

**A collection of News Extracts:**

**Mr. George O. (Ossie) Edwards OBE  
Town Clerk with Perth City Council  
January, 1966 – October 1981**

**The West Australian, Tuesday October 6 1981, Page 55**

**'Ossie' Edwards – The Quiet Achiever**

**By Janet Wainwright**

Behind the quiet hesitant voice that councillors and reporters have strained to hear in the appalling acoustics of the Perth City Council chambers for the past 16 years lies a determination that has achieved much for Perth.

Perth's Town Clerk for the past 16 years, Mr. G.O. Edwards – known affectionately as "Ossie" – retires next Tuesday.

He will acknowledge that some of his achievements have been against considerable scepticism, such as the beautification of Burswood Island and a small start to what could well be Australia's leading recycling rubbish scheme.

"I stay a bit later and work all the harder" he said

This is an understatement indeed from the man who has spent his annual holidays in the past five years studying various forms of rubbish disposal throughout Asia and New Zealand – in his own time and at his own cost.

**Belief**

Mr Edwards believes firmly that within a decade wet pulverisation will be the accepted method of refuse treatment, with or without recycling.

The wet pulverisation of rubbish would create soil conditioner, badly needed in the sands of W.A.

He would prefer to see it with recycling. In an attempt to ensure that others share his views, he has initiated the rubbish recycling scheme in the Carlisle area as a final gesture.

To win the support of the ratepayers he has gone to the source.

Which other Town Clerk would go out on the collection each Thursday, talking to the mainly elderly people in the area to ensure that they understood what is required and to give a word of thanks for their co-operation?

## **Complaints**

To Mr Edwards, this is merely an extension of a long-held policy of visiting the ratepayers who write with complaints.

The sorting for recycling that he is asking Carlisle ratepayers to do has been his practice for many years.

Paper, glass and tins are sorted for recycling and garden waste gets chopped in his own chaff cutter to condition his garden at City Beach.

“About the only item I cannot dispose of are milk bottle tops,” he said.

He believes that achievements are made by persuading the people.

Regarding waste management, from which both the PCC and the State Government have shied away for 10 years, Mr Edwards said: “We have been intimidated by the imaginary magnitude of the task.”

“With the co-operation of an enlightened community and the support of the Public Health Department and the Government, Perth could lead the country in the field of waste management.”

## **Query**

If Mr Edwards had another five years, it probably would. But a question mark lies over whether those who remain – particularly the councillors who make the decisions – will continue with the Carlisle scheme which promises so much but requires the personal touch that the Perth Town Clerk has applied.

It was the same quite determination that saw the completion of the first stage of Burswood Island’s beautification for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, despite a lack of council and Government money.

No one could accuse Mr Edwards of being imprudent with ratepayers’ money, though he is WA’s top local government employee.

When the Government, having upgraded Heirisson Island, decided that Burswood needed tidying too, Mr. Edwards had a scheme.

He cajoled contractors in a period of recession to donate their services and goods to achieve his scheme.

The result was that 20 contractors worked as hard as they ever had on any multimillion dollar contract to achieve a \$1 million plan, leaving the council to contribute \$70,000 for planting and the Government \$250,000.

## **FINAL TOUCH**

One Sunday morning last year, Mr Edwards was to be seen on Burswood Island – not admiring his achievement but slipping bolts into the gazebo that added the final touch to the landscaping.

He had gone from his home with his pocket full of bolts from his workshop to rectify the work of vandals.

So the man who saw Perth through one of its great development booms leaves at the beginning of another boom.

Whether we have a resources boom or not, the city's skyline dotted with cranes and its streets blocked with cement trucks leave no doubt that there is a building boom.

Mr Edwards began his local government career when, bored with kicking his heels at Kalgoorlie in 1937, he got a job as a temporary clerk.

"I think they forgot to lay me off," he said.

He is reticent about his earlier years.

"I was a product of the depression years. I do not remember them with happiness" he said.

"The young people would not understand what that meant, they would not be interested."

It meant the Mr Edwards left school at 14, worked in the bush and educated himself to become a qualified accountant and secretary.

He completed both his qualifications while serving in New Guinea during the World War.

After the war he returned to Kalgoorlie and was appointed the council's treasurer in 1947.

For a short time he was Town Clerk at Northam before being appointed Town Clerk of Kalgoorlie in 1952.

In 1961 he became Town Clerk of Subiaco and was appointed as Perth Town Clerk in 1965.

He has some regrets for the city.

He would have liked to see the Hay Street mall serviced from underground and it saddens him to see the mall choked with vehicles, which he thinks should not be there.

What does he see as the greatest asset in a city or our community?

"A good citizen" he answers without hesitation.

## **The West Australian, Tuesday November 2 1965, Pages 1 and 14**

### **Perth Picks New Town Clerk (49)**

The Perth City Council yesterday appointed Mr G.O. Edwards to succeed Mr. W.A. Green as Town Clerk. Mr Edwards, who is 49, and was born in England is at present Town Clerk of Subiaco.

Selected from 16 applicants for the Perth post, he has had wide experience in local government since he joined the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council in 1937.

His new job will be his fourth as Town Clerk in W.A. in 28 years.

Mr. Edwards is a qualified accountant and secretary, has a clerk and treasurer's certificate under the Local Government Act regulations and is a member of the W.A. division of the Institute of Municipal Administration.

He has been the Subiaco Town Clerk, one of the leading local government positions in the State – since July, 1961. \* More in page 14

\* From Page 1

Before he was appointed to the Subiaco post, Mr Edwards was Town Clerk of Kalgoorlie for nine years and was Town Clerk of Northam for six months in 1952.

Between 1947 and 1952 he was town treasurer in Kalgoorlie.

"I have given all my working life to local government," Mr Edwards said last night at his Floreat Park home. "It is the satisfaction of an ambition to get the top job".

### **SALARY**

The top job means a salary increase of about 40 pounds a week – from his present 3,100 pounds a year to a new salary range of 4,850 pounds to 5,250 pounds.

It will also mean a big increase in responsibility, involving the administration of nine PCC wards and a budget rapidly approaching 3,000,000 pounds.

Mr Edwards is married and has a son aged 19. He will take up his new appointment late in January.

## **The West Australian, Friday November 5 1965, Page 5**

### **A Country Boy Becomes The City's Top Servant**

**By Athol Thomas**

George Edwards, the man who will succeed Mr. W.A. Green as Town Clerk of Perth, admits quite freely that he is a country boy.

For one thing, he is a Shropshire lad – he was born in the Shropshire town of Shrewsbury in 1918.

For another, he comes of farming stock. His father farmed in Shropshire and at Mundijong, after the family migrated here from England in 1922.

And again, till he became Town Clerk of Subiaco in 1961 all his experience in local government was gained outside the metropolitan area.

It is a case of country boy making good but Mr Edwards is not overawed by the prospect of taking over, in January, the State's best paid job (about 5,000 pounds a year) in local government.

"It's a terrific challenge" he said yesterday, "but I'm undaunted."

I found him in his rather gloomy office in the Subiaco City Council chambers thumbing through a sheaf of papers.

"You finish with business involving one committee and you start straight away with another committee." he said. He was extraordinarily cheerful, considering the work that was lying on his desk.

### **New Outlook**

As far as I could seek, there was no view at all from the window behind him. From his office on the fifth floor of Council House, Mr. Edwards will enjoy a splendid panoramic view of Kings Park the Narrows Bridge, the Mitchell freeway work and several council parking areas. He will be able to watch the city grow.

The office in Council House is big enough and floor coverings plush enough for him to play carpet bowls (if he can the time).

Mr Edwards is of medium height, with dark wavy hair showing no sign of going grey. He looks closer to 30 than 49.

He was wearing a cardigan (a habit picked up perhaps, during his time in Kalgoorlie) but he swiftly donned the jacket of his smart grey suit and led me briskly into the mayor's parlour.

“There’ll be no interruptions here,” he said. He pointed out that he was a firm believer in good relations with the Press. He enlarged on the public relations theme.

When you served a district you had to have rapport with the ratepayers. Equally important was the building of teamwork with the mayor and councillors.

“I’ve always had wonderful co-operation from council members in the past” he said. “One of my objects in Perth will be to mould everyone in the council into a good team”

Mr Edwards entered local government almost by accident. As a youth he had studied hard in his spare time for an administrative career but he did not get his foot on the bottom rung of the ladder till 1937.

He was holidaying in Kalgoorlie when he got sick of doing nothing and applied to the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council for a job. He was employed on a temporary basis but local government has been his permanent interest ever since.

He joined the A.I.F. in 1942 and served in Australia and the islands. In the army he completed his accountancy and secretarial studies - battling with the mosquitoes at Merauke, in Dutch New Guinea – to qualify as a secretary.

Back in Kalgoorlie after demobilisation, he rejoined the council, took an interest in Legacy and held posts in the Goldfields Cricket Association, the Silver Chain Bush Nursing Association and the St. John Ambulance Association.

Cricket is his first love away from work and when he has the time, he likes to potter in the garden of his Floreat Park home. He is married and has a 19 year old son.

Mr Edwards impresses as a man who regards local government as a community service. “One gets a tremendous pleasure out of seeing a district develop” he said.

### **Inspire Others**

He does not specialise in any particular field of local government. “The range of activities is too wide,” he said. “It’s no good being just a health inspector, or an engineer. The main thing is to inspire other people to get on with the job.

“For this reason, I believe in the delegation of duties.”

At present Mr Edwards has an open mind on the question of city development. “I haven’t had time to think about any specific activity,” he said. He acknowledged that he was in for some hard work with the Perth City Council.

“Obviously it is a job that requires a terrific capacity,” he said. I realised a long time ago that a Town Clerk doesn’t just prepare a budget and say ‘That’s That’.

“But my appointment is the realisation of a life long ambition.”

“I am ready for it.”

**The Local Government Journal of W.A.  
June Quarter 1981, Vol. 4, no. 5 page 12**

**Ossie Edwards OBE**

Mr. G.O. (Ossie) Edwards is another outstanding administrator who has brought distinction to Local Government in this state.

He received the OBE in the Queen's Birthday honours list.

Mr. Edwards, who began his study by hurricane lamp during Army service in New Guinea, will retire in October.

His 39 year career in Local Government began in Kalgoorlie in 1937. It was broken by five years' Army service.

Of those 39 years he spent 30 as a Town Clerk – nine at Kalgoorlie, five at Subiaco and the past 16 with Perth – and five as Town Treasurer for Kalgoorlie.

Notable milestones Mr. Edwards has seen for the City of Perth during his years of service with the council include:

- ❖ The completion of the Perth Concert Hall. (He was chairman of Perth City Council-State Government committee that selected the site and got the project under way).
- ❖ The establishment of multi-storey car parks. (He was active in obtaining sites within the central city area).
- ❖ The conversion of Hay Street to a mall and the extension of the pedestrian areas to Forrest Place.
- ❖ The redevelopment of the Central Railway Station forecourt.
- ❖ The launching of the driving range at Wembley Golf Course.
- ❖ The State's 150th Anniversary year and with it the building of the Allan Green Plant Conservatory.
- ❖ The development and beautification of Heirisson and Burswood Island as a garden gateway to the City and recreation areas for the people of Perth.