becoming null and void. So with okay such strong belief that WIS was still important but it was how does it fit into the new world of technology and how do you continue to be able to identify what women need and be able to provide that as well. And to secure funding. Yeah.

PASCOE: So can you just make a summary of that of how WIS has changed over the years. Because you had the terrific advantage of volunteering very early on and then coming back and seeing it and well you know people there now so you know what's going on today really so you've, you've been around for a while.

[00:15:31]

THOMPSON: Yeah (laugh). Because I'm old. (laugh). So I guess and I hadn't actually really thought about this before and articulating it now is that when I first started the Internet was in it's you know infancy and then it kind of took off. So the way that society was getting their information was totally different and growing. And how WIS had to remain relevant in that spot. Because it didn't change then it was just going to become yep to service what purpose. And why would you, why would the State Government want to fund a service that was irrelevant. And yet there's still a need for a service such as this. So how do you change it in an environment and a society that's changing that it still becomes relevant and still meets the needs of what women need. And so part of that was to go around and this was the work that I did a lot with kind of Fiona Mort who was Manager of Policy of OFW at the time. So it was Lindy MacAdam when I first started and then Fiona took over that and we did a lot of going around the country and asking women what's important and a lot of that was based around Women's Safety Strategy and the engagement around that and the offset of that. And the reason why I was there is just to listen and learn and find out and think and talk about new ways of keeping WIS relevant.

PASCOE: So just another question along those lines but can you remember the sorts of queries you had at Kintore Avenue and the sorts of queries you had at Station Arcade the difference.

THOMPSON: No.

PASCOE: No.

THOMPSON: I don't know if there was a difference at that point. It was a predominately around safety and a lots legal advice around divorce, separation, child support and how just how to go about anything really. So I

mean there was no access to inform so you know you couldn't jump on Google and find out anything. It just wasn't around. It wasn't there.

PASCOE: So you've talked about going out and trying to make --- keep Women's Information Service or relevant Women's Information Switchboard first and then Women's Information Service relevant and funded and with the, with the people the staff and the volunteers and you spent some time, do you remember how much time you spent in that --- the shopfront and phone room. You spent a lot of time out and probably up in up in --- did you have an office up in OFW.

[00:18:31]

THOMPSON: Yeah so we were --- when I first started we're on Level 12 Roma Mitchell, and then we moved down to Level 3, I think. Yeah and this was --- so the department --- we're in DTUPA when I first started. So the Department of Transport, Urban Planning and the Arts. And then cos we use to follow the Minister around and yeah it was Minister Laidlaw at the time. But I mean OFW was doing some really amazing things. So and this is the help with the Minister they had actually set up a child, childcare service, like in Roma Mitchell House for the women that worked in the building and across DTUPA and that was all done through OFW.

PASCOE: Well who was the person in charge of OFW at that stage.

THOMPSON: Carmel O'Loughlin

PASCOE: Carmel O'Loughlin yeah.

THOMPSON: And it was Rachel Myers who was the --- did all of the leg work around that. It's --- and at the time having at work based childcare was fantastic and even because a lot of --- cos I then went to work for the Department of Transport and I was recognised through my position as WIS

through there. And it still gets talked about. Had a conversation a couple of weeks ago about how fantastic it was during school holidays that they could take their children there, get minded at work. They'd go down have lunch with them and then go back to work. And it was all on Level 2 in the big --- there was a big --- use to be the cafeteria and that yeah is now just office space. It's not even there anymore. But it was this huge area they had the balcony and all of that kind of stuff.

PASCOE: Did they pay for it, the parents pay for the child minding.

THOMPSON: Look I was never that kind of involved with it. But there would have been some kind of payment I reckon.

PASCOE: So getting back to this --- oh no I was --- won't go with that. You've said that sort of has influenced you a bit in your later career. Were there other things that you think you took with you from the Women's Information Service.

THOMPSON: I think I took everything with me because --- I look --- the reason why I left I think is because I just had only been in the Public Sector in the Office for Women and it's a small unit and doesn't really represent the wider Public Sector and I thought the best thing that I could do for WIS is to broaden my experience in the way the Public Sector works so I kind of left. One I need a bit of a change anyway but I wanted to see how the big boys played so I went to a big department Transport predominately men and I just wanted to learn how it all worked and I thought I'll get experience for a year or two and I'll go back to where I really belong. Yeah. Back in the women's movement. Well its twelve years on and I'm still playing with the big boys . So, yeah.

[00:21:39]

PASCOE: So it was twelve years ago when you left, finally.

THOMPSON: I think so. It was about Two Thousand and Five when I left.

PASCOE: Two thousand and five. Okay. And still taking about the Women's Information Service and your involved in it. Did you have team meetings or staff meetings ---

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah.

PASCOE: Were volunteers involved in that?

THOMPSON: We use to have a Volunteer Rep and trying to think who that was at the time. I think it was you ---

PASCOE: It was ---

THOMPSON: For a bit ---

PASCOE: Well

THOMPSON: Yeah towards, yeah the end

PASCOE: It was about --- that was about when I became the Volunteer Rep I think so yes so we --- I came to that. Okay. Now something different, the types of women, the sorts of women who used both the Switchboard and the Service. Can you remember the varieties --- we're talking about you know maybe, maybe different, different ethnic women or Aboriginal women, older, younger, that sort of women.

THOMPSON: Yeah, look I think there was a big difference between the Kintore Avenue days and the Station Arcade days. Moving to Station Arcade was a really good move because it gave us a public face so unless you knew where we were in Kintore Avenue you know there was a little sign on the window saying Women's Information Service and there was nothing to suggest it was anything more inside. But giving a shopfront having it all glass on the

front where you could have different displays and different promotion for you know any kind of different event or kind of issue at the time really opened it up. So you got lots more different types of women. Because they would walk past it every day coming in and out of the train station and it just made us more accessible which was a really good move.

PASCOE: And you had the IAP Program the computer program which brought in older women would you say?

THOMPSON: Yeah I can remember also when --- and this was one of the best promotions that ever happened and this was the Minister's suggestion at the time and we all thought this was f'ing ridiculous. It was when ATMs were kicking off and there was a lot of push back from older people not trusting to put a card into a wall and get money out. So we organised with a Bank I think -- I can't remember what Bank, it might have been NAB [National Bank] I reckon and they bought an ATM into the shopfront. There was a big campaign of promotional campaign where you could come in and ask questions and have a practice at it and yeah look at internet banking and have a go at the Internet or at the same time. And we got a lot of media coverage out of that and there was this ATM sitting in the middle of the shopfront. And there was generally older women and some men that came in and they just wanted to speak to someone and have a look and it and play with it so they weren't intimidated before going to an ATM.

[00:24:42]

PASCOE: So it was well used by women ---

THOMPSON: Yeah

PASCOE: And men.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Men were welcomed in there too. Has that been different --- has that changed over the years do you think? The men coming in. What about Kintore Avenue? Did you ever see a man come in to Kintore Avenue?

THOMPSON: No never, never. I think it was --- I don't know --- like public perception wise it was --- it went from being a community based organisation to an open more main stream kind of service which is where it kind of needed to be as well and it just made it more accessible to more yeah --- people felt more welcome I think to come in. And the decor had a lot to do with that. Because I think at the time Carmel was criticised for the amount that was spent on the look and the feel of WIS in the Station Arcade. But it worked. It main streamed us a bit.

PASCOE: Can you talk about WIS being involved in the community and perhaps remember some of the things that went on there that you were part of.

THOMPSON: Yeah and this is --- so I did a lot of functions with --- so there was Women's Information Service, there was Women's Health State-wide and the Working Women's Centre, so it was Lisa Moody from Women's Health State-wide and Sandra Dann from the Working Women's Centre and the three of us went to a lot of rural kind of gatherings. So every year we would go to the rural women's gathering and then we would kind of do other functions throughout the year and we would go as this trio. And I have lifelong friends with those two women now and yeah the memories of the rural women's gatherings are pretty fantastic. But that's more on a personal kind of level. Yeah it was great.

PASCOE: What about, what about meetings in Adelaide. Did those sorts of things happen?

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah so as the Manager of WIS I was also on the Management Committee of the Working --- Women's Legal Service as well so had input into that. And I was also on --- what was I on --- oh there was, there was a women's group tied with Multicultural SA --- I'm trying to think of the name of the group, but I had a seat on that table as well. And again it was all about trying to identify the emerging needs of women as there was a lot of new arrivals coming through and feeding that information back to make WIS relevant to the needs of the women at the time.

PASCOE: I think there are other different, different expos or exhibitions around town. Were you, were you involved in those too or was it just when you were with.

[00:27:57]

THOMPSON: Look I felt like I was doing them all the time. But trying actually go back now and think what they were. I mean there were the obvious ones like the rural women's gathering and then ---

PASCOE: The Homeless Expo was that sort of thing there maybe --

THOMPSON: Yeah, no never did --- I went to some meetings for homelessness but there was --- I think we'd changed --- we kept changing departments when I was there. So every time we changed it --- department I had to go and be representative on a whole pile of kind of different committees within that department and again it was just about trying to tap in to see what they could offer WIS and we could offer them.

PASCOE: From what you're saying you were the face of WIS but did the staff or the volunteers go out on these things, can you remember?

THOMPSON: Oh yeah, yeah.

PASCOE: They did too.

THOMPSON: Yeah, so we --- and again I didn't do this. We had an outreach service there was one in Gawler, I reckon at the Library in Gawler and then there was one down south but I think that was through the Southern Women's Community Centre, I reckon. Lies [Zuidland] would know that, I thing that she use to do a lot of that and Kate Hawtin use to do all of the Gawler one as well.

PASCOE: Was the Family Court Service there when you were Manager or did that come in later?

THOMPSON: That was coming in as I left, I reckon. So I think it was, it was just being kind of developed. Cos I, I'm really trying to rack my brain now. I reckon that I something to do with trying to find out the legal implications of yeah of providing that service. I think, yeah so I had left by the time it go set up I reckon.

PASCOE: I've been told it happened in Kintore Avenue occasionally women had to go to court and some volunteer maybe staff I don't know went with them to court but it was on a more an ad hoc basis, it wasn't a formally organised thing as it's become.

[00:30:18]

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah so and again I think that's indicative how WIS has changed. It was a community based service and it was almost there was you know a need and so you just went out and did it and then you know the women that came before us started to become aware of some kind of level of safety and responsibility and occ health and safety and welfare and the risk that we were putting ourselves in at the time and then we kind of got suck into

the Public Sector proper really and to abide by all of their rules. Where before we kind of sat out outside of all of that.

PASCOE: I've been told by someone that worked at Kintore Avenue that occasionally Kintore Avenue was used as a handover.

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah.

PASCOE: For children is that your memory of it,

THOMPSON: Yeah like I never saw any of that. But I did hear yeah. I mean there are so many different kinds of wrong in what was --- kind of went down but you can understand there was a need and so you just go and do it. But you know different time different place.

PASCOE: Things have changed.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: Do you know how much --- do you know much about the Women's Information Service Support Group and role it played in supporting WIS?

THOMPSON: Yeah, yep I do. So they use to meet on a Wednesday, kind of springs to mind. So think Fliss Lloyd, Lord was the Coordinator there and they were a really good resource and if you had an idea and you wanted to run something past them they would quite frequently and bluntly give you their opinion, which was really very useful. Or if they saw something they didn't really like they use to kind of pop up and tell us what they think.

PASCOE: Something about Woman's Information Service that they didn't like.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

PASCOE: What sort of things, any examples of that?

THOMPSON: I --- it's --- no it was more about the look and the feel of the place and the services that got provided, or if we stopped providing a service for whatever reason it was --- we kind of had to justify it to them --- they were my benchmark as well. So if I couldn't articulate why we doing or not doing something and to the Support Group then I didn't have a hope in hell of actually getting it through anyway. So ---

PASCOE: So as a Support Group do you think that they would have had your back if there been any thought that the funds might have been withdrawn.

THOMPSON: Oh yeah absolutely. Yeah and they had their fingers in a whole pile of different networks and they could have --- liked rallied the troops quite quickly. Are they still around?

[00:33:26]

PASCOE: I'm not sure. I certainly don't see Fliss as much and and where we use to take calls to say whether or not someone was attending a meeting, we don't do that now. So I'm not sure if they meet elsewhere but I need to find that out.

THOMPSON: I mean they were an ageing group of women as well --- so --- and Fliss was by far the youngest. So yeah.

PASCOE: Fliss is being interviewed for this Oral History Project so no doubt she will be talking about that.

THOMPSON: She's good at keeping records so she'll probably be able to give you times and dates where --- me not so good.

(Laugh)

PASCOE: WIS held several phone ins on women's issues such as domestic violence, women and housing, parental stress, women and disability did you participate in any of those, or organise any of those during your time?

THOMPSON: Look I was involved in one but I don't ---I think --- were we in the Health Department --- I think we might have been in Health Department at the time

PASCOE: It changed.

THOMPSON: Yeah

PASCOE: We've moved several times out of that into DCSI (Department of Communities and Social Inclusion) and yeah.

THOMPSON: Yeah and then --- I think the Minister for Health at the time --- I have no idea who it was --- use to make themselves available on the phone and so we had to hang around in case they needed to divert any calls through to us. And I think I --- yeah, yeah --- I can't remember much more than that really, really testing my brain now.

PASCOE: Can you give me some names of some of the women that you've worked with over the years maybe have influence you or made a particular --- that you remember particularly.

THOMPSON: Or look I think all of the women there influenced in some way shape or form. I have made lifelong friends with many of the women that I worked there. It was a time of incredible support for me and and, and I think that without working in such a caring supportive environment I wouldn't actually be where I am now and that's everyone. So you know from Carmel O'Loughlin to Lindy Macadam to Fiona Mort to you know all of the amazing volunteers and you know like we were talking earlier and you know and Libby

Coote is still a big part of my life. And yeah. I now work on a road kind of project and I answer the phone there and I have incredible training from my WIS days but it's amazing that there's a couple of time where Kate Hawtin who is a resident within the project area she called about an issue and I've answered the phone and she's gone 'Is this Wendy, Wendy Thompson' and I went 'Yeah' and she went 'Wow'. (laugh) And it's happened three times. Yeah on the project, yeah, which is kind of amazing really. Yeah so I just --- yeah I think all of them yeah everyone, every single one of them and they've all come to WIS at a different time in their life to achieve something different and it's the type of place where you can have a passion for one particular area and just go with it. And you know move WIS off to a different area different time for a different need and needs change and so does WIS.

PASCOE: But you still think WIS is still relevant to the needs of today's women.

THOMPSON: Absolutely, absolutely.

PASCOE: Then thinking about this knowing that you were going to be interviewed have you come up with anything that you'd like to say or like to tell us about WIS apart from the ---what you've, what you've told us already. Is there anything else you'd like to say.

THOMPSON: No I just think that it's this constant absolute constant struggle to keep WIS relevant and and yeah it has to be so adaptable and responsive, not reactive, but responsive to the emerging needs and to continue to identify who --- what women and what situation are they in so you target their needs and that, that gets really tiring, really tiring and the fact that WIS is I mean how old now.

PASCOE: Forty five years. [Correction - Forty years not Forty Five]

THOMPSON: Yeah and still relevant and still going you know. Well done.

PASCOE: That's wonderful note with which to finish. But I'd just like to ask one more thing. You've been back a couple of times, when are you coming back again.

(Both laugh)

[00:38:29]

END OF INTERVIEW.