The summary of an interview with Mrs. Jay Cummings, the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia. Mrs. Cummings spoke of his wife's activities and highlights whilst in the Newcastle City Council.

Mrs. Jay Cummings was born on the 23rd December, 1923 in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe and living in the Sydney area until the transfer of her father to Newcastle during the war.

Friday night dances held at Tyrrell House brought Jay and Joy together, culminating in their marriage at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle in February, 1946. The family of three daughters is Joy active in the community.

Joys involvement in the Labor Party was instigated greatly by staunch A.L.P. supporters, her parents and her grandparents.

Following her husband's interests in the Newcastle City Council, who was then an Alderman in North Ward. In the early 1960s, Joy became conversant with the affairs of council and civic events. Joy moved out of the City Council not seeking further re-election. Joy moved in.

The issue of the elimination of the beautiful Moreton Bay fig trees in the Islington Park, afforded Joy the opportunity as a candidate to join the City Council in the Triennial Election in 1965 in East Ward. East Ward consists of Mayfield, East Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton the industrial suburbs and she was elected quite comfortably.

Environmental and conservation aspect considered of great importance at the time but to Joy it was something Newcastle people should become conversant with.

The destruction of the avenue of trees in the Birdwood Park, the Highway 33 through Blackbutt Reserve were two of many controversial issues attacked by Joy.

Consternation of the unemployed women in the area, produced a change of heart amongst the big companies in the employment of these young women. Establishments such as Newcastle City Council, the abattoirs, the Red Mill section of the B.H.F., and the Taxation Office are only a few of many who became involved with the issue of the unemployed young women in the area.

September, 1974 found Joy the successful candidate nominated by the A.L.P. Caucus for the role of Lord Mayor of.
The summary of an interview with Mr. Ray Cummings, the husband of Joy Cummings, the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia. Mr. Cummings spoke of his wife’s activities and highlights whilst in the Newcastle City Council.

Mrs. Joy Cummings was born on the 23rd. December, 1923 in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe and living in the Sydney area until the transfer of her father to Newcastle during the war.

Friday night dances held at Tyrell House brought Ray and Joy together, culminating in their marriage at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle in February, 1946. The family of three daughters and one son kept Joy active in the community.

Joy’s involvement in the Australian Labor Party was instigated greatly by two generations of staunch A.L.P. supporters, her parents and her grandparents.

Following her husband’s interests in the Newcastle City Council, who was then an Alderman in North Ward in the early 1960s, Joy became conversant with the affairs of council and civic events. Ray moved out of the City Council not seeking further re-election. Joy moved in.

The issue of the elimination of the beautiful Moreton Bay fig trees in the Islington Park, offered Joy the opportunity as a candidate to join the City Council in the Triennial Election in 1968 in East Ward. East Ward consists of Mayfield, East Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton the industrial suburbs and she was elected quite comfortably.

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September, 1974 found Joy the successful candidate nominated by the A.L.P. Caucus for the role of Lord Mayor of
Newcastle. Australia's first woman Lord Mayor, where she remained for nine out of the next ten years. Elected to Lord Mayor three times with overwhelming majority.

Nominated in 1974 for the Order of Australia and received the award from the Queen in Canberra in 1975. Only one of many awards to be received by Joy.

The conversion of Hunter Street for the Mall, the restorations of Newcastle Surf Club and Nobby's Surf Pavilion, the development of Pacific Park, Warabrook Estate, the new Conservatorium of Music and the cosy little Hunter Valley Theatre Co., are small in comparison to the Foreshores Development of the East End of Newcastle bestowed by Joy to the populace of Newcastle.

Serving on the College of Advanced Education and the University Councils, Joy set up "Friend's of the University," which still operates today.

Patron of over five hundred clubs and organisations in Newcastle and district, attending each one at least once a year.

The relationship of the sister city of Ube in Japan was established in 1981. The Mayor and a group of Aldermen from Ube with some powerful industrialists came to Newcastle to cement the relationship.

Newcastle has the largest collection of Japanese Art in Australia, Japanese sculpture has been placed in our parks and gardens. The teaching of Japanese culture to the students at Newcastle University.

A tremendous welcome received by the Marching Koalas Band on their successful trip to Japan.

The untimely decision of retirement was forced upon Joy Cummings, who has suffered a debilitating stroke, affecting the use of her right arm and leg also impairment to her speech.

Her formal resignation of Lord Mayor of Newcastle and Alderman of East Ward was received by the Town Clerk on Monday, August 13, 1984.
A Transcription of a taped interview with
Mr Ray Bunning, husband of Joyce Bunning, former
Lord Mayor of Newcastle. 2/8/88

Student Phyllis Southall, Open Foundation course,
University of Newcastle, interviewing Mr Ray Bunning, husband of Joyce Bunning, former Lord Mayor of
Newcastle, speaking of Joyce's activities and highlights
whilst in the Newcastle City Council. Joyce, were
you a Newcastleian? Were you born in Newcastle?
Joy was born in Ashcliffe, in Sydney on the 23rd
December, 1923, and lived in the Sydney area until
she was 16 years of age prior to coming to Newcastle
she was residing at the seaside town of Coogee.
Joyce's family lived in Sydney, Joyce's family life in Sydney consisted of
herself, her brother, her parents and her grandparents.
They moved regularly from place to place, because her
father was at that stage an officer in the NSW Fire
Brigade and living in fire brigade quarters. They were
often moved from place to place. Joyce's parents
were actively involved in the Labor Party in the
early days if Jack Lang in fact they were personal
friends of the famous J.T. Lang, her parents and all
his relatives always had a feature photo of J.T. Lang
on the walls of their homes. Joyce's mother herself
was the secretary of the Coogee Branch of the Australian
Labor Party until she moved to Newcastle. Joyce's
father was a adventurous spirit, before joining the
Fire Brigade he was a great friend of Mr. Holden,
who was famous for the advent of the Holden motor car
and he eventually went to work for Mr. Holden in
their factory. Mr. Holden had a fixed wing plane in
those days, which he operated from Bankstown Airport.
and Joyce learnt to fly and flew regularly with Mr. Holden. On one occasion he came to Newcastle and landed the plane on Newcastle Showground when the plane had to take off. They had to have groups of men on either side holding the wings until they got enough power up to the plane to take off and rise steeply and it would not hit the fences or the buildings near by. The flew regularly with Mr. Holden until Joyce was two or three, her mother became fearful that she may have an accident and so she gave away flying. Joyce's grandfather also lived with them; he was an Englishman and lived in the Liverpool area of England and his parents had paid for him to be a Midshipman on the sailing ships. And this was to prove a wonderful source of information for Joyce who often listened to him talking about the battleships and other famous sailing ships throughout the world, and Joyce loved the ocean and sailing ships is to prove a vital aspect in her life in the later years of Lord Mayor of the City Council. Joyce was actively involved in sport; it seemed as if anything she put her hand at, she became quite proficient at. She was a tennis player; she was renowned in the local club and she had advanced to what we would call an A grade tennis player and in those days people involved in ice-skating, very proficient at figure ice skating and also swimming, where she had lived at Ramsgate for many years, quite close to the Ramsgate Baths. Diving and swimming just came naturally to her, and of course her active sports life was to prove a vital important to her resourcefulness later in public life in Newcastle. When did you and family come to Newcastle? Joyce's father was transferred to Newcastle.
in 1942. They came to reside in Aircourt Flats in
Telford Street, Newcastle, which is now the site of the
beautiful fountain in Pacific Park, we met at the
local dances held in Tyrell Hall held on Friday
nights and then four years later we were married on
The 9th February 1946 at Christchurch Cathedral.
After you married Gay, where did you reside? We
lived at Mayfield, where we resided for the next
three years and raised a family of three girls
and a boy. At what stage Gay did you become
involved with the municipal council affairs? Gay's
interest in municipal affairs first began when I
was elected to the Newcastle City Council in the early
1960s, I served a term of three years but I wasn't
greatly interested and decided not to seek a second
term but that was an opening and Gay became quite
concerned with the workings of council and civic
affairs. When did you first decide to enter local
government? As a family we had been involved
in many issues in the local community but in
the early 1967 there had been a move to eliminate
an avenue of the beautiful Morton Bay fig trees in
Islington Park. This became an issue with Gay and
she took up the cudgels and decided to fight on
this issue and a local alderman of the council
was due to retire at the triennial elections in 1968,
and Gay decided to offer herself as a candidate and
that was when she first entered the Newcastle City Council
as an alderman of the East Ward. Who was Lord Mayor at
the time? Alderman Doug, Mc Dalgle was mayor at
the time. Gay, what was some of your activities
in the council when you elected? When Gay was elected
to East Ward, it was quite a unique situation, because,
East Ward consisted of the very industrial suburbs of Mayfield East, Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton. It was something unique that a woman should be entering the council from that type of area, where the majority of the residing in that area were employed in the waterfront, shipping, seaman and the heavy industries. However, she stood on a ticket and she was elected quite comfortably. In those days voting was not compulsory and there was a lot of hard work put into the effort to get sufficient people along to record their vote. However, she had no trouble getting elected on that occasion.

The next six years on the council involved the lots of issues in those days. The environment wasn’t considered of great deal of importance, but, to say it was something that the Newcastle people should become conversant with, it affected their life styles of them and their future children and of the area.

We know that the beautiful avenue of trees along Islington still remain, but, some important issues to come up in the next six years, particularly the destruction of an avenue of trees in Birdwood Park. Birdwood Park had been a park that had been allowed to, more or less, deteriorate and it was allowed and used mainly for circuses and such that came to Newcastle, no beautiful development in it. It was always a possibility that the park could become established into a lovely park for the people of Newcastle to rest. The trees had been planted in a form of a square and were at least 100 years old, and had grown majestically. The idea was to widen Parkway Ave. and so put a road through the continuation of King Street, right through.
Centre of the park, the issue had been debated and caused quite a lot of controversy. In Newcastle City Council, Joy made many impassionate speeches on it prior to the actual involvement of it. The destruction of the trees, it took place at a very early hour one morning and Joy received a phone call seven o'clock one morning, to say that they were already using bulldozers and circular saws to destroy the trees, she immediately went in and already great groups of people were bracing themselves before the trees and trying to prevent their destruction and to look at some other method of clearing up an avenue into the centre of the city without going and destroying a park. Highway 23 to Blackbutt Reserve was a very controversial issue which many people took a great interest in. In Newcastle, the Council meetings were packed, people standing out in the corridors to hear the debates on this vital issue. Joy had taken up the cudgels on, that the highway should never go through the Reserve, that the reserve would be destroyed in its value, and she made again many impassionate speeches, often when she'd make her speech in Newcastle the people were cheering and clapping, giving her great encouragement to keep up her fight for this issue and issues such as this. Fortunately, the highway didn't go through the Reserve and today Newcastle has that majestic reserve out at Blackbutt, that is visited by crowds of people almost daily. Joy was vitally interested in that the employment of women in Newcastle being the leading industrial city of Australia, there wasn't a great deal of avenue for work for young women in the city, she was a great advocate in the early
days for women to be employed by the police department. This was before women were even employed actually or the beat. Her idea, in those days was that they could be engaged in the offices doing typing and such and relieve more police in those days to actual patrolling what they called patrolling the streets. She became a great advocate for women to be employed in the Council and abattoirs, she felt that there were avenues for employment in the packaging department, some of the media in Newcastle, took the issue up as a being not worthy and was more or less categorizing her, "how could employees be engaged in slaughtering animals" and that and of course anyone with common sense would know this wasn't Jay's idea and of course later on, a large number of female workers being employed in the packaging dept of the abattoirs, both on when she became Lord Mayor, she had been invited to open, the new very high technical Rodmill of the BHP, and she was quite amazed at the technology in which steel was being rolled and formed into the products to be used and she felt that there was an avenue for women to be employed in this type of employment. There was some hostility from some of the unions at the time, that they, in those days felt that the women shouldn't be employed in the heavy industry, of course. This is not the case today, many women are employed in this form of work, later on she was greatly involved with the housing the taxation office being built in Newcastle because, she realized that the large majority of persons employed in that would be female. Another issue which caused a great deal of controversy was, when Jay introduced & resolution
ui, the Council which was asked for support to stop the needless slaughter of whales, most aldermen lifted it as of no concern of them, the city or its people. Jay again gave one of her finest speeches on value and the quality of life, for her, her children and future generations of Newcastle. She told how she loved to take the children to the high Rocks of Newcastle to watch the whales passing Newcastle, diving, spouting and would often with their calves. This was something that could be lost forever, and so to it was a tremendous importance, Newcastrians to enjoy.

The resolution was carried, the Newcastle media largely ignored the issue, however, it must have been recorded interstate and overseas, as she received mail from New Zealand and every state. The upshot was that she was invited to become a Trustee of the World Wide Fund of Australia. You were first elected to the position of Lord Mayor in 1974, yes there was a triennial election in 1974, and the group that Jay represented received the majority on the Council.

The position of Lord Mayor in those days was election by the aldermen of the Council, not by the public. She was approached by the majority of her members and asked to stand for the position and thus she done and consequently in September 1974 became the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia. I understand that there were some notable achievements and awards given to Jay during her term of Lord Mayor, ones here were. I'll talk about her awards first, she was granted, the Federal Government had instituted the first purely Australian award known as the Order of Australia, in the time of Prime Ministe Whitlam and Jay was nominated for this award and she
received the award in 1976, and she travelled to Canberra and she received the award from the Queen. These were the first recipients of this purely Australian award. Later that year, Kay had suffered a stroke in early 1984. The City Council decided to award Kay the Freedom of the City, this had been a ceremony that had been instituted during the term of Kay as Lord Mayor and there were already two recipients of this award. The first was the late Lord Mayor of Newcastle Alderman Frank Partridge and the second was a former Lord Mayor and a Government Minister in the Federal Government Mr. Charlie Jones. Kay, the Councillor, awarded Kay the award in May, 1984 and it was to be left at her discretion when she was ready to participate in the ceremony to receive the award. This was because Kay had suffered the stroke and they were leaving it to her to judge for herself when she thought she would be well enough. This took place in October 1987, at a beautiful ceremony in the City Hall, attended by some hundreds of people and she was in fact the first recipient of this award to be honoured as a Freeman of the City of Newcastle.

Kay's achievement are there today to be enjoyed by us all, could you elaborate more on them? I would also like to talk to you about the Mall in Newcastle. Newcastle, Newcastle City had had a Mall for some years, but it wasn't what you'd call a proper Mall. Traffic still travelled the centre street and it wasn't used by people who could walk indiscriminately through the area. Kay was involved in the Queensland Company to develop the Mall into the beautiful place that it is today, having shrubs and trees, hanging baskets and the conversion of the City Council owned...
properties that had become quite dilapidated, and at this time, there was a depressed economic factor in spending money, to do up old buildings. The City Council took the initiative and we had those old City Council buildings refurbished and they look quite beautiful, in the area which was formally the Strand Theatre. The old Newcastle Surf Pavilion had become quite dilapidated and suffering from the exposure to sea air and was crumbling, it was decided to develop a new surfing facility and public ancillaries use by the public on the beach. That beautiful development is up there now within any high structure to cast shadows on the beach and is a popular place now for the people of Newcastle. To get to the beach area, they also decided that a subway should be constructed so that families, young people wouldn't have to cross the busy street to get to this beautiful beach of Newcastle. Another development on the head front was the Nobbys Surf Pavilion. This had also become quite almost unsalable because of rust and falling into decay, there was a move to have this building demolished, but I think Jay and some other members of the Board could see that it was a beautiful building and it could be recycled and which it was, and it is now one of beautiful. The building on the beach is up there at Nobbys. Pacific Park was always an area that had been suffered from a winds and exposure to the Southern elements when they swept across from the beach and the ocean area into the park and had this capacity of this damaging the trees and the
Garden and so forth. It was decided to seek the advice of some of Australia's leading landscape artists, Mr. Bruce McKenzie and from his ideas that the beautiful Pacific Park, which we have now developed with a huge mound, people didn't realize what the idea was, and this was to protect the park from the ravages of the cold wind, cold salt air winds that would come in from the sea. The park is one of probably Newcastle's most beautiful at the present time, with its beautiful fountain and its area for entertainment, music and bands. After the Newcastle Odliottos closed down, we had a large area of land at Mayfield West. Again they used the same company, a Queensland company, to develop, and this is now become one of the prestigious new suburbs of Newcastle, called Macquarie. The N.S.W. Conservatorium of Music in Newcastle had for many years operated in the old library building and it was to move, they had nowhere to go and it was through the good graces of Jay, through her contacts in the N.S.W. Government, she was able to persuade them to purchase the old People's Palace, Salvation Army's Peopless Palace and that became refurbished and that became the Conservatorium of Newcastle. Jay gave great encouragement to the Civic Theatre in Newcastle. It had been struggling to become recognized and to be accepted by the people and they didn't have a, their own theatre and she was able to get the Council to develop the Old Civic People's Garden and this became the home of the Hants, Nally Theatre, 60, and it still operates there to this day, quite successfully.
still have their reasons of live theatre. And it's one of the nicest little theatres I've seen. It is its lovely theatre. I was much involved with various aspects of public life here in Newcastle, yes, in fact it was just after I was elected Lord Mayor in Sept 1974, that Cyclone Tracy hit Townsville and Darwin was destroyed, at Christmas Time, that year, we had gone away for a eight-day holiday up the valley, we have a three-day break and we heard on the wireless and on the television that Darwin had been destroyed. I immediately cancelled our holidays and we travelled back to Newcastle that night and her secretary Mrs Joan Hamb had already set up the Central Ararat as for opening a Lord Mayor's Appeal, this was to be one of the first big local official appeals Newcastle had ever experienced. Because it was a devastating event and Newcastle and the people were only so pleased to help, it entailed tremendous work by Gay, she had to attend gatherings from breakfast time till midnight, not only in Newcastle area but all up the valley, up the Nelson Bay area, and in the Lake Macquarie area. People were lined up in the corridors, in the corridors of the City Hall waiting to set up tables to receive money. Tables were set up in the mall and Gay, I can remember, Gay up there to see how they were going and people were coming across and putting money into her hands and she had to sit down herself at the table and start issuing receipts herself. Gay became involved with the University life in Newcastle; she had had close contact with the Vice-Chancellor of the University and she was officially invited to become a member
of the University Council and she served her term on that for a period of two years. This was also carried out with the College of Advanced Education, she also served on that Council for a period. The University Council, while she was a member of that, she was involved in setting up what was known as Friends of the University, and this Society still operates, raising funds for various aspects of University life. Because Dr. Jay had played in the University Orchestra, had suffered from stroke, the University decided to award her the honorary degree of Master of Arts. The whole family attended this ceremony. The conferring of the awards, and it was an really beautiful sight when Jay was awarded this honour and the whole of the audience raised to their feet and gave a public acclamation. As most deserving person, there was always speculation how Jay would be received by the various R.S.H. Clubs—Newcastle, all her life she had been a great worker for peace, but, strangely enough, she was accepted by the R.S.H, and became a regular and asked by all the sub-branches to attend their functions and in spite of being a woman Lord Mayor, she was greatly accepted, by the R.S.H. They understood her work for peace, marching in the peace marches and that was accepted by them. That was Jay's thoughts and they knew that she, that she was loved and respected by the Returned Soldiers' and Naval Airforce establishments in Newcastle. She was patron of nearly five hundred Victorian organisations in Newcastle and I think she at least attended each one of them at least once a year. Because of her involvement in the Council it extended from 9 o'clock in the morning till midnight almost
every day, of the week, unless this included Saturdays and Sundays. Mr. Symms's what was the benefit to Newcastle, the Japanese City, the relationship? Yes, Newcastle had already established the relationship with Arcadia, an area in California on the West Coast of the United States of America, and this was very important, however, look at Japan was proving to be one of our most important trading partners, particularly in coal. I could see the value of establishing good relationships and the city of Ulee, in southern Japan, was a city very much akin to Newcastle. It had been a City established on coal and had moved from coal to heavy engineering and steel. The population was similar, and the cities themselves were similar in appearance. When the Sister City Relationship was established, there was lots of apprehension because there were still a lot of hostility towards the Japanese people. That Jay could also see in this, a relaxation of this hostility and being of mutual benefit to both nations. The relationship with the city of Ulee, was established in 1981, when the Mayor and a group of the Aldermen and powerful industrialists of that city came out to Newcastle and cemented the relationship with the signing of documents. Later that year, we were to visit Ulee City and there signed the documents in that city. It was an amazing sight, when we arrived there, the whole of the city was decked with flags and huge, huge signs carrying Jay's portrait, citizens were wearing huge cardboard medallions on their laps and dressed up with Jay's portrait and we were received at the airport with a band, with a uniformed band and
Hundreds and hundreds of school children waving Australian flags, it was almost like royalty. As we descended from the plane it was greeted by throngs of people, later we were taken to the City Hall and received a battery of television cameras, and radio stations and news paper reporters. The benefits to Newcastle were twofold, firstly was the trade between the city of Ube and the coal industry in Newcastle. This was proving an immense value to this city, with the development of further coal loaders and the development of deepening of the harbours that will accommodate a huge ship, to carry the coal to Japan, but, another aspect of the benefits received by Newcastle was the generous response from the Ube City Council and Ube Industries to Newcastle. Rising from the relationship, I think Newcastle Art Gallery now has one of the largest collections of Japanese art in Australia. Besides this, Newcastle has been, graced with some Japanese sculpture which has been placed in our parks and garden plots. A special department has been set up at the University with a Japanese Professor in charge that deals mainly with Japanese culture and the teaching of Japanese culture to the students at Newcastle University. I have arranged just recently last year for a visit to their city of the, our famous Marching Kansai Band, received a tremendous reception from that city. Because of the sister city relationship between Newcastle and Ube, Jay was invited by the Australia, Japan Society, to attend a convention in Tokyo in 1983. I went across with her and it was an amazing convention attended by people from all over Australia and people from all over Japan, that Newcastle was
mentioned on numerous occasions, as the one successful run and to be as an example to other relationships, to say our Newcastle relationship had developed. It was so important that the we had been invited to attend the private reception at the Australian Ambassador residence in Tokyo, while in Japan Jay was invited to open an Australia Fair in one of the largest business houses in Tokyo. This was a tremendous multi-story building and we attended the Fair, and every floor we ascended on there were huge crowds of people waving Australian flags and Japanese flags and when we arrived at the Fair, at the floor where the Australian Fair was to be conducted we were amazed to see, lots of produce from the Hunter Valley, including dairy products and of course our famous Hunter Valley wines. The Australian Government was as NSW, so impressed with this event that they sent dozens of people from Tokyo to be present at this Fair. Of course the NSW Board of Agriculture had arranged the Fair originally, and they arranged to be there, when Jay opened it. I believe also Jay was one of the two Directors appointed to represent NSW, on the Bicentennial Authority. Yes in late 1979 the Fraser Government had decided to start organising for Australia’s Bicentenary birthday in 1988. They decided to set up this Bicentennial Authority and in early 1980 and as you say, Jay was appointed One of the two representatives of NSW. The directors were generally appointed for a period of two or sometimes three years. Jay was appointed on three successive occasions and probably would have been still on that Director of Authority until only she had to resign after she suffered a stroke in 1984. The Authority met generally in
Canberra on a monthly basis, at first then later on.
They met in each State capital city, and gradually plans
for plans were formulated to celebrate our Birthday
in 1988. One of the early suggestions came forward,
was that vigorously enunciated by Jay and this
was the visit of the Tall Ships to Australia. Jay had
a vast knowledge of sailing ships throughout the
world. As I had mentioned earlier her grandfather
had been a midshipman who worked on sailing
ships in the late 1800s. She was pursueing for this and
actually knew by name, all the names of the tall ships
operated by the various companies throughout the
world. And of course we had that grand spectacular
event the Tall Ships entering Sydney Harbour on
26th January, 1988. And on that occasion Jay and I
were invited to see this event at the authorities
sighting on Garden Island on that day. We flew down
to Sydney and was transported by car to Garden Island
and had a spectacular view of this event. Later in
that year, the Federal Authorities had to set up
the seven State Authorities to direct the affairs of the
Bicentennial Authority in the various States. When N.S.W.
was set up, Jay was appointed vice chairman of
the N.S.W. Council. Later the N.S.W. Council of the
Bicentennial Authority was to set up in every
municipality of Australia, Bicentennial Council to
organise events in their area for the national
celebrations in 1988. This holding such an important
position in the Bicentennial Authority at both Federal
and State levels been instrumental in establishing
of the Foreshore Development? Yes, because of these
positions Jay held and her rapport with both Federal
and State Governments, she set about with a small
group of colleagues on the city council, to organising
the acquisition of the old government railways
lines, an irrigation and old power house and
power-house station site on the Newcastle East
end. So below a project, Newcastle's major project
for the Bicentennial, event and a harbourside park
to open up the city, with Newcastle Harbour.
Arrangements were formulated done with very close
colleagues to arrange for a prize to be established
for an Australian wide competition to design a
park which would be acknowledged as something
beautiful for Newcastle. An appeal was opened and
Newcastle businesses came forward readily with
large donations and I think approximately $35,000 or
$33,000 was raised from this 2nd and 3rd appeal was
awarded. Three judges were appointed to choose the
winning design, one award expert on environmental
landscape and another of course our own Bruce
McKenna, who was also involved with interest
in his own right, and a third person. The
prize was a group of design architects from
Melbourne and after the prize was won, the whole
of the project of the half a dozen or more of the leading
architects were put on display in the City Hall and
it was visited by thousands and thousands of people
from the city and throughout the valley. To see what
was to be established for Newcastle of 1988. And of
course we have seen the result of that by the visit
of The Queen in May of this year, when she opened the
Harbourside Park, already used by the people of
Newcastle on a number of occasions and seems to
be appreciated by the people. Just prior to her suffering
a stroke in April of 1984, she had invited the
Prime Minister of Australia for her and him to plant a tree to initiate the first Bicentennial event in Australia and in the municipality and a plaque was arranged for that end. It will no doubt be established in the park when the tree is well established. I'd like to thank you Jazz and Ray for this interview, but, I believe Ray that you and Prince Philip have something in common even you like to tell us, well I suppose you could say that we have both walked besides great women.
PHYLLIS SOUTHALL.
Australian History Class.
Wednesday Evening.
A transcription of a taped interview
with Mr. Ray Cummings, husband of Joy Cummings, former Lord Mayor of Newcastle,
first woman Lord Mayor in Australia.
PHYLLIS SOUTHALL.
Australian History Class.
Wednesday Evening.
RESEARCH PAPER.
An interview with Mr. Ray Cummings husband of Joy Cummings first woman Lord Mayor in Australia and former Lord Mayor of Newcastle for nine years. Of Joy’s highlights and activities whilst Lord Mayor of Newcastle.

Joy Cummings was born at Arncliffe, a southern suburb of Sydney, on 23rd December, 1923. She was the eldest of two children and lived with her parents and grandfather in the Sydney area, until the transfer of her father to Newcastle.

Joy's family moved to Telford Street, the inner city, to Aircourt Flats, which is now the site of the beautiful fountain in Pacific Park, the year was 1942.

World War II was well advanced, Newcastle had been shelled by Japanese submarines and Fort Scratchley had replied with their 6" guns. During the attack a shell landed in Parnell Place, fortunately upon impact it did not explode. No landing had been attempted. The night skies were lit up with the blaze of search-lights, scanning and probing for the enemy overhead. Great rolls of barbed-wire and pyramids of concrete one metre high (tank traps) were strategically placed on the beaches in an attempt to prevent an armoured landing under the cover of darkness.

Social evenings held at Tyrrell House, brought Ray and Joy together. Tyrrell House a stately multi-storey building costing £41,500 to build in 1922. Named after Bishop William Tyrrell, who was Bishop of Newcastle from 1847-1879, who was consecrated in Westminster Abbey as the First Bishop and on 30th June 1847, he was installed in the Christ Church Cathedral at Newcastle.

Unfortunately, with progress the beautiful Tyrrell House, the Anglican nerve centre of religious life of Newcastle came to an end in 1981.

About forty home units and town houses replaced the hall, which is only a few yards from the beach. The facade of the building was preserved.

In the same Christ Church Cathedral, Ray and Joy were married in 1946.

The family of three daughters and one son kept Joy active in the community.

The move to eliminate in 1968, the avenue of the beautiful Morton Bay Fig Trees (Ficus Macrophylo) in Islington Park, these trees stood 20 metres tall, were planted in 1879 by the

1. Anglican Year Book of 1922. P 49.
2. Ibid. P36.
4. Ibid.
late James Croft. Payment of 1/- (16t) for each of the 68 trees with stipulations that they were watered until established and the cutting of every taproot in order that the trees become of large girth and spread generally. A stone was placed under the taproot in order to make this practicable. Some of these trees have since been removed to make way for the Bowling Club at Islington.

The elimination of the trees was an issue for Joy.

A local alderman on the council was due to retire at the Trienniel Election in 1968, Joy offered herself as a candidate. Upon winning, she entered the Newcastle City Council as Alderman for East Ward, Alderman Doug McDougall was Lord Mayor at the time.

East Ward consisted of Mayfield East, Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton. Voting for local council was not compulsory in those days. A tremendous amount of work was put into the effort to get sufficient people along to record their votes.

"There are many great things we can do for this city," commented Joy.

The decision to put a six lane expressway through Blackbutt Reserve resulted in a loud outcry of protest.

The original area in 1932 was known as Blackbutt and was held in Fee simple, by the Scottish Australian Mining Company. Then was purchased by the Newcastle District Returned Soldiers Memorial Trust, for the purpose of making farmlet holdings for returned servicemen. This project was dropped.

The approach of citizens to the New Lambton Council, culminated in the constituent councils of Adamstown, Wickham, Wallsend, Merewether, Hamilton, Waratah, New Lambton and Newcastle contributing £900 to purchase the area. Later, a Government Grant of £2,500 permitted the addition of further land to increase the acreage.

Blackbutt Reserve is our largest park in Newcastle and is unique, because three quarters of it contain over 82 species of Australian native trees. This specialized forest community cannot be replaced just anywhere. The project was abandoned.

Her impassionate speeches on parks and trees earned Joy the nickname of "weeping willow".

2. Ibid. 5th September, 1968.
3. Ibid. 5th January, 1932.
4. Local History and Archives Dept. Newcastle Reg. Library. 1983
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
The invitation to Joy in 1973, to become a trustee of The World-Wide Life Fund of Australia, resulted from her plea of protest about the needless slaughter of whales.

Each year sees the migration of whales to warmer waters to breed and forage for food. Returning south the True Right whales with their calves can be seen in the waters surrounding Newcastle from time to time.

Joy's support of Women's Lib. Any movement that tries to free women from pots and pans and give them the same opportunity as men would have my support. "I'm in general agreement with the principles of Women's Lib."

The Lord Mayoral robes are splendid, even if the chain is a bit heavy, remarked Joy at the end of her first afternoon in the City Hall. The position of Lord Mayor of Newcastle was filled by Joy in September, 1974, then again in 1977, following that in 1980 with 66% of the votes.

The fact that Joy's overwhelming popularity among the city folk have forced key to do her weekly shopping at Cessnock. Where the shopping gets done.

The restoration of Nobby's and Newcastle Surf Pavilions, which had fallen into disrepair and the projects of The Mall in Hunter Street and the Foreshore Development, which enhance the east end area of Newcastle are visions of what the future holds for the city of Newcastle.

Nobby's S.I.S.C., now in its 66th year of service, and is responsible for the safety at both the beach and the harbour entrance. The name Nobby has been lost in history - some historians say it was called after a Mr. Nobby Clark, but, there is no evidence of proof.

Newcastle Surf Pavilion was established in 1927, built as a memorial to 24 members, who died in World War 1, that same year 187 members of the served overseas.

This building replaced the little wooden shed which had been established as a surf club in 1908 after the death of three from drowning at Newcastle Beach.

The Newcastle Market Square and The Mall Development in the inner city of Newcastle, designed by the Queensland company Kern Corporation Ltd., and officially by Premier N.Wran on November, 1980 provided an attractive invitation to invest in retail in the area. The cost of $500,000 to beautify the area.

1. Newcastle Sun, 27th September, 1971
3. Ibid. 19th December, 1974.
5. Ibid. 26th December, 1957.
6. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
with its pavings, lamps, shrubs, trees, hanging baskets and
the conversion of the City Council owned properties which had become
quite shabby money well spent.

The Foreshore Development was opened on May 7th, 1988 as a
Bicentennial Project by Queen Elizabeth II, resulting from the
demolition of the old 23ara Street Power House, the removal of
the old delapidated buildings plus the restoration of the beauti-
ful Custom House. Creating a spectacular panoramic view of
great beauty with wide sweeping lawns, lamps, paved walks,
benches and festooning flags a suitable entrance to the Port
of Newcastle.

To Joy there is not "a place" for women in society. But,
a woman's place is in the world.

The presentation by the Queen to Joy in Canberra in 1976 of
the Order of Australia, an Australian award for her services
to the community, following upon her successful election to
Lord Mayor, the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia.

Newcastle City, covers a great area. The Lord Mayor of
Sydney, has about two square miles to worry about and the Lord
Mayor of London only one square mile. But Newcastle has a tremen-
dous area and a large number of people to represent and to visit.

In 1984 the City Council awarded Joy The Freedom of the City,
A traditional English honour, this rare award was given for 'out-
standing service to the city and to local government.

A debilitating stroke suffered in April 1984 reduced Joy's
power of speech and movement and forcing her into an early re-
tirement.

Ald. Cummings leaves the Lord Mayoralty with honour and
knowledge of great achievement. Her life-long love of parkland
and trees were second only to people in her aldermanic life;
she made friends among and drew political support from all sides
of the city. Her strong sense of social justice and compassion
marked all years of her public life.

A thunderous applause at the afternoon graduation ceremony
at Newcastle University in May, 1985. When the former Lord
Mayor of Newcastle, Mrs. Joy Cummings, was awarded an honour
degree of Master of Arts, presented by the Chancellor of the
University, Sir Bebe Callaghan.

As we journey through Islington, we will see the Moreton
Bay Fig Trees still standing.....

2. Ibid. 11th. December, 1976.
I, Raymond C. Cummins, give my permission to Newcastle University to use this interview, or part of this interview, for research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of these if required) and for copies to be lodged in the Newcastle University Archives for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed

Date

Interviewer Phyllis Southall