



## ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

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**INTERVIEWEE: Vivienne Ingram**

**INTERVIEWER: Jo Kijas**

**PLACE: Elizabeth Bay**

**DATE: 28 April 2012**

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## TRANSCRIPT

0.00    **JK:**    This is an interview with Vivienne Ingram and Jo Kijas on the 28th of April 2012 at Vivienne's Elizabeth Bay apartment for the Shared Terrain Oral History Project on behalf of the City of Sydney History Unit.

**And could I ask you your full name and year of birth?**

**VI:**    Vivienne \*\*\*\*\* Ingram, \*\*\*\*\* 1954.

**JK:**    I've come to talk to you today because you've just explained to me in fact that you've really always lived in the city and that you love the city and we're going to talk about and explore that relationship that you have and see with the natural environment. So to get us started can you give me your background, some personal background so that we get a bit of a context for you.

**VI:**    Sure. My parents emigrated to Australia shortly after WWII from Poland and their first little rat-infested apartment was in Orwell Street,

number 18 Orwell Street, Orwell Lodge, so not ten minutes' walk from here. And my mother, when she was pregnant with me, lived a few blocks away from where I now live and then my parents spent their entire life in Australia in Newcastle, so I went to school for about sixteen years in Newcastle and then came back to university here and then my father bought this apartment in about 1975. So one way or another I have never really been far from Elizabeth Bay and my parents and I have always felt very privileged to live in this little jewel in the middle of the city where you have the greatest density, if you like, of urbanisation but an absolute abundance of nature; you've got the harbour coming almost to the front door, beautiful parks and so you have the best of both worlds.

**JK: And what is your profession?**

VI: I'm a lawyer.

**JK: And you work out of the city, don't you?**

VI: I've unfortunately worked out of the city since about 1988. I started off working in the city, which I adored because it was very easy to get to work – I could sometimes walk – and then I worked in Hurstville for a very long time and now I work in Dee Why, so it's an absolute delight for me when I hear that e-TAG ping on the eastern side of the harbour to know that I'm back home.

**JK: Well, could you describe what it was like growing up - and how old were you when you left - and tell me about growing up in – it's Kings Cross/Elizabeth Bay, is that right?**

VI: No, I didn't grow up here, I grew up in Newcastle.

**JK: You grew up there.**

VI: However, I've lived in Newcastle, went to school in Newcastle but we regarded our real lives as being lived in Sydney. So every spare weekend we would come down to Sydney and we would often stay at the Gazebo, which was a hotel up here in the Cross which has now been converted to apartments. So our family always had a love for this part of the city, so whenever we would come down from school or to go to the theatre or to concerts we would stay in this part of the world. And I remember once standing on the balcony of the motel room at the Gazebo, looking down here to this very spot and thinking just how lucky people are who live here.

**JK: Well, please would you explain where we are, where we're located and for somebody who knows nothing about Sydney tell me about Elizabeth Bay but also your apartment.**

3.58 VI: This apartment is located in the cul-de-sac of Elizabeth Bay Road so it looks straight out onto Beare Park and Sydney Harbour and while it's located in one of the most gorgeous parts of Sydney, being Elizabeth Bay, it is a stone's throw from one of the seediest and most violent, being Kings Cross, so we live with that tension of an extremely beautiful urban environment, a quite luxurious one, and at the same time cheek by jowl against the seediness of Kings Cross. So we have Sydney Harbour, as I said before, almost coming to the door and a lot of exquisite native birdlife. So my greatest contact is with native birds and in the last maybe, I don't know, fifteen years, twenty years maybe there have been a huge influx of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Rainbow Lorikeets and little Rainbow Lorikeets despite their size now dominate the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos actually, which is fascinating to see. Yes, so that's the environment.

**JK: And if we're talking about birds, other sorts of birds?**

VI: Yes, I don't have the same love for the koel when it's shrieking for its mate but nonetheless that's part of living here. And then there are, of course, the poor, hard done by ibis from the city occasionally fly over and the odd pelican but principally it's Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Rainbow Lorikeets.

**JK: And where do you meet up with them on the whole?**

6.02 VI: They love hanging out in the trees near my apartment, so I get to meet them quite intimately and have quite a close relationship with them. They're certainly very intelligent, clever birds.

**JK: Which ones are we talking about?**

VI: The white ones, the Sulphur-crested. The Rainbow Lorikeets are not as clever, not as clever. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo will know when you come home and so they really are quite extraordinary creatures and demanding: they can walk into your apartment to ask for some attention.

**JK: It's a very nice apartment. So they just wander around? How many floors up – ten, is it?**

VI: Ten. But they know they're not allowed inside so they're a bit sheepish and reverse out fairly smartly but, no, they're very good. I'm not like the mad lady with birds flying around, pooing everywhere.

**JK: Good. They don't have a very good reputation amongst some of your neighbours, Potts Point, Woolloomooloo.**

VI: And I understand that. I mean, they are naturally very destructive and this is not their true habitat, I suppose, or at least I think we have displaced them and so they are now, of course, eating timber window frames and the like, so I understand that. So that's a real problem and it's a shame because they're delightful animals. However, they are in enormous numbers so I can very much understand that people resent their destructive nature.

**JK: What is it that you like about them?**

VI: Their physical beauty, they are spectacularly beautiful, and for such big birds, while they can give you a nasty bite they are incredibly gentle and incredibly intelligent.

8.07 They can land on your head or your back if you're unfortunate enough to have that happen to you and they are very gentle - they will not bite you hard at all. If they're in a bad mood they might give you a nip but they seem to have an innate knowledge that you don't mean them harm and they're quite fearless. I mean, regrettably, I suppose, this means that lots of people are feeding them and developing a relationship with them but, yea, no, they're very cute.

**JK: And we were talking about not having a dog or a cat and there you've got these rather beautiful animals that you're engaging with, I suppose.**

VI: Yes, and I mean I adore animals and I would love to have a pet but because I work and have a busy lifestyle that's not fair on the animals so I have to say that these are my putative pets, if you like, and so I get a great deal of pleasure from them. And I have to say I even love the flying foxes. I know the damage that they wreak in the Botanic Gardens but it's an iconic image of summer, sitting on the balcony, watching the sun set and watching the flying foxes fly over; it's another great pleasure of living here.

**JK: And have they been coming over the whole time that you've been living here?**

VI: Not that I can really remember. I started living here in about 1975 when I was still at university and then for instance I remember sparrows, which have completely disappeared, and you certainly had magpies – we've had them all along – and kookaburras, they've been here all along but the influx of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and certainly Rainbow Lorikeets are probably the last twenty years.

10.02 **JK:** **And do you remember the bats, have they always been coming past?**

VI: That I don't recall. I certainly can see the culling regime having its effect; certainly the numbers are very reduced this year over the last couple of years but they have been around for a very long time. I just can't quite put a date on it but they have been around for a very long time.

**JK:** **And so when you say "culling" the population, they haven't been culling them in the Botanic Gardens but outside.**

VI: They haven't been but I think the Botanic Gardens have been employing all sorts of techniques to divert them from denuding their trees, so if they haven't been, then something has decreased their numbers.

**JK:** **Right, yes. And they're about to have another go, I think; they've built up again.**

VI: Yes.

**JK:** **It's interesting that you've seen that. One of the things that I can already see in your apartment – you've shut the door because of the noise but you have the door open, you sit out on your balcony?**

VI: I have the door open all the time when I'm home, I have all my windows open, so that I do have – notwithstanding that I live in this intensely concentrated urban environment – a sense of immediate contact with the world outside. So notwithstanding that it's sometimes not the cleanest air I love having that sense of immediacy and I've made sure that the way the apartment is furnished, the colours invite the emphasis of the outside world, rather than the other way around. So this is a window, if you like, to the most important thing, which is the outside.

**JK:** **Well, perhaps you could actually, I suppose, describe a bit more about the outside because that harbour is - - -**

12.02 VI: Is utterly divine, notwithstanding that you have Garden Island as well. Garden Island, I don't dislike it because it's part of the working harbour and it makes life interesting, so you have the span of the Harbour Bridge visible, you have, of course, all of Sydney Harbour and the North Shore and immediately in front of this building Beare Park, so that it feels incredibly spacious because you have that

expanse of Sydney Harbour really as part of my living space, so I'm incredibly privileged to have it.

**JK: Yes. I think it's interesting that it's a big open space, isn't it, and somebody actually said to me the other day that Sydney Harbour's the biggest bit of open space there is in the city of Sydney.**

**VI:** No, I agree with that and, as I said, I've made very, very great effort so that this apartment feels – like the carpet looks like sand and it just goes out to the blue of the harbour and the sky and it does give a sense of incredible expansiveness and intimacy. I never feel lonely here. At night it's a different outlook altogether but you have that sense of being cradled by the city, if you like, so I find it not only expansive but incredibly intimate and supportive. So I've lived here now for thirty five years. I never walk through the front door without a sense of appreciation and love for where I live.

**JK: So you come home and I guess your leisure time here is the weekends, isn't it, or I suppose evenings sometimes, daylight saving.**

**VI:** Yes, yes.

**JK: When you go out down the bottom there and go walking, can you tell me about where you go and what sort of choices you might make about going walking?**

14.07 **VI:** O.K. There are a couple of things. If I'm doing recreational walking, there are two tried and tested routes. One is walking down the stairs into Rushcutters Bay Park from Elizabeth Bay Road and then walking through Darling Point and doing a large loop – that walk takes me about an hour. You also have the glory of McKell Park at the bottom of Darling Point Road, so I have all of that as part of my playground and that's my exercise walk. If I'm feeling like a longer, more suburban walk, I'll walk through Rushcutters Bay Park, up through Paddington, into Woollahra, back along Oxford Street and back through Darlington Road and the Cross and home but my most regular walking route is from here to the Cross to do my shopping or go out to dinner. And so there are two favourite routes. One, of course, is the most direct route which is Elizabeth Bay Road and up Greenknowe Avenue to the Cross and the other is the most beautiful, which is down to Beare Park and through Elizabeth Bay itself, along Billyard Avenue and there's a gorgeous little laneway that brings me right up onto Macleay Street into my idea of heaven, the bookshop to the right, gorgeous restaurants. Macleay Street is the Paris of living

here; it is just a glorious, glorious street. And it's changed radically in the thirty five years that I've lived here: it's become much more gentrified. It was always the more elegant side, from the El Alamein Fountain down Macleay Street was always more elegant and that was a very clear delineation between the rough world of the Cross and the more rarified world of Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay but that has really changed radically in the last fifteen, twenty years and become much more gentrified and more elegant.

16.19 **JK:** **And has there been a greening process in there? I don't know the area.**

VI: No, no, no, no, no.

**JK:** **Just the shops?**

VI: Yes, more elegant shops, nicer restaurants. The Cross has always been very sophisticated. The Cross was the location of some of the first delicatessens in Sydney, some great restaurants, very famous restaurants like Repin's and Sinatra and Tabou and – what was another one, it was really famous – Le Trianon and Mother's Cellar, there were some spectacular restaurants in its past and also some great bookshops. I'm a great reader, so the beauty of bookshops defines my enjoyment of places and there have been some great bookshops in the Cross for as long as I've known it, for all of that time. So it's been this incredible clash of the seedy underworld and bohemian life. Of course, you have the history of the Yellow Book and the artists who used to live here and still do, so you still see a lot of actors and I saw John Gaden walking around the other day and so it attracts quite a – to use a very old fashioned word – bohemian, eclectic mix of people which make for a very interesting, interesting environment.

**JK:** **And when you go on your walks, why is the alleyway interesting?**

18.01 VI: Well, it's a sneaky little route between some big buildings but I love it because that walk takes me from here through Beare Park and then through Billyard Avenue, which is glorious, I see the beautiful park outside Elizabeth Bay House, which is particularly insane in spring with its magnolias and its azaleas and it's physically very beautiful and then you have your little alleyway which takes you into the heart of the Cross, right out onto Macleay Street, so it's a very picturesque and charming route and I never cease to love that glimpse of the sky and the trees. That's another gorgeous thing about Macleay Street: it

is tree-lined, so you have that again in this incredibly urban area a sense of nature not being far away.

**JK: Because of the trees?**

VI: Because of the trees, yes. The trees have been there for a long time and they're huge, they're mature and that is gorgeous.

**JK: And do you visit that little park in front of Elizabeth Bay House much?**

VI: No, I don't, I have to say, regrettably. As I say, I make it my business to visit it in spring because it's so unbelievably beautiful but I suppose it's a bit like walking and taking pleasure just knowing that it's there, so I might not actually go to it but every time I take that well-worn path to Macleay Street, even if I mightn't look at it there's something that tells me that it's there that makes it part of where I live. And I forgot to mention that here in Elizabeth Bay Road, the middle of the road is also a park with huge, mature trees in it, so there is always a sense of looking out.

20.00 I look out of every single window in this apartment onto nature. Even when I'm right up against a building I will still see the sky or trees, so that's particularly special.

**JK: So could you tell me a bit more about how you conceptualise nature and how you understand that, especially here in the city, because sometimes people don't think that nature is in the city somehow.**

VI: Yes. Look, I have a love of nature in all of its forms. I worked for the National Parks and Wildlife Service for nineteen years, so I have a love and appreciation of wildest, remotest nature but because of my passion for city living, and I am to my DNA a city girl, it is important to me to have nature, whether it's water or trees or the sky. So to me that is an integral part of my appreciation of nature. Of course it is not wild, of course it is man-made in lots of ways, other than the harbour, and we're not talking about native vegetation at all but nonetheless the mere fact of a mass of trees and the immediacy of the harbour and the sky give me a sense of having the best of both worlds. I live in a city which gives me all the things that are important to me and at the same time I have the abundance of the natural world, albeit in a significantly modified form.

**JK: You would be aware of the Sydney 2030 plan?**

VI: Yes.



21.56 **JK:** And one of the things that I've come to understand that needed to be lobbied for was that biodiversity was something that I gather had been not given a lot of emphasis earlier on and then has been given more place. Is that something that you also see as important in the city in parks and being able to give spaces to wildlife, etcetera, or is it not really something that's perhaps around this side of town been something that you've thought much about?

VI: No, I probably haven't and I mean I have a good understanding of conservation principles and so I think there's always a tension when you're talking about conservation and biodiversity conservation in particular that you are really talking native flora, native fauna and from a purist conservation point of view that's where the emphasis should be. However, the reality is that we human beings occupy cities and that certainly in the area where I live, other than the birds and the possums, there isn't a lot of native fauna around and native flora around in particular but, having said that, I think it's terribly important to give people as much access to living intense green space so you do have the beating heart of this city is the Botanic Gardens and Hyde Park so that, I think, is terribly important. So while I have a great deal of sympathy for the purer sense of biodiversity conservation, I think we also have to be realists and try very hard to have a realistic capacity for people living in an incredibly modified built-up environment to have some contact with the green world.

24.13 I was in Double Bay today and my acupuncturist was bemoaning the fact that they had demolished a beautiful old house opposite him, which had a lovely old garden and were replacing it with a concrete monstrosity built to each boundary, so not even the remotest allowance made for a garden. So as a planning lawyer I do understand the need for capacious city living but I also think that there should be a great emphasis on providing some beating green heart for the urban dwellers to relate to.

**JK:** And it seems perhaps a little too obvious to ask but why is it important?

VI: Well, it depends. There might be some people for whom it is not important but I think that most human beings will smile when they walk out into a sunny blue day. They will feel better if they sit in a park where they see green trees, where they see flowers, where they hear birds. I don't know, I think maybe human beings are hardwired to be responsive to the natural environment. And we were talking earlier about the role that pets play. When I'm lying in bed and I hear

the cockatoos in the trees, it actually gives me pleasure that they're nearby and I feel that they're talking within my earshot, so I think it's very enriching to feel that you have some interaction with live animals, of course, but with the natural world.

26.05 It's you can be feeling flat and off-colour and just go for a walk in Beare Park, Rushcutters Bay Park and the world looks different because you've seen something green, you've smelled the fresh air – well, not so fresh air here but still I think human beings need the natural world as well as the joys that the extremely urbanised world gives us.

**JK: One of the things, especially being on the tenth floor, pollution. How have you monitored that, I suppose, in your own personal way over the last many years?**

VI: Well, when I first moved here and we went to buy a carpet, because this building had to be fitted out because it was brand new, the people at the carpet shop said "You live in the dirtiest part of Sydney. You need a brown carpet". And it's true: you get a tremendous amount of dust and dirt from the harbour. So I suppose I have always lived with pollution and dirt. I can't say that I've noticed it getting worse. There was that terrible red dust storm which really was horrendous and the great hailstorm but I've not noticed, I can't honestly say that I've noticed the place getting dirtier. It's always been a place where – and because I live with my windows open all the time that's the price I pay. So I've not particularly noticed pollution getting worse. Of course, there are days when it's appalling but, yes, I can't say I've turned my mind to that particularly.

**JK: And how have you experienced those events, natural events I guess we'll call it but they're probably caused by humans, so it gets a bit tricky - - -**

28.03 VI: Caused by it, yes.

**JK: - - - but tell me about events like the fires.**

VI: Fires are very dramatic here, yes.

**JK: Yes, and all of those things, including hailstorms which are indeed entirely natural.**

VI: Yes, natural.

**JK: Tell me about those events.**

VI: Well, they're interesting because you then realise how remotely you live from nature because you really don't expect extreme weather events. Fire is something that I understand very well because I dealt with fire issues when I worked with National Parks. However, in the big fire years of '94 and the huge fire years, you have great bits of black soot coming in through the windows, that you can smell fire on the air from kilometres away, you can smell fires from the Blue Mountains here, and I'm hypersensitive to the smell of fire smoke because I used to do a lot of work in relation to bushfires, so I could always smell bushfires here. So you do experience that phenomenon that way but things like the hailstorm and that red dust storm are terrifying because we're not used to extreme natural weather events. So the dust storm really was something quite shocking and frightening and mercifully, thanks to radio and the television I quickly became aware of what it was but that first sense of waking up and tasting it, feeling it and then looking around and your whole environment's changed - everything's covered in this layer of red dust - it really was very unpleasant and very frightening.

30.01 And the hailstorm was equally terrifying because being ten floors up wind really does rattle the windows so you do feel then rather than invincible quite vulnerable and I went to the bathroom window because the noise of the hail was incredible and luckily left the bathroom quite quickly - my bathroom faces south and that storm came from the south - and literally five minutes after leaving the bathroom the window blew in and the glass came all the way down the hall. So that was very dramatic and shows that nature can vent its fury even when you live in a highly urbanised environment.

**JK: And what was it that was so terrifying in fact about the red dirt storm?**

VI: Because it was surreal. It had never happened before, I had no idea what it was and it was everywhere, it coated absolutely everything, so I quickly realised that closing all the windows was important but notwithstanding that it got in through every crevice. And then that day I had to do something in the city and I felt like an idiot, thinking that I should wear a facemask but lots of people were wearing facemasks and I regret that I just didn't want to look stupid. And it was surreal, walking through the city with everybody feeling awkward. It was a bit like that atmosphere after September 11, you know, with everybody feeling that their ordinary world was no longer safe and was no longer identifiable to them as it was yesterday and I think it's that sense of things being extremely other and very alien and the fact

that the dust and the elements can get into your hermetically sealed cocoon is very confronting.

32.05 **JK:** **Right in the middle of our biggest city.**

VI: Absolutely, absolutely. And you do realise how vulnerable cities are. When the Queen Mary made its first voyage to Sydney, it took me over two and a half hours to get home from Dee Why because the world stopped because everybody came to have a look at the ship and it just showed me how easily this city could be brought to its knees. But that really was shocking, if with people coming to look at a giant cruise ship could bring the city to its knees, what could a terrorist attack do?

**JK: Yes. And other weather events? I mean, are you quite aware of the weather up here or are you a bit sealed off from it generally?**

VI: Oh, no, no, no, you're very aware of the weather because it's very windy. And I love air, so I love my south facing bathroom, so really except on a forty degree day where there isn't a breath of wind I will get every gust of air that's possible to get and I love it so I'm very much aware of particularly wind and rain. And, of course, with the harbour you have the joy of watching weather, so you can see lightning and thunder in the sky and you can watch rain clouds come in over the North Shore, so the changing moods of the harbour, the changing colour from like it is today, that sort of steel grey, to an almost incandescent crystalline blue in the sun makes you very attuned to the elements, notwithstanding that you live in your hermetically sealed world.

33.58 **JK:** **And one of the things in the 2030 plan and obviously happening in cities all around the world is trying to get a grasp of sustainability issues. Given the density in which you live, what are the sorts of things that you think are either possible or that perhaps you're already doing to contribute to that possibility of a more sustainable city?**

VI: Well, in terms of aging in place, other than the fact that there is a slight incline up Greenknowe Avenue, with a bit of luck as I age I will be using my car less and less and I can live here quite happily and walk to the shops and use my vehicle less. Having said that, I of course have spent the last twenty-odd years driving to my jobs because the public transport is completely non-existent to the Northern Beaches and was unpleasant to Hurstville. I can't say that I'm a huge fan of the city's passion for bicycles. I think that the city is too dangerous and not bicycle-friendly and I have a particular

prejudice for bicycles. One of my dearest friends had a shocking head injury on a bicycle so I think the interaction between bicycles and cars is a frightening one, so I can't say that I'm a fan of that but increasingly we have to look at sustainable practices and will certainly people who live in the inner city are more inclined to embrace sustainable practices, I think we are all very selfish, myself included. So I think this is the role that government, local government, state government has to play, which is to make people aware of the consequences of practices which aren't sustainable.

36.05 You see, one thing which has, I think, been successful is trying to lure people away from plastic bags. You do see lots of people doing their supermarket shopping with green bags and the like, so little by little people are changing but I think there needs to be a massive education process and people are amenable to it. When you had the huge droughts and you had the dam levels at very low levels, people actually did save water, did shower more quickly, so I think that there's a great role for government to play in educating people and making their capacity to embrace sustainable practices easier.

**JK: And do you have an idea of what sort of things they are that you can do in a place like this?**

VI: Difficult, yes, difficult, but I think you've also got to convince people that the practices have an effect. I know in my current job with local government there are many occasions where people have gone to lots and lots of trouble to sort garbage and then they see all the sorted bins being emptied into the same truck. So I must say that rather jaundiced my view of the effort that everybody's gone into recycling, etcetera. So I think in general terms if people a) are given simple things that they can do and b) are convinced that their individual contribution will have an effect people will do it – and I include myself in this. I sometimes think "Oh, well, bugger it. What difference is it going to make?" and certainly selfishly I will say that my personal inconvenience will still outweigh my commitment to sustainability.

38.10 I will drive my car because public transport is so disgusting. You need to look at the state of Kings Cross Station; blind horses would not make me exit from that station now. And I used to use it; when it was first built, I used to use it a lot but it is so disgusting, notwithstanding the effort that was spent on beautifying Darlinghurst Road it's not been effective at all, so, sadly.

**JK:** Yes. I had been interested in the community gardens thing and there's nothing around here, really.

**VI:** No, there isn't, there isn't. Look, I think that the idea of community gardens is a lovely one but having had something to do with it in Warringah, it's highly politicised and the politics of it and the practicality of it is a little bit difficult but where there is goodwill and where people have a genuine desire just to use an area to grow things, I think it's a wonderful idea. And I've seen stories about community gardens in Sydney where they've made a huge difference, particularly in high-rise Housing Commission development; I think there it's in some instance had a critical benefit. Here there's no great need for it in the sense that lots of people grow things on their balconies but we are truly surrounded with green space everywhere we go, so we don't have that sense of "Oh, God, I wish there was something green and growing"; everywhere I look I see green and growing.

40.13 **JK:** And I guess that's one of the things that's happened with some of the community gardens that they've taken over part of the green, the lawns and that sort of thing.

**VI:** Yes.

**JK:** Are there things that you would not want to see in your park just down here?

**VI:** Yes, yes. I would be appalled, I would man the barricades. I wouldn't tolerate a community garden in my park, I have to say, and it's probably irrational; I just love my park as it is and the park is for everybody. And the way Rushcutters Bay park in particular and Beare Park are used, allows everybody, families, elderly people and, as I said, there's enough green and growing. And people can read Indira Naidoo's book and if they want to grow veggies and things they can do so on their balcony and I'd support that but I would be unhappy to see parts of big metropolitan parks taken over for community gardens, particularly given – and I suppose I'm jaundiced and battles-scarred by my experience of them in Warringah, so that's not been a happy experience. So maybe if I saw it in a different light I might have a more positive attitude to it but I still think that we have so much beautiful green around us here that it's not really necessary.

**JK:** So you're saying you like the parks as they are, you don't want to see them touched, really?

VI: No, no, I don't. And as for, I suppose, a conservative person's attitude, this is how they've always been and to be honest they haven't changed much in thirty five years, you know, the odd coffee shop here and there, children's play equipment but other than that they're pretty much as I remember them and therefore I rather like them like that.

42.26 **JK: Are there other things that I haven't thought of that are important about your engagement with the city environment?**

VI: Look, I just love the location. I love the fact that I can walk into the city down through Woolloomooloo, up through the Art Gallery, I can walk to the Art Gallery, I can walk to the city, if I go to a concert at night and can't get a cab I can walk home. I love that interaction, I love the fact that I can walk to Double Bay to do my shopping if I want to, I love being able to walk from here to Woollahra if I want to. So it's incredibly accessible and very, very beautiful. So it gives me access to everything that's important to me; I love all aspects of city dwelling. So, look, I did most of my university study in this apartment, I've spent my entire working life in this apartment and, as I said, it really doesn't matter where I work and it doesn't matter where I travel to. I love travelling and it doesn't matter whether I've been in the wild countryside or in New York, I love every time the wheels of that plane hit the tarmac at Kingsford Smith, I just love that.

**JK: And have you explored any of the other parks within the LGA but further afield, like maybe over to Glebe or out to Sydney Park or any of those – do you ever go further afield?**

44.09 VI: No. Isn't that terrible? So born in Paddington, spent all my life here. I've not been out to the Olympic site much.

**JK: Actually, I meant Sydney Park which is at the end of King Street out at Newtown.**

VI: No, no, never been there I have to say to my shame but I have walked around Pyrmont quite a bit and find that quite charming and fabulous. Where was the other park you mentioned?

**JK: I just wondered about Glebe over in the foreshore.**

VI: Oh, yes, I have, which is utterly glorious. I used to have a friend who lived in Glebe so we would often do that. I mean, that's also beautiful but, no, I have to say I'm very narrow-minded.

**JK: I think you're in very good company. I'm finding people stick within their areas even within the LGA, definitely.**

VI: Well, as I say, my parents loved the Cross, my father in particular adored the Cross, so it's been my playground, it's part of my heritage, it's where I grew up, I associate living with this area. So I appreciate the beauty, for instance, of Warringah where I work, I like the North Shore but this is home and home is a fairly small circumference. There have been some clashes with the Jewish community, both in Bondi and on the North Shore where ultraorthodox Jews want to expand the areas that they can comfortably walk in from sundown on Friday to Sunday and on Saturday and there is in ultraorthodox Judaism a really mediaeval delineation of the town.

46.05 So town in mediaeval times had city walls, so the rabbis would delineate that your home was the village or the town within those city walls, so there have been attempts, both in Bondi – and I can't remember where it is now - Lindfield, Pymble, but somewhere on the North Shore too to create markers so that orthodox Jews can venture from their houses into an area that is marked off for them as their home. And while I find that disturbing for a number of reasons, I actually relate to the concept of the invisible walls, if you like, of the area that you define as home and my invisible walls stem to Double Bay, possibly to Rose Bay. That's the other thing which I do love and you don't do that walking – I have done it walking but it's a big effort – is, of course, to Vaucluse, so the park there is just glorious as you walk out to the end of the world there and you can look right across the entry to the harbour. So that's also glorious but my intimate home is bounded by probably Double Bay, Woollahra, Darling Point and Kings Cross.

**JK: And you're pretty protective of that area.**

VI: Well, very. I mean, it's been my home for such a long time but, having said that, I don't mind a lot of the changes in the sense that only fools object to change and, as I say, we've always had really interesting people living here and I like the fact that I do have the industrial working Garden Island in front of me, that you do have the sort of seedier, rougher side of the world at the Cross combined with this sort of rather, you know, genteel, rarefied world. So I like those contrasts; that makes it interesting and not homogenous, so I think that's part of the attraction of living here.

48.28 **JK: And that's a contrast to Warringah?**

VI: In every way, in every way, yes. Although Warringah surprised me by having quite – but it has a much smaller ethnic injection, if you like, whereas this area has always been characterised by significant what



I would call European influence from the influx of my parents' era of immigrants who really have changed our world to the more recent immigrants like Vietnamese immigrants changing the way we eat. That's the other thing: if you love eating, this is the place to be.

**JK: And down in the park because really when we look at your window, if we look left we're looking straight onto Beare Park and it's not a pocket park.**

VI: No.

**JK: And you're also looking at – you talked about Centennial Park, I think.**

VI: And Rushcutters Bay Park.

**JK: And Rushcutters Bay, yes, although that's not City of Sydney but that's O.K.**

VI: No, no, but a tiny bit.

**JK: I'm just wondering about the use of the park by different ethnic groups. Do you see some differences?**

50.02 VI: No, no, not as much. But interestingly, if you go to Watsons Bay you will see a lot of Muslim people, a lot of Indian people, lots of Chinese people. So if you go Nielsen Park, Watsons Bay but much less in Rushcutters Bay Park and Beare Park. Rushcutters Bay Park and Beare Park are principally used by people who live around here, so they really are local parks in the truest sense.

**JK: So that's an older European - - -**

VI: Yes.

**JK: And do you think that there might be any - - -**

VI: It's very middle class.

**JK: I was just wondering if that's an influence on how the parks look and are maintained**

VI: Look, I don't know, I don't know. No, I don't know, I've not really thought about that but I think these are very old parks, they've been here for a very long time and they've been maintained in pretty much the same way. As you rightly say, Rushcutters Bay is the responsibility of Woollahra but not much has changed and Beare Park not much has changed either, so, yes.

**JK: You said it was nice to think about why you loved it.**

VI: Well, I've really enjoyed this because it's actually encouraged me to analyse why I love living here. There's the felt experience of warmth and comfort and stimulation. It's incredibly stimulating, whether it's the constant change of weather, the boats on the harbour and you just walk outside and you'll see interesting people and café society really started in lots of ways in the Cross and has developed.

52.11 So there's a sense of interaction with people and society is right outside your front door and at the same time I can be here and have a sense of meditative isolation and quiet to a fairly significant extent. So I've enjoyed very much talking to you because it's been a pleasure to verbalise why I adore living in this city.

**JK: Thank you so much. Well, I've greatly enjoyed it.**

**Interview ends**