A discourse analysis of civil society, regional agency and government relationships in natural resource management

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Alexandra Mary Johnson
MEd. RMIT University

School of Global Urban and Social Studies
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

October 2017
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Alexandra Mary Johnson

(18 October 2017)
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the co-operation of a great many people. My thanks go to the staff and board directors of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority who supported this study from inception.

Thank you also to all those working in natural resource management who agreed to participate in this study. The list is long and includes agency staff, farmers, facilitators, scientists, researchers, educationalists, policy makers and Landcare volunteers. Thank you also to the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Incorporated and community who were very generous with their time and wisdom.

Special thanks go to my supervisors Professor Ralph Horne and Professor John Fien. Ralph’s instruction and supervision kept me focused, while John provided hours of advice and feedback over the years. I have learnt a great deal from both supervisors – thank you.

Thank you to Dr Ruth Lane who provided advice in the early days of the research and colleagues Dr Kaye Scholfield and Dr Sean McDermott, who encouraged coffee drinking and conversations about the research process.

Finally thank you to my wonderfully supportive family. I especially thank my partner Phillip who maintained a calming environment in which to work and my sister Liz who provided critique and encouragement on the research.
Table of Contents

1 What Lies Beneath ........................................................................................................3
  1.1 Introduction ...........................................................................................................4
  1.2 Research problem .................................................................................................7
    1.2.1 The regionalisation/regionalism paradox .......................................................9
  1.3 Research Aim and Objectives .............................................................................11
  1.4 Conceptual Research Framework .....................................................................13
  1.5 Research Questions ..........................................................................................14
  1.6 Research Approach ..........................................................................................16
  1.7 Significance of the Study ..................................................................................17
  1.8 Thesis Synopsis ...............................................................................................20

2 Digging Deeper – the Literature Part 1 .................................................................22
  2.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................23
  2.2 Participation, participatory NRM and partnership ........................................24
    2.2.1 Participation ..............................................................................................24
    2.2.2 Participatory NRM ..................................................................................26
    2.2.3 NRM Partnership ....................................................................................31
    2.2.4 Environmental Communication ..............................................................32
    2.2.5 Social Learning ........................................................................................34
  2.3 Civil Society ........................................................................................................35
    2.3.1 Civil Society and NRM .............................................................................35
    2.3.2 Civil Society and Leadership ....................................................................40
    2.3.3 Civil Society and Resistance ....................................................................42
  2.4 Policy, governmentality, people and problems ..............................................43
    2.4.1 Public Policy ..............................................................................................43
    2.4.2 Governmentality and Neo Liberalism .......................................................45
2.4.3 Policy Implementation and the NRM Facilitator Network.............48
2.4.4 Wicked Problems...........................................................................49

3 Digging Deeper – the Literature Part 2..............................................51

3.1 Introduction..........................................................................................52
3.2 Discourse Studies ..............................................................................52
   3.2.1 Discourse Analysis Framework...................................................58
3.3 Dryzek’s Environmental Discourse .....................................................59
   3.3.1 Leave it to the people - Democratic Pragmatism..........................63
   3.3.2 Assumptions, agents and metaphors .........................................69
   3.3.3 Summary.....................................................................................70

4 The Australian NRM Context............................................................72

4.1 Introduction..........................................................................................73
4.2 The Australian Context .......................................................................73
   4.2.1 Landcare in Victoria ...............................................................75
   4.2.2 Landcare goes National............................................................76
   4.2.3 Productivist Agriculture..........................................................80
   4.2.4 Toward a Post-Productivist Era .................................................83
   4.2.5 Cooperation and Whole of Government .....................................85
   4.2.6 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 1: 1997-2001.................................86
   4.2.7 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 2: Interim arrangements 2001-2002 ....90
   4.2.8 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 3: 2002-2008...............................94
   4.2.9 Caring for our Country...............................................................95
   4.2.10 Summary of NRM Phases.........................................................96
4.3 Summary.............................................................................................98

5 The Study Area..................................................................................100

5.1 Introduction..........................................................................................101
5.2 The Glenelg Hopkins Bio-region ................................................................. 101
5.3 The Actors, Roles and Responsibilities ..................................................... 104
  5.3.1 Federal Government ............................................................................ 104
  5.3.2 Victorian Government ....................................................................... 105
  5.3.3 The Glenelg Hopkins CMA ................................................................. 106
  5.3.4 Civil Society Groups .......................................................................... 107
5.4 A Multiscalar Networked Perspective ...................................................... 110

6 Study Design - Ways of Seeing ................................................................. 113
  6.1 The Research Approach ......................................................................... 114
    6.1.1 Qualitative Paradigm ....................................................................... 114
    6.1.2 Practitioner Research ....................................................................... 116
    6.1.3 Validity and Reliability ..................................................................... 118
    6.1.4 Analytical Generalisation ................................................................. 120
    6.1.5 Developing Learning and Praxis ......................................................... 120
  6.2 The Conduct of the Study ....................................................................... 122
    6.2.1 Research Preparation - ethics ........................................................... 122
    6.2.2 Research preparation – the discourse studies research community .... 124
    6.2.3 Glenelg Hopkins CMA Involvement ................................................ 125
  6.3 Research Methods .................................................................................. 125
    6.3.1 Interview .......................................................................................... 126
    6.3.2 Snowball Sampling .......................................................................... 127
    6.3.3 Focus Group ..................................................................................... 127
    6.3.4 Case Studies ..................................................................................... 128
    6.3.5 The Corpus ...................................................................................... 130
    6.3.6 Managing the Text ......................................................................... 132
    6.3.7 Identifiers ....................................................................................... 133
6.4 Text Analysis......................................................................................... 135

6.4.1 Coding............................................................................................. 136

6.4.2 Open Codes ...................................................................................... 137

6.4.3 Focused Coding and Categorization ........................................... 140

6.4.4 Category Descriptions................................................................. 142

6.4.5 Themes .......................................................................................... 146

6.4.6 Coding for Case Study 2 .............................................................. 147

7 The Analysis – Discourses Revealed............................................. 149

7.1 Introduction ......................................................................................... 150

7.1.1 Official Discourse .......................................................................... 151

7.1.2 Resistance Discourse .................................................................... 158

7.1.3 Utility and Action Discourse ....................................................... 164

7.2 Alignment with Dryzek’s Environmental Discourse ................. 173

7.2.1 Changing the Official Discourse ................................................. 174

7.2.2 A New Discourse – Utility and Action ....................................... 176

7.3 Focus Group Findings: Power relationships .................................. 180

7.3.1 Category 1: Power in funding and resources ............................ 181

7.3.2 Category 2: Political power - the ability to influence decision makers 182

7.3.3 Category 3: Knowledge as power .............................................. 182

7.3.4 Category 4: Regulatory power ................................................... 183

7.3.5 Category 5: Power invested in networks and capacity ............ 183

7.3.6 Indicators of power and shifts in power .................................... 184

7.3.7 Summary of power relationships analysis ............................... 186

8 Discourse and Practice ............................................................... 188

8.1 Case Study 1 Regional Catchment Investment Plan .................. 189

8.1.1 Voice 1. The Official .................................................................. 190
8.1.2 Voice 2: Utility and Action ................................................................. 193
8.1.3 Voice 3: Resistance ........................................................................... 200
8.1.4 Summary of Case Study 1 RCIP: collaboration and contestation across discourses at regional level ................................................................................ 202
8.2 Case Study 2: People and Partnership ......................................................... 204
  8.2.1 Gunditjmara country ............................................................................ 204
  8.2.2 The Project ........................................................................................... 204
  8.2.3 Exploring the Partnerships ................................................................... 206
  8.2.4 Summary of Case Study 2 GMPP: cooperation and collaboration at regional level ...................................................................................................... 216
9 Conclusion ............................................................................................. 220
  9.1 Summary of the Research ........................................................................... 221
  9.2 Contribution to Knowledge ......................................................................... 222
  9.3 Recommendations for Policy and Further Research ................................... 225
    9.3.1 Reflection and Concluding Remarks ................................................... 226
10 REFERENCES .......................................................................................... 228
11 APPENDIX .............................................................................................. 253
  11.1 Documents gathered for analysis ............................................................ 253
  11.2 Letter: 1 Glenelg Hopkins CMA approval .............................................. 257
  11.3 Letter: 2 Freedom of Information approval ............................................. 258
  11.4 Letter of Consent ..................................................................................... 259
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 A Partnership Model (Gorrie & Wonder 1999) ........................................... 8

Figure 1.2 NRM Discourse at Regional Level............................................................. 11

Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework ........................................................................... 13

Figure 1.4 Simplified research model (Punch 2013) ................................................... 16

Figure 2.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation ............................................................. 24

Figure 2.2 Map of large scale connectivity initiatives (Wyborn 2011) ....................... 28

Figure 2.3 Environment, communication and the public sphere (Cox and Pezzullo 2016) ............................................................................................................................ 33

Figure 2.4 Typology of problems, power and authority (Grint 2008) ......................... 42

Figure 3.1 First dimension in Dryzek's taxonomy ....................................................... 60

Figure 4.1 Landcare Logo ............................................................................................ 77

Figure 4.2 Three Elements of Landcare (Cary & Webb 2000)...................................... 78

Figure 4.3 The Landcare Model (Cary & Webb 2000) ............................................... 79

Figure 4.4 Attitudes to Managing the Environment On-Farm (N=91) ......................... 81

Figure 4.5 The Limiting Factors to Increased Productivity (N=91) ......................... 82

Figure 4.6 Framework for Regional NRM .................................................................. 91

Figure 4.7 Fifty-six NRM regions (Natural Resource Management Regions Australia 2015) ............................................................................................................................ 92

Figure 4.8 The evolving focus of Australian NRM programs adapted from Hajkowicz ............................................................................................................................ 97
Figure 4.9 Additional characteristics (in italics) of Australian NRM, adapted from Hajkowicz. ................................................................. 97

Figure 5.1 The Glenelg Hopkins CMA region ................................................................. 102

Figure 5.2 NRM governance framework 2006 (author). ............................................. 104

Figure 5.3 Glenelg Hopkins CMA governance structure adapted from Annual Report 2008 ................................................................................................................... 106

Figure 5.4 Conceptual networks in the study area adapted from Morrison (2007) ... 111

Figure 6.1 Embedded Case Study adapted from Yin (2011) ............................. 130

Figure 6.2 Iterative coding processes............................................................................ 137

Figure 7.1 2011 Caring for our Country presentation ................................................ 155

Figure 7.2 Power and interest scale: improve natural asset ........................................ 185

Figure 7.3 Power and interest scale: regional NRM planning ............................... 185

Figure 7.4 Power and interest scale: local NRM planning ....................................... 185

Figure 8.1 GMPP structure (author) ........................................................................... 212

List of Tables

Table 2.1 NRM Participatory Motivation .................................................................... 29

Table 3.1 Second dimension to Dryzek's taxonomy ................................................... 60

Table 3.2 Nine environmental discourses .................................................................... 63

Table 4.1 Key national policies, programs and strategies ........................................... 85

Table 4.2 Compilation of Natural Heritage Trust programs ....................................... 88

Table 6.1 Ontology, epistemology and methodology: adapted from Fien (2002) .... 114
Abstract

Understanding the communication and interplay between civil society and various levels of government is critical to enabling reasoned responses to the global climate challenges that impact on communities. This study explores the discourse(s) of natural resource management (NRM) in an Australian context – a frontline area for such people-government response. However, these communications occur in situations that are diverse, complex and beset with interrelatedness between issues, people, power and policies.

The focus of this study lies within the context of water and catchment management in Australia and the way policy is awkwardly formulated, enacted and implemented through communication between civil society, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and various levels of government. The Glenelg Hopkins CMA region in south-west Victoria has been chosen as a case study to exemplify NRM discourse(s).

Three theoretical concepts underpin this study: (i) NRM participation; (ii) regionalisation and regionalism; and (iii) social-ecological dynamics and heterogeneity. Together, these provide the framework and the context within which this study takes place.

The aim is to probe ‘what lies beneath’ – to explore the NRM discourse(s) that interact and compete for meaning and power. The study also describes the discursive struggle between actors at a regional level, as well as those beyond the region at state and federal tiers of government.

This thesis uses discourse analysis to explore relationships through the lines of communication between civil society and various levels of government in natural resource management. The first step of the study was to identify the corpus of text relating to Australian natural resource management. An additional search compiled official communiqués, meeting notes, public documents and references pertaining with the activities of natural resource management at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA regional level. The second step adapted Dryzek’s taxonomy for organizing conflicting environmental discourse and applied it to the corpus relating to Glenelg Hopkins CMA, civil society and government. Interviewing key participants ascertained their
perceptions of the discourse(s) and the discursive practices that emerged from and informed the discourses. Observation and field notes support the analysis. The third step identifies three co-existing discourses at play: an Official discourse, the discourse of Resistance and the pragmatic discourse of Utility and Action. Each discourse overlaps with the others and interacts in ways that give voice and dominance to different dialogues at different times.

NRM relationships are observed and documented in two regional case studies. The first is a study of networks, power, narratives and discursive practice that occur during Regional Catchment Investment Planning (RCIP) - an intense time of activity and interaction at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA. The second is a study of the partnerships, interaction and relationships in a four-year project between the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners and the CMA.

This study contributes to natural resource management and citizenship studies by using discourse to understand and recognise our own and others worldviews. There remains a great deal to be discovered in the construction of power relations and discourse especially as the language used by civil society is rarely studied. Greater understanding will in turn provide a means of negotiating the inconsistencies that exist at the interface between civil society and government. These inconsistencies and tensions prevent communities from identifying and developing their own destinies and governments from developing strategic and long-lasting state and national policies that are owned and implemented by those directly affected.

Importantly the study articulates the relationship between discourse analysis and participatory resource management and provides insight into participatory processes. In particular, it provides a new understanding of how processes serve to create and defend a particular discourse and potentially limit divergent views in NRM. Thus analysis provides insight into participatory processes through highlighting the discursive practice among the NRM actors.

Lastly, although set in the NRM context, learning from this study has potential application for others interested in civil society/government relationships and greater input of citizenry.
1 What Lies Beneath
1.1 Introduction

Understanding communication between civil society and various levels of government is critical for planning reasoned responses to the global climate challenges that impact on communities. Human-induced climate change poses a significant threat to Australia's biodiversity, natural resources and regional communities with the best available climate science indicating warming and drying trends for south eastern Australia where this study is located (Garnaut 2008; Murphy & Timbal 2008; Pachauri & Meyer 2014, pp. 183-7). Civic and government responses are underpinned by relationships that are diverse and beset with a complex interplay of issues, people, power and politics.

The setting for this study is regional natural resource management (NRM). The concern is that tensions between government and civil society may constrain the ability of the former to achieve its goals and the latter to influence their own destinies.

Discourse, the way we use language for specific situations, is a co-construct of social realities or behaviours shaped by cultural or historical contexts (Hajer & Versteeg 2005; Van Dijk 2008). Discourse is situated in everyday lives and is where actors normalise their world views, themselves, problems and actions. Discourse is characterized by social transactions that use language to accomplish meaningful interaction and communication of beliefs. It is how we come to know the knowledge, intentions and emotions of others. Discourse is also characterised by the use of power and domination and who has control over public debate (Van Dijk 2011).

Studying discourse (Discourse Studies) offers a method of revealing how identities, activities, relationships and shared meaning are created (Starks & Brown Trinidad 2007). The growth in the discourse studies has revealed new theories, methods and formal studies that are constantly evolving (Van Dijk 2011, p. 2).

Analysing discourse (Discourse Analysis) makes explicit what is normally taken for granted and offer insights into social life and social relations (Cameron 2001). It also explores actor orientations to and engagement in their roles through their use of language (Bryman 2012; Gee 2005). Multiple methods of discourse analysis are found in all humanities, social and
cognitive sciences. Conversational analysis, for example, has gone beyond the study of everyday talk to examining institutional settings (Van Dijk 2011).

Environmental and NRM discourse has been, and continues to be, explored through a number of disciplines including policy (Hajer 1995), politics and power (Darier 1999), planning (Sharp & Richardson 2001), culture (Fischer & Hajer 1999), science (Myers 2003) and social theory (Dryzek 2005). The focus of this study lies within the discourse overlap between public and private interests in natural resource management (NRM).

NRM discourse is fundamentally linked to power as it shapes policy and sets direction and funding priorities. Power is enacted through the preferential access to and control over public discourse. Those who ‘know’ the discourse can participate in, define and maintain the discourse. Discourses themselves can condition perceptions and values of those subject to them, such that some interests are advanced and others suppressed (Dryzek 2005). NRM is also embedded within contextualised social practices and behaviours. Citizens and governments define their realities (worldview) through discourse in order to negotiate their position. Therefore, the act of understanding these discourses provides a mechanism for facilitating change and learning and determining how civil society and governments can work together.

The aim of this study is to probe ‘what lies beneath’ – to identify and analyse natural resource management discourse. A deeper investigation reveals the relationships that exist between actors in natural resource management at a regional level, as well as those between the region, state and federal government. The relationships are embedded in communication and can be comprehended through an analysis of the discourses between actors and the associated exercise of power.

The focus and research design of the study exemplified is reflected in a little known Australian project that currently has limited bearing upon water management policies and the practices of farming communities. The research, Basin Scale Integrated Observations of the Early 21st Century Multiyear Drought in Southeast Australia, (Leblanc et al. 2009) was conducted over an eight year period (2000-2008) and assessed the magnitude of the drought on Australia's biggest river system, the Murray Darling Basin (the Basin). The study showed that surface water resources had been substantially reduced. However, it also revealed, that while the surface water and soil moisture stabilised at low levels two years from the onset of
drought, groundwater levels continued to decline significantly for the next five years. Over the study period, the Basin lost 200 cubic kilometres of water. Total water lost between 2002 and 2006 consisted of 83% groundwater, 14% soil moisture and only 3% surface water. Yet, surface water attracts the most public and official attention for it is that to which we form connections – it is easily seen, consumed and traded (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008).

The importance of understanding ‘what lies beneath’ in the Leblanc study has bearing on the design of this research. In the research presented in this study unseen elements, equivalent to groundwater in the Leblanc biophysical description, are the interactions between agents and actors and the effect this has on NRM outcomes. The Leblanc study revealed hidden consequences of ignoring what lay beneath. The water analogy can be extended to the information that flows between catchment stakeholders and various levels of government. This data provides indicators needed to understand NRM interactions and include formal communications of management, administration and planning. In addition, informal matters are discussed in records of daily communiqués, which take the form of meeting notes and diarised telephone calls. Such texts reflect a diversity of perspectives, approaches, claims and counter-claims; however little is understood of the underlying core or common themes, praxis and values in NRM governance. These may be seen as the underlying discourse that frames communication and describes the functions of relationships.

Within the context of water and catchment management in Australia analysis of discourse illustrates the way policy is an awkwardly formulated, enacted and implemented through communication between civil society, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and various levels of government. The geographic scope of the Murray Darling basin is too large an area and contains too many regional bodies to be adequately studied in depth through a doctoral dissertation. Instead, a much smaller catchment in south west Victoria has been chosen as a case study for detailed discourse analysis: the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region. The bio physiology and demography of this catchment epitomises the issues found in the Murray Darling basin and larger environmental management challenges.

The Glenelg Hopkins CMA was the first regional body in Australia to develop a Regional Catchment Strategy 2003-2007 (RCS) that was endorsed by both State and Federal government (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2003). The RCS was one of several planning documents that set regional priorities for the future management of natural
resources across the Glenelg Hopkins region. During the research study, a second RCS (2013-2019) was developed. The development of this document necessitated periods of concentrated dialogue between respective NRM actors as the environmental, economic, social and cultural wants and needs of the region were canvassed and discussed.

Another reason for selecting the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region was that, as a practitioner researcher, I have worked for the CMA, state and federal agencies, and possess a high level of insider knowledge and direct access to documentary information and data.

Finally, privately held farm land accounts for over eighty per cent of the Glenelg Hopkins region (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2003) thus land managers are a priority group for engagement by agencies and NGOs. As a farmer I offer practitioner perspectives on conservation, production and farmer participation in NRM. This contributes to the study as farmer needs and motivations can be interpreted and explained from this viewpoint.

1.2 Research problem

Governments and most stakeholders involved with land and water degradation recognise that solutions to big problems require cooperative and integrated approaches (Head 2005). The Australian response has been to decentralise NRM functions into regions thereby creating increased opportunities for local participation (Eversole & Martin 2005). The premise is that regional scale and regional management is optimal; that devolution enhances integration and that citizen participation is central to the development and implementation of policy. Operating at regional level would generate more strategic and targeted outcomes (Farrelly 2005) through the promise of improved levels of integration (Abrahams 2005).

Citizen participation in NRM has been widely encouraged by government and others as an effective means of addressing Australia’s environmental problems. Yet institutional arrangements and process may well hamper participation. As Reed observes many of the limitations experienced by citizen participatory processes have their roots in the organisational cultures of those who sponsor or participate in them (Reed 2008). How do regional arrangements and partnerships co-exist as governments entered policy spheres that require on ground action and implementation?
The Australian federal government’s emphasis on NRM partnerships was described in the 1999 national policy discussion paper: Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future (Gorrie & Wonder 1999). The paper stated that rural and regional communities were critical to the maintenance of healthy regions and catchments. Furthermore, the decisions made and actions taken by these communities - through their local governments, Landcare groups or other bodies – would greatly affect how rural lands are used and managed. The paper described regional communities as partners in natural resource management. Clear and agreed roles and responsibilities would be based on devolved authority and empowered regional communities (Gorrie & Wonder 1999).

Figure 1.1 A Partnership Model (Gorrie & Wonder 1999) illustrates the partnership model envisaged for the national strategic policy framework.

Figure 1.1 A Partnership Model (Gorrie & Wonder 1999)

The government-oriented model (Figure 1.1) sets out various functions and processes. Feedback loops would inform policy development and be delivered mainly through the mechanism of monitoring. The paper discussed that approaches to partnership would be directed at harnessing people’s participation within local level projects and managed and funded by government. The model was representative of highly structured government approach i.e. regionalisation.
1.2.1 The regionalisation/regionalism paradox

Regionalisation is a process usually guided by government or industry in which administrative regions are formed to improve management efficiency and delivery. Thus, regionalisation is based on a synthetic, convenient concept that regions are created largely from the outside for central policy purposes (Brown 2005; Ford 1999). In contrast, regionalism is a more organic/authentic indicator of political, cultural and economic association that defines area based communities from the bottom-up (Brown 2005; Chapman & Wood 1984; Jennings & Moore 2000).

There are great differences in regionalisation and regionalism and consequently great differences in outcomes (Brown 2007; Brown 2005; Jennings & Moore 2000). The regional NRM model has been directed by government through the establishment of administrative regions that are underpinned by powers of legislation and regulation. Therefore, NRM governance aligns most closely with regionalisation, given the strong guiding role taken by the Australian government (Moore & Rockloff 2006).

Yet the establishment of administrative regions (regionalisation) relies on engagement via a regionalism approach, where communities potentially have a greater direct influence on and participation in the decision making that impact their region and their futures. The CMA governance structures i.e. Boards and Advisory groups are selected from regional representation. Thus, the regional NRM model has its origins in regionalisation, but is characterised by regionalism. This paradox gives rise to pressure points where government anticipates that civil society will deliver state or national outcomes, while civil society expects that governments’ desire is for genuine partnership, shared authority and acknowledgement of regional legitimacy. The problem of confused expectations is compounded by questions of local capacity, as a level of capacity is required to order to negotiate with government (and their agents) and for genuine inclusion in decision making.

A succession of reviews reveals that the regional NRM arrangements are operationally difficult (Broderick 2005; Farrelly 2005; Prager 2010). For example, Broderick (2008) suggests that NRM practitioners encourage community participation in decision-making, often with little consideration of the social context of these processes which results in difficulties integrating social data with the biophysical. Collits (2008) contends that any form of regional policy intervention will be controversial since there is disagreement over matters
including: regional priorities; which regions/project should be assisted by government; what
drives regional performance and if any intervention has worked.

In addition Farrelly (2005) notes that a lack of communication and limited community
participation in regional planning have created uncertainty and confusion in the sub-regional
community group, resulting in mistrust of and alienation from the regional groups. Robins and
Dovers (2007b) identified a number of external factors that negatively affect the operation of
regional NRM including: physical remoteness; access to political and bureaucratic decision-
making; access to information; specific regional NRM issues and proximity to learning and
research centres. The establishment of the 56 administrative NRM regions, with substantial
devolved responsibilities, occurred with little appreciation of the capacity for regional bodies
to respond to strategic planning, priority-setting and resource allocation in natural resource
management (Paton et al. 2004).

Collits (2008) made two further pertinent observations about the challenges of regionalisation.
The first concerned the clarity of roles and government/civil society partnerships where
shifting alliances and differing understanding of who is in charge create confusion. This was
borne out in 2009 when a change of federal government resulted in a significant change in
environmental policy direction. The new Caring for our Country program adopted a narrower
agenda, increased central government control and compromised buy-in by state and territory
governments (Robins & Kanowski 2011, p. 88). Although the regional NRM model continued
under Caring for our Country, previous close relationships enjoyed between the regional
bodies, state and federal governments were greatly weakened and roles are less clear.

The second observation concerns the lack of agreement over objectives. Regional
stakeholders tend to have long lists of desired outcomes and increasing notions of
sustainability (Collits 2008). These were expressed in the five-year Regional Catchment
Strategies that had previously influenced environmental activities, priorities and funding.
With the advent of the Caring for Our Country program regional strategies were of little
interest to a federal government who had developed a new set of targets and business plans

One of the key roles of the regional NRM authorities was to liaise between government and
regional communities and provide feedback to and from their respective regions. The aim was
to integrate the expert-led centralised NRM priorities and local and regional plans for
mutually achieved outcomes. Caring for Country reframed and extended the role of the
government, rather than building on existing partnerships that recognised citizen input and
participation. As a result Gorrie and Wonder’s feedback loops established during the National
Heritage Trust era suddenly became tenuous with the disruption of networks and
relationships.

It is the contestation and lack of agreement that provides the context for the research problem
that is the focus for this study. It lies within the context of water and catchment management
in Australia and the way policy is awkwardly formulated, enacted and implemented at
regional level.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The research aim is to probe what lies beneath – i.e. uncover underlying competing meanings
and power relations between NRM actors at regional level, to explain how dominant actors
prevail in NRM decision making. By exploring the NRM discourses that interact and compete
for meaning and power this thesis sheds new light upon the discursive struggle across actors
at a regional level, and between them and actors at state and federal tiers of government. In so
doing it focuses on questions of the ‘who and how’ of relationships, governance, language,
meaning and empowerment. The linkages are complex and require a deconstructionist
approach to provide meaning and clarity. One way of presenting the problem position is
diagrammatically as in Figure 1.2, a representation of discourse at regional level and the
actors involved.

Figure 1.2 NRM Discourse at Regional Level
In Figure 1.2 the area of competing discourse is an evolving, contested space that occurs within social practices. NRM actors can participate in numerous discourses and the ensuing discursive struggle requires negotiated positions. The discourse often takes place in situations of institutional ambiguity and the shifting priorities of changed political arenas (Hajer & Versteeg 2005). National level debate can be complicated by changing and competing statutes and policies. The management of the Murray Darling river system provides examples of cross-border challenges. These disagreements are part of a wider discourse about the Australian federal system (Connell 2007; Marshall, Connell & Taylor 2013). Thus, regional discourse is nested within a wider national discourse.

In addition to institutional and policy settings, environmental discourse is located in cultural politics, where people reflect on who they are and what they want (Hajer & Versteeg 2005). Worldviews are often contested, some may polarise and actors may try to influence debate and discussion. The Glenelg river system in the study area provides an example where multiple actors (i.e. production, cultural, environmental and recreational interests) have a stake in river management. Analysis can help to explain how these stakeholders feel, what they wish for the river and themselves, who is represented and who is not represented.

The first objective of this thesis is to describe regional NRM discourse and the actors involved. This includes an examination of the history and grounding of NRM policy and practice and how people use language to manage their practical tasks and perform activities associated with NRM participation. The next objective is to explore and describe the power relationships and the strategies used by the three entities (described in Figure 1.2) for achieving their goals. Access to power, or the means to exercise power, is often variable and are not in a steady state (Parent & Deephouse 2007). Non-negotiable positions may exist, such as those mandated by environmental law, or actors with veto power, that limit the extent that participants can influence decisions.

The differences among NRM actors (stakeholders) lies in the existence and nature of their ‘stake’ and whose claims are accepted and whose claims are denied (Kivits 2011). Understanding and describing the power relationships provides further context and understanding to how NRM discourse and discursive practices function.
The final objective is to identify processes for effective NRM collaboration at regional level. Initial scoping of the research problem revealed examples of effective regional collaboration that could provide valuable learning for those involved in NRM.

1.4 Conceptual Research Framework

Having set out the research problem and the aim and objectives, this and the following section set out the research design and approach to achieve the aim and objectives. The conceptual research framework provides a research map of territory being investigated (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014; Yin 2014). Creating the framework assists the researcher to be selective when deciding what areas of research are important. The framework specifies who and what will be studied (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014).

The framework (Figure 1.3) identifies both actors and types of information that inform NRM discourse at regional level. It is not a comprehensive list and although actors have been clustered, a hierarchy of power or authority is not implied.

The interrelatedness between NRM relationships and communication is complex and not as straightforward as the conceptual framework suggests. The illustrative lines and arrows
describe a presumed communication flow from people, entities and objects that inform NRM discourse. A feedback loop emerges from the discourse back to the informants. Again, this does not imply that relationships and communication are static or exist purely as a circular route.

The study is conducted within the geographic boundary of the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region. Other actors and objects exist outside the region that may also inform the discourse. For example, global discourse appears in the framework to acknowledge its importance to NRM discourse. Global discourse was not included in the corpus for analysis – hence dashed lines. This framework provides a starting point for the research.

1.5 Research Questions

Qualitative research questions seek to discover, to explore a process, or describe experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2006) and address ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions. Discourse is not a neutral device for imparting meaning, rather, people seek to accomplish things when they write or talk - they are action-oriented (Bryman 2012; Gee 2005). Thus the researcher can ask what is this discourse doing, how is the discourse constructed to make this happen and what resources are available to perform this activity? This requires an analysis that considers the whole picture and provides descriptions of context, locality, scale, practice and people.

The research questions presented below were drawn from the process of identifying the research problem described in Section 1.2. Initially a number of questions were developed through discussions with NRM stakeholders, PhD supervisors, academics and others. The research (including questions) was also discussed with discourse analysis academics including Emeritus Professor Norman Fairclough Lancaster University; Emeritus Professor Paul Chilton, Lancaster University and Professor John Dryzek, Canberra University (see Section 6.2.2 Research preparation – the discourse studies research community). After an initial canvassing of research questions an iterative process then narrowed the number of questions down to those that could be researched and relevant to the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, government, civil society and other stakeholders.

The research design thus arrived at three research questions designed to collectively assist in achieving the study aim; each question is aligned to one of the three objectives introduced in Section 1.3 above.
The first research objective is to describe regional NRM discourse and the actors involved. Van Dijk’s (2011) discourse characteristics of (1) social interaction, (2) power and domination and (3) communication of beliefs provide a general framework where various aspects of NRM discourse can be understood.

Research question 1, chosen to address this objective is “What are the roles and responsibilities of actors as ascertained through discourse, and how do these roles and responsibilities function in practice?” This requires an examination of modes of social interaction.

The next objective was to explore and describe the power relationships.

Research question 2, Chosen to address this objective is: “How are actors using their power and what is their intent?” This requires an interrogation of the preferential access to and/or control over NRM discourse across different actors.

The final objective was to identify effective NRM collaboration at regional level.

Research question 3, chosen to address this objective is: “What is the nature of communication and discursive practice between NRM actors?” This requires attention to the communication of beliefs and the ways in which these beliefs and supporting knowledge is acquired and distributed.

The research questions thus link directly to the research problem and objectives and were co-identified with NRM stakeholders. The questions also influenced the sample size, sampling scheme employed and selection of data analysis techniques.

Some flexibility was allowed with research questions when following lines of inquiry not previously considered. For example the impact that changing NRM policy had on regional discourse. Social research academics advise that research questions do not have to be set in concrete and may change as the empirical work proceeds (Bryman 2012; Punch 2013; Ritchie et al. 2013).
1.6 Research Approach

Punch (2013) developed a simplified research model to describe the research approach (see Figure 1.4).

![Figure 1.4 Simplified research model (Punch 2013)]

In this study the literature review informs the research, from research questions and design to the language used in the analysis i.e. codes and categories. Theories from the literature are applied to the data to see whether the data supports, contradicts or is relevant to these theories. The literature helps to frame the investigation but not necessarily the answers unearthed.

This study draws on John Dryzek’s theory of global environmental discourse. Dryzek uses tensions in environmental debates to connect and differentiate discourse, and developed a taxonomic procedure for understanding the differences between discourses. Findings from this study are tested using Dryzek’s taxonomy and result in a description of NRM discourse at regional level. NRM participation and environmental communication theory also guides the analysis through enabling the researcher to compare and contrast the findings from this study with others.

Analysis of the environmental social interface provides a useful entry point for examining NRM relationships, the power dynamics and discursive practice. The environmental social interface lies at the interface and trade-offs between often conflicting objectives of economic, social development and environmental protection (Lehtonen 2004). In designing NRM policy governments need to consider not only environmental or economic outcomes but also social dimensions. Examination of the environmental social interface explores the capabilities of rationally and responsibly acting individuals but also the social capabilities of a society and the roles of social actors (Lehtonen 2004).
The study is place-based, situated in Western Victoria and an example of civil society/government relationships in a NRM context. The Glenelg Hopkins CMA is used as an example of the regional model and an arena to explore the multiple discourses. The study develops a depth of understanding and historical perspective of the relationships between regional civil society and government that had evolved simultaneously with national understandings of NRM.

A perspective used to guide the conversations undertaken and selection of themes during analysis is that of conflicting scales of influence. This perspective focused on the tensions that arise when a mismatch occurs between the desires of regional community and the directions established by government through policy and other initiatives.

The study documents and examines the interactions between the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, regional communities and State and Federal government agencies. Two scales of case study are used to further describe and explore NRM discourse and how various NRM actors enact the discourse.

This longitudinal research study (from 2006 until 2013) enabled the examination of specific events within a context of place and time. The findings contribute to a better understanding and practice for regional communities, the catchment management authority, state and federal government agencies, policy makers and others interested in NRM.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for four reasons. First, it will improve understanding of the NRM relationships that occur at regional level between civil society, regional agency and governments. Greater understanding will in turn provide a means of negotiating the inconsistencies that exist at the interface between civil society and government, and between regionalisation and regionalism. These inconsistencies and tensions prevent communities from identifying and developing their own destinies and governments from developing strategic and long-lasting state and national policies that are owned and implemented by those directly affected.

Understanding the communication and interactions between civil society and various levels of government will be critical to enabling reasoned responses to these challenges and their
associated global environmental, social and economic imperatives. Through analysis of discourse and using case studies this thesis theorizes and tests relationships in an impartial way to discover what discourse exists, who is participating and how it is enacted.

Government has a role and responsibility for setting long-term transformative reforms that support both healthy environments and a productive economy. This requires mechanisms that link government reform directly to regional goals and aspirations. Learning from this study can assist the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and other regional entities to consider how best to design and implement processes that encourage genuine partnership and sustained collaboration for both regional communities and governments.

Third, although set in the NRM context, learning from this study has potential application for others interested in civil society/government relationships, for example, in regional development, education and health sectors. As Dryzek (2005) observes

A confident globally organised liberal capitalism mostly insensitive to environmental concerns is the dominant political fact of our times. The pathway to a sustainable future includes a process of sensitization that is a process of making politics more attentive to the environment, more cognitive of the human/environment relationship, and more responsive to the participatory input of its citizenry.

Lastly, from the nineties onward, successive Australian governments funded increasingly large NRM programs (Australian National Audit Office 2008; Crowley 2001; WalterTurnbull 2005). Examples of key national programs included: the Natural Heritage Trust Phase 1 (NHT1), funded at A$1.3b; Natural Heritage Trust Phase 2 (NHT2) funded to A$1.2b and Natural Heritage Trust Phase 3 (NHT3) funded to A$2b (Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team 2009; Australian National Audit Office 2008). The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) was funded by state and federal Government for A$1.4b over 7 years and Caring for Our Country commenced in 2008 ($2.25 billion over 5 years). These programs and initiatives represent a significant investment by both state and federal government.

The investment that individuals and community groups contribute is perhaps incalculable. Insight into landholder investment can be seen in the Woady Yaloak Catchment Group (Victoria) survey Outcomes from landholder involvement and investment in landcare (2001 to 2013) where the average investment in Landcare in 2013 (excluding grants) was calculated at
$4,340 per property. Based on the number of active Landcare members, this equates to an annual investment of $720,000 (Nicholson C 2013).

The contribution to environmental effort by civil society can be quantified as exampled by the Woady Yaloak Catchment Group survey. What isn’t calculated is the wider contribution that citizen groups make to social and economic well-being of their localities. Avenues of inquiry that describe existing and possible partnerships between civil society and government may also identify ways in which government investment can be further leveraged by civic contribution that goes beyond NRM.
1.8 Thesis Synopsis

The research is reported in nine chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and sets out the research problem. The chapter then describes the aim and objectives of the inquiry, provides a conceptual research framework and introduces the research questions and approach. The significance of the study and thesis synopsis completes this chapter.

The literature reviewed for this thesis was guided by the research topic, context and questions, and is presented in two parts. The first part Chapter 2 Digging Deeper – the literature Part 1 consists of three assemblages (1) Participation, participatory NRM and partnership, (2) Civil society and (3) Policy, governmentality, people and problems. The second part Chapter 3 Digging Deeper – the literature Part 2 describes the study of discourse, presents a discourse analysis framework and introduces John Dryzek’s theory of environmental discourse.

Chapter 4, The Australian Context provides a history and grounding of policy and practice related to NRM. Chapter 5, The Study Area describes the study area and NRM actors including their roles and responsibilities.

Chapter 6 presents the research approach, the conduct of the study and research methods. Section 6.4 Text Analysis explains the analysis techniques applied to the corpus including coding, categorization, themes and text analysis. The coding technique applied to the corpus in Case Study 2 is also explained.

Chapter 7 presents three discourses that emerge empirically from the data collected: (1) Official, (2) Resistance and (3) Utility and Action. Each description of discourse uses relevant transcript examples from the data gathered to support interpretation. The critique of specific examples is used in a general sense to emphasize characteristics of that particular discourse. The analysis confirms, contradicts or builds on Dryzek’s environmental discourse theory and taxonomy. The chapter concludes with the focus group findings that further inform the analysis.

Chapter 8 presents two case studies to illustrate NRM discourse and discursive practice in the study area. Case Study 1 presents the voices of those actors directly involved in the Regional Catchment Investment Planning (RCIP) cycle and drawn from the three newly described discourses. Each voice within the respective discourse is considered with respect to intent, the
mode of interaction (including language) and discursive practice. The second case study is an embedded unit that explores the discursive practice of the Utility and Action discourse. Utility and Action is utilitarian, emphasizes action and human interactions. This discourse is grounded in local implementation but also acknowledges the importance of voices in the broader discourse of NRM.

Chapter 9 presents the conclusion, summary of the research contribution to knowledge, recommendations for policy and further research, and reflection and concluding remarks.
2 Digging Deeper - the Literature Part 1
2.1 Introduction

The literature review was guided by the research objectives and questions discussed in Sections 1.3 and 1.5. As the study progressed the researcher returned to the literature to provide further insight, explanation or alternate views and argument.

The review is presented in two parts. Part 1 consists of three assemblages of themes covering: (1) Participation, participatory NRM and partnership, (2) Civil society and (3) Policy, governmentality, people and problems. Part Two describes the study of discourse and in particular the study of John Dryzek’s environmental discourse.

Part 1, Section 2.2 assemblage (sub-sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.5) introduces participation, participatory NRM, partnerships, environmental communication and social learning. Civic participation in decision-making is increasingly embedded NRM policy and programs yet research shows that although participatory NRM has demonstrated beneficial outcomes, there are limitations. A discussion on partnership is included as the term appears in many research studies, policy documents, programs and strategies – often interchangeably with participation.

The second assemblage, Section 2.3, (sub-sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3) discusses civil society as a significant NRM stakeholder. An exploration of the characteristics of civil society and relationship with NRM is provided.

The third assemblage Section 2.4 (sub-sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4) begins with a discussion on public policy. The alignment of NRM investment priorities and regional strategies remains weak – the review offers Constructive Alignment theory as potential solution. The review then describes the Australian political setting in which NRM operates i.e. neo-liberal governmentality, economic and administrative rationalization. Introducing street-level bureaucrats highlights the importance of creating space for discourse, discussion and negotiation. Finally natural resource managers are tasked with solving very complex environmental, societal and economic problems. The term ‘wicked problems’ is used to describe problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements. The literature on wicked problems concludes Part 1.
2.2 Participation, participatory NRM and partnership

2.2.1 Participation

Within this study, the term participatory NRM is used synonymously with stakeholder, public or civic participation. This reflects an interaction of the terms used in the Australian vernacular of natural resource governance, environmental management and public policy (Davidson et al. 2007; Maclean 2015; Yencken 2002).

Participation is a categorical term for citizen power (Arnstein 1969). A model to describe levels of participation was developed by Arnstein. The model, a ladder of participation, ranks instances of interaction between citizens and industry/government according to levels of influence which citizens had in decision making (see Figure 2.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation).

![Figure 2.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation](image)

The continuum is understood in hierarchal terms where the higher the level the more involvement in decision making or citizen power. On the bottom rung of the ladder are those who can be manipulated; the middle levels are those who can be placated through tokenistic consultation processes and lastly at the top rungs are those who can form partnerships and have a strong sense of citizen governance (Arnstein 1969). For Arnstein the sole measure of participation lies in the power to make decisions (Tritter & McCallum 2006); the model doesn’t take into consideration the ability of participants to change levels of power, nor the possibility of more complex sets of relationships (Collins & Ison 2009).
The literature reveals other criticisms of Arnstein’s ladder. For example, the model assumed that power has a common basis for users and providers. This limits the potential for sharing experience, knowledge, and multiple perspectives (Titter & McCallum 2006). Furthermore, the ladder does not capture the diverse forms of public participation (Ross, Buchy & Proctor 2002). Nor, in contested NRM situations, does the model provide insight into how participation might be progressed as a collective process (Collins & Ison 2009).

In their summary of theoretical approaches to public participation, Richardson and Razzaque (2006) highlight that civic involvement in environmental decision making has been rationalised from two main perspectives (1) process and (2) substantive. The substantive perspective is based on claims that public participation improves outcomes in decision making while the process perspective supports the democratic legitimacy of those decisions. Across these two perspectives several schools of thought on the rationale for and role of public participation have arisen. The first, described by Jasanoff (2009), is the school of rational elitism that treats environmental policy as complex and technical, requiring decision making to be done by experts and framed within an administrative approach based on science and evidence. The rational elitists engage with civil society on a limited basis and mainly for information that will assist decision-making. This approach complements ecological modernisation (Huber 2000) where the capitalist political economy can be restructured to reflect better environmental practice.

A second school of thought describes liberal democratic processes that stress the procedural rights of individuals and NGOs need to be consulted and heard in decision making (Richardson & Razzaque 2006). As traditional mechanisms (i.e., political parties) are unable to manage the competing demands of a diversity of interest groups, government seeks to provide public consultation processes through administrative and legislative processes. The rationale is that civic participation provides legitimacy and public acceptability of policy decisions. This assumption needs to be challenged as citizens may be heard but their views are only given weight in discretionary decision making as this occurs in institutional frameworks that cannot respond to citizen interaction and learning (Richardson & Razzaque 2006).

A third school of thought describes deliberate democracy that seeks to empower citizens in actual decision making and restructure decision making processes to ethical and social values.
Wide and inclusive participation in environmental discourse is seen as essential to developing environmental values, regenerating ideas and promoting public policy dialogue (Touraine 1985). Dryzek (1983) suggests that the institutional means for rational environmental discourse can be achieved through mediation and negotiation. Given a diversity of environmental interests and agendas developing shared values in contested areas is challenging, and as discussed, active citizen involvement is hampered by trying to engage with the traditional mechanisms of government.

2.2.2 Participatory NRM

The complex nature of NRM requires decision-making and consequently power sharing that embraces a diversity of knowledge and values. For this reason, stakeholder or civic participation in decision-making had been increasingly sought and embedded into national and international policy (Reed et al. 2009). Yet as Currie-Alder advises participatory approaches involving multiple stakeholders does not guarantee more equitable or effective outcomes in practice (Currie-Alder 2007). Moreover, Head contends that there is little evidence that the widespread adoption of community engagement and partnership approaches have involved substantial power-sharing (Head 2007).

Head offers two reasons for this. First, governments retain control through funding, service contracts and regulation and find it difficult to devolve power and control. Second, the capacity and motivation of citizens to participate effectively, or to create alternative forums, remains a weakness in community engagement strategies.

Reed (2008) describes participatory resource management as broadly categorized into normative and pragmatic justifications. These categories complement Richardson and Razzaque’s process and substantive rationale. Normative claims focus on benefits of participation for democratic society, citizenship and equity. An example is increased public trust in decision making through transparent processes (Richards, Carter & Sherlock 2004). Whereas pragmatic claims focus on the quality and durability of environmental decisions that are made through engagement with stakeholders (Reed 2008).

The normative notion of participatory NRM places value on citizen participation (Davidson & Lockwood 2009; O’Toole 2006) and argues that the citizens of any region should be directly engaged in policy development and implementation (Lane 2006; Morrison, Oczkowski &
Greig 2011). Yet government takes a pragmatic approach and seeks public participation in order to enable the uptake of NRM interventions, programs and technologies. For example post NHT (that sought to develop participatory and inclusive arrangements) government focus shifted to participation in terms of meeting targets. This exampled in the 2009 Caring for Our Country Business Plan with a target to increase participation of urban and regional communities in activities that manage natural resources (Australian Government Land and Coasts 2008).

Normative and pragmatic approaches operating in parallel have produced perverse outcomes. There has been misunderstanding and tension and disillusionment amongst practitioners, stakeholders and the wider public, who felt let down when claims of participation and shared power were not realized (Compton, Prager & Beeton 2009; Curtis et al. 2014; Curtis & Sample 2010; Robins & Kanowski 2011).

Another challenge for establishing successful participatory processes has been the increased geospatial scale of NRM programs. Diverse alliances are formed to develop and implement large scale initiatives and the negotiations required between stakeholders can be a substantial challenge (Wyborn 2011).

The Habitat 141 initiative is a program that covers 18 million hectares and three states: South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales and partly covers the geographic area of this study. Figure 2.2 locates Habitat 141 within large scale Australian connectivity initiatives. The map is not to scale.
Habitat 141 evolved to become a significant project. Yet during the establishment years trying to accommodate at least 20 organizations was difficult, frustrating and time consuming (Carr 2013). Exacerbating this was a lack of resources to help build communication and relationships, and develop these into successful collaborative partnerships and governance arrangements (Carr 2013). A lesson from Habitat 141 is that the potential benefits from participatory NRM can be lost under scaled up conditions.

Problems of scale and participation have been noted by other commentators and include differences in policy interpretation, resource allocation, structural and functional variances and integration of activities (Prager 2010; Wallington, Lawrence & Loechel 2008).

Although the literature often romanticizes participation (Hurlbert & Gupta 2015), others observe that by establishing common ground and trust participatory processes have the capacity to transform adversarial relationships and find new ways to work together (Stringer et al. 2006). If this is shared by a broad coalition of stakeholders, long-term support and active implementation of decisions may be enhanced (Richards, Carter & Sherlock 2004) and may also promote social learning (Blackstock, Kelly & Horsey 2007).

What motivates civic NRM participation has been summarized in terms of substantive, instrumental and normative principles of justification (Stirling 2006). Substantive justifications are those that identify the need to include the knowledge and experience of people (or natural assets) likely to be affected by a decision. A central assertion is that for a
sound decision to occur, the interaction between natural ecosystems and social systems must be taken into account. This interaction occurs mainly at land management and landowner level and between communities and individuals.

The instrumental principle suggests that being seen to include civic society in a decision-making process somehow legitimises the decision made, through securing the support and consent of those affected i.e. a process that is inclusive and fair. Decisions made without these characteristics are increasingly perceived as authoritarian, have no local buy in and are less likely to be adopted or implemented.

The normative principle proposes that public discussion and debate is something that is essentially a good thing to do because it can help achieve equity of access, empowerment of process and equality of outcome (Rawls 2009). Table 2.1 NRM Participatory Motivation is a matrix that describes the principles for participation, characteristics and examples.

Table 2.1 NRM Participatory Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles for participation</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantive</td>
<td>Farming, ecosystem services, Indigenous ecological knowledge</td>
<td>Stewardship schemes, agricultural production groups, Indigenous Protected Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Co-management groups; catchment management advisory committees, regional planning bodies</td>
<td>Catchment Management Authorities, joint management of national and state parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>Organised interest groups, advocacy, lobbying and collective activity</td>
<td>Wilderness Society; Landcare, Waterwatch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, Stirling (2006) concluded that of these three justifications the more instrumental the approach, the greater the degree the closing down of wider policy discourse. This is observed in instances where NRM regional boards have been parochial in their management strategies and priorities and resistant to linking into wider decision-making dialogues.

Change is inherent to both social and natural systems. NRM and environmental literature highlights that communities that depend closely on natural resources need to enhance their capacity to adapt to change in order to be better able to determine their futures (Bardsley & Rogers 2010; Bellamby 2007; Gooch & Warburton 2009). Social-natural systems are spatially variable in nature (Bellamby 2007) and can occur simultaneously on multiple scales, over time,
and through numerous forms of geographical interdependence and historical path dependency (Mehta, Leach & Scoones 2001). This added complexity and dynamics makes adaptation even more challenging.

Changing NRM governance arrangements and new expressions of community can add to this complexity, both as contributors and responders. Dietz, Ostrom & Stern (2003) suggest three principles for good governance, namely: (1) Analytic deliberation: well structured dialogue involving interested parties (e.g. public, scientists, resource users and policy makers) in informed discussions, (2) Nesting: allocating authority to allow for adaptive governance at multiple levels from local to global and (3) Institutional variety: employing a variety of institutional types (e.g. hierarchies, market based forms of resource allocation and community self-governance) (Dietz, Ostrom & Stern 2003, p. 1910).

The intention of such principles is to support genuine civic participation and shared decision-making. The growing interest in participatory NRM has attempted to shift the development lens from generality to specificity – the needs of particular people in particular places (Eversole & Martin 2005). Yet the needs of particular groups can remain invisible to policy makers as governance arrangements exclude some interest groups and thus fall short of being truly democratic (Moore 2005).

Regional community voices typically reside in place-based locally focused discourse not the planning, administration and policy discourse of government and its agents. Studies show that some community groups feel alienated from regional NRM - specifically the strategic planning processes - not being sure who should be engaged and for what purpose (Broderick 2005; Byron & Curtis 2002; Dore et al. 2003; Moore 2005; Working with People 2004). During NHT both federal and state governments delivered numerous capacity building programs however as suggested by Moore (2005) a greater emphasis should have been given to governance training and the development of mechanisms, approaches and styles that make democratic practice possible.

The government response to capacity building was simplistic. It failed to consider that programs that focus on collaboration and integration of policy, science and community perspectives, host a number of paradoxical elements at organisational level. These paradoxes can be observed between the different policy levels and governmental directives and reside in the flux between ever changing centralisation and decentralisation approaches (Browne &
Bishop 2011). Furthermore, institutions and governments engage in contradictory discourses through an approach that frames a dichotomy between personal control and economy/governance (Browne & Bishop 2011).

2.2.3 NRM Partnership

The 1999 federal government discussion paper, *Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future* describes a ‘partnership framework’ in which natural resource management could develop. The discussion paper, together with the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity Audit, the Natural Heritage Trust Mid-Term Review, and the Regional Australia Summit provided the basis for a national natural resource management policy strategy (Gorrie & Wonder 1999, p. 2). The discussion paper emphasised the need for partnerships between landholders, Landcare, catchment groups, rural industries, environment groups, Indigenous Australians, and the Commonwealth, State and Territory, and local governments.

A language of ‘partnership’ is woven throughout the discussion paper and reflects international discourse and documents of the time particularly from the community development sectors. The notion of partnership has been an aspiration for non-governmental organisations for over two decades, though this remained more illusion than reality (Crawford 2003; Fowler 2000). The role of government within the partnership framework was to establish policy and regulatory parameters; establish decision-making and institutional structures and arrangements; contribute to landholders’ and other natural resources managers’ capacity for informed decision making; facilitate change and invest effectively to counter market failure (Gorrie & Wonder 1999). The role of civil society was described in terms of regional development and as a continuous process primarily dependent on the people and their motivations and capacity (Gorrie & Wonder 1999).

Whelan and Oliver (2005) described this framework as a combination of three approaches: (1) a green planning (rational policy) approach involving the formulation and implementation of long-term policies, strategies and plans, (2) an institutional reform approach focusing on the development of new governance arrangements and the development and enforcement of legislation and regulations and (3) a social mobilisation approach which focuses on encouraging community and industry action to address shared problems. The emphasis on a partnership approach required the informed involvement of regional communities; local state
and federal government, non-government organisations and others involved in NRM and assumed a level of regional maturity and more importantly the capacity to engage.

NRM has evolved with two very contrasting outcomes. On one hand a partnership approach was sought by regions, civil society and government and efforts were made to support the partnership process, such as collaborative planning. On the other hand policy change and program and funding discontinuities have undermined partnerships.

The evidence for genuine participation and devolved power has been strongly questioned by many authors (Fraser 2005; Head 2009; Moore & Rockloff 2006; Simpson & Clifton 2010; Tennent & Lockie 2012). Governments embrace the idea of partnership but struggle to understand or implement lasting partnership arrangements as these are invariably formed through institutional arrangements, based on often changing policy direction and dependent on funding cycles. Partnership are struck through agreements (Wallington, Lawrence & Loechel 2008) and not necessarily based on a legitimacy that may come from nurturing respectful, sincere relationships.

Resolving complex environmental problems cannot be done by single institutions or one sector but requires partnerships that promote mutual interests and identify common priorities. It also requires partnerships that recognise and address the underlying differences in power that often dictate how knowledge, resourcing and processes are used and shared (Guevara 2017). Therefore, NRM partnerships need to be re-thought as dynamic arrangements that can respond and contribute to changing contexts of problems, not just the symptoms.

2.2.4 Environmental Communication

The literature on environmental communication is extensive and diverse. Themes include civic engagement (Brulle 2010); ethics (Cox 2007); media (Aerts & Cormier 2009; Hansen 2011); advocacy (Bortree & Seltzer 2009) and policy (Bäckstrand 2003). Cox and Pezzullo define environmental communication as a form of symbolic action that uses language to convey purpose and meaning that affects our perceptions and actions (Cox & Pezzullo 2016).

Communication as a symbolic action shapes the way we see the world through words, images or narratives. Through communication (discourse) we share our understanding and views, and invite reaction (Cox & Pezzullo 2016). The public sphere is a discursive space where competing voices engage in environmental matters or concerns.
Figure 2.3 describes three core principles of environmental communication proposed by Cox and Pezzullo (2016). These are: (1) human communication is symbolic, (2) our beliefs and behaviors to environment are mediated by communication and (3) the public sphere is where communication occurs. Cox and Pezzullo’s public sphere can be likened to the earlier description of regional NRM discourse (Figure 1.2 NRM Discourse at Regional Level) as an evolving, contested space that occurs within social practices.

Cox and Pezzullo also suggest that environmental communication serves two functions (1) pragmatic and (2) constitutive. Pragmatic communication is the vehicle for problem solving and education campaigns. Constitutive communication helps to construct or compose representations of the environment as subjects for understanding.

Using both pragmatic and constitutive communication devices opens a space where diverse perspectives and values can be canvassed. For example, the Glenelg River (located in the study area) was used in the past for irrigation and recreation purposes. Stock accessed the river and as a result the river banks became highly degraded. To restore and protect the river the Glenelg Hopkins CMA conducted an extension program, the Glenelg River Restoration Project. The approach was to educate and offer incentives for landholders and community (pragmatic) while simultaneously inviting new ways of understanding and connecting with the river i.e. through environment, Indigenous and heritage values (constitutive). In fourteen years the River Restoration Project involved over 659 individual landholders, community groups and government agencies, and delivered the biggest river protection program in Victoria’s history (Riverspace 2017). The combination of both pragmatic and constitutive devices resulted in beneficial outcomes for the many and diverse stakeholder interests.

Figure 2.3 Environment, communication and the public sphere (Cox and Pezzullo 2016)
2.2.5 Social Learning

Cox and Pezzullo’s public sphere is described as a space where social practice occurs. The public sphere may also be the space for social learning. The idea of social learning appears in the NRM literature as a task of co-management that occurs through joint problem solving and reflection and sharing of experiences and ideas (Berkes 2009). Authors write about social learning in terms of managing water resources (Pahl-Wostl et al. 2007); multi-party collaboration (Bouwen & Taillieu 2004; Schusler, Decker & Pfeffer 2003) and sustainability (Keen, Brown & Dyball 2005). This illustrates that social learning has wide application for diverse environmental interests.

In their review of NRM literature Cundell and Rodela (2012) found that the term social learning is used in different ways. These differences are explained by learning within different management paradigms. For example, adaptive management, ecological complexity and uncertainty are one factor that drives learning. This approach to learning is based on experimentation and reflective practice that leads to better decision making i.e. science and policy. On the other hand from a collaborative management perspective, social learning is where multiple stakeholders, with different worldviews and values (some conflicting), can learn how to work and build relationships that allow for collective action.

Cundell and Rodela conclude that one of the primary causes for confusion about social learning in the context of natural resource management is that the term is used to refer to quite different things (Cundill & Rodela 2012). Nonetheless there is consensus amongst authors that describes social learning as involving sustained interaction between stakeholders, shared, diverse perspectives and experiences, common understandings and joint action (Berkes 2009; Cundill & Rodela 2012; Schusler, Decker & Pfeffer 2003).

NRM case studies have shown that social learning can complement existing governance mechanisms through empowering local participants to contribute to the development of management practices (Leys & Vanclay 2011). NRM social learning is advanced as a tool that integrates science with local knowledge, builds capacity and community engagement (Leys & Vanclay 2011). Therefore, social learning, as an adjunct to NRM discourse and participatory process, is a mechanism where contested values and power differentials may be overcome through joint thinking and action.
2.3 Civil Society

2.3.1 Civil Society and NRM

The references to civil society throughout this research require explanation. The classic text concerning community and society is Ferdinand Tönnies Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, first published in 1887. The Tönnies study focused on the differences between small-scale communities and large-scale societies, and categorised these as two dichotomous sociological types which define each other (Tönnies & Harris 2001). The civil society concept bridges these two concepts. Civil society is made up of voluntary associations and forms of independent public expression (Cohen & Arato 1994). In a natural resource management context studies describe various configurations of social and human relations (civil society) and their respective efforts to deal with problems, and government efforts to assist or manage complex land management.

How well voluntary associations can mobilise and collaborate for effective responses varies according to their capabilities, needs and resources. A well-developed civil society has the potential to influence government in two core ways. The first is through enhancing political responsiveness by aggregating and expressing the wishes of the public through non-governmental forms of association. The second is through safeguarding public freedom by limiting the government's ability to impose arbitrary rule by force (Clark, Friedman & Hochstetler 1998).

Numerous examples of responsiveness are evident in environmental advocacy groups such as the Wilderness Society, Australian Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Earth and Australian Landcare. These groups seek to safeguard public freedom through debate, discussion, representation, lobbying and ultimately the ballot box. Nonetheless this is not straightforward, especially at regional level, where complex and complicated problems can confuse and disguise matters and create an environment where emancipatory interest is compromised.

Another definition of civil society is provided by the Oxford Dictionary as “a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity” (Oxford Dictionary). This thesis subscribes to this broad definition of common interest and/or collective activity as seen in natural resource management.
Social commentator Eva Cox (1995) reminds us that civil societies are also civic societies that must take some responsibility for changing what we do not like. Furthermore, civic activity must recognise the importance of connection, goodwill, and trust (social capital) to sustain difference and debate (Cox & Weir 1995). This calls for social inclusion approaches that provide opportunities for all to have a say on local priorities. The role of local voices (civil society) is fundamental to the success of a place-based approach. This requires local government, business, industry, vested interests and community to identify their local strengths and assets, but also ‘park’ specific agendas in favour of working collaboratively.

The Geelong Region Alliance (G21) provides a good example of collaboration. This alliance was initiated in late 2001 when the City of Greater Geelong identified the need to improve community wellbeing across multiple sectors. The collaborative regional approach to planning and development necessitated alliances between three neighbouring municipalities, state government and community and business leaders. The G21 rural-urban partnership is making a difference by improving public governance and institutional capital within the region and even beyond it (Jones & Meikle 2013). As regions struggle with numerous complexities including climate change, ageing populations, uncertain markets and skills deficits, they are also working between the administrative and political arms of Government.

A smaller unit of civil society described by Tönnies is community, which consists of groups of citizens who, through their on-going interactions, form relationships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity.

The literature provides many definitions of community. Two descriptions that could be applied to this study are: (1) Location based communities (Davis et al. 2005; Parsons 2007) and (2) Identity based communities that concern human relationships (McMillan & Chavis 1986). However, these categories oversimplify the complexities of community and tend to take sociological categories such as ethnicity as given (James 2006). To overcome this, a taxonomy has been developed that maps community relations and recognizes that communities can be characterized by different kinds of relations at the same time (James et al. 2012).

James et al offer three alternative community types as: (1) Grounded community which involves enduring attachment to particular places and particular people; (2) Life-style community where communities come together around particular chosen ways of life and (3)
Projected community where a community is self-consciously treated as an entity to be projected and re-created, for example, communities of practice. This allows for nested and/or intersecting communities and helps to describe communities within communities, for example, a Landcare community residing in a wider rural community.

Common to most definitions of community are the social capital elements of trust, reciprocity and networks. Networks of interaction (social capital) form the basis for collective action and enhanced community well-being (Putnam 1995). These networks assist local people to take social, environmental and economic action. They draw on community spirit and provide local solutions to NRM problems that government(s) alone cannot provide.

Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) describes collaborative environmental planning, co-management and community-based planning, that implies ‘bottom-up’ alternatives to conventional ‘top-down’ approaches (Prager & Vanclay 2010). CBNRM seeks to encourage better resource management outcomes through wide participation of local communities in decision-making and the incorporation of local knowledge (Marshall 2008; Measham & Lumbasi 2013). Australian CBNRM strongly resonated with the Landcare movement, integrated catchment management and the regional delivery model (Marshall 2008).

Curtis et al (2014) describe eight lessons drawn from Australia and New Zealand CBNRM. The first three lessons explain CBNRM as a device for strengthening community motivation to participate in NRM initiatives. The next three lessons describe the need for capacity building at all NRM levels and the last two lessons predict an extended role for CBNRM that goes beyond NRM (Curtis et al. 2014).

While discussing motivation Curtis et al note that external intervention (provided in Australian examples) has in fact weakened motivation through reducing the autonomy of regional bodies and their stakeholders. Yet it is possible for government(s) to foster and support civic NRM activity, as the provision of infrastructure and resources are within the remit of their control. Efforts to increase intra and inter-community social interaction could be enhanced through resourcing and supporting social networks. Furthermore, resource management decisions are not made in an economic or social vacuum, rather, they are made within a variety of social networks, societal beliefs and public policy contexts. Strengthened
social networks that encourage community leadership, mobilise regional effort and ensure priority needs are met can also better inform and build on government policy and investment.

The lines of communication between civil society and government are complicated. On one hand there is the publicly palatable rhetoric and on the other the unwritten set of commands, controls, and directives that civil society must learn to comprehend to manage effective communication with governments. In developing his concept for communicative action Habermas (1984) called for communication and debate in the public sphere between formal decision-making bodies and civil society using criteria such as honesty, clarity and sincerity. This has application in NRM where the complexity of issues and diversity of interests require clear, respectful and unambiguous communication.

In practice, NRM communication between civil society, government, business and industry, academia and non-governmental organisations has often been disjointed and disconnected. Governments need to communicate not only broad policy directions, but also raw data, leading-edge science, general and informed layperson interpretations, and advice for action and behaviour change (Bielak et al. 2008). Authors observe that NRM communication failings occur because of inadequate communication techniques and poor comprehension of environmental policy integration (Ross & Dovers 2008). The language of government can be obscure, and to paraphrase Orwell (1946), political language can consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. The *A-Z GovBiz* website offers the following advice for those wishing to engage with government departments:

Dealing with government can be a difficult prospect at the best of times. The public sector has such a different culture that it can be easy to think sometimes they are from a different planet! One of the quickest ways to connect, and one of the best ways to succeed, is to talk the talk. With this in mind, we've put together a guide of some of the key points of language you need to know to parley with public sector buyers.

(A-ZGovBiz 2015)

Connecting civil society and government requires iterative and inclusive communication, the translation of jargon and language, and the intercession between differing understandings of knowledge and experiences. Blomgren, Bingham, Nabatchi & O’Leary (2005) observe that citizens use many devices to connect with government including e-democracy, public conversations, citizen juries, study circles, collaborative policy making and alternative dispute resolution. These quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial governance processes require public
administrators to participate in negotiation, active listening, reframing, facilitation and consensus building. These may require public administrators to learn new skill sets.

Government is not alone in failing to communicate appropriately with civil society. Scientists and academics too have failed to explain the relevance of science to our daily lives - our health, wealth and wellbeing (Alcock & Cribb 2002; Cox & Pezzullo 2016; Kahan 2010; Kahan, Jenkins-Smith & Braman 2011; Maynard & Scheufele 2016; Pidgeon & Fischhoff 2011). Or as Young (2012) noted our lack of ability to position our argument in the public means science has not influenced public debate as it should.

In the past science was called on to solve the environmental issues of industrial society but the approach of control and dominance, facts and figures has failed. Kuhn (2012) referred to the old traditional ways as ‘normal science’ where uncertainty was managed. The collapse of such normality occurred in the wake of realising that natural systems are dynamic and complex.

This has given rise to post normal science which is based on assumptions of unpredictability, incomplete control and a plurality of legitimate perspectives (Funtowicz & Ravetz 2003). Fundtowicz and Ravetz further describe post-normal science as occurring when uncertainties are either of the epistemological or the ethical kind, or when decision stakes reflect conflicting purposes among stakeholders - a set of circumstances that exist in NRM.

Post-normal science addresses high decision stakes and high systems uncertainties that ultimately influence environment policy. For example, the causal chain of coral reef collapse in the Great Barrier Reef occurs under a combination of conditions. These include high concentrations of pollutants from farm nutrient runoff, that lead to more algae and less coral diversity; population explosions of the coral predator Crown of Thorns Starfish and changing ocean temperatures - all interacting in complex, uncertain ways.

At stake maybe a combination of environmental, economic, cultural and societal values, therefore developing appropriate policy will require the inclusion of a diversity of participants or stakeholders. This introduces the concept of the citizen scientist that is enacted by citizens themselves (Irwin 1995) and a response to the scientisation of civil consciousness (Cronin 2010). Cribb (2010) argues that for science and technology to deliver full value to society, they must be accessible to as many people as possible and that messages must be easily
understood and tailored for each audience. Academics have to use less turgid and impenetrable communication and more relevant and comprehensible language (Dodgson 2017). For policy audiences communication is needed that can deliver synergistic combinations of ‘science push’ and ‘policy pull’ (Bielak et al. 2008).

Public deliberation may not occur harmoniously since the improvement of the environment may have adverse effects on some social groups. For example, establishing marine reserves reduces commercial and recreational fishing areas. Likewise, changed environmental/social policy and initiatives may in fact adversely affect certain civic capabilities i.e. the weakening of the Landcare movement as government funding is redirected. This was observed by Rutherford and Campbell (2014):

"Among the environmental fallout of the federal budget, Australia’s Landcare program has taken a hit, losing A$484 million. In return, the government’s environmental centrepiece, the Green Army, receives A$525 million. But switching money from Landcare to the Green Army is trading down for a less effective conservation model, repeats a pattern of reduced funding and weakened delivery and confuses improved agricultural productivity with improved environmental management."

Normalised communication lines have variously been described through the relationships between Landcare and government (Curtis & De Lacy 1995; Lockie 1997; Lockwood 2000), and the regional bodies and government (Pannell et al. 2007; Paton et al. 2004; Robins & Dovers 2007a; Wallington & Lawrence 2008). Communication at regional level operates in both formal and informal settings and networks. An influential group are the NRM facilitators, funded by state and federal government. These communicators are a diverse cohort and represent interests such as local government, Indigenous, biodiversity, water and sustainable agriculture. They are ‘translators’ or ‘intermediaries’ that carry messages for respective regions, civil society and government interests.

An important question is raised about how the intermediaries manage potential conflict between the legitimacy conferred on them by government and the perceived need to be recognised as separate from government in order to earn legitimacy from their communities.

2.3.2 Civil Society and Leadership

Leadership plays an essential role in the era of complex and evident environmental and social problems (Akiyama et al. 2013) yet limited study has been done on environmental leadership. Outstanding and explicit leadership by Australian citizens is recognized through awards
including Future Leaders Environment Award, Premiers Sustainability Award for Leadership (Qld) and the World Environment Day Sustainability Leadership Award. Yet the determinants of day to day leadership are little understood or recognized.

A precise meaning of leadership is difficult as leadership comes in many guises (i.e. business, political, and public). Warwick University’s Leadership Academic, Professor Keith Grint writes about the sacred nature of leadership that embodies three elements: (1) the separation between leaders and followers,(2) the sacrifice of leaders and followers and (3) the way leaders silence the anxiety and resistance of followers (Grint 2010). Fien (2014) notes that leadership is about vision, ethics and about the capacity to motivate and generate commitment. Eco-leadership is described as an emerging discourse that moves away from control and towards understanding emergence, connectivity and organic sustainable growth (Western 2013, pp. 183-7). It is the nature of a particular problem or set of problems that determines the style of leadership.

Grint (2008) provides guidance on this by describing a linked continuum of Command, Management and Leadership and their associated forms of power and compliance with a typology of three types of problems: critical, tame and wicked problems. Wicked problems are problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements – this is further discussed in Section 2.4.4. Increasing uncertainty surrounding a problem requires collaborative approaches of leadership. This is described in Figure 2.4 Typology of problems, power and authority (Grint 2008).
Fien and Wilson (2014) suggest that wicked problems cannot be addressed through the analytical approaches used by the public sector. The evidence-based approach that science demands and policy makers adopt may work with ‘tame’ problems but wicked NRM problems require the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders. Grint (2008) contends that as power is a relationship then change depends upon the breaks in relationships between leaders and followers. Therefore it follows that where civil society has chosen to ignore or resist the plans and policy of government new ways of thinking and collaboration will emerge. This can be seen in the people power movements.

### 2.3.3 Civil Society and Resistance

Civil resistance or people power movements are important because nonviolent civic forces provide pressure for decisive change. Civil resistance is generated by the action of ordinary people (Ackerman & Rodal 2008) and takes many forms in Australia, for example Goolengook, Australia's longest running forest blockade and the current Lock The Gate Alliance, a national coalition of people united against ‘unsafe mining’. These examples are obvious forms of resistance yet other powerful forms of resistance are located within discourse. Foucault reminds us that where there is power there is resistance and yet, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (Foucault 1979). Resistance reveals the weaknesses of current discourse and seeks alternative discourses to be created. It is in the contentious areas between competing discourses that new discourses can be created.
The current discourse of NRM ultimately reinforces hierarchies of scale and government homogeneity and it could be argued that Government’s explicit expectation for civil society input into NRM provides a diversion that focuses community energy to resisting interference from bureaucrats (Broderick 2005; Lane & Morrison 2006; Prager 2010). Yet civil society does find ways to resist the actions promoted by government and its agencies, and initiates other dialogues to change the balance of power. For example, civic environmentalism features an emphasis on dealing with problems at local levels and involves a political process in which divergent values are recognized. In discourse theory, resistance and agency are constructed at the level of discourse and resistance is a means for change and transformation.

2.4 Policy, governmentality, people and problems

2.4.1 Public Policy

Public policy is an instrument of governance, which provides direction for resources, activities and research and relates to the workings of governments. There have been many attempts to define public policy but its meanings and boundaries remain ambiguous (Althaus, Bridgman & Davis 2013). Although difficult to define, there are important characteristics of public policy that provide an insight to its functions. Althaus et al have defined these characteristics as: intentional, designed to achieve a stated or understood purpose; involving decisions, and their consequences; structured and orderly; political in nature, and dynamic.

The institution of public policy – the government - is represented through a combination of the Westminster System notions of ministerial responsibility and a federal Senate modelled on the United States. The primary functions of government are legislative, executive and judicial.

Conversely, the NRM model provides for governance managed through a strategic framework of cooperation rather than through regulatory or legal mandate (Head 2005). Policy makers use systematic cycles of planning and evaluation to develop policy. They ask what is the purpose of the policy and how will it affect overall government direction, interest groups and society. Do policy makers consider the links between the policy objectives and the means of implementation?

Thomas (2007) notes the complexities and breadth of environmental (NRM) policy and observes that environmental policy brings together two vastly different concepts –
environment and policy. Both concepts share the characteristics of being difficult to define (Thomas 2007, p. 26). Nonetheless, an underlying assumption behind environmental policy is that by designing social interventions we can bring about environmental improvement (Thomas 2007, p. 7).

Farmers and communities act within broader economic, political and cultural frameworks. It becomes challenging to encourage environmental behaviours within farm practice when economic imperatives and production policy drivers override environmental desires. Farmers are encouraged by government to become as productive, efficient and competitive as possible and a very strong imperative is created to externalise, as much as possible, the environmental and social costs of production (Lockie & Bourke 2001). Therefore policy that can encourage and incentivise a balance of production and conservation has a role to play in setting the stage for sustainable development.

During the 1990s and 2000s governance arrangements for NRM encouraged alignment of direction and activities across national, state and regional levels (Griffith, Davidson & Lockwood 2009; Lockwood et al. 2007). Regional bodies engaged with political and bureaucratic processes to try to ensure that their plans aligned with those generated at higher levels (Robins & Dovers 2007b). For example to receive State funding CMAs’ annual project bids are required to articulate links to their regional catchment strategies and sub-strategies. However, the Victorian Auditor-General 2014 review of CMAs found that project submissions contained only high-level links to CMAs’ regional catchment strategies. No links were established to specific strategy objectives, priorities or actions. Consequently, there is a lack of strong alignment between investment priorities and regional catchment strategies (Victorian Auditor-General 2014).

Furthermore, the Auditor-General’s review found that CMAs’ Monitoring Evaluation and Review (MER) programs were yet to establish approaches that fully adhered to the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, the guidelines and DEPI’s MER framework. In the absence of universal reporting systems and after two decades of funded programs, DEPI and CMAs are only now adopting standards to ensure consistent reporting, data quality and alignment. Exacerbating the regions efforts was the weak alignment among the three levels of government (Head 2009, p. 16) and failures on the part of state and Australian Government
NRM agencies to develop their own coherent and integrated NRM policy frameworks (Lockwood et al. 2007).

One way of considering how to overcome the challenges of alignment is by examining Constructive Alignment theory. Constructive Alignment theory was developed by Professor John Biggs and is a principle used for devising teaching, learning and assessment activities. The principle evolved from using a portfolio approach to assess the extent to which students felt they had met their unit objectives. This forced the students to reflect on what they wanted from the learning and how they would achieve this. This in turn puts pressure on the teacher to provide appropriate teaching/learning activities. In this way, all components in the system became aligned to the objectives (Biggs 2011).

Most environmental enactment occurs at local level. By applying Bigg’s principles to environmental planning, evaluation and reporting these activities could be assessed against the extent to which all stakeholders (local, state and federal) felt that objectives had been met. This would necessitate joint agreement on what was wanted as an outcome, how it would be achieved, how it would be evaluated and what resources would be required. Constructive alignment in a NRM context could promote agreed, consistent agendas, constructed through a reflective process shared by all legitimate parties.

Since the mid-2000s CMAs have endeavoured to align their strategies and plans to state and federal plans and policies, but this has mostly occurred at a higher level and is not integrated through the full gamut of environmental responses (Victorian Auditor-General 2014). In addition CMAs work with short-term fragmented State approaches and a weak national policy framework. Most recently constant changes in policy and program direction have undermined any local/regional efforts to align. The results are highly variable responses.

2.4.2 Governmentality and Neo Liberalism

This research focuses on community/government relationships and dynamics. The idea of governmentality is a concept first developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault defines governmentality as the art of government, that is, how governments organise practices through which people are governed, and fashion citizens best suited to fulfil government policies (Foucault 1979). In a series of lectures and articles, Foucault posed questions about contemporary social orders, the conceptualization of power and human
freedom and human actions that are linked to governmentality. The literature on
governmentality provides a certain priority to ‘how’ questions and asks how do we govern
and how are we governed? (Dean 2010).

Since the 1970s, the Australian political setting has been characterised by a neoliberal agenda
that involved a retraction of government support of various welfare initiatives and a rollout of
new forms of governance. The standard neoliberal policy package of the 1970s included
cutting back taxes and government social spending; eliminating tariffs and other barriers to
free trade; reducing regulations of labour markets, financial markets, and the environment;
and focusing macroeconomic policies on controlling inflation rather than job growth (Pollin
2005).

The change by government to a neo liberal approach required significant shifts in how
communities were understood and formed (Argent 2005), the place of the citizen and the role
of government. There was a strong notion that citizens should be autonomous, accountable,
conscientious, act in their own (enlightened) self-interest and not dependent on government
for their welfare (Argent 2005; Davidson et al. 2008; Lockwood et al. 2009; Measham &
Lumbasi 2013). Many of these attributes are evident in current understandings of sustainable
development, notions of good governance and in Australian NRM institutional arrangements
(Lockwood et al. 2008).

Neo-liberalism characteristically developed indirect techniques for leading and controlling
individuals without being responsible for them. The main mechanism is through
‘responsibilisation’. This entails subjects becoming ‘responsibilised’ by making them see
social risks such as unemployment, poverty, etc. not as the states responsibility but the
individual’s responsibility (Lemke 2001). The reliance on responsibilisation is strongly
evident in the regional delivery of NRM through volunteerism. Government needs volunteers
and landholders to implement on-ground works yet, although there are some financial
incentive for providing public services (funding grants), volunteers are in the main expected
to contribute their own resources. Furthermore, government retains a strong directive role
through the dominance of accreditation processes and decisions regarding the availability and
extent of funding (Moore 2005).

In reflecting upon the evolution of Australian NRM and citizen relationships with government
helpful lessons are found through the writings of philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Through his
Theory of Communicative Action (1981) Habermas describes the growing intervention of formal systems in our everyday lives. He contends that led by economic and administrative rationalisation, society is increasingly administered at a level remote from input from citizens.

Habermas (1984) also contends that democratic public life can only thrive where institutions enable citizens to debate matters of public importance. In this state actors are equally endowed with the capacities of discourse and recognise each other’s basic social equality. Expanding on this hypothesis, Habermas developed the concept of communicative action. Communicative action involves moving from the teleological to the communicative dimension where the analysis of language as social action is the basic medium of communication. The teleological aspect refers to the realising of one’s aims or the carrying out of one’s plan of action, whereas the communicative aspect refers to the interpretation of a situation and arriving at some agreement (Habermas 1990).

Shifting focus from one’s own aims to interpreting a situation and arriving at agreement can be attained through the act of how people acquire and use knowledge (Habermas 1984). It is the means of reaching understanding which is important, and key to this is recognising validity in of those who may hold differing positions and views. Habermas argues that it is possible to reach agreement about differing and disputed positions by means of argument and shared insights, which do not depend on force, but rather on reasons and grounds. It is this process of critique or argumentation that allows communicative action and rationality to proceed. Agreement between parties then rests on the sharing of common convictions, and through enabling a space where shared discourse can occur.

Governance of natural resources has often proved problematic for traditional top-down regulatory levels of government (Leys & Vanclay 2011). Yet an imbalance in power relations between government and civil society works to keep in place existing practices and institutions. Head (2005) asks how can partnerships operate successfully in the face of major pressures from community expectations, financial constraints and likely conflicts. Part of the answer may lie in the discursive practice of government officers, coordinators and facilitators. It is their role to implement policy at regional level, initiate and maintain partnerships and explore ways to enable the discourse to occur both within and outside the institutional frameworks of government. One theory that provides insight on how this takes place is street-level bureaucrat.
2.4.3 Policy Implementation and the NRM Facilitator Network

Michael Lipsky first described the concept of ‘street-level bureaucrat’, when presenting a theoretical framework for understanding the role that public service workers play in policy implementation. Lipsky used the term street-level bureaucrats to portray those teachers, police officers, health workers, social workers and others who worked directly with citizens, had discretionary decision-making, and relative autonomy from management. However, the bureaucrats also worked with a number of significant challenges including lack of sufficient resources and over allocation of clients. This led to bureaucrats creating unsanctioned coping mechanisms through their interactions with citizens, which in turn had the capacity to shape the public policy that directly impacted on the lives of citizens. There were the inevitable tensions as street-level bureaucrats’ had to follow a ‘rigid’ script emphasizing organizational policies and goals, yet were expected to be compassionate and treat each client on a case-by-case basis (Lipsky 2010).

Lipsky’s theory echoes in the Australian Government National Facilitator Network where over 100 facilitators were employed to support the delivery of the Natural Heritage Trust programs. The network included Australian Government Facilitators, Regional Facilitators, Indigenous Land Management Facilitators and Local Government Facilitators. These frontline officers liaised between all levels of government, the regional bodies and civil society to both articulate government direction, and negotiate, plan and integrate where possible the diverse wants, needs and priorities of others. The Facilitators became pivotal actors in shaping public policy as they met the challenges of implementation and provided feedback to the policy makers.

Like Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrats the facilitators developed devices to deal with a work environment of competing interests, aspirational goals, shifting science, policy and position change. They created extensive NRM networks; built trusting relationships; kept communication channels open and refreshed; honed their understanding and articulation of government policy and programs and expanded their understanding of regional issues (Fenton 2007).

A 2007 survey of the NRM Facilitator network reported that over 74% of survey respondents felt that facilitators had contributed to an awareness and understanding of government policies and programs, in addition to providing practical knowledge, NRM tools and resources. The
survey also reported that it was the quality of the relationship and interaction between some facilitators and Australian and State Government departments and agencies that significantly influenced the ability of facilitators’ to communicate effectively to targeted stakeholder groups (Fenton 2007).

There is an important and significant point of difference between street-level bureaucrats and the NRM facilitators. Lipsky’s bureaucrats worked with challenges so overwhelming that their coping mechanisms resulted in decisions that actually skewed policy intent. This has not occurred with the facilitators. Rather the facilitators use strategies to create space for discourse, discussion and negotiation where shared decisions can be made. The negotiated space becomes critical for those ‘on the street’ where policy sets intent, procedure guides how this will happen and implementation through negotiation take place. If the policy and procedure is too prescriptive then implementation cannot be flexible enough to adapt to local conditions.

2.4.4 Wicked Problems

Natural resource managers are tasked with solving very complex environmental, societal and economic problems. The term ‘wicked problems’ is used to describe problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements.

Wicked problems were first described in the 1970’s by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber, who argued that using a scientific approach to confronting problems of social policy is not possible because of the interdependencies and frequent multi-causal nature of these problems. They are wicked problems and can only be resolved by changes in the society that generated them (Rittel & Webber 1973). The nature and extent of a wicked problem depends on the range of people involved as different stakeholders have different versions of what the problem may be. Often, each version of the problem has an element of truth - no one version is complete or verifiably right or wrong. There may be no clear solution and there are often internally conflicting goals or objectives within the broader wicked problem (Australian Public Service Commissioner 2012; Head & Alford 2013; Rittel & Webber 1973).

NRM wicked problems often exist where it is unclear which authority may claim responsibility for a site or event, for example the problems of water pollution where water
catchments are linked by human and natural systems that are complex, dynamic and multi-actor in nature. Brown, Harris & Russell (2010) use the example of global warming as a wicked problem where there is no single definition and no final answer, since resolution always brings another set of issues.

Bellamy (2007, pp. 98-9) describes NRM wicked problems as involving large and multifunctional spatial area, with substantial institutional and organisational fragmentation. Griffith, Davidson & Lockwood (2009) concur with Bellamy’s description and also observe that NRM policy responses lag behind, as problems rapidly change as a result of interactions between people, policy and systems dynamics.

There are NRM examples where on-ground implementation and feedback is linked directly to policy makers. For example, the community mapping project ‘Victorian 2002/03 Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)’ that gathered baseline data to assist with planning and management activities. The project was modified to enable local government and other agencies to use it simultaneously for formulating policy and statutory planning frameworks (Keogh, Chant & Frazer 2006).

Dealing with wicked problems and the associated social, economic and ecological consequences requires ongoing adaptive governance (Bellamy 2007), adaptive leadership and wide stakeholder participation to ensure the ‘buy-in’ and on-going feedback and advice (Fien & Wilson 2014). Actors are needed who can both influence and enable each other to accept collective responsibility for their collective problems and to act with collective purpose (Grint 2010). Fien and Wilson describe adaptive leadership as built on features that include the character of the leader, collaboration, and continuity of commitment, competence and communication. Of particular relevance to this study are the notions of collaboration and communication. How do people collaborate and communicate in an open, honest and persuasive way – what does this discourse look like? Particularly against the nature and seriousness of problems, the difficulties of finding resolution and especially when there may be those aggrieved by outcomes (Fien & Wilson 2014).
3 Digging Deeper - the Literature Part 2
3.1 Introduction

Chapter three presents the second part of the literature review. Section 3.2 Discourse Studies reviews the origins of discourse and discourse studies and draws out the broader dimensions and origins of discourse analysis. Foucault proposed that discourse is fundamentally linked to power and discourse enacts power. How figures in authority use language to express their dominance is an area that Foucault explores through discursive practice. Antaki presents potential weaknesses in the discourse analysis approach and Fien’s powerful and subordinate discourse links the literature to the Australian NRM context. Gee provides seven tools or categories to guide the analysis process.

Section 3.3 Dryzek’s Environmental Discourse introduces the work of John Dryzek. Dryzek uses tensions in environmental debates to connect and differentiate discourses and developed taxonomy for organizing conflicting discourses. Section 3.3.1 identifies democratic pragmatism as a frame for exploring and understanding the narrative of NRM at regional level.

3.2 Discourse Studies

The term discourse, used analytically, is defined in this study as an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories (Hajer 1995) through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena. It is embedded in language, interpreted and reformed to make coherent stories or accounts.

Discourse analysis is derived from the principle that text is inscribed within a given discourse. Discourse analysis as a technique enables access to ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a research question and can reveal hidden motivations as it deconstructs and interprets text. Discourse analysis also allows us to survey the struggles and strategies that lead to the formation of dominant social narratives, such as the Landcare movement. Discourse analysis may not provide conclusive answers to a specific problem. Rather, it allows the reader to understand the conditions behind a problem and to identify the assumptions that underpin the essence of the problem. By revealing assumptions discourse analysis allows the reader to view the problem from a new position. This in turn reveals motivations, values, intent and messages that provide a platform on which to solve problems.
Philosopher Michel Foucault developed the concept of discourse to reveal content concerning illness, madness, sex and criminality (Foucault 1979). Foucault focused on questions of power and how governments try to create citizens best suited to realise governments’ policies. He also explored how power is assigned to citizens, the perception of themselves and their responses.

Foucault (1979) proposed that individuals are embedded in the discourse and unable to step back and make comparative assessments and choices across different discourses. However, with the digital age and instant global communication this proposition could now be challenged as people participate in multiple discourses and seek multiple worldviews to inform their own positions. Foucault also proposed that discourse is fundamentally linked to power and discourses enact power. Dryzek (2005) takes another view and contends that discourse is powerful but not impenetrable. Foucault maintains that one single discourse is typically dominant in any time and place – conditioning not just agreement but also the terms of dispute. Again, Dryzek takes a contrary view, and offers environmentalism as an example. Environmentalism is composed of a variety of discourses, sometimes complementing one another, but often competing. These discourses can be felt in the policies of governments or intergovernmental bodies and in institutional structure (Dryzek 2005).

Fairclough (1992) provides insight to the discourse analysis of texts, stating that every discourse instance involves three phases. The first phase describes the text in terms of vocabulary, grammar and textual features evident. The second phase involves interpretation and analysis and how the text is used. The third phase is explanation and seeks to clarify how social practices are reproduced within society as a product of the process of text construction.

Discourse analysis has introduced new methods of research and a proliferation of forms (Antaki et al. 2003). In critiquing discourse analysis Antaki identifies several problems. These include: (1) under analysis through summary, (2) under analysis through taking sides, (3) under analysis through over quotation and (4) analysis that simply spots features (Antaki et al. 2003). To avoid these pitfalls this study uses multiple sources of data and informants; analysis techniques that distil and cross reference data (described in Section 6.3.6), and through sharing draft findings with others.

Environmental discourse has been explored through many disciplines including urban environmental management; citizen participation in environment; environmentalism,
sustainable development and environmental politics (Brand 2007; Darier 1999; Dryzek 2005; Hajer 1995). These studies are usually undertaken through analysis of media texts, policy documents or environmental movements (Kurz et al. 2005).

A central theme of this study serves to understand and construct meaning in NRM relationships through analysis of NRM discourse. Qualitative analysis of texts can reveal self-contradictions, essentialist assumptions, absences, the existence of multiple voices, metaphors, taken-for-granted constructions e.g. binary assumptions and rhetorical devices that uncover multiple meanings (Forbes 2000). Given the potential, in this study, for multiple perspectives of the same shared event(s), a triangulation technique was used to seek counterparts and well as convergences. Triangulation is a technique for observing the phenomena of research from different perspectives (Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 31) and in this study was applied through using multiple data sources and validation of analysis.

This study also explores events in terms of powerful and subordinate discourse that constitute social realities (Fien 2002). As a particular discourse has its own argumentative rationality, tracing discourses might also reveal the democratic quality of discussion. Through interrogating text and listening to the various actors, insights can be gained into the roles performed by agents participating in the regional NRM setting.

Numerous Australian studies discuss issues relating to NRM power relations (Bellamy 2007; Compton & Beeton 2012; Lane, Robinson & Taylor 2009; Lockie & Higgins 2007; Robins & Kanowski 2011; Tennent & Lockie 2012). However, NRM discourse analysis has been mainly used as an adjunct to support other methods of research, not as a primary method for exploring the power relations and discursive practices used by NRM actors.

Hajer (1995) believed that discourse analysis could clarify how social and cognitive commitments are reproduced, how discursive ‘interpellations’ take place, and where routine practice is interrupted. These interruption events are described as ‘inter-discursive transfer points’ where actors exchange positional statements and draw new discursive relationships. The interactions between NRM actors are a focus of this study, thus applying discourse analysis offers a method to explain how actors enter or retreat from NRM discourse.
Discourse is how stories are told and narratives formed, and it is where problems may be solved, ideas created and worldview constructed. Different discourses perceive different worldviews in different ways (Dryzek 2005, p. 17).

Establishing the Australian regional NRM model was consistent with international trends where the region is considered a favoured scale of economic, administrative and political organisation (Lane, Robinson & Taylor 2009). These institutional changes to NRM introduced new ways of doing things and new language. The language used was an expression of ‘soft capitalism’, a form of managerialism used by many government administrations (Thrift 2005). Indeed, government referred to itself in communiqués and other documents as ‘the investor’ and community groups, non-government organisations, industry etc. as ‘the client’. The environment was given a ‘natural asset value’.

The discourse of government came from an authoritative, administrative, managerial position. In spite of that, government as an investor was not a prospect that had been endorsed by either the proponents of regional autonomy or those with alternative linkages and support through State-level legislation (Robins & Dovers 2007b).

How figures in authority use language to express their dominance is an area that Foucault explores through discursive practice. For Foucault, discursive practice means power relations and how relationships are formed by asserting power through language, written text, vocabulary and syntax intonation (Foucault 1979).

Power and resistance are inter-linked and discursive practice denotes the status of the ‘speaker’. The way that discourse emerges through discussion, debates and negotiations reveals tensions of power and resistance. Insight is gained into social practice in terms of how practice is discursively produced through the tensions of the interface among agents. Discursive practice is grounded in discourse through four components: (1) social reality that is linguistically/discursively constructed, (2) discourse that is context-bound, (3) discourse as social action and (4) meaning is negotiated in interaction. Foucault suggests that civil society plays an implicit role in the discursive practices or systems of power, which provide their livelihoods and definition.

The not-negotiable basis of a discursive practice approach is that discourse leads to action and not merely representation. The analyst must attend to what is being accomplished through the
discourse. So, for example, metaphors are treated as utterances that reveal a discourse or way of explaining sometimes-abstract notions to help describe certain situations. The object of study, then, is how the metaphor discloses discourse and sets context i.e. how metaphors are used.

A feature of discursive practice approach is to bracket such themes as truth, reality, morality and common sense. Instead of discussing how matters should be through an exploration of reality, an analysis is conducted of how reality is invoked and negotiated in discourse. This allows the researcher to discursively follow lines of inquiry to discover, for example, how professional responses take place, how people negotiate their positions, and how activities are organized.

The discursive approach in this study uses analysis of events and text to describe a discourse. Then observation, field notes and interview transcripts are used to describe how reality is invoked by the various actors. Conversations with informants provide insight, and are treated as a source of knowledge concerning the topics discussed. The context for the informant is described and cross-referenced with others experience of the same situation.

Discourse analysis has steadily gained ground since early environmental change studies (Darier 1999; Hajer 1995), with authors focusing on power relationships associated with dominant and subordinate narratives. The emergence of civic environmentalism discourse, using bottom-up, participation and stakeholder references, came to the fore at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It is worth noting that prior to Rio the bottom-up movement had already been emerging in Australian through Landcare and NGO’s such as Greening Australia. Nonetheless, the Rio conference made it obvious that those affected by environmental problems, or with a legitimate interest or stake, should have a voice in addressing the solutions (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2006).

Civic environmentalism discourse is neither homogenous nor uncontested and is characterized as two quite separate discourses (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2007). The first is reform-oriented and the second is radical resistance. The reformist civic environmentalism discourse encourages public accountability and legitimacy of multilateral institutions through increased civil society participation that links local issues to global agendas. The reformist discourse promotes a pluralistic global environmental order and affirms the rise of public private partnerships between NGOs, business and governments as they hold the promise of result-
based environmental problem solving. In contrast, radical resistance is deeply sceptical of participatory stakeholder governance. This discourse contends that issues of power and disempowerment are present in negotiation processes that are supported by entrenched power structures (i.e. sovereignty, capitalism).

The radical resistance discourse advocates for a fundamental change of consumption patterns and existing institutions, and challenges neo-liberal market-oriented policies, privatization and deregulation that operate at the expense of the environment. The exercise of power is closely aligned to the production of knowledge which in turn can sustain the power discourse (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2007).

The Australian government and its agents use evidence-based, expert driven, science and technology to underpin the development of NRM programs, strategies, targets and priorities. Hence the language that government adopts from the science brokers becomes a dominant discourse. (No doubt scientists would say they use a different language to government especially around notions of risk and probability). Accordingly NRM discourse is not neutral but favors certain descriptions of reality and empowers certain actors while marginalizing others. Furthermore, the mechanisms for NRM discourse are clearly weighted in favor of government and its agents who have long established avenues to arrive with a powerful voice. The instrumentalities of parliament, the public service, and statutory legislation – all help create a unified voice in the discourse.

The marginalized voices are located in civil society and are those who do not have the capacity, capability or confidence to engage in the NRM discourse. The language of civil society may simply not connect with government which encompasses a wide range of expertise and can draw on multiple sources of information and knowledge. Government discourse, while focused on law and regulation, also includes the language of business and of science as an evidence base. Civil society represents a full spectrum of expertise and knowledge (capabilities) that are often dispersed with each individual voice drawing on more narrow expertise and specialist knowledge. The language of others may well be unfamiliar.

Individuals and entities within civil society act independently and often competitively, through the vox populi and demos. Are the voices of the people with their diverse and conflicting intent accommodated in NRM discourse? When voices are enabled, how does the scale of view affect the interaction? Individuals often only see a small section of the puzzle –
their bit – whereas government has the knowledge and resources to view across state, national or international levels. The disparity in view means that interaction may be misaligned. Despite these challenges, as world environmental problems impact on greater numbers of communities (i.e. climate change) the resistant discourse of civic environmentalism is challenging power regimes and advocating for increased access and stakeholder participation. To address this partnership agreements and multi-stakeholdership are increasingly used for collaborative problem solving (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2007).

In this study NRM issues are embedded in multiple problems and multiple definitions in a social construction of environmental conflict. The position of resistance creates opposition that is important to challenge dominant discourses. Democratic processes can offer an institutionally sanctioned mechanism for expression of opposition, but Hajer (2005) asks what institutional practice can be envisaged where discourse can take place in a more democratic way? The institutional question becomes all the more important when considering the complexity and severity of global environmental problems, such as climate change. These problems will necessitate transnational networks where power is dispersed with limited application between independent states (Hajer & Versteeg 2005). Solutions for these issues will not be found using traditional approaches.

3.2.1 Discourse Analysis Framework.

Discourse analysis studies the interplay between talk, non-vocal conduct and the spatial and technological dimensions of a setting (Drew & Sorjonen 2011; Van Dijk 2011). Analysis in this thesis considers language-in-use (speech and text), discursive practice, spatial and institutional settings to reveal how, when and where NRM discourse is being used.

World views are continually built and rebuilt through language in tandem with action, interaction, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, ways of thinking, valuing, believing and feeling (Gee 2005). Gee maintains that whenever we speak or write we always build seven areas of reality. These seven building tools are: (1) Significance of language; (2) Activities or discursive practice; (3) Identities and relevant roles/positions; (4) Relationships; (5) Politics and the discourses present; (6) Connections and (7) Knowledge and ways of knowing (Gee 2005). Gee’s building tools provide a framework of intent, mode of interaction and discursive practice that can be applied to the research questions (Section 1.5 Research Questions).
Gee (2005) also observes that the validity of analysis is not constituted by arguing that the analysis reflects reality. Rather the validity of analysis is based on a convergence of the seven categories where the described discourse is recognized by actors, and there is agreement of the discourse settings described. Furthermore, the analysis is valid if it can be applied to other sorts of data.

A comprehensive linguistic exploration of language is not the focus of this study; therefore the research does not align with the versions of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2010; Wodak & Meyer 2009). Rather the subjective nature of this study results in research findings that enable others to build on the line of thinking or to argue alternate views - the analysis is open to further discussion and dispute.

### 3.3 Dryzek’s Environmental Discourse

This study draws heavily of the work of John Dryzek who studies global environmental discourse through an analysis of difference and findings as published in The Politics of the Earth (2005). Dryzek uses tensions in environmental debates to connect and differentiate discourses and describes environmental discourses that are often in conflict. Each discourse rests on independent assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates and agreements.

To make sense of the competing environmental discourses Dryzek developed taxonomy for organizing conflicting environmental discourses. Nine discourses are defined as arguments against industrialism, the long-dominant discourse of industrial society, with its commitment to unlimited growth at the expense of the environment (Dryzek 2005). Dryzek’s taxonomy begins with the definition of two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the degree to which alternatives wish to move away from the conditions created by industrialism, either reformist or radical departures from the terms of the dominant discourse see Figure 3.1 First dimension in Dryzek's taxonomy.
The reformist accepts the discourse and nature of industrialisation whereas the radical rejects this discourse.

The second dimension to the taxonomy further defines the character of the reformist/radical alternatives as either prosaic or imaginative. Prosaic alternatives take industrial society as given and environmental problems are viewed as industrial political economy issues. As such these problems require action but not as a departure from the status quo of industrialism. In contrast, imaginative departures seek to redefine the world order and solving environmental problems requires transformation of the political-economic structure. By combining these two dimensions a) reformist versus radical and b) prosaic versus imaginative a further four discourses are characterised. See Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Second dimension to Dryzek's taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reformist</th>
<th>Radical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prosaic</strong></td>
<td>Environmental Problem solving</td>
<td>Survivalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginative</strong></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Green radicalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dryzek further elaborates on these four environmental discourses by defining the following sub-categories of discourse.

1. Environmental Problem Solving

The reformist and prosaic category of discourse is defined as environmental problem solving. The three discourses that make up this category comprise: (1) administrative rationalism, (2) democratic pragmatism, and (3) economic rationalism. These discourses are prosaic because the economic-political status quo of industrialism is taken as a given. The distinction between the three discourses is that the agent who is in control of environmental policies, i.e. experts for administrative rationalism, the people for democratic rationalism, or the market for economic rationalism.

2. Sustainability

The reformist and imaginative category is defined by sustainability. In this space, Dryzek describes two types of discourses (1) sustainable development and (2) ecological modernization. Concepts of sustainable development evolved during the 1980’s but were hampered by a lack of consensus on what was meant by sustainable. Ecological modernisation contends that economic growth and environmental protection can be compatible. They use multiple images of sustainability, which according to Dryzek do not include notions of limits.

The two discourses are differentiated by the political implementation of sustainability principles. Sustainable development grew out of aspirational goals for environmental management, for example those led by the United Nations (Bruntland 1987) and is built on preceding ideas of sustainable yields in resource use. As Dryzek suggests the effective implementation of sustainable development relies on the commitment of stakeholders which may or may not be present.

The success or failure of sustainable development rests on dissemination and acceptance of the discourse at a variety of levels, followed by action on and experimentation with its tenets (Dryzek p159).

In contrast, ecological modernization refers to a ‘restructuring of the capitalist political economy along more environmentally sound lines’ (Dryzek p167). Here, sustainable development is built into operation of the state via ‘consensual relationships among key
actors’. Dryzek points to a number of countries as examples of ecological modernization such as Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway and Sweden, noting that different countries have arrived at this point from quite different backgrounds.

3. Survivalism

Survivalism is based on the assertion that the planet has limited stocks of resources and will require multidimensional action to prevent global disaster. It is both radical and pragmatic and includes two dominant discourses. The first, survivalism, focuses on population, limits and carrying capacities. It is radical because perpetual economic growth and power relations are challenged and it is prosaic because solutions are proposed within the constraints of industrialism. This discourse stands in opposition to the alternative dominant discourse which is the ‘no limits’ Promethean discourse of industrialism. The latter recognises markets, prices, technology and people and maintains that growth is good and the market will produce the optimal outcome. It assumes that humans dominate the natural world and that everyone is motivated by self-interest and will act individually and according to free-market principles. The validity of these assumptions is increasingly challenged, notably by Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz (Atkinson & Stiglitz 2015; Stiglitz & Chang 2001).

4. Green Radicalism

The last category, Green Radicalism, includes discourses that are imaginative and radical and described by Dryzek as (1) green consciousness and (2) green politics. Those who employ these discourses reject the basic structure of industrial society and re-imagine radically different understandings of the environment, human-environment interactions, and human society. These two discourses comprise diverse, ecologically oriented political and social movements including social ecology, deep ecology, and bioregionalism.

Green consciousness aims to change the way individuals and civil society thinks about environment. It links to a humanist tradition using ecological ideas to create a philosophical position.

The idea is to cultivate a deep consciousness and awareness of organic unity, of the holistic nature of the ecological webs in which every individual is enmeshed. (Dryzek p184)
Green politics refers to the discourse built through green political parties. This extends the idea of changing consciousness and uses existing political processes to influence environmental outcomes at the level of the state.

Using the Dryzek’s taxonomic key the nine environmental discourses are represented in Table 3.2. Nine environmental discourses.

Table 3.2 Nine environmental discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prosaic</th>
<th>Reformist</th>
<th>Radical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>● administrative rationalism</td>
<td>● survivalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● democratic pragmatism</td>
<td>● promethean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● economic rationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>● sustainable development</td>
<td>● green consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● ecological modernization</td>
<td>● green politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The concept of ‘leave it to the people’ as a form of resistance to the neo-liberal influence on NRM discourse is positioned within Dryzek’s Democratic Pragmatism (highlighted in Table 3.2). The next section will investigate this discourse as a potential frame for exploring and understanding the narrative of NRM at regional level.

### 3.3.1 Leave it to the people - Democratic Pragmatism

The federal government established the regional NRM delivery model as the main mechanism for addressing environmental challenges and issues. Consequently an administrative framework was established to support the numerous programs and initiatives that mushroomed across the nation in response to a call for action at local and regional level. Government intent has been to encourage participation, develop partnership approaches and establish interactive problem solving. Yet these objectives occur within the institutional framework of government and within a discourse that defers to the status quo of government.

Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism situates interactive problem solving within basic institutional structures. Pragmatism in this context has two meanings. The first is used in everyday language and is practical, matter-of-fact. The second meaning stems from philosophical schools that theorize that life is a process of pluralistic learning in a world of uncertainty. These pragmatic meanings mirror the discourse of NRM where a combination of...
approaches including democratic involvement and the value judgments of experts’ advice are used by policy makers to reach conclusions (Richardson & Razzaque 2006). As previously discussed in Section 1.2 Research problem, civic participation provides legitimacy and public acceptability of policy decisions – a proposition that Dryzek observes as the primary reason for democratization of environmental administration. However, focus on the expressed intent masks the underlying question of the reality of partnership. Do already established government practices actually enable discursive interaction in an equitable and democratic way? Dryzek offers several devices that are available to democratic pragmatism including: public consultation, alternative dispute resolution, policy dialogue, lay citizen deliberation, public enquiries, and right to know legislation. These devices warrant closer examination and testing for equitable and democratic discursive interaction.

3.3.1.1 Public Consultation

Government, its agents and institutions use public consultation processes when preparing reports such as environmental impact assessment statements. This type of information is used to inform policy and set program direction. Public consultation in these instances is a regulatory process by which input from the public is sought on matters affecting them. The primary goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects or laws and policies. On most occasions citizens have an ability to voice their views but there is no sharing of power between the state and the citizenry. An example of comprehensive public consultation is that of the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. The Commissioner reports on the environment at least every five years through the State of the Environment (SoE) report.

I submit the Victoria State of the Environment Report 2013, Science Policy People (SoE 2013), in accordance with the requirements of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Act 2003 (the Act). In my 2010 reporting framework I undertook to produce this report in a manner, which would: inform the Victorian community about the health of the natural environment and influence government to achieve environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability.

To meet this undertaking the SoE 2013 was produced not only through research and data analysis, but also through consultation across sectors, including communities throughout the state. (Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability 2013)

In developing the 2013 SoE, scientific data about Victoria’s natural environment was collated along with ground-truth (validated) information gathered from discussion with local
government, community groups, interested individuals, corporate stakeholders, universities and research groups. The Commissioner conducted extensive regional visits including personal visits to sites of interest identified by both subject experts and lay people. This example illustrates an effective public consultation, which leads to the problem of less satisfactory processes. What is lost when a public consultation is less thorough or reaches fewer stakeholders? What is the appropriate balance between the depth of consultation and cost efficacy of the process?

3.3.1.2 Alternative Dispute Resolution

Australia’s environment planning and development processes are characterised by increasing complexity and frequent controversy. The expansion of coal seam gas mining in the Hunter Valley is a recent example. In Australia several hundred statutes are described as environmental legislation (Bates 2010) and cover both state and federal levels of government.

Disputes commonly arise as a result of public protest in relation to a government policy or proposal (the right to farm); a private planning or development application (vegetation clearance); or objections related to the granting of licences (works on waterways).

These disputes are often multi-claimant, require expert argument and can result in lengthy legal battles. One way of recognising and involving interested parties is through alternative dispute resolution (ADR), which Dryzek suggests has increasing potential as a vehicle for civic action.

Each of the Australian state and territory jurisdictions have developed ADR processes to assist in resolving environment and planning disputes, but these vary greatly between states. The judicial and arbitration systems covering environmental issues are not streamlined. For example, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hears environmental planning and building appeals, while judicial reviews are still heard within the Supreme Court, and criminal prosecutions in the Magistrates’ Court. Nonetheless ADR offers an important alternative to prolonged legal action. Moreover, as the frequency of environmental disputes increase ADR will feature more strongly in dispute resolution, administration of law and law-making.
ADR processes do not necessarily interact directly with overarching Commonwealth environmental law. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 provides for ‘increased opportunity for public involvement and participation in environmental planning and assessment’ as one of its objectives. Yet state ADR processes are not linked to the Act or this objective, which may weaken public opportunity. The multiple forms for alternative dispute resolution across Australia create a multi-layered system which is likely to produce variable outcomes.

### 3.3.1.3 Policy Dialogue

Dryzek notes the use of policy dialogue where the public are explicitly involved in policy development as an avenue for public consultation, yet this device appears to be the weakest of those presented. A typical example of policy dialogue is provided by Australia’s 1990 Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) process where main national environmental groups and relevant industry representatives participated in discussions that were informing strategic policy recommendations. These discussions covered a number of areas including agriculture, energy, fisheries, forestry, manufacturing, mining and tourism and for each area a working group was established. Yet eight years later the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1998) found that while Australia had made progress in developing a framework for integrating environmental and economic policies, in many cases economic objectives had taken priority over environmental concerns. The structured policy dialogue had not advanced the environmental voice.

### 3.3.1.4 Lay Citizen Deliberation

Lay citizen deliberation is increasingly seen as an option for policy development, planning and strategizing. Examples of citizen deliberation include citizen juries, consensus conferences and planning cells where randomly selected people come together to deliberate on specific issues and to develop recommendations for policy makers or actions for authorities. These processes specifically seek input from people who have no particular knowledge or association with the issue – although there are opportunities to question experts and advocates and information is provided. This approach encourages public reasoning and consensual decision making where the citizen learns more about the issue in a non-adversarial environment. However, it is undermined by the disparity between actors. Can public
deliberation work without being compromised by the very power structures that commission these activities?

The deliberate minimization of the expert voice also creates constraints. If the issue relies on technical understanding, as is often the case with NRM, the lay voice must at least acknowledge the limitations of its contributions. Naïve questions can be very useful to challenge assumptions and to ensure validation with community expectations. Local knowledge is important in its own right as a form of expertise. Uninformed weighting and preference for a singular voice risks unintended consequences and hidden bias.

In addition, there are democratic implications with lay citizen deliberation processes when representation from interest groups is not ensured. Key to the success of citizen deliberation is that all parties need to have very clear, agreed-to understanding about the terms of authority for implementing or changing recommendations transpiring from a deliberation.

3.3.1.5 Public Enquiries

Dryzek describes public enquiries as resembling impact assessment in that they are orientated by specific project proposal. They differ in that public enquiries are visible forums and open to the depositions of both proponents and objectors. The success of public enquiries depends on the terms of reference defined in each case and the way these terms are interpreted. There are instances where narrow and limiting terms have influenced outcomes. This study uses six government parliamentary inquiries (between 2001 and 2011) to interrogate civil society input into environmental issues. These inquiries reveal numerous contributions by individuals and groups from all walks of life. The inquires used comprise: Inquiry into public good conservation - Impact of environmental measures imposed on landholders; Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy; Inquiry into the Environment Effects Statement Process in Victoria; Inquiry into Sustainable Development of Agribusiness in Outer Suburban Melbourne; Inquiry into Soil Carbon Sequestration in Victoria and Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires in Victoria. These public enquiries did gather valuable input from individuals and groups but it is not clear that this mechanism can have broad enough application to gather input from all interested parties.

Public inquiries need participants to be able to effectively present their case in a public forum which may be confrontational, competitive or both. Capacity is affected by many factors
including confidence, expertise, availability and expertise in communication. Not all stakeholders have the capacity to be heard in this type of forum.

3.3.1.6 Right-to-know Legislation

Dryzek’s last device to enable democratic pragmatism to influence central administration is right-to-know legislation. Dryzek uses this example to demonstrate that under law the state can provide information for its citizens to ensure effective participation in democratic processes. Right-to-know legislation is best understood in the context of the United States workplace and community environmental law where, for example, it is a legal principle that the individual has the right to know the chemicals to which they may be exposed in their daily living. Australia has an even more powerful piece of legislation for obtaining information that is the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act.

FOI is the legislative basis for open government in Australia and covers Australian Government ministers and most agencies. Individuals have rights under the FOI Act to request access to government documents. This includes documents containing information about them or about government programs, policies and decisions. In some circumstances individuals can also ask Ministers and agencies to correct or add a note to any information they hold about them. The FOI Act also requires agencies to publish specified categories of information, and allows them to proactively release other information (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner 2105). FOI requests are used to seek specific pieces of information and as such are an important devise for informing public discussion. Again, the success of a request to government for information will be limited by the expertise of the requestor. If the request is imprecise or delayed by bureaucratic processes, the information provided may not be useful.

To summarise, Dryzek presents the previous six devices as examples where democratic pragmatism is working within administrative processes. Despite results of mixed value, Dryzek maintains that they represent a shift in environmental policy toward a greater openness and participation in decision-making. Yet a closer examination of these devices, using an Australian regional lens, reveals the inadequate nature of these mechanisms to enhance equity, equality and transparency in NRM. Public consultation; alternative dispute resolution; policy dialogue; lay citizen deliberation, public enquiries, and right to know legislation are all constructs of government instrumentalities. Do these government practices
enable discursive interaction in an equitable and democratic way? The answer (as shown in this study) is that some do but in a limited way.

Public consultation gives citizens the ability to voice their views but there is no sharing of power between the state and the citizenry. Alternative dispute resolution offers a better option than costly court cases, although the ADRs vary from state to state and are not linked to the important Commonwealth EPBC Act. Policy dialogues where the public are explicitly involved in policy development initially showed promise but as the OEDC found in many cases economic objectives had taken priority over environmental concerns. Lay citizen deliberation raises three questions: (1) how public deliberation can occur without being compromised by the commissioning power structures, (2) how this approach deals with conflict and (3) the democratic implications when representation from interest groups is not assured.

Australian citizens can voice their concerns through public inquiries where these are held, but the reach of an inquiry is dependent on the terms of reference and the way these terms are interpreted, as well as the capacity of the citizen to engage. The right-to-know legislation is one vehicle that citizens can access but then FOI’s are a much more widely used and an important devise for informing public discussion.

3.3.2 Assumptions, agents and metaphors

Dryzek’s taxonomy further describes democratic pragmatism using assumptions, agents and their motives and key metaphors to explore its landscape. Dryzek notes that a number of assumptions that underpin the concept of democratic pragmatism are derived from its antecedents of liberal capitalist democracy. Democratic pragmatism assumes that nature is subordinate to human problem solving; that is, that human ingenuity can overcome challenges from the natural world. Placing the concept of democracy at the heart of the idea creates the assumption that problem-solving will not exist simply as an arm of government rather it is a multiplicity of decision processes populated by the diversity of the citizens. This discourse assumes political relationships are interactive and feature a mix of competition and cooperation. The discourse allows for both cooperative problem solving and political conflict between competing interests i.e. developers and environmentalists.
Agents of democratic pragmatism are diverse and representative of civil society from individuals, groups, corporations or government agents. With a diversity of representation comes a diversity of motives, nonetheless the key motivation is public interest. Dryzek cautions that public interest will have to be defined in plural terms, for example, public interest to the environmentalist may be very different to that of the farmer.

Dryzek also uses metaphor as a way to investigate and explain discourse and describes democratic pragmatism in four metaphors. The first is from physics where public policy is the result of forces acting upon it. The second is that public policy is like a scientific experiment that needs to be tested and challenged. The third metaphor is that democratic pragmatism allows a wide range of variables and is similar to that of a thermostat that triggers correction from extremes. The final metaphor is networks and draws parallels between networked information technology and networked government that operate without a central controller. These metaphors were not used specifically in this study, which instead draws directly on the language of the examined discourse.

### 3.3.3 Summary

Dryzek’s (2005) taxonomy describes democratic pragmatism as:

1. Basic entities recognized or constructed
   - Liberal capitalism
   - Citizens
2. Assumptions about natural relationships
   - Equality among citizens
   - Interactive political relationships, mixing competition and cooperation
3. Agents and their motives
   - Many different agents
   - Motivation a mix of material self-interest and multiple conceptions of public interest
4. Key metaphors
   - Public policy as a resultant of forces
   - Policy like scientific experimentation
   - Thermostat
   - Network

Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism is best suited to investigate NRM discourse in the study area. Those involved in natural resource management are concerned with everyday
problematic situations. Problem solving approaches are inherently pragmatic and ultimately dependent on local place-based communities to implement. Although NRM acknowledges pluralism and the multiple views and interests of citizens, there are deeper issues with ensuring equity and inclusiveness in decision making. So far, government interests have been favored over the interests of place-based communities. Thus democratic pragmatism’s main limitation is the existence of political power and as Dryzek notes ‘politics in capitalist democratic settings is rarely about disinterested and public-spirited problem solving, where many different interests are brought to bear’ (Dryzek 2005, p. 117).

As previously evidenced, the devices used by democratic pragmatists are instruments of either the state or powerful interests. These debates can be influenced or biased using the vast resources of the state or finances of specific interest groups. The business of liberal capitalism has far reaching influence on the design and implementation of policy and decision-making processes.
4 The Australian NRM Context


4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents a historical account of natural resource management in Australia, including key players and policies and influencing programs and events. Documenting the many phases of NRM provides the reader with an appreciation of the constant evolution and changing nature of environmental focus and policy, who the actors have been and continue to be, and the cumulative nature of the issues and responses that have been tried.

4.2 The Australian Context

Australia is a very old and dry continent with generally shallow, infertile soils. A greater proportion of the continent is classified as semi-arid or arid. Post-settlement Australians farmed these soils using techniques developed for European conditions i.e. rich deep soils. These European practices were largely proven to be completely inappropriate and led to widespread soil erosion and degradation (Cary, Webb & Barr 2002; Lane et al. 2009). In Victoria, the need for a government response to soil erosion can be traced back to the early 1850s (Thompson 1979) when grazier John G Robertson, of Wando Vale, set down the first written accounts of soil erosion (Bride 1983). Over the years various government departments were assigned responsibility for aspects of soil conservation, but it was not until November 1940 that an Act of Parliament set up the Soil Conservation Board (SCB). The SCB eventually became the Soil Conservation Authority (SCA) which was responsible for preparing land type studies across Victoria.

By this stage soil erosion had reached disastrous levels, largely due to land clearing, wheat fallow rotations and overgrazing. The scale of the problem was national and forced stronger legislative and administrative responses from respective State Governments. The Victorian government established the Department of Soil Conservation. The department underpinned statutory soil boards, catchment groups and generally focused on the research covering water control and soil erosion.

In the 1950’s and 60’s, land degradation slipped from political view as a combination of the boom years of “Sub and Super” (sub-clover and superphosphate), improved technologies and genetics. Investment into agricultural research obscured degradation behind amazing productivity gains (Lockie & Vanclay 1997). Nonetheless, a growing number of citizens
became concerned with escalating environmental degradation that was occurring across the Australian landscape.

Rather than being observers of problems, some affected farmers quickly mobilised to address these land and water issues. For instance Australian farmers embraced Conservation Agriculture (CA) because it met their needs.

Farmer experimentation with Conservation Agriculture began in the 1960’s and has continued to this day where around 80%-90% of Australia’s 23.5 million hectares of winter crops are now grown using Conservation Agriculture principles. This remarkable achievement is the result of both sustained investment in agricultural research and development and farmer innovation (Bellotti & Rochecouste 2014)

CA maintained productivity and profitability in the face of declining terms of trade, and offered sustainable production with enhanced environmental outcomes.

In addition with constant lobbying from farmer organizations and conservationists government was increasingly prepared to take a lead on issues of natural resource management. The Victorian state extension services provided the first formal whole farm plans, appraisals of dryland salinity and land management incentives (Cummings 2006).

At a national level, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) was founded in the mid-sixties by distinguished entomologist Francis Ratcliffe. Inspired by a memo from the Duke of Edinburgh requesting help to start a World Wildlife Fund branch in Australia, Ratcliffe consulted with CSIRO colleagues, conservationists and community leaders and instead formed the ACF. An early ACF campaign was the successful protection of large areas of the Mallee, in north west of Victoria (Australian Conservation Foundation 2014).

By the mid-1970s the Australian government had developed a national position on soil erosion and in 1978 released the ‘Collaborative Study on Soil Conservation’ report. This led to the development of the Commonwealth National Soil Conservation Program in 1983. From this program came the development of national policies and funds were provided to State agencies to implement the policies. Each State created administrative structures and powers to address their particular issues. For example, the Victorian government amalgamated environmental and public lands departments into the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (Poussard 2006) whereas Western Australian formed Land Conservation District Committees.
Government agencies and non-government agencies were not the only actors in land conservation at this time. During the mid-1980s, the philanthropic Ian Potter Foundation supported a new approach to land management in Western Victoria. This involved the establishment of fifteen working farms in the Hamilton region of south west Victoria. Providing finance and technical expertise the Potter Farmland Project (known colloquially as ‘Potter’) enabled farmers to undertake land protection works that would otherwise have taken many years. It also enabled the farmers to prioritise NRM on their properties (Campbell 1991). In effect, Potter was a comprehensive extension program that aimed to reduce barriers to implementation of NRM and the demonstration farms became a model for landholders and natural resource practitioners. Over 3000 farmers, scientists and agency officers from across Australia and internationally visited the farms (Campbell 1991). The Potter Farmland Project commenced in 1985 - a year prior to Landcare formalising as an extension program in Victoria (Poussard 2006).

4.2.1 Landcare in Victoria

During the late 1980’s Joan Kirner, then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, requested assistance from Heather Mitchell, President of the Victorian Farmers’ Federation to develop program for advancing conservation and agriculture. Salinity was a particular concern as it was widespread in irrigated and dryland areas of Victoria. In November 1986, the government of Victoria launched a state-wide multi-disciplinary and community-based program to reverse land degradation issues. The program was named Landcare and sought initially to identify the broad spectrum of technical and social aspects of natural resource management (Johnson, Poussard & Youl 2007).

As voluntary associations Landcare groups varied in size, from groups of neighbours with a local problem to larger groups working with more complex catchment scale concerns. The groups tackled a wide variety of on-ground activities including: planting salt tolerant species in saline areas, rejuvenation and repair of habitats, restoration of waterways and addressing land management issues such as erosion. Initially Landcare groups utilised government coordinators to organise projects and resources, and to broker relationships with government programs and other organisations. Later, as resources allowed, groups employed their own coordinators. From its agrarian roots, Landcare expanded to encourage new urban and peri-urban members and those citizens caring for public land. The approach proved a very cost
effective way to achieve on-the-ground outcomes relative to the amount of public funds invested. This was mainly due to low coordination and administration costs, volunteer labour, and significant landholder contributions both cash and in-kind (Department of Environment Land Water and Planning 2015).

Since 1986, Landcare in Victoria has grown to more than 630 Landcare groups, 67 Landcare networks, and more than 500 other community-based natural resource management groups. These groups represent around 60,000 members and involve an additional 45,000 volunteers.

4.2.2 Landcare goes National
The Landcare program proved to be practical and attractive to local communities and the Australian Government declared the 1990s as the Decade of Landcare (1990-99). Consequently, Landcare spread to every State and Territory.

This morning's journey through three States, culminating in this launch at Wentworth, symbolises two realities about our environment. It shows in a graphic way that the degradation of our environment is not simply a local problem, nor a problem for one State or another, nor for the Commonwealth alone. Rather, the damage being done to our environment is a problem for all of us - and not just governments - but all of us individually and together.

The second reality is that the solutions - just as we have witnessed with the land rehabilitation programs in this region - are to be found through co-operation at all levels of government and by community groups who care for the land, who want to repair our damaged environment.

(Prime Minister Robert Hawke 1989)

Prior to 1992, Landcare was funded through the National Soil Conservation Program (NCSP). Then with the launch of the National Landcare Program (NLP) support for Landcare activities and sustainable agriculture greatly increased. Projects funded under the NLP varied considerably in focus and approach and reflected local issues. Most NLP funding required significant co-contribution (cash or in-kind) from the recipient, whether a group, a landholder or a government agency.

Despite bipartisan political support, Landcare needed a structure. During its formative years Landcare relied on connections to government through local parliamentarians, corporates, the catchment management frameworks, farmers’ organisations, municipalities, and resource professionals.
Within the NLP framework, three important Landcare structures were created. The first was the Australian Landcare Council (ALC), a group of multi-sectorial representatives from states and regions, to provide an advisory role to the Australian government. The second was Landcare Australia Limited (LAL), an entity formed to raise awareness and generate corporate support for Landcare. The third was the National Landcare Facilitator (NLF) that serves as a focal point for the Australia-wide facilitator/coordinator and linked to government, industry and groups. The Australian Landcare Council and the National Landcare Facilitator provided the required representation at national level (Johnson, Poussard & Youl 2007).

During the 1990’s, Landcare grew to around 4000 groups and consequently increased popular awareness of environmental issues. Roy Morgan Research Centre surveys found that awareness of Landcare in Australia increased from 22% in 1991 to 66% in 1994. The most recent survey data (2013) shows just over two-thirds (70%) of the Australian population aged 14 years and over claimed to have heard of ‘Landcare’ (Roy Morgan Research Centre 2013) and three-quarters (78%) of Australians recognised the Landcare logo (Roy Morgan Research Centre 2013) Variants of the logo have been adopted, such as, Junior Landcare, Landcare South Africa and Landcare International. Landcare Australia Limited owns and manages the use of the original trademark and refreshed versions. The Landcare logo (see Figure 4.1) has been used with permission from Landcare Australia Limited.

![Landcare Logo](image.png)

Figure 4.1 Landcare Logo

The Commonwealth Government formed Landcare Australia Limited in 1989 as a private non-profit company to manage the national public awareness and sponsorship campaign for the Decade of Landcare. The two core objectives of Landcare Australia Limited are: 1) to raise corporate sponsorship for the Landcare and Coastcare movements and 2) raise community awareness of the programs and brands.

For over two decades Landcare groups have embraced all facets of resource management across in Australia, and by default, built the social capital of many of these communities.
(Sobels, Curtis & Lockie 2001). As Landcare evolved organically the movement was able to “capture the scale, complexity and external effects of agricultural practices within physical and social environments” (Sobels, Curtis & Lockie 2001, p. 266)

Landcare has no legislative foundation. The Victorian Catchment Management and Land Protection Act 1994, refers to community in the Act on seventeen occasions and mostly in relation to community engagement and community participation. Yet there is no specific mention of Landcare with its significant community membership. Nonetheless, Landcare groups are linked to government through funding mechanisms and institutional arrangements such as the National Landcare Program. At a regional level these include: as delivery partners in strategic and management plans; representation on catchment management authority advisory committees and Boards and in State and Federal funded co-ordinator and facilitator roles.

Cary and Webb (2000) observe three elements to Landcare (1) community Landcare, (2) the Landcare movement and (3) government response the National Landcare Program. These are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2 Three Elements of Landcare (Cary & Webb 2000)](image)

Cary and Webb also describe a Landcare movement model (see Figure 4.3). In this model, the individual is represented by a black dot and is the smallest unit. Individuals are interconnected through a range of networks, represented by the lines joining individuals. The shaded circles represent community Landcare groups and a collection of these constitutes community Landcare. Finally the Landcare movement is the sum of the four lower levels and is represented by the outer rectangle (Cary & Webb 2000).
Cary noted the importance of the informal networks between Landcare members and non-members and that information and values are transferred through interactions beyond the confines of community Landcare.

The role of informal or social NRM networks, as expressed by Landcare, has been widely studied (Lauber, Decker & Knuth 2008; Lockie & Vanclay 1997; Roling & Wagemakers 2000; Sobels, Curtis & Lockie 2001). Authors generally describe the functions of these networks in terms of activities that disseminate information, exchange ideas and for collaborative purposes such as sharing and seeking resources. Lauber et al describe these interactions as “transfers” of information, ideas, money, or other resources from one stakeholder to another (Lauber, Decker & Knuth 2008). Another dimension to these networks was through building social capital including trust, reciprocity and goodwill.

Autonomy and self-reliance was important to Landcare and the often-stated desire within the movement was to “keep politics out” (Woodhill 2010, p. 61). In fact groups were not accountable to government outside the context of specific government-funded projects (Lockie 2004; Tennent & Lockie 2012). Landcare wished to keep the movement independent of government and for government to retain bi-partisan support. Yet as Woodhill observes it reflects a dismissal of politics and a naivey about power relations in social interaction. To claim to be apolitical is “to accept the status quo of social and political relations, which in itself is political” (Woodhill 2010, p. 61).

To summarise Landcare emerged as a distinctive movement in Victoria during 1986 and expanded nationally through the National Landcare Program. Landcare had its genesis in initiatives to improve agricultural productivity through sustainable land management. The movement has since adopted a broader focus on sustainable management of all of Australia’s
natural resource assets and encompasses individuals and groups across the whole landscape of Australia (Landcare Australia Limited 2014). Landcare membership is primarily made up of landholders or farmers, but there also Indigenous, urban, coastal and ‘Friends of’ groups. Most of Australia is held in private ownership (freehold or Crown leasehold land), and agriculture is the most extensive form of land use occurring on nearly 60% of the Australian landmass (OECD 2008). It is not surprising that government programs target landholders for the adoption and implementation of government policy and initiatives. The influences on landholder uptake and decision-making are discussed in the following Section 4.2.3.

4.2.3 Productivist Agriculture

Productivist agriculture describes the post-World War II commitment to an intensive, industrialised and expansionist agriculture which was supported by governments to increase productivity and output (Lowe et al. 1993; Wilson 2001). Key features of productivist agriculture were quantity over quality, national self-sufficiency, intensification and specialisation over sustainability of natural assets (Wilson 2007). Adopting a route of intensification and increased primary production ceased implications for the Australian environment. Gray and Lawrence contend that the cause of environmental decline stemmed from forms of production that did not suit biophysical conditions, embedded social attitudes that saw the landscape in terms of production, and contemporary policy settings that strongly favoured a productivist agricultural regime (Gray & Lawrence 2001).

During 2013-2014, 53% of Australia’s total land area was managed by agricultural businesses (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014). Over 80% of land in this research study area of south west Victoria has been developed for agricultural purposes (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2013). The complex association between Australian agricultural production and environmental conservation can be explored through landholder attitudes and behaviours.

Resource management decision making at the local farm level is located within a global context (Rickson, Rickson & Burch 2001), for example, situating Australia as Asia’s “clean, green food bowl” (Pratt 2013). It is influenced by consumer demand for clean green food and ethical farming practice. Furthermore, decisions are subject to the scale of environmental problems, public policy and resourcing. In effect farmers balance the need for increased production against sustainably managing natural assets, i.e. soils, remnant vegetation,
waterways. The 2013 Productivity Survey (Scholfield et al. 2013) was conducted in the study area of south west Victoria. The survey asked over ninety farmer respondents about their attitudes to managing the environmental impact on farm. Over 75% of those surveyed were prepared to invest in environmental sustainability, contribute to biodiversity plantings and preservation, and even more (over 90%) felt they contributed to environmental health (see Figure 4.4).

![Figure 4.4 Attitudes to Managing the Environment On-Farm (N=91)](image)

The 2013 survey was undertaken in a year when agricultural commodity prices were good, the growing season was reasonable and there was relatively high optimism in the agriculture sector.

Australian productivist agriculture has been primarily driven by the Terms of Trade, that is, the ratio of prices received relative to the cost of production. Since 1997-98 Australian farming terms of trade have decreased by almost 10% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Assisted by farm consultants, financial advisers and scientists, farmers have sought to overcome falling profits by introducing operational improvements and efficiencies. Working with the individual components of agriculture systems and manoeuvring four main levers enacts these operational changes: The levers are: (1) cost minimisation, (2) product volume increase, (3) product quality increase and (4) increased property size (through lease or purchase).
The Productivity Survey also asked farmer respondents to nominate the limiting factors to increasing productivity. Results show (in order of priority) that commodity prices, the value of the Australian dollar, input costs of fertiliser, fuel, and labour were perceived to be limits to increasing productivity (Scholfield et al. 2013).

Figure 4.5 The Limiting Factors to Increased Productivity (N=91)

The Productivity Survey indicates just some of the decisions that farmers consider, and as Pannell observed, managing a farm can be blindingly complex (Pannell 1996).

The choice of farm strategy may also be influenced by the farmer's knowledge of scientific issues, economic/commercial factors, political events, legal constraints, historical trends, climate/weather, environmental issues, personal circumstances, and practical considerations. Attending to the discrete elements of production rather than addressing the system as a whole, has resulted in negative outcomes in the form of more virulent pests, fertiliser/chemical pollution of the environment, and animal waste in vast quantities – all of which contribute to the continuation of unsustainable agriculture (Gray & Lawrence 2001). These problems are compounded by producer dependency on the use of artificial fertilisers, monocultures and agrichemicals. Therefore, environmental degradation has not simply happened. Rather it follows “logically from the structure of production and the application of reductionist science and its agriculture corollary – the intensification/industrialisation of modern farming” (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 142). Unfortunately, as environmental costs are rarely accounted for in
production decisions there is little incentive to mitigate these effects or invest in ways to do so (Cary, Webb & Barr 2002).

4.2.4 Toward a Post-Productivist Era

The term post-productivist describes the era that began during the nineteen seventies with national agricultural reforms and a change of focus from production only to include environmental and social concerns.

The productivist attributes of the Australian agricultural system persisted long after 1945 as Australian farmers enjoyed strong political representation and generous policy measures, such as taxation concessions, drought relief, input subsidies and special access to credit (Throsby 1972). Indeed, whilst espousing an ideology of free enterprise, conservative post-war WW2 governments intervened strongly in agriculture through a policy of stabilisation (Botterill 2003, p. 8). Stabilisation was a vague term that described a package of guaranteed prices, bounties and subsidies; protection from imports and orderly marketing McKay (1965).

The opening up of Australia’s economy – post-productivist - was one of the most important national reforms of the second half of the twentieth century. The agriculture sector was profoundly affected when, in 1973, the Whitlam Labor government cut tariffs by twenty-five percent. Furthermore, Labor introduced two key initiatives that brought greater economic rationality into the agriculture policy process and ensured that a broader national interest was taken into account. Prior to these changes, agricultural policy was negotiated through ad hoc decision making and behind closed doors with selected producer groups (Botterill 2003).

The first initiative was the Government Green Paper on rural policy, inquiring into ‘all aspects of rural policy in Australia’. The authors identified eight key areas to be addressed as follows: (1) less intervention, (2) improving market mechanisms rather than replacing price systems, (3) a floating exchange rate, (4) compensation for the effect of tariffs on protected industries, (5) the family farm is foundational to agriculture, (6) the variability of farm income, (7) high poverty rates in small rural towns and (8) rural policy must address the well-being of rural people (both farm and town).

The second initiative was to establish the Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) in 1974. The IAC provided public scrutiny of the process of governments’ decision making about the
amount of assistance given to different industries. When proposing the IAC Bill then Prime Minister Whitlam explained the importance of such public scrutiny as follows:

It is important to appreciate fully what the phrase 'public inquiries and reports' will really mean under this proposal. It means wide advertisement, in newspapers and by circulars, of matters referred to the Commission. It means public hearings, at which interested parties can support or oppose industries' claims for assistance. It means prompt availability of those hearings. It means the systematic collection and analysis by the Commission and other organisations of information relevant to the Commission's inquiries. It means that most of this information should be available for public scrutiny during the course of particular inquiries. And it means that the Commission should be able to call disinterested expert witnesses. Finally, it means public reports, which explain in detail the reasons for the Commission's recommendations. In short, the words 'public inquiries and reports' denote a deliberate, orderly and widely accessible system of communication between the Government, industry and the wider public (Whitlam 1973).

A period of policy reform occurred in parallel to the establishment of the IAC. This ensured that the management of Australia's rural lands shifted from a production only focus to a concern that agriculture should demonstrate environmental and social benefits (Argent 2002). Hence the beginning of the post-productivist era (Holmes 2002).

Argent (2002) argues that this shift was not unexpected as rural Australia had been undergoing an intensive process of re-evaluation. Farmers, rural communities, policy makers and others grappled with complex issues that included the effects of a changing climate, maintenance of basic services, declining population bases and more stringent natural resource policies. The advent of increased environmental awareness coupled with ongoing productivity gains triggered the need for government response. The next section outlines key national policies, and introduces the whole of government approach and federal government environmental initiatives such as the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)) and the Caring for Our Country (CfoC) programs.

Table 4.1 provides a list of national policies, programs and strategies. It shows that the past thirty years has been an era of great change in thinking, when formerly disparate groups representing environment, business and government were able to come together to identify commonalities, acknowledge differences, seek direction and consensus on national environmental issues. A key theme for many of these policies and strategies was to find ways to integrate environmental protection and development in decision-making.
Table 4.1 Key national policies, programs and strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Policy, Program and Strategies</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil Conservation Legislation (State-based)</td>
<td>1930’s – 1940’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Study on Soil Erosion</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Tree Program</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Soil Conservation Program</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Conservation Strategy</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Soil Conservation Strategy</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decade of Landcare</td>
<td>1989 – 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental Agreement on Environment</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention on Biological Diversity</td>
<td>Ratified 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>1996 - 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust 3</td>
<td>2008 - 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for Our Country – Phase 1</td>
<td>2008 - 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for Our Country – Phase 2</td>
<td>2014 - 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Youl (Youl 2006)

4.2.5 Cooperation and Whole of Government

Another characteristic of the post productivity period was increased levels of cooperation between federal and state governments. For example, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia, and representatives of local government in Australia, met at a Special Premiers' Conference in 1990 in Brisbane to agree to develop an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment. This provided a mechanism for better defining the roles of the respective governments, reducing disputes and providing greater certainty of business decision making and environmental protection.

The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment was ratified on 1 May 1992. This much-needed reform linked the national level together with state and territory regional level
activity. The ensuing coordination of the IAE required a whole of government approach (Thomas 2007).

The Australian Public Service Commission established a management advisory committee to examine implementation of whole of government approaches in 2004. The committee’s report titled Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia’s Priority Challenges (Australian Public Service Commission 2004) defines a whole of government as: public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated response to particular issues (Australian Public Service Commission 2004, p. 4).

The benefits of a whole of government approach included: (1) increased productivity and effectiveness through teamwork; (2) opportunities for people to learn together and from each other; (3) maximised information flows and communication opportunities; (4) better informed collective decision making; (5) improved government engagement with individuals and communities and (6) better capacity for immediate response in times of crisis (Australian Public Service Commission 2004; Ross & Dovers 2008). Though these benefits are significant Morrison and Lane (2005) observed that while whole of government approaches in Australia have identified roles of non-State actors, they generally failed to protect and promote the public interests.

It was also during the nineties that government policy sought increased citizen, community and business participation in decision making. Cary et al (2002) argue that the management of Australia’s natural resources called for a united effort between government, landholders, business and industry and the community. A united effort was an aspiration that the regions readily embraced yet “at state and federal level where the bulk of political power and public financial resources are held, the in-principle commitment translated into a vastly different reality” (Brown 2005, p. 17). Multi-causal tensions emerged between the institutional apparatus of state and federal government and the aspirations and needs of regions.

**4.2.6 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 1: 1997-2001**

Perhaps the most significance government initiative was the establishment of the Natural Heritage Trust (‘NHT’ or ‘the Trust’) in 1997. This was funded through the partial sale of the publicly owned telecommunications provider, Telstra. NHT provided base funding and grants for environmental activities at community, regional, State/Territory and national level.
Initially funds comprised $1.25 billion with a capital base of $300 million, which was to be retained in perpetuity to fund future environmental activities (Commonwealth of Australia 1996, p. 6). This was supplemented by extra funds in 1998–1999 to extend the programme by one more year until 2002.

The preamble the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997 (the Act) notes:

“the need for urgent action to redress the current decline, and to prevent further decline, in the quality of Australia’s natural environment. There is a national crisis in land and water degradation and in the loss of biodiversity. There is a need for the Commonwealth to provide national leadership and work in partnership with all levels of Government and the whole community, recognising, among other things, that many environmental issues and problems are not limited by State and Territory borders. It is essential that Government leadership be demonstrated, and that the Australian community be involved, in relation to these matters” (Commonwealth of Australia 1997a).

The Act - SECT 8 describes environmental protection (Section 15); supporting sustainable agriculture (Section 16); and natural resource management (Section 17) (Commonwealth of Australia 1997b). Three NHT objectives, as described in the Commonwealth-State NHT Partnership Agreements, were: (1) provide a framework for strategic capital investment, to stimulate additional investment in the natural environment, (2) achieve complementary environmental protection, (including biodiversity conservation), and sustainable agriculture and natural resources management outcomes consistent with agreed national strategies and (3) provide a framework for cooperative partnerships between communities, industry, and all levels of government.

To achieve these objectives, NHT focused on five major areas for funding. The first three areas (Land, Vegetation and Rivers) explicitly emphasises community participation in implementing programs and initiatives. Table 4.2 is a compilation of NHT Phase 1 funded programs and initiatives. Information for the table was sourced from the Mid-Term Review of the Natural Heritage Trust, Expenditure Statement 2000-2001 and Audit Report No.43 2000–2001 (Australian National Audit Office 1997; Minister Robert Hill 2000; Natural Heritage Trust Ministerial Board 2000).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>PROGRAM/INITIATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAND</td>
<td>National Landcare Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Land and Water Resources Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Forest Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Feral Animal Control Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Weeds Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FarmBis: The Farm Business Improvement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETATION</td>
<td>Bushcare Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Land Management Facilitator Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm Forestry Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIVERS</td>
<td>National Rivercare Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National River Health Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverworks Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waterwatch Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murray–Darling 2001 Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Wetlands Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIODIVERSITY</td>
<td>National Reserve System Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Endangered Species Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World Heritage Area Management and Upkeep Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COASTS AND MARINE</td>
<td>Coasts and Clean Seas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coastcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clean Seas Program (local component)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clean Seas Program (Commonwealth component)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coastal Monitoring Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Species Protection Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduced Marine Pests and Ballast Water Mitigation Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Waste Reception Facilities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coastal and Marine Planning Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia’s Oceans Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Moorings Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commonwealth Marine Protected Areas Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-fouling Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fisheries Action Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable Fisheries Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL AND OTHER PROGRAMS</td>
<td>Air Pollution in Major Cities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste Management Awareness Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasmanian Strategic Natural Heritage Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given the large number of NHT government programs, and even larger number of projects coming forward, funding was distributed through a ‘one-stop-shop’ application process. To represent both environmental and agricultural interests NHT was jointly administered by the Federal Departments of Environment and of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. NHT funds were also devolved directly to Landcare and catchment based community groups and individuals working on projects that integrated environmental protection, agriculture and natural resource management. Of the total funding pool between 40% and 60% of funds bypassed state and local government to directly fund community-based projects (Crowley 2001).

Over sixty-five NHT program evaluations occurred between 1998-2003 (Department of Environment and Heritage and Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2003). Most reviews suggest that NHT had been successful in establishing administrative processes, raising community awareness, empowering communities through funding local projects, fostering integrated planning, developing partnerships and achieving on-the-ground outcomes (Australian National Audit Office 1998, 2001; Natural Heritage Trust Ministerial Board 2000).

Mid-term reviews also found that the arrangements for program administration established at the policy and senior management levels of government were highly collaborative and productive. Moreover, the arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States were “initiated and negotiated on the basis of good will and collaboration” (Howard Partners 1999, p. 1). In particular the NHT Facilitator, Coordinator and Community Support Network initiatives were mentioned for contributing significant progress towards achieving the NHT objectives with more sophisticated and integrated projects being undertaken (Hassall & Associates Pty Ltd 2003). The co-contribution from community, corporates, philanthropy and others was also acknowledgement; for every $1 of government Trust money invested, an additional $7 of non-government cash or in-kind was generated (Minister Robert Hill 2000). This captured the imagination of volunteers, land managers and others working in NRM with a sense that we (the Australian people) were all investing in the environment.

Improvement of NHT program design and delivery was ongoing. Another mid-term review noted that NHT had strong design features but significant management and reporting challenges (Australian National Audit Office 2001). In response the federal government
focused on areas including: strategic direction, promoting regional approaches, developing a stronger investment focus, improving communication and capacity building (Farrelly 2005). The National Audit Office report (2001) also noted that the most significant shortcomings of NHT was the absence of a finalised set of performance indicators. The audit office suggested that indictors would assist with motivating behaviour towards desired outcomes and build suitable information on trends over time.

Other reviews found a lack of accountability, funding delays, reduced on-the-ground action and increased community frustration (Curtis & Van Nouhuys 1999). Similarly a study of integrated environmental planning in selected NRM regions by Farrelly et al (2006; 2007) identified key criticisms of NHT as including: program management deficiencies; lack of evaluative capacity; undue bureaucratic process and unhelpful administrative frameworks, and lack of accountability by governments and individual projects.

The first iteration of NHT represented the “largest financial commitment to environmental action by any Australian federal Government in history” (Minister Robert Hill 2000, p. 18). Funding was predominately granted to community groups for locally determined priorities and were favourably received by Landcare and community groups. Yet reviews revealed that the local projects were often ad hoc and did not address environmental issues to any great scale. Funds were spread thinly across landscapes and landholders. Larger scale thinking would have to be applied to any successor.

**4.2.7 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 2: Interim arrangements 2001-2002**

The second phase of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT2) moved towards more strategic planning and investment by federal government (Australian National Audit Office 2008) and larger-scale thinking. Through planning, priority-setting and resource allocation the second phase flagged an on-going commitment by federal government that was increasingly determined at regional level (Paton et al. 2004).

The regionalisation of Australian NRM was formalised by a regional NRM framework that described the linkages between various governance entities and their roles. Figure 4.6 Framework for Regional NRM is based on the Davidson et al diagram Regional NRM structure for NHT2, 2002-2008 (Davidson et al. 2007) and the Municipal Authority of
Key to the regional model was the formation of the fifty-six NRM regions across Australia. These regions were inaugurated through bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and provided an institutional framework, governed by community-based boards of management and responsible for delivering co-ordinated and strategic NRM outcomes. Importantly each region developed a strategic investment plan to reflect their respective needs. Figure 4.7 Fifty-six NRM regions, locates the Glenelg Hopkins CMA within the Australian NRM region (the map is not to scale).
Figure 4.7 Fifty-six NRM regions (Natural Resource Management Regions Australia 2015)

The establishment of the regional delivery model was consistent with international trends where the region was a preferred approach to economic, administrative and political organisation (Lane, Robinson & Taylor 2009). Emphasis was given to regional management through planning and the negotiation of trade-offs and outcomes that provided social, economic and environmental benefits for the respective regions. The regional model also complemented an integrated catchment management (ICM) approach. This enabled issues to be addressed at larger scale, incorporating technical knowledge and policy objectives, with community involvement (Bellamy & Johnson 2000).

The regional model offered a means to consider environmental, social and economic issues in an integrated way. Moreover, devolving authority to regional communities could enable regions to determine their preferred approaches to NRM. Government considered that strategies for improved natural resource management at the regional level were most effective when generated by regional communities themselves (Gorrie & Wonder 1999).

In addition to NHT2 a second national program was launched - the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP). NAP concentrated on improving salinity and water quality and quantity. Salinity had become a significant issue for Australia, with billions of dollars in lost production and infrastructure damage i.e. buildings, roads and bridges. Land and water degradation, excluding weeds and pests, was estimated to cost up to $3.5 billion per year
(Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team 2000). Statistics from 2000 reveal at least 2.5 million hectares (5% of cultivated land) was affected by dryland salinity which, without intervention, was projected to increase to 12 million hectares (22% of cultivated land) (Australian Government 2000).

The goal of the NAP was to motivate and enable regional communities to use coordinated and targeted action to (1) prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in dryland salinity and (2) improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment. Based on severity and urgency, NAP priority areas were identified across Australia and then targeted for priority programs and funding.

Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) had been established in Victoria in 1997 under the Catchment and Land Protection Act of 1994. CMA areas were based on the identified water catchment or naturally occurring drainage basins. Initially the CMAs were responsible for floodplain and waterway management but, with the emergence of a regional NRM model established by federal government, the role of CMAs role expanded to encompass regional environmental coordination.

The regional NRM model reflected global trends toward civic participation and decentralisation in watershed and catchment management. This variously involved the advocacy of community participation and bottom-up approaches and the establishment of locally evolved institutional arrangements that devolved responsibility for planning and investment decisions through regional boards and committees. The use of incentives rather than regulation was increased and environmental policy was further framed in terms of natural resource management (Dietz, Ostrom & Stern 2003; Lane, Robinson & Taylor 2009; Pretty 2003; Rhoads et al. 1999; Singleton 2000).

A national study of NRM bodies found that the capacity of regional organisations to provide leadership and decision making increased with the maturity of the organisation (Fenton & Rickert 2008). Furthermore, the effectiveness of local and regional efforts was greatly influenced by the enabling actions of government, levels of civic engagement, and existing geographic, social and economic circumstances.
4.2.8 Natural Heritage Trust Phase 3: 2002-2008

Funding for Natural Heritage Trust Phase 3 (NHT3) programs (including the National Action Plan program) was to conclude in June 2008. In September 2005 the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board commissioned a Ministerial Reference Group for Future NRM Program Delivery. The Group was charged to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of NRM programs, regional delivery arrangements and regional community engagement (Keogh, Chant & Frazer 2006).

The Reference Group, led by Kim Keogh, consulted Australia wide and findings were presented in the Keogh Report. In general, the Reference Group found an overwhelming sense of commitment from those involved in NRM, and a strong desire to continue to build on the regional model.

Key findings from the report included that:

- The regional plans were developed, the institutional arrangements were in place, and the implementation of strategic investments had commenced.
- Key land managers, i.e. primary industry and local government, were yet to be fully engaged.
- The partnership between the Australian Government and state and territory governments had been instrumental in leading regional delivery of NRM.
- NRM is an issue of national importance and worthy of a continued and sustained commitment from the Australian Government.
- The Australian Government must persist with regional NRM arrangements or be prepared to risk losing community backing and on-ground support.

In 2006, the Framework for Future NRM Programmes paper was released. This proposed a framework for national NRM programs, based on three objectives. It was endorsed by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and included:

- Biodiversity Conservation – the conservation of Australia’s biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems (including wetlands) and habitat for native plants and animal;
• Sustainable Use of Natural Resources – the sustainable use and management of Australia’s land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve productivity and profitability of resource-based industries;
• Community Capacity Building and Institutional Change – the continued development of sufficient support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities to enable them to acquire the skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management. (Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council 2006).

For over three decades Australian natural resource management had grown to encompass 56 regional bodies, many thousands of community groups and tens of thousands of volunteers and landholders. Government investment returned significant dividends through co-contribution by landholders and volunteers, changes in attitude to NRM and environmental improvement. The Facilitator Network, with over 800 regional, state and national facilitators, had assisted in the development of integrated NRM plans and investment strategies, and encouraged community involvement in sustainable land management practices (Lane, Marcus & Corbett 2005). In June 2007, the government committed a further $2 billion to extend the NHT until 2012–13. This changed when a federal election in November 2007 returned a Labor government and a new policy direction for NRM.

4.2.9 Caring for our Country

With the change of federal government came a change of environmental direction, policy and programs. A newly fashioned funding and policy initiative Caring for our Country (CfoC) commenced in 2008 with the launch of a Business Plan. This program focused on national targets and was a significant change of policy direction. To attract federal funding regions and others were required to tailor their activities to fit the new directions as set out in the national targets (Australian Government Land and Coasts 2008, 2010, 2011). The CfoC budget was $2.25 billion over 5 years (2008-2013) and allocated against the priorities of the business plan. Investment by the Australian Government was offered through three funding streams: (1) open call, competitive proposals (up to $1 million), (2) allocation to regional Catchment Management Authorities (negotiated, based on an expression of interest) and (3) small-scale grants and Community Action Grants.
The regional NRM model (established under NHT and NAP) was retained and it was widely anticipated that CfoC would build on these foundations. This was understandable, as the Labor 2007 National Platform and Constitution stated that: Labor recognises the critical role of the rural community in the ongoing stewardship of our land…Labor is committed to building on the achievements of Landcare…and…ecologically sustainable development represents a future for regional Australia, with regional delivery of natural resource management consistent with national priorities, sustainable agricultural practices and opportunities for new industries (Australian Labor Party 2007).

However, the anticipated strengthening of a regional NRM model wasn’t borne out. On the contrary, CfoC greatly undermined the previous decades of efforts to establish arrangements, partnerships and relationships. CfoC introduced highly competitive funding arrangements with priority given to high impact ‘flagship’ projects that met predetermined targets. Commitment to Landcare and other community groups was not forthcoming. Furthermore, the disbanding of Land and Water Australia, the federal research and development body, severely curtailed knowledge creation and sharing that had informed and strengthened the regional model (Robins & Kanowski 2011).

Prior to CfoC there had been considerable commitment to and investment in the regional model. In reviewing NHT, consultants WalterTurnbull had advised that “any change to the delivery framework could result in considerable disengagement of the community, level of commitment from the community to provide resources to deliver NRM outcomes” (WalterTurnbull 2005, p. 4). The advice was unheeded.

### 4.2.10 Summary of NRM Phases

Hajkowicz (2009) summarises the evolution of Australian NRM as three phases: Phase 1: raising awareness and changing attitudes; Phase 2: building new institutional capacity and Phase 3: toward a system of direct payments - see Figure 4.8.

The early focus on attitude and awareness change was reliant on voluntary community participation. The second phase toward more formalised institutional arrangements was founded on the 56 regional bodies. Phase three shifted towards direct payments to landholders and farmers for the provision of services.
Building on Hajkowicz’s 2009 work, this study proposes additional characteristics to Phase 3. The additional characteristics describe a more centralised approach by federal government to the delivery of NRM. This has resulted in a NRM discourse that frames the dichotomy between government or civic interests – regionalisation or regionalism.

Figure 4.8 The evolving focus of Australian NRM programs adapted from Hajkowicz

Building capacity of community groups
Attitude and awareness change
Move toward regional groups
Devolved grants (competitive)

Institutional arrangements and plan preparation
Market based
Stewardship payments to land managers

1990/91 NLP $360m
1996/97 NHT1 $1.3b
2000/01 NHT2 $1.2b
2007/08 Caring for our Country $2.25b
2009/13 Caring for our Country $2.25 b

By 2006 Australia has 56 regional bodies with accredited plans

Figure 4.9 Additional characteristics (in italics) of Australian NRM, adapted from Hajkowicz.
4.3 Summary

This chapter explores the history of NRM. The first iteration of NHT was a centralised approach with the funding delivery of ten programs produced through a single application form, a single assessment process and a single evaluation process (Davidson et al. 2007). Most funding was devolved directly from federal government to community groups for on-ground works. There was no coordinated planning or alignment of national, state or regional environmental priorities and as Bellamy observed “the institutional arrangements for managing natural resources traditionally involve numerous individual, single-function federal and state agencies, each pursuing its own legal mandate through developing and implementing policy dominantly focused on single issues” (Bellamy 2007, p. 98).

Consequently the NHT2 regional model was established for policy approaches to be applied in an integrated way across regions and catchments and at the local or farm level (Gorrie & Wonder 1999). The regional model was underpinned by bilateral agreements that covered procedural, reporting and accountability arrangements, including investment priorities that aligned with national, state and regional priorities.

Changing from a local focus under NHT1 to a regional focus under NHT2 was a significant shift. It reduced the direct access to federal funding that Landcare and community groups had enjoyed under NHT1 and introduced a structured, more institutionalised approach to NRM planning and coordination. This triggered some mistrust between communities and government. Ironically in the eighties agency staff had misgivings about the emergence of Landcare and felt that Landcare challenged the control that agency had over programs and funding (Poussard 2008 pers comm). Nonetheless, during NHT many Landcare groups had formed strong relationships with their local agency staff. By 2006 there was widespread community acceptance and understanding of the regional model as the basis for delivery of NRM programs (Byron & Curtis 2002).

The regionalisation of NHT2 and subsequent programs was effective for strategic planning, better targeting of government funds and aligning of local state and federal policies and priorities. It was also effective for integrating and coordinating the efforts of numerous community groups at regional level. Nonetheless, this approach assumed that government agencies could accommodate local/regional needs and differences which directly contrasted
with the new focus on larger scale projects implemented by higher level groups i.e. catchment and sub-regional. As Marshall (2007) noted the decentralization was not to Landcare or other local groups but to catchment or regional bodies operating at a much higher spatial level of governance.

In 2008 a new federal government program Caring for Our Country was launched. This program adopted a more centralised, strategic and competitive approach to NRM. While the regional model was retained and base-level funding provided to each regional body, resources for environmental projects were allocated more widely on a competitive basis. The open call competitive grants opened the field for state agencies to compete against NGOs and community groups. With greater centralised control and a narrower agenda the administrative processes, networks and relationships that had formed during NHT were greatly weakened.
5 The Study Area
5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 is reported in three sections. Each contributes to a narrative of the study area and the actors.

Section 5.2 locates the study area and provides a description of the geographic extent, natural features and economic base. Section 5.3 describes four primary actors (Federal government, State government, CMA and civil society) and subsets of actors within these groups. Natural resource management in the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region is planned and managed by numerous local, regional, state and federal entities. The relationships and activities are complex, interrelated and characterized by multiple strategies and approaches to the NRM issues. There is potential for an extensive list of NRM actors but the study is time bound and focused on the annual activity of investment planning. Four primary NRM actors who participated in the annual investment planning and negotiations are identified from interrogating meeting minutes, communiqués and public documents. The actors are: (1) Federal Government, (2) Victorian government, (3) Glenelg Hopkins CMA and (4) Civil society groups.

Section 5.4 introduces a multiscalar networked perspective. Previous descriptions of NRM focus on regional arrangements nested within larger management arrangements. An alternative approach, the concept of scale rather than level, is proposed by Morrison (2007). This is relevant to this study as it highlights a relational space and the interface between units operating at regional level and supports the idea that environmental management can be conceived of as a product of relations.

5.2 The Glenelg Hopkins Bio-region

Government at local, state and Commonwealth levels accept the view of ecologists that the bio-region should be the logical base for decision making about natural resource management (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 204). The focus of this research is based the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region that spans approximately 2.6 million hectares and extends from Ballarat in the Central Highlands of Victoria, west to the South Australian border and south to the coast. The southern two thirds are characterised by flat volcanic plains while the Grampians, Dundas Tablelands and Black Ranges dominate the northern third.
Figure 5.1 The Glenelg Hopkins CMA region

Figure 5.1 locates the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region within Victoria and highlights three catchment basins: (1) Glenelg Basin, (2) Portland Coastal Basin and (3) Hopkins Basin.

The region has a number of natural features of national and international significance including the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park and Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape (currently under nomination for World Heritage listing). In addition two of 15 nominated ‘biodiversity hotspots’ (the Victorian Volcanic Plain and South Australia’s South-east/Victoria’s South-west) are located in the region. It also contains Australia’s most extensive newer volcanic province with six geo-sites of international significance. The Grampians National Park comprises a series of sandstone mountain ranges and around 1,000 native plant species, 23 of which are found nowhere else in the world. Extensive wetland systems are a key feature with approximately 44 per cent of Victoria’s wetlands located within the region. Approximately 1,000 square kilometers of intact native vegetation is estimated to be on private land and is important for containing rare ecological vegetation communities.

Regional groundwater systems, including the Otway, Murray, Highland and Dilwyn Aquifers are important for stock and domestic water and the region’s irrigated horticulture and fodder industries.
The region supports important agricultural production including grazing, cropping and forestry and is Australia’s most productive dairying area, supplying nearly a quarter of the nation’s milk. Forestry is a major industry with almost 20 per cent of the nation’s forestry plantations in or near the south west coast. Land-use change in agricultural areas has been due largely to the expansion of broad acre cropping, dairy and blue gum plantations.

The region’s main economic drivers comprise agriculture, fisheries, retail, manufacturing, health and community services, education and construction with approximately 81 per cent of the catchment developed for agricultural use. In the far south-west, Portland is one of the premier deep-water ports in Australia. In addition, there is significant investment in sustainable energy, particularly in wind energy innovation and gas-fired power plants.

Archaeological surveys show that the Gunditjmara people have lived in the Glenelg Hopkins region for at least 11,000 years and probably more than 40,000 years (Builth 2003; Tibby et al. 2006). Importantly the Gunditjmara have continued connection to this country (Weir 2009). The first European settlers arrived in the 1830’s pursuing whaling and pastoral activities around Portland Bay. Further settlement was rapid as pastoralists moved in to displace Indigenous people and by the end of the 1840s most areas suitable for grazing were occupied. The Land Act 1898 endeavoured to break up the large squatter estates and smaller landholders were encouraged to clear the land (Parliament of Victoria 1900). Soldier settlement schemes were introduced after both World Wars, with further farming concentrated on smaller landholdings. The major biodiversity threat has been the destruction of habitat by extensive clearing of native vegetation since European settlement. Hence the CMAs focus is to conserve any remnant bush land and re-vegetate the landscape (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2003, 2013).

High quality fresh water is considered an important natural assets (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2003). According to the CMA, major threats to water health include pollution from farming activities, stock access to waterways, salinity, erosion, pest plants and animals and over use of water resources. Soils offer high productivity potential, though there are ongoing issues with salinity and erosion, and soil acidification.

In summary, the region is rich with natural assets and its economic drivers (agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism) depend on maintaining a healthy natural resource base. A key challenge for CMA has been how to incorporate economic, social and cultural considerations
into the design of regional natural resource management plans, mindful of any economic and social impacts that may result from the implementation of regional NRM strategies.

5.3 The Actors, Roles and Responsibilities

This section describes the four primary actors (Federal government, State government, CMA and civil society) involved with the regional planning and implementation of programs and projects. It also describes the subsets of actors within these groups and their roles and responsibilities.

5.3.1 Federal Government

With the commencement and alignment of NHT 2 and the National Action Plan, the Federal government established a joint team approach between the (then) Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the (then) Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH). The resultant NRM Team comprised staff from both departments who were responsible for the Federal government's strategy on sustainable use and conservation of land, water, soil and vegetation resources through the dual objectives of sustainable agricultural production and environmental protection. The NRM Team established specific sub teams responsible for program administration of regional NRM delivery on a jurisdictional basis i.e. the Victorian Team with individual staff responsible for regions, such as the Glenelg Hopkins CMA. In addition the NRM Team was the point of contact for state and territory agencies and regional bodies. Figure 5.2 describes the NRM governance framework and lines of communication and highlights the central role of the NRM team.

Figure 5.2 NRM governance framework 2006 (author).
A Joint Steering Committee was established as the main vehicle for bilateral decision-making between the federal and Victorian governments. The Joint Steering Committee’s role included: (1) development of principles and criteria to guide NHT and National Action Plan investment, (2) alignment and prioritization of NHT and National Action Plan investments in consultation with the CMAs, (3) assisting in the development of regional plans and associated regional investment strategies, (4) recommending accreditation of regional plans to Ministers and (5) approving funds to be released for investment.

Senior management of the NRM Team co-chaired the Joint Steering Committee with their Victorian state counterparts, including: General Manager (DAFF); Assistant Secretary (DEH); Deputy Secretary, Public Land, Stewardship and Biodiversity (DSE), Executive Director, Regional Services (DSE) and General Manager, Catchment and Waterways (DSE). In addition, Independent Advisory Panels (IAPs) were established to provide advice to the Committee on procedures and processes for developing regional NRM strategies and investment plans. Independent Advisory Panel representatives included primary producers, conservation and local government peak bodies and Landcare.

5.3.2 Victorian Government

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) was the lead Victorian state agency to facilitate the delivery of the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan. This agency managed partnership agreements between the regional bodies, state and federal government reporting requirements, liaised with the regional bodies and provided secretariat services to the Joint Steering Committee. DSE was also responsible for supervising the governance arrangements for CMAs and the Victorian Catchment Management Council including: reviewing regional catchment strategies and regional catchment investment plans; appointment and induction of CMA Board members; reviewing annual CMA corporate plans and annual reports; funding NRM programs and CMA corporate activities and internal audit. Other major DSE roles and responsibilities included: management and governance services for Victoria’s parks; water and biodiversity protection, heritage and tourism services; public land, forest and fire management; and policy frameworks, regulations and environmental protection services (Department of Sustainability and Environment 2006).

In parallel, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), whose main function was to promote sustainable development of primary industries in Victoria, also played an important
role in NRM delivery through its statutory functions and implementation activities. Specific DPI objectives relating to NRM included: managing and regulating natural resource use in the public interest; facilitating investment in sustainable NRM; driving primary industry productivity and sustainability; and strengthening rural industry and community’s capacity to anticipate and respond to change.

5.3.3 The Glenelg Hopkins CMA

The Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority is empowered under the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act) and the Victorian Water Act 1989 (Parliament of Victoria 2007, 2010). It is responsible for the planning and implementation of strategies to protect and enhance the health of the region's biodiversity, soils and land. Under the Water Act, the CMA has management powers over regional waterways, floodplains, drainage and environmental water.

Figure 5.3 shows the governance structure of the CMA.

Figure 5.3 Glenelg Hopkins CMA governance structure adapted from Annual Report 2008
A Board of nine ministerial appointed community representatives governs the CMA. The Board is responsible and accountable for the good governance, strategic direction and effective and efficient operation of the organization. Theme-based Advisory Groups act as conduits for local community input and provide advice on river health (including coastal and estuarine), land health, biodiversity and community engagement. Membership of these groups is drawn from across the region (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009). The Glenelg Hopkins CMA performs two roles: (1) to act as a statutory authority responsible for waterways and floodplain and (2) to implement Regional Catchment Strategy, sub strategies and plans.

The CEO and staff support the board and advisory committees to oversee the development and implementation of programs and liaise with the community, government and others involved in natural resource management.

The CaLP Act established the Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) and the CMAs. The VCMC is responsible for coordinating catchment management on a statewide basis. Its principal functions include overseeing the CMAs, acting as an advisory council to the Minister for Environment and promoting community awareness and understanding of catchment management issues.

5.3.4 Civil Society Groups

Civil society groups (i.e. communities of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity) in the NRM context comprise a diverse heterogeneous range of community-based groups and non-government organisations. The predominant community-based groups in the study area comprise Landcare and environmental groups, such as Field Naturalists, Bird Observers and Friends of Groups (Byron, Curtis & MacKay 2004; Scholfield et al. 2013), and farming systems and industry based groups (Scholfield et al. 2013).

These regional groups work through social networks where information flows and actors can mutually inform, influence and learn from one another. A social network is an interconnected group of people who usually have an attribute in common. Different groups often have their own set of social norms and levels of mutual obligation between group members. Prell (2011) notes that in the context of adaptive management and adaptive co-management, social networks can be pre-existing or deliberately designed in an effort to include diverse opinions.
and views. Understanding the representative nature of civil society groups is important as it is these actors who interact and form relationships with one another and it is these relationships that influence how knowledge is constructed, exchanged and used. This is particularly evident in regional NRM as people seek information from trusted sources and link to work on local, sub-catchment and catchment scale projects. Individuals and groups transfer knowledge, experiences and information as well as facilitate the development and communication of adaptive responses. These activities develop mutual understanding and trust among different stakeholders in the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region.

Collaboration is important to achieving natural resource conservation and management objectives. Lockwood (2009) described NRM as a collective action problem requiring diverse actors – governments, farmers, business, communities and non-government organisations – to integrate their activities. Tucker (2004) also noted the different roles played by local residents and nonlocal stakeholders. The distinction between the roles of local and nonlocal stakeholders is critical for community-based management because it helps to distinguish the needs that communities may be able to fill on their own and those for which they need to turn to external sources. The characteristics of these networks, which stakeholders are involved, what roles do they play and with whom they interact, influence members’ ability and motivation to engage with and contribute to collaborative natural resource management.

In 1987 the first Landcare group, the Dundas Black Range group, was established in the Glenelg Hopkins region. Landcare groups then expanded rapidly to a high of 150 in 2006. These numbers decreased in later years to approximately 100 groups in 2012 (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2002, 2007, 2012). Landcare groups in the study area comprise mostly farmer members, with more than 50 per cent of rural landholders currently members of existing groups (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2007). Landcare also represents urban (Ararat Landcare) and coastal (Warrnambool Coastcare) interests. In 2004 the CMA appointed a state funded Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC) to coordinate and provide assistance to the growing number of Landcare groups. The co-ordinator guided planning at local level and integrated local plans with sub catchment and regional planning and strategies as well as technical support, funding advice and general capacity building activities. In 2004 to complement the regional Landcare Coordinator role, and further support community groups, the CMA employed 10 Community Landcare Facilitators funded through the NHT2 funding program. These positions were
situated across the CMA region including Hamilton, Ararat, Ballarat, Balmoral, Casterton, Warrnambool and Portland. The Regional Landcare facilitators worked with Landcare groups in their respective areas.

In addition to Landcare, numerous environmental groups are active in the region and include: Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Warrnambool Environment Action Group, Waterwatch, Estuarywatch, Wildlife Victoria, Frogwatch, Victorian Environmental Friends Network and Australian Plants Society. These groups are characterised by shared environmental interests, values, and representations with formal governance arrangements in place. The groups can be local chapters of state or national entities i.e. Birdlife Hamilton, have a specific interest i.e. Brolga Recovery Group, or a have affiliate associations with entities such as Environment Victoria.

Grassroots activist campaigns lead to wider social benefits (Demetrious 2007) and south west Victoria has a history of group formation for specific environmental campaigns. These range from locally focused campaigns i.e. the 1960s protection of the Cobboboonee forest to engagement with national campaigns i.e. the recent anti-fracking campaign. Fracking is a technique used to extract unconventional gas from shale deposits. As a result of these campaigns the Cobboboonee National Park was established and the Victorian Government legislated to ban fracking in Victoria.

Agriculture is the region’s economic mainstay, with an estimated 60% of the region’s economy is in some way dependent upon food and fibre production (Great South Coast Group 2012). Over 80% of the Glenelg Hopkins region has been developed for agricultural use and is characterised by a diversity of farming systems and industry based groups. Farming systems groups comprise members whose agricultural activities integrate biological, social and organisational/institutional aspects of farming. The ‘system’ in this context is the unit of land managed at farm scale. The group encourages inclusive participation and collective action. Systems thinking combines ‘hard’ systems that focus on biophysical and economic data, and ‘soft’ systems that deal with human interactions (Bawden et al. 1984; Ison, Maiteny & Carr 1997).

Ridley (2005, p. 605) has organised farmer-member groups into five non-exclusive categories: (1) Farmer driven groups that are largely self-funded and with local sponsorship, (2) Scientist driven approaches where partnerships are formed, for example between state
agency (DEPI) and farmers (Better Beef Network), (3) Farming systems groups that are
driven by farmers in partnerships with scientists, for example the No-Till Farmer Association,
(4) National industry approaches such as Meat and Livestock Australia’s (MLA) Sustainable
Grazing Systems and (5) Catchment driven, government and landholder partnerships which
are motivated by priority issues such as dryland salinity.

Ridely notes that these groups have emerged in response to varying issues of leadership and
the needs of farmers, scientists and government priorities/ institutional arrangements and
funding opportunities.

The delivery of NHT2 and NAP has become increasingly devolved to non-government actors,
including non-government organisations (NGOs). NGOs have the flexibility to work at local,
regional, state- wide and national scale (Lockwood et al. 2009) and can roll out programs in
collaboration with local groups. NGO’s also provide a role in promoting discussion and
debate about environmental issues, outside the spheres of governmental policy and planning.
This advocacy and awareness has been especially crucial in promoting concepts such as
sustainable development and ecosystem services. NGOs can advise policy makers about the
local needs and priorities. They can also contribute significantly by undertaking research and
publication on environment and development related issues. During the study, NGOs active in
the Glenelg Hopkins region included Greening Australia, Trust for Nature, Bush Heritage
Australia, Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Wilderness Society.

5.4 A Multiscalar Networked Perspective

Descriptions of the various NRM actors in the previous sections has been arranged for clarity
through a hierarchical lens that focuses on levels of decision-making and regional
arrangements nested within larger management arrangements. An alternative approach
proposed by Morrison (2007) is the concept of scale rather than level. This is concerned not
with the hierarchically set unit at a particular scale, but with the relational space. This concept
of relational space reveals the interfaces between these units, and if these interfaces are
considered, environmental management can be conceived of as a product of relations rather
than of level. Focusing on scale, rather than level, describes the complex set of relationships,
resources and opportunities between levels (Morrison 2007). Morrison’s relational scale
perspective better reflects the links that have evolved for particular need or issue. These don’t
necessarily match the organizational or boundary parameters established by the regional bodies, state and federal government.

The strength of these groups is determined by their various capacities that include networks, knowledge, social and cultural links. The networks are not horizontal but, as Morrison discovered in far North Queensland, are a complex hybridized style of networked governance comprised of vertical and cross-wise interactions. They resemble the networked multiscalar design of Cary’s Landcare networks described in Figure 4.3. As Morrison advises this reality presents a complex challenge to those expecting simple solutions. Figure 5.4 is an adapted representation of the multiscalar approach as applied to the Glenelg Hopkins region. It shows the complexity of relationships in scale and time.

Figure 5.4 Conceptual networks in the study area adapted from Morrison (2007)
In this representation NRM actors are linked through the activities, nodes and networks. The activities contribute to meeting the aims and targets of the Regional Catchment Management Strategy and federal and state government policies. Yet each actor has their respective needs and priorities and ability to fulfill their aspirations.
6 Study Design - Ways of Seeing
6.1 The Research Approach

Chapter Six is presented in four sections. The first, Section 6.1 discusses the research approach including the ontological, epistemological and methodology guiding the study and the use of qualitative research. Section 6.2 describes the conduct of the study including ethical considerations, the research community and CMA endorsement for the research. Section 6.3 provides a rationale for the selection of methods chosen for this study. Section 6.4 describes the process of analysis, how codes, categories and themes were developed to arrive at a classification of discourse.

6.1.1 Qualitative Paradigm

Science philosopher, Thomas Kuhn, popularized the term paradigm, which describes the general informing laws, theoretical models and methods shared by a given scientific community (Kuhn 2012). Paradigms are sets of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deal with ultimate or first principles. They each represent a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world (Guber & Lincoln 1994).

Fien (2002) provides guidance for considering the ontological, epistemological and methodological elements of four paradigms: (1) Empirical–analytical, (2) Interpretive, (3) Critical and (4) Post structural. Fien’s table situates this study within a post structural paradigm see Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Ontology, epistemology and methodology: adapted from Fien (2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Paradigm</th>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post structural</td>
<td>There are multiple representations of reality constituted in and through language and discourse in different contexts</td>
<td>Events are understood in terms of powerful and subordinate discourses which constitute social realities</td>
<td>Research seeks to deconstruct or expose how dominant interests are constructed through language and discourse preserves social inequalities and ecological harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common research method used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accordingly, this study is epistemologically rooted in the idea that social relations shape the world and that these are in turn shaped by structures and discourses of power. It adopts the ontological position that there are multiple representations of reality constituted in and through language and discourse in different contexts. Post structuralism investigates individuals and social relations through language and gains meaning within specific relations of power (Macdonald et al., 2000). The relationship between meaning and power is embodied in discourse, what is said and thought and who has the authority to speak (Macdonald et al. 2002). Post structural theory contends that actors are constituted within discourse and that presents opportunity for change (Hajer 1995).

A criticism of post structuralism is that it undermines self-agency, that, beyond their control, people are constructs of their society (Hammersley 2000). Alternative views posit that as people are part of complex social relations it is essential to interrogate discourse in order to expose power relationships (Macdonald et al. 2002). An examination of NRM discourse can reveal powerful and subordinate discourses and how dominant interests are constructed and maintained. Natural resource management there is a need to appreciate the different discourses present and how meanings and actions change for different social groups within these discourses.

In this study the researcher is linked to both theory, via. critical inquiry, and to practice, via. action research which together provide a basis for valuable insight. As a natural resource manager the researcher sought ways to improve practice and make a contribution to the workplace through shared learning from the study.

Methods that are suited to the post structuralist inquiry of NRM discourse are qualitative, since this provides rich, contextual data from which crucial inquiry and action research can be performed. It enables this research to ask the open question ‘what is going on here?’ (Bouma & Ling 2004). Qualitative approaches allow room to be innovative and to work more within researcher-designed frameworks. As this study takes place within a multi-layered workplace, qualitative research enables the researcher to try to understand the perspectives of those involved, informing and making sense out of sometimes vague and unlinked information.

Qualitative research covers a wide range of approaches that aim to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people's experiences, perspectives and histories. Denzin and Lincoln propose the following definition for qualitative
research: qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 3).

NRM relationships are not consistent or uniform, but develop through meaning and human agency in the social world. Consequently the researcher attempts to comprehend this social world using both participant and the researcher understandings. The interpretation of the phenomenon being studied is integral to qualitative research and accounts for the interrelatedness of different aspects of people's lives including social, historical and cultural factors. Phenomenologists believe that knowledge is socially constructed and created from a particular group and context (Bryman 2012, p. 30).

6.1.2 Practitioner Research

Practitioner research is an umbrella term for a research methodology that covers all forms of research carried out by practitioners (Jarvis 1999). Using practitioner research enables the researcher to build upon learning drawn from an earlier thesis. In this study, practitioner research was found to be highly responsive to the needs of the research focus as it combines connection to workplace, colleagues and communities, contribution to academic scholarly knowledge and potential for improvement/change in the workplace/individual. Practitioner research became part of ‘normal’ activities. The journey of this research process has two outcomes: (1) improvement of the researcher’s own skills and knowledge, and (2) the benefit of the research study itself. Van Maanen proposes the paradox that the more accurate, detailed and precise a framework, the more complex, untidy and chaotic the resultant simulation (Van Maanen 1983). The research questions arose from investigation into modeling relationship frameworks in the field of natural resource management. The research was initially disordered and amorphous - yet the researcher’s desire to seek greater understanding and explanation required the study activities be explored within the workplace context in order to provide a meaningful result.
The practitioner researcher allows the experience of surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation, which maybe uncertain or unique. The research is carried out to generate both a new understanding of phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schon 1986). Thus the research will find order from disorder. Whenever a researcher aims to concentrate on how aspects of the social world are constructed, there must be an attempt to get inside the process of social construction by building up descriptions of how human beings engage in meaningful action and create a shared world (Hough 2002).

The research strategies and methods have been chosen to allow exploration of complex issues of social and government NRM constructs. Organizational worlds are always more uncertain, ambivalent, contradictory and ambiguous than expected (Hough 2002). A sense of order is required to undertake analysis. Identifying data and information relevant to the research objectives was also guided by the decision to focus on themes of empowerment and participation as a means of describing and understanding the relationships. Furthermore, the practitioner researcher approach allows accumulated experience to inform theoretical considerations. The benefits accrued to the research design and theoretically based questioning is more easily interpreted in practice using experience and knowledge.

Practitioner research in this study is understood as a concept of insider research. The insider researcher has a direct connection to the research setting. This contrasts with traditional notions of research where the researcher is an objective outsider studying topics external to his/herself (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

The literature cites advantages for adopting an insider researcher approach including:

- access to information and or knowledge which the outsider researcher is not privy (Denzin & Lincoln 2005);
- that interviewees may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly if familiar with the researcher (Tierney & Gitlin 1994);
- deeper levels of understanding as an outcome of prior knowledge (Taylor 2011);
- knowing the local language and being empirically literate (Roseneil 1993); and
- benefiting from existing trust between researcher and participants (Labaree 2002; Zeni 1998).
Having an in-depth knowledge of the study, the actors and the situations is an advantage for the researcher and particularly in this study when exploring NRM discourse. The insider researcher position allows for an unravelling and comprehension of such intricacies and complications.

6.1.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings accurately reflect the situation and are supported by the evidence (Bryman 2012; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014; Yin 2013). In quantitative research reliability is concerned with reproducing the same result, over time and using a similar methodology. However, this is counter-intuitive for qualitative research where study maybe for the purpose of explaining and generating understanding (Stenbacka 2001). Stenbacka (2001) further argues that the concept of reliability has no relevance in qualitative research since reliability involves measurement.

Other authors propose that validity and reliability in qualitative studies can be treated in terms of credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness (Golafshani 2003; Seale 1999). Moreover, Lincoln and Guba assert that there can be no validity without reliability, and a demonstration of validity is sufficient to establish reliability (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity and therefore reliability, in their studies. Data triangulation, used in this study, involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study. At the same time the goal of triangulation is not necessarily to arrive at consistency across data sources, rather inconsistencies are likely and should be viewed as an opportunity to uncover deeper meaning in the data (Patton 2002).

This study uses a multiple methods approach, and when methods are purposely designed to collect overlapping data greater confidence may be placed in the evaluation’s overall findings (Yin 2013). The validity of analysis is further discussed in Section 3.2.1 Discourse analysis framework.

Social research is always deeply contextual and its claims to truth are integrally related to its realisation in practice (Zeichner & Noffke 2001). It could be argued that the researcher (with accountability for delivery of NRM programs at the CMA) would lean towards describing the effectiveness of partnerships for which she is responsible. There may be a blurring of
boundaries between the researcher and researched that causes bias in the analysis and reporting. Alternatively, the researcher may be reluctant to probe questions for fear of revealing inadequacies; or the researcher may identify too strongly with the participants/situation and not test theory as systematically or as rigorously as required. The issue of validity becomes problematic because of the researcher's involvement with the subject of study.

Similarly, there may be circumstances where, for example, the researcher has access to knowledge that others don’t (i.e. community groups), thus creating potential issues of empowerment/disempowerment. Taylor (2011) cautions against notions of privileged insider knowledge and that insider status doesn’t guarantee a correct way of seeing or interpreting.

This study required the researcher to have a particular sensitivity to colleagues, community members and others involved in the workplace. The approach taken was to be very transparent about the research, consulting colleagues and community and invite questions, feedback and critique. The way the research was communicated was also important from using plain language (but not dumbing down) to consensual approaches for enlisting others’ support and opinions.

Due to the familiarity of these relationships, addressing the ethical issues of insider research included challenges such as: interviewing colleagues; managing the power implications of the workplace and the role as a researcher; and in particular, challenging the value system and processes of the CMA and government. This became noticeable when conducting interviews. For example, a community interviewee was unhappy about the lack of CMA consultation during the regional investment planning process. In this instance and with the approval of the interviewee, their concerns were taken to the researcher’s work colleagues.

Freely sharing knowledge and information during the research process encouraged a trusting learning environment and helped validate the data and findings. Through creating strong links and communication between the researcher and the research stakeholder group, the honesty with which the information was gathered, interpreted and reported could be increased. It is to everyone’s benefit to have accurate information (Dick 1991).

Finally an independent ‘critical friend’ agreed to provide advice when the researcher needed a trusted person to ask provocative questions and critique the research approach. The critical
friend was active in social research and had an understanding of the Australian context of natural resource management and regional development. This proved invaluable as the insider researcher, immersed in the workplace, failed to see ‘the obvious’ on occasions. The dilemma of the power and authority in the workplace sometimes impeded the development of the researchers’ reflective and learning capacity.

6.1.4 Analytical Generalisation

The term generalisation is used to describe findings that are general for a population (Stenbacka 2001). That is generalising or transferring lessons from smaller projects to larger population projects. Yin (2014) points out that for qualitative research results or findings should be in relation to a theory and not population.

Analytic generalisation describes more abstract levels of ideas from a set of findings and as a process provides an appropriate logic for generalising the findings (Yin 2013). In order to identify overlaps and gaps in the findings Yin (2013) advises linking the analytic generalisation to related research literature. By doing so, the analytical generalisations can be interpreted with greater meaning and lead to a desired cumulative knowledge (Yin 2013).

In this study Dryzek’s environmental discourse taxonomy has been adapted and applied for the analysis of the NRM corpus. These findings were then linked to two case studies. This approach adapts Halkier’s theory of ‘positioning’, a form of analytic generalisation that reflects multiple voices and discourse. The positioning form of generalising enables the researcher to represent some of the communicative and discursive dynamisms that are formed through social constructions (Halkier 2011).

6.1.5 Developing Learning and Praxis

Social researchers, particularly practitioner researchers, have a strong motivation to pursue topics of personal interest that relate to an interest in creating a better society with life experiences a primary influence that underpins practice (Wadsworth 2006). Dick (2002) proposes action research as a family of methodologies, each that simultaneously pursues action and research. The action takes the form of change, improvement or implementation in the workplace and the research consists of learning and understanding leading to sharing of results.
Learning and continuous improvement in praxis for the researcher/practitioner was supported by using critical reflection techniques while researching. Reflective techniques enable self-understanding and opportunities for self-directed personal change and professional development. The theory of knowledge acquisition as a reflective practice has been described by Schon as a reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action although Schon also points out that professionals work in ‘messy swamps’ filled with uncertainty (Schon 1986, p. 34).

The development of learning and praxis is undertaken through doing in practice and a process of shifting back and forth between reflection (Schön 1987; Wadsworth 2006). As the nature of knowledge is understood in terms of powerful and subordinate discourse then it is necessary for the researcher to reflect on multiple representations of reality and expose how dominant interests are constructed. The position of the researcher is noted throughout this thesis but the study is designed to focus on the observed discourse rather than the development of the researcher.

At the commencement of the study, the researcher started a workplace journal to capture workplace observations, meeting minutes, conversations and discussions. The nine journals cover a five-year period 2007-2013. The journal notes served two purposes (1) to assist with the interpretation of the research data and (2) to reflect on research practice. Reflection at all levels of the analysis helped to enhance thoroughness. Journal observations further informed and made sense of events in which discourse took place. Where appropriate observational notes were entered into the data analysis software (NVivo) and could be cross referenced and linked to codes.

Learning from this review and reflection process was shared more broadly with other academics and researchers through conference papers, seminars and presentations, reports and doctoral study groups held at RMIT. In addition, the learning was incorporated into the design of subsequent NRM projects, for example, the Australian government funded Improving the methods and impacts of agricultural extension in conflict areas of Mindanao, Philippines.

Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests social science researchers tend to address the following four value-rational questions to guide decisions about taking action: (1) where are we going, (2) is this development desirable, (3) who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power and (4) what, if anything, should we do about it. In asking these questions, the researcher
continues to explore their position with respect to the dominance of the work in relation to the participants in the study. This self-reflection encourages an ethically reflexive study.

### 6.2 The Conduct of the Study

Section 6.2 describes the preparation taken at the beginning of the study. This includes identifying ethical protocols and how these would be applied, linking with a discourse analysis research community and seeking involvement and support from the Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

#### 6.2.1 Research Preparation - ethics

To prepare for the research, and in keeping with university protocol, a Human Research Ethics approval process was undertaken with the Human Research Ethics Committee of RMIT University. The ethics process required the researcher to consider how the study would be conducted in relation to the welfare and rights of participants, the workplace and the university. The researcher familiarized herself with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The code prescribes standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all researchers (academic staff, students, technical and other support staff) engaged in research at RMIT University (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council & Universities Australia 2007).

The Code is based upon the following guiding principles: (a) Research is original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding and make this widely available and (b) Researchers should, in all respects of their research demonstrate integrity and professionalism; observe fairness and equity; demonstrate intellectual honesty; effectively and transparently manage conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest, and ensure the safety and well-being of those associated with the research; and (c) Research methods and results should be open to scrutiny and debate (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council & Universities Australia 2007).

A Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) was prepared with supporting documents (i.e. Letter of Invitation and Plain Language Statement) that covered what the research was about, why they had been invited to participate, the extent of involvement sought and time required. Example research questions were also provided. Consent forms were prepared that
summarized the research undertaking and conditions of participation, i.e. participation was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage, and required the participant’s signature. A copy of this document is located at the Appendix Section 11.4.

At the commencement of the study a stakeholder list was developed to identify who may be involved either directly and indirectly in the research and to what level. This list was expanded as the study progressed. All potential interviewees were sent the letter of invitation and relevant support documents. After the letters were sent contact was made by phone to confirm receipt of the letter, and to discuss the research and potential for involvement. Other research participants were identified as the study progressed and through the snowball sampling as described in Section 6.3.2.

A key consideration for the researcher was how to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for participants. Interviewing should be accompanied by assurances about anonymity and practical confidentiality (Berg 1988; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Furthermore, when approving access to records the Glenelg Hopkins CEO requested that information would be treated in confidence and that individuals would not be personally identified (See Attachment 11.3 Letter: 2 Freedom of Information Approval). A clear statement about the degree to which anonymity and confidentiality could be guaranteed was provided with the letter of invitation. All interview datasets were given pseudonyms and coded, and direct quotes were reported using a code that didn’t identify the interviewee. In the event that reporting of data might reveal a source the interviewee was contacted and the potential for disclosure discussed. It was important to reassure the interviewees that any information they disclosed would only be used for the purposes of the study and would not be reported to, for example, their managers in such a way that they could be identified.

Chapter 8 includes an embedded case study that describes successful strategies for collaboration, the elements that enabled success and the extent to which practical constraints affected outcomes. This was achieved through an analysis of text and interview from those who were either involved in or had an association with the Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project. This project was a joint initiative of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners and the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and based on a long-standing relationship. The embedded case study did not seek cultural information or information of a sensitive nature.
The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012) provide protocols and guidelines for ethical research involving Indigenous people. The guidelines comprise 14 principles grouped under the broad categories of: rights, respect and recognition; negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding; participation, collaboration and partnership; benefits, outcomes and giving back; managing research: use, storage and access; and reporting and compliance. Being aware of and applying these protocols and guidelines helps create a study based on equal power relations, transparency and representation.

Research findings were regularly discussed with and made available to members of the project reference group. This reference group comprised: Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners CEO; Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Chair; Gunditjmara Elders x 2; Gunditj Mirring field officers x 4; Glenelg Hopkins CMA x 1; Parks Victoria x 1 and Department of Sustainability and Environment x 1. Working with the reference group was also important for addressing local cultural protocols.

This approach ensured that participants were not disadvantaged by the study, free & informed consent was sought for interviews, any shared Indigenous knowledge or process was respected and remained confidential and the view of one group (or individual) was not presumed to represent the collective view of the community.

6.2.2 Research preparation – the discourse studies research community

Early in the development of this thesis the researcher contacted Lancaster University Emeritus Professor Norman Fairclough, Faculty of Linguistics. Professor Fairclough is an eminent academic of discourse studies, specifically critical discourse analysis and the place of language, power and social change. Through email exchange the application of discourse analysis to the study of regional natural resource management was discussed. Professor Fairclough also arranged for the researcher to meet with academics at the Faculty of Linguistics in the UK. This meeting provided an opportunity to expand discussion on the multiple use of discourse analysis for example corporate, politic, gender and education studies. At that time the academics suggested that applying discourse analysis to the study of regional NRM was a new application of an evolving theory.
This study draws on the theory of environmental discourse developed by Professor John Dryzek, University of Canberra. The researcher also contacted Professor Dryzek to discuss his work on environmental discourse and to clarify components of the taxonomy.

Contacting expert academics and practitioners early in the research provided valuable opportunities to discuss theory and practice. It also linked the researcher with an important source of ongoing information and knowledge – the networks and research community working with discourse studies.

### 6.2.3 Glenelg Hopkins CMA Involvement

The study is based within the Glenelg Hopkins CMA workplace. At the outset of the study and prior to the research confirmation presentation, approval to conduct the research study was sought from the CMA by the researcher. Initial discussions took place with the CMA Chief Executive Officer and senior management. A formal letter seeking support from the CEO followed these discussions. A further two meetings were held to discuss the design and parameters of study, who would be involved, how confidentiality would be maintained, who would benefit from the outcomes and other matters. The CMA Board members were briefed about the research.

Over the duration of the study there have been three CMA Chief Executive Officers. With each new appointment, the researcher provided a briefing and update on the research and sought continued support (see Attachment Letter: 1 Glenelg Hopkins CMA approval). In 2012, the third newly appointed CEO requested that the researcher submit a Freedom of Information application to the CMA as an administrative process. This was done and approval given (see Attachment Letter: 2 Freedom of Information approval).

### 6.3 Research Methods

Selection of research methods is guided by the nature of the research (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Insch, Moore & Murphy 1997). This study comes from a post structural position where multiple representations of reality are constituted in and through language and discursive practice. To explore these multiple realities the selection of method(s) was not limited to one approach, rather it was expanded and multiple of methods were chosen. The corpus was
gathered through interview, focus group, observation and journal notes, and text and archival material.

A discourse analysis of documents, text and artifacts and interview transcripts enabled the study to examine multiple NRM narratives and discursive practice. The analysis looked for assumptions, repeated patterns and/or discrepancy. The purpose of the focus group was to identify key regional NRM actors, explore themes of power and provide validation (or not) of the initial findings from the corpus. Case study provides a unit of research that places the discourse analysis findings in the workplace.

The discursive approach in this study uses analysis of events and text to describe a discourse. Then observation, field notes and interview transcripts are used to describe how reality is invoked by the various actors. Conversations with informants provide insight, and are treated as a source of knowledge concerning the topics discussed. The context for the informant is described and cross-referenced with others experience of the same situation.

6.3.1 Interview

Semi structured interviews were undertaken with regional, state and federal agency staff to validate consistency and clarify understanding of government policy and directions and explore other issues that arose from discussion. Semi structured interviews were also undertaken with regional actors either involved in NRM and/or affected by NRM decisions. These included community group representatives, individuals, local government, universities, schools, landholders and other NRM agencies. The selection of interviewees, interview schedule and handling of data were approved by the RMIT University Research Ethics Committee. Consistent with the approved procedure, this research preserves the anonymity of those interviewed.

A total of 25 participants were interviewed. For the analysis participants are coded based on whether they operate at regional, state or national levels and, if at regional level, whether they are a board member or staff of the regional NRM body, or member of the community. A numerical subscript is used to indicate where more than one participant was interviewed from a particular category. The researcher conducted each interview and sessions were documented and recorded. Recordings were then transcribed independently. Draft transcripts were constructed from the notes and participants contacted to verify the transcripts and clarify the
intent of their observations and discussion points. Several participants made amendments to these draft transcripts and in these cases a revised transcript was produced and rechecked. Interviews were held face-to-face with participants. One interview was held with two interviewees at the same time.

Direct quotes were used to support the analysis and findings. Interviewees had consented to interview on the understanding that they would not be identified. To ensure this reference numbers were allocated to the interviewees direct quotes used in the findings.

6.3.2 Snowball Sampling

The study is primarily explorative, qualitative and descriptive and aims to reveal and understand relationships and networks in NRM. This includes potentially hidden voices who may be involved in activities that are not considered mainstream or those reluctant to take part in more formalized studies e.g. small Friends of Groups not associated with the larger Landcare networks. The research strategy chosen to enable the researcher to reach these voices was snowball sampling – a technique to find research subjects who may be otherwise difficult to identify. Snowball sampling is a simple approach where one interviewee provides the researcher with a suggestion for another interviewee, who in turn provides the name of a third and so on.

Both Berg (Berg 1988) and Atkinson and Flint (Atkinson & Flint 2001) described snowball sampling as ever expanding set of contacts and social networks as linked to the initial sample that allowed a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance. The approach enhanced this study in that it prevented the potential limiting of subjects that might occur in a stakeholder analysis developed by the researcher alone. Hence the study was not limited to the knowledge of the insider researcher or mainstream NRM associates.

6.3.3 Focus Group

Focus groups are concerned with exploring a certain topic and allow participants to bring forward issues that they think important. The focus group method is more focused than a group interview (Bryman 2012; Krueger 2014) and enables individuals to collectively make sense or construct meaning to a phenomenon. Participants are recruited from their experience or knowledge of the topic (Krueger & Casey 2002).
Focus groups are an effective tool for investigating the relation between discourse and society, and the role of discourse in producing and reproducing unequal power relations (Krzyżanowski 2008). The purpose of using a focus group approach in this study was to identify regional NRM actors, explore themes of power and provide validation (or not) of the initial findings from data analysis.

The nine focus group participants were a natural grouping, that is, they knew each other through NRM and came from the community, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, state agency, a non-government organization and primary industry. Federal government was not represented at the group activity however the data was later discussed with two federal government officers and their feedback incorporated.

All participants were advised of the themes to be explored and the purpose of the research. Participation was entirely voluntary. The focus group activities were structured to encourage individual thinking, group discussion and consensus (where applicable) with no right or wrong answers. This maximized the participant’s opportunity to express their beliefs and observations. Findings from the focus group are presented at Section 7.3 Focus Group Findings: Power Relationships.

6.3.4 Case Studies

As an intensive, in-depth form of qualitative investigation, the case study portrays the range of perspectives that constitute a phenomena or practice being studied. According to Yin (2014) case study is the preferred research approach for ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions, investigating contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Case studies can be particularly valuable in the applied social sciences, where research often aims to present findings through real life examples (Gummerson 2000). Case studies also allow for multiple perspectives to be examined between actors, groups of actors and the interactions that occur. This makes the method well suited to the interpretivist nature of this research. Case studies can involve multiple techniques for data collection and analysis and take years to complete (Guthrie 2010). This study was conducted over six years. The advantage of a longitudinal approach is that it allowed findings to evolve and mature, for misinterpretation to be corrected, for validation of outcomes and for improved representation.
Two scales of case study are presented. The first scale is a descriptive case study that explores the case (i.e. regional NRM discourse) in its real world context (Yin 2014). The second scale is an embedded unit of analysis that drills down to explore the partnerships involved with delivering the four-year Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project. This project was chosen as an embedded case study because of the diversity of regional partners involved and the potential for findings to contribute to a better understanding of effective partnerships. The two case studies are based upon primary interviews and secondary data (documented material).

**Case Study 1: The Regional Catchment Investment Plan**

Case Study 1 the Regional Catchment Investment Plan identifies discourse representative of the three discourses identified across this research. Case Study 1 presents three regional discourses (1) Official, (2) Resistance and (3) Utility and Action to explore the respective perceptions, claims and counter claims and discursive practice that each brought to the discourse. These voices are derived from those actors directly involved in the Regional Catchment Investment Plan. These actors have first-hand knowledge and experience and present not only an individual perspective but also that of the entities they represent. Text is also analysed for the government voice where this is the dominant mode of interaction. Each voice is considered with respect to intent, the mode of interaction (including language) and the outcome which represents the effect of discursive practice. The RCIP activity provides rich material for the case study as it is a distinct point in time when the three discourses Official, Resistance and Utility and Action come together at a time of intense discussion, debate and negotiation. This case study also spanned a period of major change where the federal government moved from the Natural Heritage Trust program to the Caring for our Country program. The shift in emphasis and policy prompted reflection on the change in discourse and therefore the effect on discursive practice. To illustrate findings in this the case study, interpretations are supported by quotations from the raw data.

**Case Study 2: the Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project**

Case Study 2 presents an embedded unit of analysis that reports on the nature of the relationships between partners involved in the four-year Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project. The project is based in the study area of south west Victoria. This case study draws on analytical explanations from the first case study which in turn relate to the entire research study see Figure 6.1.
Case Study 2 describes NRM strategies for collaboration, the elements that enabled success and the extent to which practical constraints affect outcomes. Relationship building as a theme was widely evident in the collated data and exemplifies the discursive practice identified in the discourse analysis.

The study reports on the relationships in three ways: (1) documents and analyses partner perceptions, (2) describe partnerships/relationships and (3) uses effective partnership indicators in the analysis.

6.3.5 The Corpus

Fairclough (1992) advises that selecting texts for a particular study will depend on the set of data available and the researchers’ knowledge of this data set. The documents used in this study represent a heterogeneous set of data exchanged between NRM actors, used internally by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and government, and includes those obtained in the public domain. These included official communiqués, annual reports, strategies and plans, meeting minutes, pamphlets, newspapers and internet material. The advantage of using documents is that they provide primary and secondary written material that record events as they occurred, and through a wide range of various perspectives and interests.

A vast number of documents are generated in the daily business of natural resource management. Analyzing all documents is beyond the capacity of the researcher and this study. Choosing which documents to be analyzed could have introduced bias to the research. To overcome selection issues and to ensure that the number of documents chosen was a manageable yet representative quantity, the selection of material focused mainly on the annual Regional Catchment Investment Planning (RCIP) period. This annual activity provides a point in time when NRM actors (i.e. civil society, government and the regional body) discussed,
debated and negotiated respective projects and funding. There are exceptions to using material outside RCIP including Annual Reports, strategies, and policy documents. The material used in the embedded Gunditj Mirring case study was not time bound.

The research material resides primarily at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA. Documents used in the workplace are stored in office filing cabinets and shelves, older material is archived in a library and archive shed at the same location as the CMA office. The most useful tool for the researcher was the single-repository electronically filing database system – RecFind. All CMA documents are registered in the RecFind database including those created in MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, Adobe PDF and graphics formats. The database allows storage and retrieval of images, correspondence and electronic documents. RecFind enabled the researcher to search for information using key words, dates and themed areas i.e. catchment health, and community engagement.

Based on advice from qualitative social research literature, three conditions were applied when selecting material for analysis. (Berg & Lune 2004; Bryman & Burgess 2002; Roberts 1997). The material was authentic, credible and representative. Authenticity was taken to mean the material was genuine and directly relevant to the study. Credibility of material read in the context of the study was ensured by iterative cross-reference which allowed detection of any omissions or anomalous material. Finally, selection of the material was structured to be as representative as possible, spanning both official publication and informal documents from a range of NRM stakeholders. The researcher was alert to avoiding bias from a particular viewpoint or outcome.

The diversity of material generated by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and relevant government departments during the study was vast and not all documents were relevant, for example, many of the documents are technical in nature. However, focusing on material relating to the investment planning cycle (e.g. communiqués, reports, letters and minutes) provided a rich source of information and helped explain the changeable nature of the relationships. The material used for analysis is listed in the Appendix 11.1 Documents gathered for analysis..

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and state and federal government documents were summarised and interpretation checked with the catchment management authority and government department staff. NRM documentation generated by civil society
was sourced through public media reports, Landcare and group newsletters, meeting minutes and correspondence to the Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

The texts were examined using NVivo software, which allowed the data to be organized, coded and explored. Through the use of NVivo, interview transcripts and data were allocated into categories (and often multiple categories) and resynthesized to produce a description of the curated data and a theory around NRM discourse. The software enables organization of themes to be analyzed showing relationships between data.

6.3.6 Managing the Text

The volume of written material generated by natural resource management agents during the study period (2006 – 2013) is extensive. At the beginning of the study the researcher established a collection of texts and documents to represent Australian natural resource management both historically and current. This collection expanded during the study period and provides important contextual information and data for analysis. For example, to gain a broader understanding of the discourse of civil society a search of public documents was made of parliamentary inquiry submissions and transcripts relating to civil society and the environment, at both federal and state level. These transcripts can be found on the parliament of Australia website: http://www.aph.gov.au/, and the parliament of Victoria website http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/ or by request from the respective parliamentary libraries. A representative list of all texts is presented in the Appendix 12.1 Documents gathered for analysis.

Key documents were then selected for analysis from the text collection. Selection was based on the document meeting at least one of the following criteria. That the text is:

- used by the NRM actors for investment planning;
- explicitly referred to by interviewees; and
- generated by one of the NRM actors of interest (government, civil society, CMA).

These criteria were chosen to ensure that the documents used were relevant, representative, and linked to the Regional Catchment Investment Planning activity. An additional attribute of these documents is that the text conveys intent and meaning in the respective agents in their
own words or the words of the organisations they represent. Examples of text used for the analysis are listed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Examples of text used for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communiqués to/from regional groups, industry and NGOs:</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate Documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glenelg Hopkins Corporate Plan 2006…2012</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Catchment Strategies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Catchment Strategy 2003-2007</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Regional Catchment Investment Plan, 2008/09 – 2010/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Communiqués to the CMA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landcare network plans and strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government</td>
<td>A National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for our Country Business Plan 2009-2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for our Country Business Plan 2010-2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for our Country Business Plan 2011-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State program descriptors i.e. Healthy Waterways Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.7 Identifiers

To prepare for analysis all texts and interview transcripts were assigned with a coded identifier. For text this consists of Source, Year and Item number. The source identified the source of the documents and coded as follows:

- **PFGOV** = publically available Federal government documents.
- **PSGOV** = publically available State government documents.
- **PCMA** = publically available CMA documents
- **PCIV** = publically available civil society documents
- **IFGO** = internal Federal government documents
- **ISGO** = internal State government documents
- **ICMA** = internal CMA documents
- **ICIV** = documents generated by civil society for internal use
The year relates to the year in which the text was produced and recorded the last two digits e.g. 2008 = 08. Lastly an Item number was assigned to place the document in a sequence of use. This was necessary to manage the documents that were ‘loose’ i.e. memos and emails. Therefore, using this approach, the CMA Regional Catchment Strategy 2003-2007 was coded PCMA03:3. The first 2007 internal CMA memo was coded ICMA07:1.

Publically available state and federal documents are those found in the public domain (for example on websites) and widely used by NRM actors. An example of Government documentation is the Caring for our Country Business Plan which is directly available from website http://nrmonline.nrm.gov.au/catalog/mql:2497. Publically available documents generated by the CMA are freely available at their website http://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/ or by request to the CMA. Examples of these texts include regional strategies and plans. The publically available documents generated by civil society include NGO prospectus, media stories, Landcare plans and strategies.

Documents used for internal purposes included emails, memos, letters and communiqués that circulate back and forth between the respective NRM actors. These documents are not in the public domain but provide a rich source of information with insights on the daily business and discursive practice of NRM.

Interview transcripts were assigned an identifier using a number system that attributed source and the year of interview. A numerical subscript was used to indicate where more than one participant was interviewed from a particular category. The Government departments noted below were those in existence during the course of the study (2006-2013). The interviewees were drawn from:

(1) Federal Government

Federal government participants came from two departments (1) Department of Agriculture Fishery and Forestry and (2) Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. These participants are representative across the levels of the public service and include deputy secretary, assistant secretary, executive manager, facilitator and front-line officer levels.
(2) State Government

State government participants were drawn from two departments (1) Department of Primary Industries and (2) Department of Sustainability and Environment, and included department members with a diversity of responsibility; executive officer, deputy secretary, assistant secretary, director, regional manager, facilitator and project officer levels.

(3) Catchment Management Authority

Participants from the catchment management authority included senior executives, Board and Advisory Group members, executive managers, field and project officers and facilitators.

(4) Civil Society

Civil society participants were located within the geographic boundary of the study region and self-identified as representing at least one of farming, land management, environmental consultancy, Landcare and ‘friends of’ group members, Indigenous communities, NGOs (i.e. Greening Australia, Trust for Nature), education, research science, academe and local government.

At the time of the study (2006-2013) the majority of the participants were either currently employed in or directly connected with the delivery of natural resource management. There were also participants who had been previously involved in shaping natural resource management and provided a reflective perspective. All participants were treated with equal consideration and weighting when analysing transcripts. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in an informal manner to allow the interviewee latitude to tell their story and draw out a diversity of responses. This meant that on occasion two or more narratives about the same event were dissimilar. These differences are accommodated in the context of the response.

6.4 Text Analysis

A discourse analysis approach to textual analysis seeks to connect language to the social world of the speaker (Fairclough 2003; Hajer & Versteeg 2005). Interpreting discourse provides an understanding and explanation for an individual’s reality however there are many realities. These are found in the disparity and inconsistency within a narrative and between
narratives. This is also where the discursive characteristics of the data can be analysed as it links the influences of individual, social and cultural realities.

As part of the analytical process attention is paid to the nuances and embedded meanings of every word in a data corpus (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014). The first step is to take raw data from the collection of texts and interview transcripts and code to overarching themes. This process was informed by a methodological approach developed by (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006) that integrates data-driven codes with theory-driven ones. To demonstrate rigour Fereday cites the suggestions of Schutz (1973, p. 43) that the research process requires:

- Logical consistency: where the researcher establishes clarity of the conceptual framework and method applied, and follows the principles of formal logic.
- Subjective interpretation: where the model is grounded in the subjective meaning the action had for the actor.
- Adequacy: where there is a consistency between the researcher’s constructs that is recognizable and understood by the actors within everyday life.

The interpretation of raw data was informed by the researcher’s theoretical position - events are understood in terms of powerful and subordinate discourses, which constitute social realities. The process of interpretation used direct quotes from text or transcript to ensure that data interpretation remains linked to the ‘words’ of the texts or interviewee. In addition, during the analysis, feedback from study participants helped determine and understand areas of agreement as well as divergence. The next phase of analysis reviewed and further refined the data coded, guided by research questions and objectives.

### 6.4.1 Coding

Coding, or gathering material by topic, is a fundamental task in most qualitative projects and the first analysis. The process of coding forces a focus on the material and asks how does this help to answer the research questions? (Bryman 2012). Codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to descriptive or inferential information (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014). Codes make it easier to see patterns, contradictions and to develop theories and coding facilitates the use of queries that connect themes and test understanding. For example, in this study the analytical strategy to test the connection between personal relationships and trust used a
coding query that gathered content coded as ‘relationships’ in proximity to content coded as ‘trust’.

QSR International’s NVivo software was used throughout the analysis to structure and store the data and to allow refinement, notations and connections to be made. Miles et al (2014) advise that this form of coding is appropriate for all qualitative studies but particularly for studies that prioritise and honour the participant voice.

Although presented as a step-by-step method, the research analysis was an iterative and reflexive process. The texts and transcripts were coded, stored as interim findings in the NVivo database, and then later reviewed as additional material was added. This encouraged consistency of interpretation, and challenges any assumptions that may have been made in the coding. Figure 6.2 describes the process of collection, coding and review.

![Figure 6.2 Iterative coding processes](image)

Familiarise with text/transcripts → Code → Review and recode, if necessary

The codes used in discourse analysis are directed toward answering the three research questions and objectives set out in Section 1.6 above, therefore the focus was on revealing the NRM discourses present (and absent), relationships, empowerment and the discursive practice that saw intent enacted. The process began with initial codes that identified the source of the text or transcript using general identifiers. Analysis was initiated by construction of open codes.

### 6.4.2 Open Codes

Open codes were named and a profile constructed that included a description, observations, any particular characteristics or contexts, significance and relationship to other codes. The use of open codes allows for immersion into the material, without constraint to thought. Dominant concepts in the material were constructed as sentences or phrases. The frequency of codes reveals the first discursive pattern identified in the data and shows relationships between codes, but is not an indicator of importance or rank. Using frequency lists directs the
researcher to investigate various parts of the corpus and is a good starting point for any type of corpus (Baker 2006). An example of the initial codes created from the data is listed in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Example of initial coding and frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust between partners</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocates the need for partnership with community</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes government as the investor</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes partnerships built on personal relationships</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmits the federal government message</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiates and facilitates between region and government</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact with state, fed and CMA and civil society</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants a local outcome</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as intermediaries</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting the Government message</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of trust</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences decision making</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes tension between community and CMA</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track record of delivery</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-dependency recognised by stakeholders</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of community</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement of communities and burn out</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects local knowledge</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying alternative funding sources</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding model</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some sections of texts and transcripts were assigned with more than one code. This occurred when there were two or more possibilities of meaning within the section under analysis. For example: parts of the following section were assigned under codes including ‘trust’, ‘tension’ and ‘relationships’.

I think there was a lot of tension around not being able to be clear with people. The trust thing was massive. I remember I got to the bottom of it one day. I was having a chat with a colleague and I just realised - the bottom line is we don't trust the CMAs, but we can't tell them that (Ref: 04:10).

One or more memos, attached with each code, were created to describe and demonstrate differences and connections between codes and track the process or history of analysis. It also showed how the naming of codes defines and contextualises the information found in the transcripts and texts. For example, memos in relation ‘trust’ include:

1. Trust exists between the project participating partners. The role of trust is seen as an important, enabling factor that in this case can help the partners through some difficult conversations.
2. Low levels of trust between some key partners have had a constraining effect on the ability to plan at a regional level.

3. Trust is enabling the partners to overcome differences and facilitate mutual understanding.

4. Partners are prepared to take risks, in spite of uncertainty, due to a high level of trust between them.

The codes were later revisited and reviewed. This refinement process reduces the diversity of codes to those relevant to the research. Patterns and connections began to emerge as key concepts or themes were exposed. For example, all codes referencing positive experiences of trust were grouped into a theme named: *trust enables and enhances collaboration*. The refined codes were then reviewed, analysed for patterns and assigned a category (see Section 6.4.3). Consistent and divergent codes were noted with an explanation recorded in each case. Table 6.4 provides examples of code development.

Table 6.4 Example of code development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section for analysis</th>
<th>Coding 1</th>
<th>Coding 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We weren’t sure about the project but there was trust between the partners.</td>
<td>Trust between partners</td>
<td>Trust enables and enhances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could count on them.</td>
<td></td>
<td>collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trust thing was massive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The regional bodies became the delivery mechanism not the prioritisation mechanism.</td>
<td>Changing arrangements</td>
<td>Change can create a contested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We (Landcare) felt shut out, their targets weren’t our targets.</td>
<td></td>
<td>area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together we are addressing the challenges.</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>Partnerships and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging people from all walks of life.</td>
<td></td>
<td>collaboration are valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing in those other partners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Codes can represent different meanings for a particular discourse. For example government often used the phrase ‘investing in the environment’ and described itself as the investor, reminiscent of a financial transaction with investment imperatives. Civic society also used ‘investing into the environment’ but in the sense of the sustainability of future generations and the earth, that is as a legacy or endowment. This second interpretation of the phrase places the discussion of investment in the environment into a different perspective with potentially different outcomes. A comparison of the two meanings contrasts neoliberal investment to civil society altruism. In practice, this point of tension may create counter discourse that resists the dominant form and can be found in a new discourse, for example, ethical investment. Thus
this analysis has revealed a new discourse that now includes both financial imperative and long-term legacy for change and transformation.

At all stages the codes, categories and themes were kept aligned with their source. It was crucial to retain context and intent to ensure the integrity of the analysis.

**6.4.3 Focused Coding and Categorization**

The initial coding process was detailed and in some instances resulted in a code assigned per line of text. This enabled an immersion into the data and generated many ideas. Focused or selective coding was used to further refine and combine the most common codes, which meant that some of the original codes were dropped. Constant reference to the source memos assisted with the analysis by reiterating context.

Categories were identified from the focused coding. They drew together related codes thus revealing the emergent concepts. Tentative category names were identified that detailed characteristics, context and how they can contribute to the study. Guiding questions for focused coding included: what is connecting the codes and is the new category consistent with the intent of the original code.

The final category was decided after an iterative process and created a more abstract conceptualization of the data. Table 6.5 presents a list of categories and the codes that are connected to form that category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d) Partnerships and collaboration</td>
<td>Advocates the need for collaboration between actors. Seeks opportunities or linkages. Highlights co-dependency between actors. Describes relationships built over years. Describes the function of networks. Linked by a common purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Leadership and capacity</td>
<td>The need for leadership. Adaptive and enabling leadership. Acts as intermediary between NRM actors. Negotiates between NRM actors. The capacity of people/entities to respond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.4 Category Descriptions

Categories draw out deeper connections between codes and may consist of two or more concepts. The next section describes each category to make explicit the ways that the particular combination of codes were created to add a conceptual understanding that is relevant to understanding NRM discourse.

a) Directive, administrative and expert driven

This category consists of codes that reflect a government driven NRM discourse and the processes of public administration. Codes comprised: supports a targeted approach; requires compliance; controlling interaction and managing the process; describes government as the investor; drives a regionalisation approach; and utilizes expert – evidence based approach (Table 6.5).

The category has similarities with Dryzek’s *administrative rationalism* where scientific expertise, administrative arrangements and bureaucratic structure are used to determine policy settings, control interaction and manage process. In this study, the category also included concepts of compliance being managed through regulation, legislation and funding mechanisms and examination of problems primarily through evidence based methods (science and measurement).

The corpus reflects changes in government discourse during the study. Under the Natural Heritage Trust program government endorsed coordinated, catchment-based approaches to NRM and developed structures and processes for engaging with community, which shifted discourse and discursive practice towards *democratic pragmatism*. However, with the introduction in 2009 of the Caring for Our Country program, government stressed a business approach to investment. The business approach sought improved efficiencies to reflect structural changes of the Australian Public Service from an institution based on an administrative model to one based on business or management principles.

The new program was explicitly intended to be different and it was publicly stated that it was no longer business as usual. There was a new approach and it was intended to be…highly targeted. (Ref: 02:10).

In this analysis, the dominant concern of this category is that natural resource management is best managed by bureaucrats for purposes of planning, administrative organization, funding distribution, service delivery and community engagement.
b) Contested areas

This category is characterized by codes that broadly described the multiple ways in which power and agency were either expressed or contested between civil society and government instrumentalities. The codes in this category comprise: regionalisation versus regionalism; competing local priorities; politicization of policy and programs and funding arrangements.

Contested areas often lie at points of intersection between NRM actors or their roles and responsibilities. The collected data shows that regional approaches were previously encouraged by government at all levels and across sectors. More recent data shows the government’s retreat from an integrated approach to more centrally controlled single issue programs and had disengaged those at local level.

I actually am comfortable with the fact that we are starting to say there is this amount of money, we have these national priorities, we have targets, we need to deliver against those targets (Ref: 04:10).

Far from being integrated environmental activity the targets established by the feds did not relate at all to what we were doing (Ref: 012:09).

This category found the most contested area was between top-down bureaucracy and bottom-up activism and included issues of power and process, changes in program direction, changes in funding models, politicization of policy, and differing stakeholder goals.

c) Democratic resistance

This category is representative of codes that describe resistance and frames a discourse of pro-action, local focus and sustainability. Codes comprised: taking ownership of issues and seek solutions; resistant to change in policy and government direction; wants a local outcome; desires coordination and action at a local level; uses networking to advantage; uses regional and local expertise; empowerment of self and community and seeks solutions outside government processes.

Akin to Dryzek’s Sustainable Development discourse, issues and solutions for environmental management are seen to reside at local and regional levels and are place-based. Democratic resistance is very much about the grass-roots taking ownership of the issues and solutions. This was clearly felt by one community respondent who said in reference to government driven programs ‘stand aside and let us get on with the job’ (Ref: 013:10).
The production of strategies, plans and maps for Australian NRM has been dominated by the interests of government. This legitimizes the claims of government agents against the needs and claims of local communities. However, community does resist and can assert its local authority and expertise as seen in the development of Parks Victoria Ngootyoong Gunditj, Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan. This plan integrates Gunditjmara Traditional Owners’ knowledge into park management and was prepared with significant input and direction from Gunditjmara Traditional Owners.

This category describes the antithesis of the directive, administrative and expert-driven category. Both relate to the contested areas discourse where they can often be seen in opposition.

d) Partnerships and collaboration

This category comprises those codes that describe partnerships and collaboration. There are multiple and varied as partnership and collaboration are described in many ways. Codes comprise: the need for collaboration between actors; opportunities or linkages; co-dependency between actors; the effort required to maintain partnerships; the function of networks; linked by a common purpose; and acts as intermediaries between NRM actors.

Partnerships were considered as a form of collaboration and mainly described as formal relationships where benefits and risks are shared. For example, the partnership discourse describes a number of opportunistic alliances and ‘partnerships of convenience’ that may be formed for a single purpose such as meeting funding criteria that requires demonstration of collaboration.

What influenced strategic partnerships? Part of that was to get increased funding into the region and to look at some of the innovative things that we were wanting to do that we could see sort of in 5-10 years, so it was about trying to get in early (Ref: 011:10).

This category also includes quite different partnerships that are described as long-standing alliances that exist in a framework of clear and mutually agreed goals. Collaboration was more generally defined as working together for a common purpose.
e) Alignment and consistency

This category relates to the codes that describe alignment and consistency of agendas and objectives. The codes comprise of: the need for agreed objectives; describes policy and program mismatch; argues for local solutions for the longer term; and seeks consistency of objectives and constant change in personnel.

The issue of alignment was frequently referenced in the context of NRM planning, objectives, funding, evaluation and structures. Consistency related to the methods used to gather detailed NRM data and information used to assess the condition of natural resources. This information is considered critical for informed decision making and demands a consistency that applies across spatial and sectorial boundaries to ensure confidence in using and applying the data.

f) Bank of goodwill

The ‘bank of goodwill’ category consists of codes that comprise: trust between actors; values local expertise and local memory; builds on success, shared social networks and values long standing relationships. This category focuses on the social capital values of trust and reciprocity that underpin relationships between NRM stakeholders. The strength of social capital determines the quality of relationships and shapes the capacity that is required to address and resolve problems. As natural resource management often deals with conflicted, interrelated issues there is a need to create conditions where honest, inclusive and transparent dialogue can take place.

g) Leadership and capacity

This category comprises codes that include: the need for leadership; adaptive and enabling leadership; negotiates between NRM actors and the capacity of people/entities to respond. The need for effective leaders and leadership was widely expressed and viewed as important for governance and problem solving. There was no consensus about the definition of leadership however leadership was broadly described as adaptive; collaborative; enabling; decisive and passionate.
Summary of categorization

The iterative process of coding sections broke down the data into identifiable concepts. The researcher became intimate with the material and new concepts emerged. From the iterative process categories were formed that grouped codes in a universal context. The next step was to associate categories together, where possible, to create themes. Themes represent more complex, higher level NRM discourses.

6.4.5 Themes

Grouping categories into themes was undertaken through exploring the tensions and implications of dominant beliefs and discourse. The emergent themes provide specific insights into natural resource management, especially in terms of identifying points where dominant discourse is challenged and resisted. Identifying points of resistance, absences and silences revealed the possibility for disruption that leads to new discourse. Each of the three themes identified uses different sets of language that hold to a particular view and situate a position of authority and power relations. The three dominant and recurring themes (1) Official, (2) Resistance and (3) Utility and Action were examined with a focus on why the categories matched to create a theme. Attention was paid to whether the development from the code, to category, to theme logical and demonstrable. Table 6.6 illustrates the evolution from category to theme.

Table 6.6 Alignment of categories to themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Directive, administrative and expert driven</td>
<td>OFFICIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Contested areas</td>
<td>RESISTANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Democratic resistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Partnerships and collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Alignment and consistency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Bank of goodwill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Leadership and capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although these themes are distinct, there are contradictions and overlap within and between themes. For example, the Official theme was dominated by administrative language, yet included the contradictory use of collaborative language. The analysis suggests these themes
are acting as discourses and each theme competes with the other. The Official supports the status quo while Resistance challenges it. Utility and Action is predominantly one of mediation, negotiation and action used by actors across the NRM spectrum. It is the closest to Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism*.

**Summary of themes**

The three themes use different types of language, values, assumptions and discursive practice and are clearly distinct. They each promote a different perspective. This permits classification of a theme as a discourse. The three themes now classified as discourses and can be further explored and analysed.

**6.4.6 Coding for Case Study 2**

The coding process described in Section 6.4 Text Analysis was also used for Case Study 2 (see Section 8.2). Five indicators for effective partnerships further informed the analysis. These indicators arose from Dr Peter Oliver’s work in developing effective partnerships. The five indicators are: (1) partnerships built on personal relationships, (2) high levels of motivation for being involved (particularly early in the relationship), (3) supported by continuity of adequate funding and resources, (4) serviced by skilled, enthusiastic coordinator (project team) and (5) can work in constantly changing social and organisational environment (Oliver 2004).

Interrogating the data through the iterative coding process produced a frequency of reference to indicator(s) and patterns in the data. The frequency of references was aligned against relevant effective partnership indicators and then arranged into high, medium and low descriptions as presented in Table 6.7 Effective partnership indicators. There were some instances where an indicator wasn’t mentioned and this was left blank. This data was then matched to the contextual nature of the references i.e. to provide a narrative. Two additional indicators were identified through the coding process and these were added to the original list. They are (1) high levels of trust and reciprocity and (2) effective leadership. The additional indicators (highlighted in Table 6.7 Effective partnership indicators) returned a high frequency rate in the research data that warranted inclusion as an indicator category.
Table 6.7 Effective partnership indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>4:01</th>
<th>4:02</th>
<th>4:03</th>
<th>4:04</th>
<th>4:05</th>
<th>4:06</th>
<th>4:07</th>
<th>4:08</th>
<th>4:09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. partnership built on personal relationships</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. motivation for being involved</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. continuity of adequate funding and resources</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. skilled, enthusiastic coordinator/project team</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. can work in changing environments</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. high levels of trust and reciprocity</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. effective leadership</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>med</td>
<td>med</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 The Analysis - Discourses Revealed
Chapter Seven Sections 7.1 and 7.2 present an analysis of the three discourses (1) Official, (2) Resistance and (3) Utility and Action, and alignment with Dryzek’s discourses. Each discourse uses relevant transcript examples from the collated data to support interpretation. The critique of specific examples is used in a general sense to emphasize characteristics of that particular discourse.

The discussion draws from the literature covering NRM participation, leadership, communication, civil society and governmentality. The analysis confirms, contradicts and builds on Dryzek’s environmental discourses; particularly the discourse of democratic pragmatism.

Section 7.3 draws upon focus group findings to interrogate the preferential access to and/or control over NRM discourse across different actors.
7.1.1 Official Discourse

The Official discourse identified in this study shows two distinct trends. Initially (2006-2009), it was reminiscent of Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism* that welcomes participation from multiple NRM actors through regionalisation. The second phase of discourse (2009-2013) strongly echoed elements of *administrative rationalism* where scientific expertise, administrative arrangements and bureaucratic structure are used to determine policy settings, control interaction and manage process. It is a dominant discourse and driven by the central goals of government.

The significant shift in the Official discourse during the period of this study was from a decentralized to a centralized focus. At the outset of the study in 2006, the NHT program was the main Government instrument for delivering natural resource management outcomes. It used all the rhetoric of partnership and collaboration and devolved responsibilities to the regions.

Capacity building for natural resource management goes beyond the traditional, top-down approach of enhancing skills and knowledge through training and provision of technical advice. It focuses on *enhancing genuine community engagement* (source italics) in all aspects of NRM, from planning to on-ground actions. Therefore, in addition to the transfer of technology and technical capability, capacity building should foster social cohesion within communities, and build both human and social capital (Ref: PFGOV06:016).

The NHT discourse evolved in parallel with the regional development and investment by regions into the new model. During this decade of building the discourse shows evidence of collaborative systems, processes and relationships.

…the first phase of NHT was a bit more around a grants program without any sort of community base per se. But the NAP for salinity and water quality was actually modelled on the Victorian Catchment Management approach and started to institutionalise these regional bodies and with the bringing together of that program and the NHT we ended up with a much more formal governance based model around regional bodies right throughout Australia. Now, Victoria was ahead of that in so far as it had already set up the authorities and it had already started to get local administration of program delivery and so on, but it became embedded in the national programs as well (Ref: 08:10)

So that went through the whole period of the NAP and the NHT2 and then when the government in Canberra decided that they wanted to look at arrangements into the future…well they had the Australian National Audit Office do the review of the
regional delivery and their conclusions were that the regional model was a sound thing to have, and as Keogh had said the regional model should continue (Ref: 08:10) NRM regionalisation depended on the continuation of regionally-oriented funding models and multi-faceted relationships between federal, state and local government. The Official discourse reveals growing awareness from the regions of their own ability to make decisions and provide leadership. However, regional authorities such as the CMAs were also required to develop the capacity and capability to act effectively at both local and national level. This was not always straightforward. The discourse shows ‘growing pains’ as the CMAs struggle with the complexity of NRM.

I think it would be fair to say that the model got to a point where the communities weren’t happy with what the regional bodies were doing and the State and the Commonwealth weren’t happy with what the regional bodies were doing. So what we’ve done is institutionalise another bureaucracy that was making its own choices rather than either responding to the needs of the community or responding to the needs of its investors. I think even the CMAs would actually recognise that that was an issue (Ref: 08:10).

While the CMAs were building their role and capacity, the Government was learning to be a NRM partner with the regional leaders. Yet, elements of paternalism were still evident in the Official discourse as Government worked towards devolution of decision making and responsibility. Government officers and the agents of government needed to shift the predominant centralist thinking of the public service to allow trusting partnerships to develop. This was not always successful.

…there was tension between myself and some of the other programs because we were going out to the community and we were looking to if you like, hear and accept some of the issues that they were raising, whereas some of the other staff felt that they knew it all. And you know I think at times they actually came undone because the community knew in many ways more (Ref: 011:10)

Civil society was slower to embrace the idea of regionalisation. The discourse suggests an initial suspicion that the regional intermediary, the CMA, was simply another expression of the Official discourse and would not improve interaction with civil society. Over time this interpretation of the role of the CMA shifted to recognize their local focus.

So there’s been a lot of evolution, there’s been, it (CMAs) came from a community base, got heavily institutionalised, became bureaucratised, I think there’s a move back now to a bit stronger Commonwealth and State direction, but a recognition that there needs to be more emphasis on the community engagement so once again the CMAs
will have to become more brokers of projects rather than doers of projects in that scenario (Ref: 08:10)

In retrospect participants in this study, notably from civil society, felt that the ‘experiment’ of regionalisation had not had sufficient time to develop a stable form. The discourse is tinged with regret that the shared idea of partnership, while difficult, had promise as a sustainable mode of operation.

I always believed in and still do believe in the CMAs because I thought all along the problems are generally regional and your strong agency at regional level is a good thing… we all know you don’t want too much power in Canberra, it doesn’t want to be too central so I thought the CMAs, the 56 of them… represent a new initiative that others might learn from. (Ref: 012:10)

The trajectory of the Official discourse shifted markedly in 2009. Since the advent of the Caring for Our Country program federal government has explicitly stressed one clear goal for NRM, which is to adopt a business approach to investment. This approach is epitomized in the introduction of the 2009 Caring for Our Country Business Plan.

We have identified the outcomes we need to achieve through Caring for our Country, we are targeting our investment and we will report regularly on what has been achieved and on what changes we have to make to ensure we reach the goals we’ve set (Ref: PFGOV:09:11)

Did government actively suppress dissenting voices through the business plan or did they assume that they spoke for all? Whatever the case, a ‘command and control’ management style has been adopted by federal government as it envisaged and prepared for the ‘huge challenges ahead of us’ where ‘any mistakes we make will be amplified by climate change’ (Australian Government Land and Coasts 2008). This is in direct contrast to previous accords with NRM stakeholders, such as the Natural Heritage Trust, where collaboration, partnering and devolved decision making was pursued. The consequence for regional level planning processes is that regional strategies now contest, rather than align, with government’s politicised, centrally driven solutions.

…they (government) ignored them (the Regional Catchment Strategy), they said ‘don’t even bother sending us any information on it’ (Ref: 10:10).

…I mean they (government) made up the target area themselves, put a circle on a map and said ‘go and work there’ (Ref: 06:10).
The politicisation of policy and consequential changes in direction greatly alters the ability of NRM actors to implement agreed-to long term plans and strategies. Regions have to live with the consequences of short term, poorly conceived policy decisions.

Direct Action (a federal initiative), people are critical of it, it’s almost getting to the stage that planting trees has no relation to climate change (Ref: 012: 10).

And the other big issue was that when you’re looking at the policy side of things is that at that stage in the Commonwealth they weren’t clear what they wanted. And particularly with the strategies, the RCSs, they become more of a de-facto plan rather than a strategy (Ref: 017:10).

Shifts in funding and planning processes can exacerbate internal issues with resourcing and organization within Government agencies. The business lens of Caring for our Country introduced competitive processes, which aligned to neo-liberal thinking and priorities of Government. But the prospect of alignment with Government was offset by the massive under-funding of the regional processes that are required for priority assessments and local capacity-building (Head, 2005, 2009). The consequence for regional bodies (and others) entering into government funding initiatives was that they were also entering into intensive periods of preparation, reporting and accountability.

…it’s very tight, there’s less money, there’s more restrictions on your applications, you have to consider whether you need to put in for some of this competitive money because we went to a lot of trouble and were told that we had an extremely good chance then to find out that it all went down the drain and then also to get told then that one Federal department thought we were getting funded so they didn’t give us funding in another area, because they thought we’d been funded, so communication is a major problem within these investment teams (Ref:006:10).

The Official discourse of Caring for our Country seeks improved efficiencies. This is in line with Australian Public Service structural changes from an administrative model to one based on business or management principles. Figure 7.1 below is a slide from the 2011 Caring for our Country presentation given at regional community information sessions.
The dominant concern and assumption is that natural resource management is best managed by bureaucrats for the purposes of planning, administrative organization, funding distribution, service delivery and community engagement. NRM governance arrangements reflect an institutionalised approach to stakeholder representation and assume that civil society and other stakeholders are content with normalized practices of consultation – not power sharing arrangements.

There are clear tensions as actors using an Official discourse also use, where required, an embedded but contrary discourse that invites citizens to be part of the solution. Here, the Official discourse uses the idea of partnership to legitimize the action and decision making of Government. The appearance of partnership disguises centralist intent.

The Victorian Landcare Program, managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, will provide targeted support to help Landcare groups and networks achieve key functions – operate effectively, engage the community, collaborate, do on ground works and tell the Landcare story. The Victorian Government, in partnership with the Landcare community, will continue working to achieve the goal of the Victorian Landcare Program, which is to have a shared responsibility for a healthy environment (Ref: PSGOV012:13).

However, this is not a consistent message. In some circumstances, aspiration to partnership appears genuine and sustained. Thus, there is an internal conflict inside the Official discourse.

Victoria has a diversity of landscapes and land uses, and an enthusiastic volunteer community. The Victorian Government (Government) wants to help volunteers and landholders undertake actions that improve the condition of our environment and the
sustainability of farming, drawing on their local knowledge and expertise (Ref: PSGOV012:13).

However, the dominant theme observed in the Official discourse uses the rhetoric of partnership and community collaboration to shift responsibility from government to civil society, and not share it.

…we undertake their priorities, we meet their priorities and so they are, they are treating us as a service provider that they’re willing to invest in to meet their objectives (Ref: 09:10).

We went from what was really by definition a highly collaborative role, to one of basically delivering messages around what the targets are or were …it became less of a dialogue and more of a one-way instruction kind of process really (Ref: 02:10).

The confusing message of central control with the appearance of partnership leaves NRM stakeholders in a difficult position. Does this neoliberal approach to partnership constrain the efforts of NRM stakeholders? In many ways it does as evidenced by concerns from NRM stakeholders regarding consecutive funding models. Despite the rhetoric of partnership and regional empowerment, once locked into the funding programs NRM stakeholders feel overwhelmed and disempowered by the onerous bureaucratic and administrative requirements attached to funding.

The dilemma for Government is that it truly needs partnership, especially at regional level, to implement its policies and strategies. However, the Official discourse currently comes from a position where government does not wish to devolve power as consistent control over policy and programme directions is seen to be essential for adhering to due public process. The discourse becomes even more confusing as an imperative to maintain business confidence, via a consistent environment for investment, is clumsily juggled with messages of partnering and collaboration. Frequently the Official discourse defaults to its genesis that reflects the powerful instrumentalities of neoliberal government, accountability and administration.

The dilemma for CMAs is that they still represent how neoliberal government can be seen to be responding to regional needs. The CMAs were established under a model of regionalisation and embody Dryzek’s imperative of democratic pragmatism where everybody must share the responsibility of decision making. The CMAs, like the Government, are aware of the need to regional representation to legitimize Government action, but are not equal partners and therefore have a compromised representational role. The CMAs are highly
dependent on Government for funding. When the same neo-liberal government denies the appropriate resources, processes and power for CMAs and others, their ability to be effective natural resource managers is constrained.

The discourse analysis also examined the discursive practice of the Official discourse, which appears in multiple forms. For example, at regional level government control is expressed through the appointment of NRM Boards. The process of appointment is conducted through departmental procedures rather than an elected process from the populace. Various regional stakeholders interviewed for this study noted both the direct and indirect influence of government on minister appointed NRM Boards and therefore the influence of the Official discourse.

…to make it egalitarian and democratic you would have committees elected from the grassroots that actually had the power to do things (Ref: 012:10).

…to my knowledge the only places where the NRM Boards have really set direction and been strategic is probably Queensland, because they aren’t as tied to the government as what probably we are here (Victoria) (Ref: 010:10).

A second example lies in legislated regulations, which are administered by the CMAs. The regulations create processes that give priority to the Official discourse rather than local adaptation or translation.

An important consideration with regard to discharge of CMA waterway, floodplain and drainage management functions is that the legislation only enables the delivery of functions. The level to which functions are delivered relies upon the resources available to direct to priority areas as agreed with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (Ref: PCMA011:3).

The missing voices in the Official discourse are non-government actors, especially citizens who have little or no means of engaging with the language of bureaucracy. These voices provide underlying information and local intelligence for government use but this potential contribution to the Official discourse is not often apparent. NRM volunteer and citizen based groups do not have the time and resources, nor understanding of government language and processes to effectively participate in this discourse. In some instances important voices are raised but ignored.

One of my big lessons from the NAP experience is how difficult it is to change a policy program once it has been announced. Despite me putting forward what I still feel were compelling and very serious criticisms, and despite those criticisms basically
being confirmed in the various government reviews, no fundamental changes were
made to the program. Pretty early on I came to the conclusion that we would have to
wait until we’d wasted that $1.4 billion before there would be an opportunity for
meaningful change, and so it proved to be (Ref: David Pannell, Pannell Discussions,
The University of Western Australia)

In this instance one of the authors of an assessment of the National Action Plan for Salinity
and Water Quality (Pannell & Roberts 2010) strongly felt that they were unheeded despite
offering significant expertise. This is an interesting example as the author is an experienced
and capable public advocate who has the capacity and confidence to speak directly to
Government. Apparent omission of this contribution in the Official discourse is surprising
since the critiques were also supported by Government-funded investigation. The result is a
lack of confidence in the Official discourse and isolation from other NRM stakeholders.

7.1.2 Resistance Discourse

The discourse of Resistance is embedded in the contested area between regionalisation
(formation of government/industry-led regions – ‘top-down’) and regionalism (association of
area based communities – ‘bottom-up’). The Resistance discourse centers on themes of
contested areas (encompassing competing local priorities; politicization of policy and
programs; and funding arrangements) and democratic resistance (ownership of issues and
solutions; resistance to change; focus on local outcomes, coordination and action, use of local
networks and expertise and local empowerment). It calls for recognition of authority outside
Government and space for independent action.

Actors in the Resistance discourse were evident in civil society and local government but less
so from intermediaries such as the CMAs. Resistance discourse was observed from NGOs,
local community groups, research organizations, local government, industry groups and
individuals whereas Federal and State Governments used the Official discourse. The CMAs
were not primary voices in the Resistance discourse. This is not surprising as they were a
product of Government and hold responsibility for legislative governance. Government and
CMAs engage with citizens as a means of securing legitimacy and joint ownership of
decisions, as is characteristic of Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism*. Interestingly, at least one
source felt that the CMAs could have moved further away from the Official discourse.

The CMAs organized themselves in the same model as DSE, no-one tried to inject an
entrepreneurial factor...they could have had a more exciting public face if they’d had
some elements of entrepreneurism and democracy (Ref: 012:10).
While adopting the Official discourse for most interactions, CMA and agency staff working with local organizations also saw problems in using the Official discourse while trying to build better relationships with other stakeholders.

We have a coastal group and they’re, they’re very, very focused on what they need to achieve and I don’t think they’re always very understanding, even when I think you know, locally we’ve done a lot to demonstrate that we’re genuine about their needs on the ground. Often though in that situation, say for example a partner might write to the Minister complaining that we aren’t doing enough. It is often aimed at a higher level of the organisation, it’s not… we don’t necessarily take it personally and people seem to understand that, that we genuinely want to achieve goals on the ground and that often it is taken away from us because of some other influence at a higher corporate level (Ref: 018:11)

Resistance discourse is primarily observed from other actors. Some sections of society resist government engagement devices and seek to engage on their own terms. For example the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) was established in 2008 to create an independent voice for Landcare volunteers, not controlled or monitored or moderated by any other agency or organization (Victorian Landcare Council 2013). Yet resistance can only be achieved if there is capacity to do so and this requires resources, skills, knowledge and networks.

Empowerment means that you give people the incentive and the resources and the decision making and operational capacity…it’s a bit more than just saying ‘go ahead’ (Ref: 012:10).

The VLC is an example of well-resourced and powerful resistance. It was formed to represent the interests of community Landcare to State and Federal governments, government agencies, local government and CMAs and is funded directly by its members. The VLC define their position and identity as one that anticipates greater legitimacy, influence and autonomy. The main activity of the VLC has been to advocate for more reliable funding for Landcare, although this focus limits the discussion to a negotiation about resources. The VLC has been recognized by government, is influential and has also maintained its independence.

Other Resistance voices have less capacity. For example, activists that are isolated or newly formed struggle to acquire sufficient resources and membership to sustain activity. This limits their capacity to contribute to any discourse and may render them invisible. This can quickly change if the Resistance voice gains credibility. The considerable success of Landcare groups is an example of a grass-roots based movement that has become a major actor in NRM.
Since Landcare began in Victoria 25 years ago, it has grown into a thriving community with more than 60,000 members across the state. Landcarers give freely of their time to care for Victoria’s land, water and biodiversity, and their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work is inspiring (Ref: PSGOV012:13).

Discursive practice in the Resistance discourse falls primarily into two forms: either direct engagement with the Official discourse and normalized processes, or disengagement working outside the established NRM interactions. Direct engagement requires the voices of resistance to deal with government, often on institutionalized terms. Large, well-resourced and successful groups, such as Australian Conservation Foundation, have the capacity to make the Resistance discourse obvious to Government and civil society. For example, the ACF has made 20 submissions to Government between January and September 2015 following from 14 submissions in 2014 (see https://www.acfonline.org.au/policy/submissions, Accessed Jan 8, 2016).

Smaller or more marginalized groups, with less capacity to be heard, need other strategies. These groups include local community groups (‘friends of’ groups), functional groups (farmer/producer groups) and individuals. To have an impact, these groups can ‘opt-out’ from the Official discourse and target their efforts more at civil society, particularly to individual stakeholders such as landholders. This allows the resistance discursive practice to avoid working on Government terms.

Southern Farming Systems is a farm driven, non-profit organisation helping higher rainfall farmers with practical research and information that produces sustainable results (Southern Farming Systems 2015).

Alternatively, small groups can invest in growing their profile and therefore their capacity to participate and influence the discourse. To do this, groups need to either capture public support or to ally themselves with other like-minded groups. The breadth and depth of networks becomes important as groups and others seek ways to find alternative solutions and make strategic alliances. This creates a dynamic landscape that forms and reforms as individuals and groups pursue their agendas.

Many of our campaigns and programs are delivered with a helping hand of likeminded groups. Here’s some of them: Alternative Technology Association; Brotherhood of St Laurence; Climate Action Change; Goulburn Valley Environment Group; The Wilderness Society; Yarra Riverkeepers Association…(Environment Victoria 2015)
Formation of networks and alliances can be challenging. Place based communities have differing goals and agendas that may be in conflict especially in the management of land, water and other resources. Interaction between community members does not necessarily produce shared values as exampled in water debates where environmental allocation compete against farm or domestic allocation. In addition, significant differences exist regarding perceptions of the nature of resource management problems, the need for action and what type of action should be done. Yet, when alliances form they can be very effective and potent, for example, the successful strategy of the ‘Lock the Gate’ campaign that builds on community power and commitment with people in the local area likely to be affected by gas exploration and fracking.

Resistance groups use pragmatic strategies to advance their objectives. It is interesting to note that resistance discursive practice may use official channels to support its activities. Where NRM practice is embedded in community action, finding innovative ways to couple community’s goals with funding opportunities is a strategy often deployed by community groups, individuals and NGOs.

…if there’s money on offer we will try and design a way of getting it (Ref: 05:2010).

This more pragmatic expression of resistance often requires careful and extended negotiation between the funding applicant and the funders as the objectives are often not the same.

Another strategy available to Resistance groups, which could enable them to influence the Official discourse, is to embed their objectives within Government policy. For example the Wilderness Society has invested in influencing development of regional plans. During the period of the Natural Heritage Trust, this strategy allowed The Wilderness Society access to the development of regional catchment investment planning which could be aligned with Federal and State policy and programs. The shift to more centralized Official discourse has reduced opportunities for Resistance groups to participate in this way.

Even when opportunities occur, alignment of objectives is not straightforward. Often the respective priorities are at odds with each other and sometimes no priorities match.

While it is appropriate for there to be a national focus on national responsibilities such as Ramsar sites, EPBC listed species and vegetation communities, there are also important ecosystems and habitats that need to be connected at a local/regional level to achieve the broad goals for the environment as outlined above. For this broader focus,
the community needs clear regional plans that fit with other regional planning initiatives and investment (Ref: ICMA:11).

The Regional Catchment Strategies were obviously very important to regions, but did we (government) actually come back and check off projects and proposals against them? No we didn’t (Ref: 03:10).

The bilateral agreement under the NHT and the NAP was not just around project and program governance, there were also issues around expectations in terms of a whole range of Natural Resource Management objectives, so it actually got down to stipulating certain things that needed to occur within the State...we could come back to that and remind the State of their obligations (Ref: 03:10).

In addition, the increasingly competitive nature of funding and subsequent reporting required by government (s) dissuades various NRM actors from integrating and aligning their plans and programs with others.

Under the current competitive system, integrated projects are not really encouraged (Ref: 010:11).

Groups have scaled back their involvement in NRM issues and their capacity to complete regional and locally significant projects has been eroded. It should be recognized that community capacity for delivering NRM is essentially volunteer (Ref: ICMA23:11).

The Resistance discourse and discursive practice are highlighted in areas of tension such as contested roles and responsibilities, processes and functions that trigger disempowerment and disputed funding and resourcing. The roles of Victorian NRM Government agents are ill-defined and confusing, especially between water authorities. For example, governance of surface water rests primarily with the CMAs whereas the authority to manage groundwater access is vested in State Government. These two water forms are linked biophysically but their management is segregated. Moreover, the approach of each governing body is different. The CMA addresses research and co-ordination as well as compliance with regulation, while the State Government focuses primarily on licensing. This is confusing for landowners who must navigate multiple government entities but also deal with different priorities. The Victorian CMAs and relevant state agencies have been clarifying the division of roles through regional operating agreements. However, further work needs to be done to include other relevant actors who also contribute to NRM outcomes.

Resistance discourse also appears when groups and individuals feel disempowered and excluded from the dominant discourse. Large-scale problems (e.g. at the regional level)
require a variety of stakeholders to contribute to problem identification and then to take necessary action for environmental sustainability. Research with stakeholders shows that resistance to behavioural change, on the part of land-holders, can be overcome only when stakeholders perceive that they have full information and that their interests have been treated fairly (Nancarrow & Syme 2001). Where these conditions do not prevail, issues become politicised and hostility to change is readily exacerbated. A recent example is the attempt by the federal government (through the Murray–Darling Basin Authority) to conduct socioeconomic impact surveys only after the Authority had released expert reports recommending large cuts in water allocations for irrigation purposes.

The third major area of tension that stimulates the Resistance discourse is funding and resourcing. The introduction of Caring for our Country created a shift in funding arrangements. Competitive tendering was introduced to open up the field to a broader range of delivery agents. This suited government aims but created situations of inequity where, for example, well-resourced state agencies compete against smaller NGOs for funding. NRM stakeholders noted that it can be difficult to cooperate and collaborate within the competitive funding model.

The competitive nature of the investments meant that where, once quite frank discussions took place, then that was less likely to occur, because there were, say, between the CMAs... still those links, but they were then stretched and a lot more tenuous (Ref: 004:10).

With the introduction of CfOC it was I suppose even further prioritised than under NAP, then there was a bit of a wedge placed…between the Commonwealth and the State…so it was, ‘These are my monies, that’s your money, and we won’t necessarily you know, support or leverage off each other’… before there was the joint funding in the co-leveraging (Ref: 08:10)

Short term and regularly changed NRM funding arrangements create another point of tension. The schedules for Government funding schemes are normally locked into government budgetary cycles, which may have little alignment to the scale of NRM projects.

Because governments love partnerships and they love projects where you're working in partnership. And often they give you twelve months to deliver a project, but sometimes it takes much longer than that just to develop the relationship of the partnerships (Ref: 015:11)

The length of the funding cycle is a major determinant of the possible achievements and forward planning. State funding of CMAs typically occurs on an annual cycle, with funds
distributed through multiple programs. For some CMAs State funding is worth two thirds of their total investment so it’s an important source of support. Nonetheless, the bid process is viewed as onerous.

The amount of work you have to put in to get it is far and above what you get back for it (Ref: 09:10).

In contrast, the federal government’s four-year funding horizon allows CMAs to better plan for strategy implementation. However, funding for regional bodies has been reduced to only base-level, consequently CMAs have longer funding horizons but with less funds.

The Federal government response was about what outcomes they wished to achieve…and they took you know, a percentage of the funds back for more direct allocation rather than through the regional model (Ref: 005:10).

Resistance discourse is about the way things are done and about the underpinning values that are the premise for action. Resistance discourse seeks recognition for the shortcomings of the Official discourse and the role of civil society. Individuals and groups seek to elevate their objectives to a higher priority for action. The Resistance discourse also seeks to shift cultural and societal assumptions about NRM. This discourse sits in opposition to the Official discourse and may or may not interact directly. It is dynamic, responsive and often pragmatic. However, it has less value in ‘getting things done’. Its role is primarily to shift the dominant discourse to new thinking.

7.1.3 Utility and Action Discourse

This study introduces a new discourse – the Utility and Action Discourse. This discourse was identified in the data and does not fit neatly into Dryzek’s taxonomy of environmental discourses. Implementation is characterized by four themes: partnerships and collaboration, alignment and consistency, bank of goodwill and leadership and capacity. It moves beyond compromise (occupying the middle ground between opposed views) to encompass utility and action. It is distinguished from the Official and Resistance discourses by its intent, which is ‘to get the job done’. It is pragmatic, solutions-focused and locally-oriented.

In the collected data, the majority of voices were located in Utility and Action. It appeared as a desirable position that facilitated action and achievement. Actors in this discourse included those implementing NRM on the ground and those dealing with the outcomes of NRM – businesses, local government and local citizens. NRM managers working with community
groups need to translate other discourses into language and action that can be understood and taken up by citizens. Like Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrats (See Section 2.4.3) they seek a shared space for dialogue and to foster action.

Analysis shows that landowners and the agricultural sector contribute substantially to the Utility and Action discourse. For these individuals and groups pragmatic solutions are the priority. Neither the Official nor Resistance discourse captures their primary objective, which often lies outside NRM. Local government also often falls into this category as they deal with the implications of Official discourse in their core activities.

Local Government is at the whim of the State Government, and as governments change, their philosophies change. These are the big things that really impact on Local Government. (Ref: 015:10)

The discourse does emphasize relationships but it is characterized by relationships for a practical purpose. For example, larger entities such as Landcare or the CMAs use Utility and Action discourse as this discourse aligns to its focus on partnership-mediated solutions.

If there is any one defining feature of Landcare it is partnerships. They have been the key to the movement’s strength and its success. Landcare partnerships range from individuals such as farmers and landholders, to community groups, regional networks, youth groups, schools, business, industry and local, state and federal governments (Landcare Australia Limited)

For the CMAs, Utility and Action enables community participation and joint decision making which is a publically published priority. In practice, interactions were often more focused on acquitting contractual funding obligations and legislative compliance requirements.

As a community organisation we understand the importance of ensuring that everyone in the community has a chance to contribute, we are therefore working closely with the community and key partner organisations in the natural resource management field (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2015)

So that’s what I would say to negotiation, it’s a matter of helping them to understand it’s our priority and seeing whether or not they can take it on board and influence their priorities. (Ref: 090: 10)

Utility and Action is characterised by common language and understanding as its primary focus. The language emphasizes values, trust, goodwill and, often, a longer-term view despite the desire for pragmatic outcomes.
All our documentation refers to the importance of relationships. But, I would argue that's all irrelevant without the reality on the ground. Sometimes those statements can actually generate conflict because they may not be demonstrated in people's behaviour on the ground (Ref: 016: 10)

If you understand it at a regional level, how an organisation is functioning, or not functioning, sometimes you prepare more of the work, but you learn to seek permission and clarify. How would you like me to bring this to the table, before you get to the table. So, you get to the cup of tea and meeting and establish rapport. You may or may not have trust depending on how well you're known and that sort of thing (Ref: 020: 10)

The defining features of Utility and Action are its goals of achieving pragmatic solutions and building effective relationships for short-term and longer-term outcomes. Pragmatic solutions are linked to themes of leadership and capacity, and alignment and consistency. Relationship building is reflected directly in the emerging themes of partnerships and collaboration, and bank of goodwill.

Relationship building was widely evident in the collated data and exemplifies discursive practice in the Utility and Action. Agencies and institutions in the study regularly referred to partnerships as critical to implementing their strategies and plans. This implies value attached to shared power and responsibility among partners, whether or not this transpires within the arrangements.

Partnerships with community, individuals and organisations within the region are the foundation for effective delivery of the RCS (Ref: PCMA:13:43)

Successful approaches that should be built on further are strong and complementary partnerships with state, territory and local governments (Ref: PFGOV:13:7)

Partnerships are not without challenges. This study has revealed many descriptions of actors entering into arrangements where misalignment of partner aims inevitably led to dysfunctional partnership. Others describe a considerable effort required to manage and/or maintain arrangements especially where the balance of power is, or becomes, unequal; or where arrangements are too restrictive.

…it became highly prescriptive, they were our instructions (Ref: 02:10).

The focus on partnership implies that Utility and Action assumes that all relevant actors will have a valid role. However, assumption of the equality among stakeholders can be misplaced in practice. Hierarchies and elites exist and some actors are marginalised.
...when it came to Habitat 141 (a three State project) Landcare Australia was marginalized...never informed (of) anything (Ref: 012:10).

The pragmatic nature of partnerships is revealed by examination of intent. Partnerships emerge because of the benefits to stakeholder groups or individuals in undertaking these arrangements and because there may be a high cost for not forming a partnership. However, the rhetoric of partnership and collaboration from the Official discourse often obscures the power relations that exist and affect Utility and Action.

We negotiated in detail for quite a long time about the content of the projects that were going to make up our regional contribution, but they (federal government) then proceeded to ensure that the content of that program was not discretionary because it had to meet their national priorities and contribute to their national targets. So, there was very little room to move (Ref: 09:10).

Collaboration was described by respondents as working together to address a specific problem or issue and were often more transient than the longer-term partnerships. This becomes important for the integrated management of catchments, which often span jurisdictional boundaries and are typically managed by multiple organizations. In addition, the imperative to collaborative is written into the Official discourse, for example, in the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act where CMAs are required to engage with communities, corporations and other government agencies. For Utility and Action, collaboration is expressed by alliances such as that developed between the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmer’s Federation. Although opposed over many issues, this pragmatic alliance was forged in the 1990s to address the escalating environmental degradation problems of the Australian landscape. The focus was on solutions that could be implemented at multiple scales. The alliance produced Landcare at a national level.

Collaborative success is affected by the way actors interact, as each brings their own agenda and interests. Motives for collaboration are mixed however most actors acknowledge a need for working toward a greater public good.

Everyone in the end gets their due, but the big winner in the end is the region and the environment (Ref: 01:10).

Diverse collaborations were important to allow responsive and tailored responses. This concept extended to collaborative networks. These networks were geographically distributed and heterogeneous in terms of environment, culture and social capital but linked by a
common purpose. Networks enable linkages between resource stakeholders at different scales and are determined by the structure of interplay between actors. The benefits of networks are as variable as the networking individuals. Nonetheless, network benefits include the ability to attract more funding, sharing resources, direct lobbying of government and direct connection at the local level.

Longer term relationships were reported as relying on trust and good will built over time. The concept of a bank of goodwill was described by research participants from all sectors. It arises from the belief that investment and nurturing of relationships will assist relationships/partnerships withstand various future challenges.

Strong relationships were required when we had to have tricky and sensitive negotiations (Ref: 08:10).

If you’ve got that credibility and that trust you can build stuff from that (Ref: 10:10)

Social capital is mobilized into social networks that influence how power and responsibility are exercised and distributed.

…the strategic knowledge and the network and the connection… someone who’s had that Federal and State government network going for you know, a long time, and that just takes a long time to build that up. To be able to make a phone call and have meetings organised within 10 days or 2 weeks, that’s because you’ve got a very strong network, but anybody new to the game doesn’t even know who to talk to, let alone get an appointment with. (Ref: 06:10)

The networks are held together by mutual expectation of benefit and reciprocity and eventually often by respect and friendship.

So, I was playing tennis, sport. Working alongside and witnessing first hand things I'd never had to think about, in terms of their life and how people were affecting the quality of their life. And trying to work professionally and live in a community without being asked upon. Made me question things I took for granted. But their attitude influenced me more than anything, which was, if you can stick with us, we can stick with you. Find a way forward. (Ref: 020:11)

These partnerships are further enhanced by a track record of working together and were created across diverse players and organizations.

…there were long standing relationships where people had known each other for, even socially outside work, for thirty-fourty years (Ref: 016:10).
The relationships and the trust within them underpin the discourse. It allows an honest and frank discourse, which accommodates difference and welcomes personal contribution. While not without challenges, the discourse is resilient and adaptable to participants. It emphasizes the human scale of NRM.

The second defining characteristic of Utility and Action is its focus on pragmatic solutions. Actors in Utility and Action are concerned with outcomes and timeliness. Two themes emerged from the discourse that underlies this characteristic: alignment and consistency, and leadership and capacity.

Pragmatic solutions must accommodate multiple interests. Alignment and consistency are functions that facilitate solutions. Alignment of interests also appears in the Resistance discourse as a means to influence the Official discourse or to create more effective resistance groups. In this context, alignment refers to finding common ground between what may appear to be competing interests. It emphasizes negotiation to align objectives and processes.

… of course with Habitat 141 we all had to form relationships with Wimmera, Mallee, and it also went into NSW I think, and it also came right down onto the other side of the SA side too…there were meetings occurring there with 6 or 7 CMAs. (Ref: 01:11)

Consistency permits relationship development. It can reside in consistency of policy or strategy or in the personnel who are working in NRM. Conversely, inconsistency is significant barrier to finding sustainable solutions. It can arise from lack of alignment between regulators, funding bodies or experts, or from changes over time. For example, monitoring and reporting at regional level and statewide has significant variances in the quality and consistency. This data is used to indicate trends that in turn inform planning. However because inconsistent assessment methods are used there are deficiencies in the data collected. Consequently, relying on centrally created government strategies and business plans carries a risk of using information that is incomplete and poorly understood.

…this is all hinging on the fact that the business plan’s got it right. And you know…ultimately that has been through a process internally and it’s been signed off by Ministers so all we’ve got to go on is what the business plan actually tells us. So if the business plan hasn’t got it right, then the review process and ultimately deputations directly to the Minister can question that (Ref: 04:11).
Inconsistency over time creates confusion and undermines collaborative solution building. Although inconsistent processes may be due to external factors, they still produce adverse results.

We went through a community planning thing a couple of years ago, where we went out and sat down with the communities and helped them to develop their plans. We’ve now lost all that goodwill and trust because we don’t have the resources to go in then and help them to achieve those plans. The communities are really quite pissed off … because of that. (Ref: 015:10)

A final reference to the concept of consistency relates to expectations of relationship constancy between NRM personnel. This issue, caused by the high turnover rate of NRM staff, creates difficult conditions for building and maintaining working relationships. For example, the regular movement of public servants between sections and departments, and similarly regional staff moving on as a result of short term contract arrangements.

The turnover of directors at a Commonwealth level was just incredible. So there was a lack of continuity, a lack of corporate knowledge, so from a regional perspective, the change, you’d just feel as though you know a person was getting accustomed if you like to the sorts of issues it’s region was involved in and then they have to sort of start again…at times one step forward, two back, particularly at the Commonwealth level (Ref: 017:10)

There is a loss of staff. Now some of those staff would have been key people for some of the community (Ref: 05:10)

The reported effects of high staff turnover included decreasing levels of trust, loss of corporate knowledge and loss of productivity while new personnel adjusted. These effects negatively impact on the ability of those transacting the daily business of natural resource management.

Issues of leadership and capacity-building also emerged through the discourse of Utility and Action. Regional leadership was described in the data as emerging from strong, inclusive and community-based entities as well as from agencies and facilitators. There were some reservations about the capability of communities to provide leadership.

Leadership can come from the agencies who can bring the community members on board and assist them, support them and give them the skills also, to be leaders in their own right. So, the leadership has to come from somewhere. My feeling at the moment it’s more coming from the agencies than the community (Ref: 07:10)
Leaders appear in all three discourses. In Official discourse, they are either positional in agencies (senior staff) or via government appointments (CMA boards). Leaders in the Resistance discourse emerge from civil society. In both cases, leaders may have limited experience of leadership. In the Utility and Action discourse, leaders are brokers and facilitators with the data depicting successful leadership as collaborative.

NRM is beset with wicked problems that require wide stakeholder engagement and participation. A command and control approach to leadership is considered inadequate for collaborative decision making and ownership of issues. The data notes the need for more adaptive, transformative styles of leadership, where leaders are able to balance competing agendas. Leadership and capacity are often referred to in the same discourse, mostly in relation to managing change. Continual change, uncertain funding arrangements, and excessive administrative requirements place unrealistic demands on community volunteers and leaders. As a consequence, people either retreat to a position of only engaging on a limited basis or give up.

Government asked why aren't there more community applications going up for funding? And one of the reasons is the fact that capacity isn't there in the communities to do it. The people who've got the skills and the ability are so flat out doing and taking on all the leadership roles...there's no time left for them to do anything more. And there's no one else with that capacity. The government then wants us to go in and work with them. Well, we also don't have that capacity or the resources to do it (Ref: 015:10).

There is an assumption that as local communities have a greater interest in the sustainable use of resources and are more cognisant of local complexities, then they are more able to effectively manage those resources through local means. However, this disregards the limitations to capacity that enables civil society and others to engage and participate on their own terms.

Actors need a range of skills to participate effectively in the dominant discourses. In civil society, effective discursive practice is often built via experience (trial and error). Larger groups can leverage professional assistance to ensure their voices are heard and influential. Lack of capacity or experience can constrain inexperienced voices in the Official discourse (formal and laden with convention) and in the Resistance discourse (combative). Utility and Action offers a more forgiving arena as it emphasizes respectful partnership and looks for ways forward.
You’re actually giving them the intellectual, spiritual and economic and sort of cultural, social, sort of at its best. You’re sort of giving the go ahead, you’re creating, the government or whatever body it is, is creating the sort of environment in which things can happen. (Ref: 012:10)

Utility and Action allows actors to accommodate difference and to find ways to empower diverse voices. Facilitators reported achieving this through creating a safe space for discussion or by building capacity amongst other actors.

I'm always interested in the discretion we have as public servants to do stuff that might not be spelled out in policy but which isn't contrary to legislation. There's a big area of opportunity there. That applies also to those formal arrangements with the settlements. You can actually settle that to one side, and just focus on the relationship side of it and have that in the background but not obsess about it. (Ref: 016:10)

Well, I think its trust. I think you trust community, I think we’ve proven that. You give as much autonomy as you can to local groups, you regard anyone as a Landcare group, not too many strict rules on this one, and, but you don’t forget that these groups have to be supported, so you foster the new range of professional, community environmental action/Landcare facilitator that can work with communities that have got a bit of financial management, a bit of PR, a bit of technical knowledge, some diplomatic and personality traits that sort of help get things done. (Ref: 012:10)

The Utility and Action discourse is characterised by the brokering of productive partnerships and relationships.

Q - What makes partnerships work, do you reckon?

A - I think empathy, attitude and resources. It's not about the structure. It's about respect and recognition. But it's that empathy to moving forward and the attitude to can-do. But resourcing it. And the strategy for resourcing is a partnership. That's a real partnership. Where you work out where you can go together with what you've got. And which order you want to do it in. And understanding that. (Ref: 020:10)

When operating in these roles, the CMA and other Government facilitators occupied the Utility and Action discourse. This approach was fostered by the Natural Heritage Trust program with its emphasis on partnership. This was less supported by the CfoC policy settings.

Utility and Action shares some characteristics with Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism* but is not fully described by the Dryzek discourse. The discourses described here emerge empirically from the data collected for this study and represent the worldviews of actors participating in regional discourse. The next section examines the relationship between these emergent discourses and the taxonomy proposed by Dryzek.
7.2 Alignment with Dryzek’s Environmental Discourse

A summary of the three NRM discourse characteristics identified in this study is presented in Table 7.1. The characteristics are identified through adopting Dryzek’s descriptors and include: basic entities recognized or constructed; assumptions about the natural relationships; agents and agent motives. The last descriptor in this analysis provides an alignment to the environmental discourse as described by Dryzek. A major change is observed in the Official discourse as a consequence of policy and program change. This is noted in the table by attributing the program i.e. Natural Heritage Trust or Caring for Our Country with change in assumptions about natural relationships and alignment to Dryzek’s discourse.

Table 7.1 Characteristics of NRM discourse aligned to Dryzek’s analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Resistant</th>
<th>Utility and Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic entities</strong></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>recognized or</strong></td>
<td>Government agencies</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Intermediaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>constructed</strong></td>
<td>Informants (sources of evidence)</td>
<td>Mobilized groups</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumptions</strong></td>
<td>1. Regionalisation balances control and efficacy (Natural Heritage Trust)</td>
<td>Regionalism is most effective</td>
<td>Pragmatic solutions are the key to action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>about natural</strong></td>
<td>then</td>
<td>Local knowledge and information should be recognized/privileged</td>
<td>Interactive relationships enable implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relationships</strong></td>
<td>2. Centralized control is most effective (Caring for our Country)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Power-sharing and equality amongst actors is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agents</strong></td>
<td>Public servants</td>
<td>Activists</td>
<td>NRM civil groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>Concerned citizens</td>
<td>Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Landowners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agent motives</strong></td>
<td>Consistent regulation</td>
<td>Changed NRM</td>
<td>Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National viewpoint</td>
<td>culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible governance</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Locally relevant solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignment to</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Timely action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dryzek’s discourse</strong></td>
<td>1. <strong>Democratic pragmatism</strong> (Natural Heritage Trust)</td>
<td><strong>Green radicalism</strong></td>
<td>Extension beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Democratic pragmatism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Administrative rationalism</strong> (Caring for our Country)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two key observations arise from the analysis firstly the effect of the shift in the Official discourse and secondly the identification of the discourse of the Utility and Action.
7.2.1 Changing the Official Discourse

The data reveals that a major redirection of the Official discourse occurred with a new Federal Government in 2009. The shift in Government policy moved from regionalisation to centralized control. Policy change led to a shift in Federal environmental strategy which then cascaded down to regional and local level. The evidence discourse shows a shift in action (discursive practice) even more than a shift in language (discourse).

The initial outcome from the shift in policy was confusion for NRM actors. Accumulated experience with the previous settings had created processes and ways of interacting that had to be reconstructed in the light of the new priorities. The first challenge was to interpret the new policy and to find appropriate ways of enacting it. Extensive investment in relationship building and maintenance had been a core tenet of the Natural Heritage Trust program. The new Federal strategy to implement Caring for our Country shifted emphasis to a business approach, which assumed different relationships. Intermediaries such as the CMAs needed time to work out what the Federal Government sought and how best to achieve it.

The second problem was that it was difficult to redirect actors from a path in which they had invested both professionally and personally. Civil society is pluralist and fluid, meaning that as a group, it is slow to accumulate experience and develop ways of interacting. Rapid change in policy settings disrupts established (and establishing) practice which then requires time to redevelop. The shift from the practices of the Natural Heritage Trust to Caring for our Country created confusion at multiple levels. Direct interactions with Government agencies were disrupted by changing roles in Government and in agencies. The agencies were often still working out how implementation could operate and who had responsibility for particular areas. The discourse reports considerable confusion about funding processes which, under the new business orientation, pitted former partners against each other in competitive tender. A third area of confusion that is evident arises in the interaction between the Official discourse and other actors. Civil society had to learn about a new underpinning philosophy to be able to understand and respond to Government strategy. The messengers of Government were left with the task of ‘selling’ the new approach.

Comparison of the Official discourse to Dryzek’s taxonomy suggests the shift in policy and practice was large enough to justify a temporal division of the classification of the discourse as noted above. Under NHT, the Official discourse exhibits characteristics of democratic
pragmatism. It embraced regionalisation and created the regional NRM model of delivery. It was derived from liberal capitalism but recognized a role for citizens in decision making.

Introduction of CfoC heralded a centralist approach. Democratic participation was less important and the authority of the centre dominated. The new discourse became much more like Dryzek’s *administrative rationalism*. It emphasized experts and managers and placed the citizen as subordinate to the state. However, the rhetoric of government retained some language of partnership, recognizing that implementation of the strategy rests with civil society. The response from civil society to the new discourse was resistance and government found this to be an impediment to implementation of its programs. As a result, government softened its approach over time and returned more aspects of the partnership into its processes and relationship building.

The Official discourse is treated as a single discourse with change over time rather than two independent approaches. This recognizes that the Official discourse is a product of the nature of government as well as of individual policy positions. During the period of the study, Australian federal governments of either political persuasion have been identified as neo-liberal governments (Beer et al. 2005) with the common view that citizens should be autonomous, accountable, conscientious, act in their own (enlightened) self-interest, and do not depend on government as noted earlier (Section 2.4.2). This gives the Official discourse a common frame of reference despite change in policy. Australian governments implement policy through the Australian Public Service and agencies, which also has a normative effect. Thus, the Official discourse is recorded as a single, but developing, voice.

The shift in the Official discourse observed in this study emphasizes the fluidity of NRM discourse. Actors and commentators need to be aware that the discourse will change over time in response to political policy and local conditions. Change allows innovation and new thought to enter the discourse. The tensions where the Official discourse interacts with other discourses, notably the Resistance discourse, have the potential for developing new world views and realities.
7.2.2 A New Discourse – Utility and Action

Utility and Action is a new discourse observed in this research and, interestingly, was the most widespread. Utility and Action is most aligned to Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism* but there are clear differences which have provoked the development of this new category of discourse.

Dryzek’s description of *democratic pragmatism* rests at a more abstract level. He emphasizes the democratic nature of the discourse and the power relations involved. Interactions between actors are described in terms of structured processes such as ‘committee meetings, legislative debate, hearings, public addresses, legal dispute, rule-making, project development, media investigations, and policy implementation and enforcement’. Although Dryzek alludes to more informal relationships, his description of *democratic pragmatism* does not capture how actors behave and interact at local level, and especially during implementation of NRM – the action phase.

In contrast, Utility and Action, as developed through this research, emphasizes action and human interactions and gives equal weighting to solutions and long-term respectful relationships. This discourse is grounded in local implementation but also acknowledges the importance of these voices of action in the broader discourse of NRM. Local knowledge and expertise is valued, as for the Resistance discourse, but not in terms of opposition. In the Utility and Action discourse, local knowledge is valuable as a facilitator for solutions and is used alongside other discourses.

Utility and Action enables a space where consensus and long-term solutions can be sought. It was seen by actors as a desirable position with the capacity to leverage both Official and Resistance discourses with the latter repositioned into a form of working together. The voices in the Utility and Action are most often those of NRM intermediaries and those immediately affected by NRM policy and the consequences of environmental damage.

Stakeholders in NRM, such as landowners, business and local government, have considerable investment at risk, hence their pragmatic outlook. For them, Utility and Action is a natural position that empowers them and encourages productive outcomes. For many of these stakeholders, NRM is a component of a more complex enterprise and must adjust to fit other
constraints and other discourses. On-the-ground success with NRM underpins other objectives such as economic development, social capital or individual success.

The second group that is obvious in Utility and Action are the intermediaries who are trying to implement NRM. This includes the CMAs, NRM facilitators, agents of Government (Federal, State and Local), and community groups. These roles require translation from Official and Resistance discourses into a collaborative space for both language and discursive practice. Despite the urgings of the Official discourse, the pragmatic solution may be much more grounded and consensual. For these actors, Utility and Action is the preferred operational sphere as it creates partnerships in terms of mutual benefit and efficient implementation.

In practice, the CMAs struggled to stay within the discourse of Utility and Action. Their response to changes in the Official discourse was to retreat towards it as they tried to find clarity within the switch from a decentralized to a centralized approach. The intrinsic problem for the Victorian CMAs is that they combine two distinct roles: managers of floodplain and waterways and, separately, brokers of and actors in environmental planning and programs. As managers, the CMAs used the Official discourse of regulation and compliance. As brokers and actors, the CMAs needed the discourse of Utility and Action to interact with their partners. This difficult position was evidenced in internal tension within the CMAs and confusion externally where civil society was not clear about the role of the CMA in a specific interaction.

Collaborative decision making is a key feature of Utility and Action. This discourse assumes equal weighting for actors despite different motivation and encourages negotiation of a position in which all players can invest. Yet the data also shows that this does not always occur as stronger voices can displace weaker voices. Nonetheless, where successful this is the preferred outcome for NRM – everyone has a reason to build and sustain a shared position.

Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism offers discursive devices for the resolution of dispute through problem solving such as citizen juries and other formalized processes. However, as this study shows, these devices are limited in scope and constrained by the institutional contexts in which they operate. As Utility and Action is grounded in local/regional action and relationships, the potential for discourse and action to be high-jacked by stronger, dominant interests is less likely although still present. Dryzek places the ‘selfish interests of within the
community’ in opposition to the ‘community as a whole’ and argues for the dominance of community interests achieved by political processes (Dryzek 2005 p234). Utility and Action discourse enables negotiated positions where all interests are acknowledged and participants are expected to give ground to reach a workable consensus.

Reflecting on his environmental discourses, Dryzek points to an extension of democratic pragmatism to overcome its inherent weaknesses and develop the NRM discourses.

The key then is to break the shackles, moving such procedures in the direction of what I have described elsewhere as discursive designs, which transgress the boundaries of democratic pragmatism by pointing to a more radical democracy. Discursive designs involve collective decision making through authentic democratic discussion, open to all interests, under which political power, money, and strategizing do not determine outcomes. (Dryzek 2005 p235)

In some ways, this ambition is reminiscent of Utility and Action in that it calls for ‘collective decision making’ (collaboration) that is ‘open to all interests’ (partnership). Utility and Action goes further to include the discourse and practice which implements the consensus decisions using the tools of alignment and consistence, and leadership and capacity building.

7.2.3 Summary of regional NRM discourses and the actors involved

There are four components to this discourse analysis approach. The first was to identify the corpus related to natural resource management. The second was to identify and describe the discourses evident in the text and transcripts. The third step analyzed and interpreted the discourses used by NRM actors and in NRM text and the discursive practices that were used by those actors. The fourth step was to align the three discourses that emerged from the analysis with Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism.

The discourses described here are empirical, that is, they emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it. Two of the discourses, the Official discourse and the Resistance discourse are recognizable within Dryzek’s taxonomy. Interestingly, the analysis reveals the dynamic nature of NRM discourse as the Official discourse moves away from its initial alignment with Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism and towards administrative rationalism. This suggests that Dryzek’s taxonomy may be applied differentially over time.
The third discourse, Utility and Action, introduces a new environmental discourse characterized by its focus on relationships and action. This discourse is distinct from Dryzek’s *democratic pragmatism*.

The three discourses, Official, Resistance and Utility and Action, identified across the collected data are present in the two case studies that are used to illustrate NRM discourse in the Glenelg Hopkins study area.
7.3 Focus Group Findings: Power relationships

The second research objective in this thesis is to explore and describe the power relationships at play that influence interactions between civil society and government agencies. Research question 2, chosen to address this objective is: “How are actors using their power and what is their intent?” This is addressed here through analysis of the focus group data, which was designed to allow an interrogation of the preferential access to and/or control over NRM discourse across different actors.

Attributing sources of power to NRM actors may be self-evident and at first easily categorized. The Glenelg Hopkins CMA has extensive lists of stakeholders and partners but this data doesn’t describe in adequate detail the perceived sources of power or influence. To examine this further a focus group method was used identify key actors, explore themes of power and provide validation (or not) of initial and later findings from the discourse analysis.

A group of nine participants came from the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, state agency, community, non-government organization and primary industry. Federal government was not represented at the group activity however the data was later discussed with two federal government officers and their feedback incorporated. The focus group began with a discussion about influence and power, what was meant by these terms and in what context. There was agreement that ‘influence’ described the ability to affect another’s behavior, thoughts or decision making; while “power” described the capacity or “tools” to be able to influence. For example, government agencies have regulatory power that influences land management practice.

The group then compiled a descriptive list of NRM stakeholders at regional level with over sixty-three units identified. This list was then sorted into six categories: (1) federal government; (2) state government; (3) local government; (4) catchment management authority; and (5) community/industry and (6) non-government organizations. The next task was for individual focus group members to identify (single word) and describe what they perceived as a source of power used by NRM actors.

The focus group then discussed the list of power sources and assembled ‘like’ descriptions into five agreed categories as follows: (1) Funding/resources: the ability to source and/or allocate financial benefits and resources, (2) Political influence: the ability to influence
decision makers (i.e. advocacy), (3) Knowledge and skills: the production and sharing of knowledge, (4) Regulatory: the power granted under legislative and regulative controls governing land and water and (5) Networks and capacity: the power in strength and diversity of networks and capacity to engage.

There was further discussion about networks and capacity and whether these should be kept separate. Again the consensus was to amalgamate the two themes. The focus group then discussed issues of power and empowerment in relation to the categories. The following section documents the observations from the focus group on each category.

### 7.3.1 Category 1: Power in funding and resources

Funding and resources were described by the focus group in two ways. The first explanation was that power resides with the ability of those who devolve funds. Government (local, state and federal) and the CMA were identified as key fund managers – investors. Funds are linked to specific programs yet the focus of the funder and targets are often mismatched with local or regional needs. As one participant observed Landcare groups had become good at writing applications to meet funding criteria – whether it was a priority for the Landcare group or not.

Very few community groups (with exception of industry groups) sourced funding from outside government or CMA programs. There were examples of corporate sponsorship (for example the Toshiba company), and philanthropic grants (for example the Uebergang Trust) however the majority of groups relied on government funds. The focus group noted that the dependency on government funding greatly influenced the decision making of groups and consequently their activities. Earlier NHT and Envirofund programs established regional panels to undertake initial assessment of funding applications and provide feedback to higher state or national funding assessment panels. This system worked well and enabled advocacy for both local and regional interests. In later years regional panels were abandoned with little or no local intelligence influencing the outcome of applications. This has been especially evident under the federal programs. A significant issue covered was the increasingly burdensome administrative processes required to obtain funding. It was perceived that those entities with high levels of the administrative capacity (people, skills, knowledge and time) were much more likely to be successful at attracting funds than those with low capacity. These observations were made from CMA perspectives as well as a community group and NGO perspectives.
The second explanation of funding as a source of power was about the ‘haves and the have nots’. This was a reference to entities that had built a strong base of funds and/or resources that could be called on at any time. This provided a level of independence and base funds could be used for leveraging further funds. The focus group could nominate successful Landcare groups (and networks) that had managed to amass unspent funds and secure resources (i.e. equipment). Interestingly, resources considered important by the focus group were effective facilitators, staff or contacts who could liaise with higher authorities for advice, to identify opportunities, to seek variations and generally advocate on behalf of the group or region.

7.3.2 Category 2: Political power - the ability to influence decision makers

The focus group discussed political power in terms of champions or advocates who could represent their interests. Representation was regarded as a proactive and strategic exercise. The intensity of effort ranged from informing stakeholders to direct lobbying for clearly identified and desired outcomes. Examples of political power were considered including: Landcare groups lobbying the CMA; the CMA lobbying state and federal government and intergovernmental lobbying activities between departments. Another discussion of interest was that successful groups/entities, functioning in an environment of asymmetrical strength of networks, negotiating skills and resources, often resulted in inequitable outcomes for weaker groups. One participant observed a neighbouring CMA that had cultivated strong relationships with key DSE staff and was consistently successful with attracting government funded pilot projects at the expense of other CMAs. Ultimately the group felt that because much of the power and decision making rested with state and federal government departments, a relationship either directly or through a third party could make working with government easier and more rewarding in terms of funds and resources.

7.3.3 Category 3: Knowledge as power

At the commencement of the discussion the terms information and knowledge were used interchangeably by group members. This became confusing so the group narrowed the definition down to knowledge as an understanding of data and information that takes into account experiential learning. The focus group felt that NRM knowledge was highly fragmented. Regions were building stocks of NRM information, often well recorded on data systems, but translating that to knowledge systems and distribution was ad hoc at best.
Furthermore, the requirement of ‘evidence-based’ prioritisation and investment from state and federal governments was creating the necessity for decision support technology. NRM actors who had resources to access or handle knowledge were clearly at an advantage over those who didn’t.

7.3.4 Category 4: Regulatory power

Legislation and regulation was identified by the group as a source of power that resided with local, state and federal government. State governments are historically responsible for environmental management, and with support from local government, handle the day-to-day decisions and administration of land and water management. There are a multitude of Victorian statutory and legislative Acts and regulations including: Environment Protection Act 1970, Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, Water Act 1989, Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, Climate Change Act 2010. The Commonwealth’s central piece of environmental legislation, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places. The focus group noted that the interpretation and enforcement of legislation/regulation has many inconsistencies, for example, the Victorian Planning Provisions use discretionary approaches that have led to a high degree of contestability in land use decisions and development.

7.3.5 Category 5: Power invested in networks and capacity

Networks were described by the focus group as operating for social or formal purpose(s). The group observed that Landcare or community based networks had evolved in recent years as a result of groups seeking to capitalise on sharing resources (especially facilitators) and finding strength in numbers. The group noted that the trend to establishing networks has been encouraged by CMAs, government and agency as it was deemed easier to work with one network than a multitude of smaller groups. The organisational networks were described as providing professional support and networking opportunities. Examples of organisational networks included the Indigenous Facilitator Network, the Dryland Salinity Network and the Environmental Water Management Specialist Network.

The group felt that the power of networks lay in the ability of members to source information, exchange ideas, negotiate resources and influence decisions. Strong networks created new opportunities for members outside their groups, which was viewed as a very positive
outcome. All focus groups members belonged to at least one network, with many belonging to several networks. The discussion then progressed to consider the capacity of NRM actors. Capacity was described as having appropriate skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment, confidence, connectedness and resources that are required across the range of NRM actors, including the CMA, Landcare groups, industry and government agencies.

### 7.3.6 Indicators of power and shifts in power

The next activity was to develop a matrix that cross referenced the regional actor with a source of power, then assign a level of power using a rating of 3 = high, 2 = medium and 1 = low (See Table 7.2 Regional indicators of power).

**Table 7.2 Regional indicators of power**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of power</th>
<th>Federal government</th>
<th>State government</th>
<th>Local government</th>
<th>Glenelg Hopkins CMA</th>
<th>Community / industry groups</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding/resources</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political influence</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and skills</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤⬤⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks and capacity</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This discussion stimulated debate about the levels of power and how contextualised this proved to be. This led to the next activity where NRM actors were assigned a position on a scale of power and interest. For each analysis of power a context was chosen by the group, for example, improve natural assets. Focus group members then noted possible changes in power/interest dynamics (see Figure 7.2, Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.4).
Figure 7.2 Power and interest scale: improve natural asset

Figure 7.3 Power and interest scale: regional NRM planning

Figure 7.4 Power and interest scale: local NRM planning
The process was repeated using a number of contexts, with each activity resulting in a change of position of the NRM actors. The group noted the dynamic tensions and shifts that occurred between different actors, specifically when power shifts changed, for example with change of government, or at a micro level with change of leadership within a community group. The focus group also noted that actors might have high levels of interest but low power which inhibits that entity from reaching its full potential i.e. Landcare.

7.3.7 Summary of power relationships analysis

The focus group identified five sources of power as (1) Funding/resources; (2) Political influence; (3) Knowledge and skills; (4) Regulatory and (5) Networks and capacity. They also reflected on the very fluid and contextual nature of this power. This has implications for ensuring equity in discourse and participation. The extent of participation in a policy or a development process is often measured in terms of the power and role that different stakeholders have in the decision-making process (Buchy & Race 2001).

As a source of power, knowledge & skills and funding/resources were equally rated above the others. Studies reveal that regions with more resources have greater capacity (staff resources, experience, skills and information) to gain further resources (Robins & Dovers 2007b). Despite this, Australian NRM does not utilise substantial resources to empower communities (Beilin & Reichelt 2009) and this appears to be an area where better targeted resourcing would make a difference. The administrative processes of NRM funding and resourcing are onerous and as Marshall (2009, p. 49) describes:

“to retain access to funding, regional bodies must comply with stringent upward accountability measures imposed by the governments. This makes it difficult for regional bodies to be perceived as community-based as compliance consumes resources that could otherwise be used on community projects. In addition bureaucratic processes discourage volunteers”.

An important development noted by the focus group was the move to networks. Networks were described as constructs of natural community groups that form an entity to act in the interests of respective group members. This is especially evident in Landcare where networks are used as a strategy for increasing capacity to compete for resources and to work on catchment scale in line with agency and government direction. Network formation is strongly encouraged and driven by government and agency for efficiency, accountability and effective regional planning purposes. From a civil society perspective networks increase capital (i.e.
social, cultural, economic and human) and form the basis for collective action (Putnam 1995). These networks enable local people to take action and are present in the discourses of Resistance and Utility and Action.
8 Discourse and Practice
Chapter eight addresses the third and last of the research objectives and questions of the research as laid out in Section 1.6. This final objective was to identify effective NRM collaboration at regional level. Research question 3, chosen to address this objective is: “What is the nature of communication and discursive practice between NRM actors?” This requires attention to the communication of beliefs and the ways in which these beliefs and supporting knowledge is acquired and distributed. It is through the analysis of two case studies presented in the following sections that this question is addressed.

8.1 Case Study 1 Regional Catchment Investment Plan

Case Study 1 occurs during the planning and negotiating phase of the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Investment Plan (RCIP). This is a period when projects and activities are negotiated and funding sought. It involves regional partners, community, industry, research and academics, the catchment management authority, State and Federal government funders. RCIP occurs annually over a four to five-month period with intense activity leading up to the final submission of the plan.

The timing of the RCIP was always challenging as it happened toward the end of the calendar year when landholders were busy with peak seasonal work and Christmas meant that key people were away on holidays. Negotiations between actors were formal i.e. forums and presentations between the CMA and federal /state government representatives, workshops between the CMA and the regions communities and NGO’s; or informal, i.e. discussions between CMA officers developing projects with landholders. The investment plan was ‘achieved through consultation, the identification of regional assets, identification of threats and establishment of appropriate projects’ (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2003).

Through RCIP the CMA aimed to aligned regional projects with catchment programs to provide an integrated approach. Moreover RCIP process ensured that management actions defined in the region’s various strategies met both State and Federal government strategies and funding priorities. It wasn’t an easy time for those involved and characterised by differing priorities, changing direction in programs (with associated funding) and tight timelines. To compound these challenges the software tools used for grant submission and management were often incompatible with CMA systems, beset with IT issues and difficult to navigate.
This Case Study presents three voices (1) the Official, (2) the Resistance and (3) Utility and Action to explore the respective perceptions, claims and counter claims and discursive practice that each brought to the discourse. These voices are derived from those actors directly involved in the RCIP with first-hand knowledge and experiences and are representative of the entities involved. Documentation is also considered for the Government voice where this is the dominant mode of interaction. Each voice is considered with respect to intent, the mode of interaction (including language) and the outcome which represents the effect of discursive practice. The RCIP activity provides rich material for the case study as it is a distinct point in time when the three voices: the Official, Utility and Action, and Resistance come together at a time of intense discussion, debate and negotiation.

This case study spans a period of major change where the Federal Government moved from providing funding through the NHT programs to the centralized CfoC program. The shift in emphasis prompted reflection on the change in discourse and therefore the effect on discursive practice. To illustrate findings in this the case study, interpretations are supported by quotations from the raw data.

### 8.1.1 Voice 1. The Official

The Official voice articulates the sum of government policy and programs, rules of engagement, implementation methodology and funding. This is exemplified in the Australian Public Service Commission report (2004, p. 4) *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia’s Priority Challenges*, which describes the imperative for ‘shared goals and integrated responses’. Government policy is constructed through existing formal and informal processes. It develops from political ambitions, expert advice, in this case, largely from scientific and technical research, and advice from the public service which encompasses cross-sectorial interactions. Government policy must enact and respond to legislation and statutory responsibilities. This creates a strong impetus for a command and control approach in the discourse. This section examines two characteristics of the Official voice observed within this case study: language in the discourse and mode of interaction (discursive practice).

A good example of the intent of government is seen in the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (Australian Government 2000). The Federal and State Government jointly developed this document as the basis for government funding to selected regions. The project...
was constructed at national level and identified priority areas, which were then invited to bid for the associated funding. The National Action Plan describes government intent for an integrated approach incorporating multiple levels of government.

The National Action Plan is a joint commitment of $1.4 billion over seven years between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, for regional solutions to salinity and water quality problems. All levels of government, community groups, individual land managers and local businesses will work together to tackle salinity and improve water quality (Australian Government 2000, p. 3).

The document also has a clear emphasis on top-down processes. It shows intent to control interactions and manage processes.

Agreed targets and standards will need to be set between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, either bilaterally or multilaterally, as appropriate, in consultation with the relevant community to ensure effective use of funding (Australian Government 2000, p. 6).

However, the Official voice also includes reference to partnership, collaboration and integration. This was the result of calls for ‘united effort’ and was translated into the language of the discourse. The government intent to collaborate did not necessarily translate beyond language into action, which raises the question of the priority of this intent. It also creates a tension with the command and control approach drive by regulation, funding and management.

This is seen when the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality displays its intent to foster partnerships with stakeholders.

Partnerships are essential to the success of this important initiative. By addressing salinity and improving water quality we will help protect our natural resources and ensure a better quality of life for all Australians. Your involvement in the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is needed to support people already working together to preserve the value and sustainability of our natural resources (Australian Government 2000, p. 3).

The switch between intent to command and control and the intent to partnerships creates confusion for potential partners. Government is inviting participation but only on its terms.

The influence of the discourse is also affected by the language used within it, documents and other interactions. Government language includes elements of authority (expert language) and control (management and regulation). This creates a perception of government as the senior
partner with the role of directing others. In the following excerpt from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, government is almost admonishing potential partners.

Good progress on addressing water quality, salinity and natural resource management issues has been made with Landcare and the Natural Heritage Trust. However, the lack of agreed, specific on-the-ground outcomes and targets for water quality, salinity and other natural resource management attributes has been a major barrier to guaranteeing a return on the Commonwealth’s investment (Australian Government 2000, p. 6).

The government also uses language of regulation to set parameters for discourse. Here, the NAP constrains any future discussion on land clearing.

Recognizing the fact that land clearing in salinity risk areas is a primary cause of dryland salinity, effective controls on land clearing are required in each jurisdiction:

- any Commonwealth investment in catchment/region plans will be contingent upon land clearing being prohibited in areas where it would lead to unacceptable land or water degradation; and
- the Commonwealth will require agreement from relevant States/Territories (particularly Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania) that their vegetation management regulations are effectively used or, where necessary, amended to combat salinity and water quality issues.

(Australian Government 2000, p. 9)

The official government discourse was transmitted through documentation (communiqués, plans and strategies, funding criteria, guidelines, descriptions of priority projects, policy) and formal meetings with stakeholders. The federal government created the role of Facilitator across the nation to articulate the national agenda and liaise with state and regional interests.

Documentation was shared via directly via communication to individuals and institutions and indirectly via broader dissemination such as government websites and regional road shows. Authority for documents depended on their status with major documents signed at ministerial level and more explanatory documents approved by departments and sometimes advisory groups. The influence of documents was dependent on their lifespan. Strategic policy documents spanning multiple years guided subsidiary documents with any plans or actions for implementation requiring reference back to the parent strategy.

Formal meetings occurred with specific parties often organized via themes, for example, stakeholders with a direct expertise or interest in waterways would meet together with their government counterparts. Meetings with stakeholders were usually held in various locations,
local meetings complemented metropolitan meetings. The site of the meeting did affect the power of participants. Meeting in a local venue, particularly arising from a local invitation casts the local stakeholders or facilitators as hosts with consequential authority. Meetings held in metropolitan venues reversed this balance.

Arrangements for meetings also affected the level of participation and therefore their utility and the authority of outcomes. Metropolitan meetings required local stakeholders to travel, which limited their availability and had an associated cost. Even where held locally, competing commitments for stakeholders, especially volunteers, limits participation.

Facilitators represented the government voice as part of their role. The influence of facilitator grew beyond formal representation into mediation and advocacy. This is discussed below in the second voice.

Two features are apparent from review of the government discourse during the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Investment Plan period. The first is that the government discourse was heavily reliant on their representative agents to effectively reach other stakeholders. The discourse of the government operated by proxies and had limited direct engagement with regional level civil society. The second feature apparent from this discourse is the potential for confusion arising from dissonance in intent and language. Government discourse carries the intent and language of command and control but also espouses ideas of collaboration and co-operation.

Discursive practice arising from the discourse is similarly confused. Governments seek to involve stakeholders but only on government terms, which is actually discouraging.

**8.1.2 Voice 2: Utility and Action**

The discourse of Utility and Action is carried by three actors in this case study. The first, the CMA mediated interaction with civil society particularly local communities. At the same time it interacted with government and needed to balance the competing interests of each. The second actors in this space were the government appointed Facilitators. As described above, these specialist roles were created to articulate the government position and to facilitate implementation. These two actors were complementary with the CMA oriented towards the local situation and the Facilitator looking nationally.
The third actor is a regional community group who participate in the RCIP process. Participation enabled the group to influence the regional planning process from a position of their perspective, their remit and their local area. The following sections illustrate the Utility and Action discourse from each respective actor.
**Catchment Management Authority**

The primary goal of the CMA is to develop strategies and plans for the local region that reflect regional needs but also link with State and Federal Government policy. This necessitates working with both government and civil society and the CMA sees itself as the link between both parties.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA is responsible, with others, for natural resource management within the region. It takes an integrated, whole-of-catchment approach by combining strategic planning with co-ordination for all natural resources. Glenelg Hopkins CMA is the link between the community and government. In particular, it is the regional community’s voice on issues involving land and water management (Ref: Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2006-2007, p. 4).

CMA officers built and invested in long-term relationships with regional NRM stakeholders. They saw this as the means to interact with community and influential individuals.

I think it’s the credibility of the staff that go out and actually work with the other stakeholders in the community…you’ve got to keep building that up all the time, maintain those relationships. Really important. And that’s what makes that happen, it’s not somebody sitting in Canberra giving us a bit of money, it’s the people on the ground really believing in what they’re doing and being able to articulate that to the people that have got the land (Ref: 011:10).

The CMA is required to meet formal obligations specified by governing legislation; to engage with local communities and to act as the regulator for floodplain management. CMA strategies and plans are authorized at ministerial level. The CMA discourse must inform its constituency, which is regional civil society, its project partners and all levels of government. It must also drive engagement with stakeholders and promote local expertise and local advocacy.

So we had as a comparison a previous approach, which was relatively non-targeted and relied on landholders approaching us requesting funds and it wasn’t working as well, because we weren’t necessarily investing the funds consistently in priority areas and we weren’t getting good linkage between adjacent landholders.

So now we undertake specific area plans in sub-catchments and that involves going on to most properties in that sub-catchment…and talk with the landholders and get them involved in the program so that they’re aware of why we’re doing it. We get them to talk about what their priorities are and they work with the consultants and identify what the major issues are… and then we inform them of the results, what was found, what the consultants found… and what funds are available to implement priority works in that area. And so we get fantastic uptake of landholders in those areas where we’ve targeted the planning and the rollout of the funding (Ref: 09:10)
During this case study, the intent of the CMA significantly shifted in response to changes in government direction. At the outset of this study, the primary funding source for the CMA and its programs was through NHT, which emphasized partnership and collaboration with civil society as a way to implement programs. Regional programs were aligned to federal and state government programs with the CMA taking a leading role in achieving alignment and setting regional priorities. In 2009, the Caring for our Country program was introduced by the federal government. This program viewed regional authorities as service providers rather than partners. This was reflected in a shift in relationships with civil society and particularly with the State Government, and is visible in the discourse.

…under the NAP program, where the funding generally sort of came through the State and the State did most of the negotiations for the Commonwealth, my sense is that’s changed a bit now under CfoC and there seems to be more direct negotiations with the Commonwealth than there previously was (Ref: 07:10)

CMAs seem to be more of an enforcement of carrying out what DSE wants or Federal government wants or State government. Whereas, the community sees us as the regional body for fixing the major problems in the NRM. But they have a higher expectation on the organisations but the organisations do not have the flexibility that they previously had. And it seems to be getting tighter (Ref: 06:10)

The CMA discourse must orient itself toward civil society and connect with individuals and community groups. The language of the discourse as expressed by CMA leaders recognized the value and contribution of individuals and the desire of the CMA to communicate in the Utility and Action space.

I think it’s something like 40,000 volunteers across Victoria, why let them go? They could have kept, been kept engaged and they become your ambassadors, and who passes it on to the young children growing up? There’s no school mentoring and things like that. So it’s extremely unfortunate that they spent so much time trying to push a message across on priorities but they actually don’t do the fundamentals of hanging onto the knowledge they’ve already got and building up on that database and putting mechanisms in place, not to lose this knowledge (Ref: 06:10)

However, in parallel to its language of partnership used for planning and projects, the CMA also used the language of government when describing its role in regulation and compliance. In this role, it espoused centralized control and behaved as a representative of Government rather than as a mediator or facilitator.
The National Action Plan and Natural Heritage Trust programs are ending on June 30, 2008, and the CMA must be prepared for business beyond National Action Plan and Natural Heritage Trust. To prepare for imminent funding changes, we need to better understand, improve and communicate our natural resource management outcomes. To do this we will focus on monitoring, evaluating and reporting (Ref: Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 2006-2007, p. 13)

The CMA interacted by both formal and informal mechanisms. It used the same mechanisms as government with official documentation and formal meetings. For example, the CMA developed the Regional Catchment Strategy that provided direction and sets priorities for regional action. Regional targets and outcomes were expressed by the strategy and represented the regional intent in negotiation with government. This formal document formed the basis for negotiation on specific projects with local stakeholders.

However, because the CMA is embedded within the region and has direct responsibility for interaction with civil society, it also created personal relationships with civil society via its field officers and communication team. This interaction was valued by the CMA but was felt to be under threat as the government view of the CMA role changed with the Caring for Country program.

If you’ve already got the contacts in the community and the idea’s coming from the community you’ve already got people that are willing to be involved and we don’t have that mechanism now, and I think one of the one disappointing things about CfOC was that they sort of, the inference was, Oh well that’s been done, with no understanding that yes, you might have done it once, but in a community in your civil society, you keep having to redo that sort of thing, you just don’t do it once and it’s done, it’s a constant thing (Ref: 09:10).

The CMA voice was somewhat conflicted by competing roles as a regulator and/or service provider for Government programs, and its local responsibility to engage and represent the local region. Shifts in government attitude to CMA, changed its voice and shifted power away from the regional level. Although it is clearly an intermediary from an external point of view, the CMA did not always see itself as a broker.

The CMA also had the challenge of enacting the Official voice on behalf of Government while operating outside the public service as an intermediary. The CMA was subject to Government funding processes and left with the task of explaining this to regional partners.
…this year is an absolute classic example. We developed our investment plan in December of the year before so you know, you’re only halfway through your year and you’ve got to start planning and preparing your investment plan for the next year and you have discussions with your investor reps and you get an idea of the indicative amount of money that they’re likely to provide. You do all that work and come around April you submit it and it takes a lot of work to get to that stage, and then this year we were told, Oh well, the State government’s actually going to make major budget cuts, and so we had to wait until late May before we knew what they looked like and then we had to do it all again. We got less money and we had to do twice as much work for it. It’s still not finished (as) we still haven’t actually got our authorisation for our funding from the State government (Ref: 09:10).

The data collected in this case study demonstrates the difficulty the CMA experienced in maintaining its position in the Utility and Action discourse.

**Government Facilitator**

The second actors using the voice of the Utility and Action were the government appointed Facilitators whose role was to transmit the voice of government into state and regional levels. Interestingly, once in place, Facilitators adapted to this role by becoming intermediaries and tailoring the government message for partners. The Facilitators found themselves working across all spaces and in contested areas.

Facilitators used the language of negotiation and relationship building to varying degrees depending on the contemporary strategy of Government. They worked via individual contact at professional and personal levels to disseminate and translate information. Under the NHT the Facilitators had a specific focus on building and leveraging relationships.

Get the relationships happening and build up some of that capital that you can utilise down the track to actually bring groups along with you (Ref: 04:10)

With the introduction of the Caring for our Country program, relationship building was given less priority.

We went from what was really by definition a highly collaborative role, to one of basically delivering messages around what the targets are or were and contextualising them into the regional context, so saying, OK this the national target, this is what it means in your patch and it became less of a dialogue and more of a one-way instruction kind of process really. Saying, this is what we want in your area, rather than what would you like to do and how does it fit? (Ref: 014:10)

Although the primary intent for the Facilitator role was to transmit the federal government message, a secondary motivation emerged that was to negotiate an acceptable outcome with
stakeholders. The Facilitators had to determine how far they could go and what could be achieved.

We genuinely want to achieve goals on the ground and that often it is taken away from us because of some other influence at a higher corporate level (Ref: 018:10).

You need to have something that will recognise the importance and the value of the community effort and will maintain and sort of foster that and help it to grow, because the reality is that while we talk about all of these projects being targeted on on-ground outcomes in a relatively short time frame, the only real change is going to be around changing attitudes at the end of the day and in the long term I think you’ve got to, you’ve got to be able to work with communities in a broad scale and probably preferably not individuals. I think that the benefits and synergies of bringing people together are too great to be ignored so I think that you do still need to have that fostering role happening (Ref: 02: 10).

**Civil Society**

A third voice represented in Utility and Action is the community based Basalt to Bay Landcare Network. The group was established in 2009 when several small to medium sized Landcare groups came together to form a network that extended from the Grampians to the coast. The network is place based and consists of members who know each other from particular parts of region or local communities and with affiliations to others with mutual interests. The network produced benefits for its members as a bigger collective rather than dispersed smaller groups however the smaller groups could retain their area of interest. Forming networks also enabled the employment of coordinators as government funding favoured the network structure for hosting these positions. During the study period the network approach was strongly encouraged by government as a means of working with single entities rather than disparate groups and individuals.

CMA resources supported Landcare networks to employ local community based project coordinators. Basalt to Bay utilised this as soon as we could (Ref 022:10).

The network voice did carry more weight when negotiating with those in the Official discourse and through the RCIP process. Through Utility and Action discourse Basalt to Bay could engage with government programs (primarily funding initiatives) and felt that they had influence into the regional investment planning process from their geographic area of interest and activity.
We were up and running and as a network worked over a wider area. Landcare Australia Limited had already pledged well over $80000 to our projects. We could leverage this funding against government funds to create a much wider reach and bigger impact (Ref 022:10).

In Utility and Action Basalt to Bay can accommodate the Official discourse but recognises that often government intent is disengaged from community intent. In these circumstances the network looked for compromise and consensus to achieve an outcome.

We were really focused on our projects and working with 21 landholders and on 8 public reserves/sites. Over 114,000 trees were planted, with funding secured for another 20,000 trees. The RCIP planning was pretty bureaucratic but we could see where we fitted in and were prepared to work with the CMA (Ref 022:10)

In the discourse of Utility and Action, agency lies with community action and relationships of mutual responsibility.

8.1.3 Voice 3: Resistance

The discourse of Resistance in this case study focused on achieving specific outcomes. The experience of interaction with two voices of resistance is presented here to illustrate the characteristics of the Resistance discourse interacting with an institutional process.

The first voice, an environmental not-for-profit organisation Trust for Nature (the Trust) sought to influence into the Official discourse through the Regional Catchment Investment Planning process. A Victorian state-wide organisation, Trust for Nature’s aim is to permanently protect remnant native vegetation through covenanting land, stewardship programs and providing funds to purchase high conservation properties. The Trust’s local branch representative participated in the Glenelg Hopkins CMA’s annual RCIP process and proposed activities for incorporation into the overall regional planning.

We had to make sure that plans were incorporated. It was a competitive field with the state, universities, Greening Australia and everyone wanting to be included. (Ref: 19:10)

While the Trust participated in the RCIP it also remained autonomous and only engaged with the processes and other RCIP partners on its terms. The focus was purely on meeting its aims and objectives.
With committed funding we could get on with our work with the landholders. We’d do the work, send in the reports and then the RCIP would start all over again (Ref: 19:10).

This first voice is focused on local issues and doesn’t necessarily take into consideration the wider issues of the region. This is observed by their regional partners.

And they’re very, very focused on what they need to achieve and I don’t think they’re always very understanding, even when I think you know, locally we’ve done a lot to demonstrate that we’re genuine about their needs on the ground (Ref: 018:10).

The second voice of Resistance was more combative. This voice was from a community based group that opted out of the catchment planning process. This was despite CMA and government agency recognition that the group’s participation was important to the success of regional environmental management. Over time the group had accrued a very strong financial base, which provided independence and enabled a stronger bargaining position. But membership had dwindled and the group was led by a Chair who was combative and unwilling to compromise instead of consensual.

We had previously had a very good relationship with the group. But when XXX took the chair he was very adversarial and bullied people. He didn’t want a bar of the CMA or any other government person. We didn’t know why this happened. It was a pity because they are in an important part of catchment (Ref 019:10).

The group operated independently from other NRM actors and subsequently became a member of a larger network. This alliance enabled the group to reinvigorated activity with its landholder members, share knowledge and generate new ideas and expand participation into broader catchment activities. This has proven to be a successful strategy for the group.

The actions and mechanisms for NRM discourse are set up for government, its agents and large entities. It is not set up for individuals or small groups.

A community group didn't have to come cap-in-hand to the Catchment Management Authority, they could build their own partnership, and their own project, and be the master of their own destiny (Ref: 012:10).

Both voices of resistance centre on themes relating to a focus on local priorities and local empowerment. Both had devised alternative practices to either engage or disengage with the dominant discourse. Trust for Nature worked within the dominant discourse but retained its autonomy and local focus. This narrower focus potentially limits the local branch of the Trust to stimulate a wider more effective discourse as a partner in regional planning. The second
voice, the community group, chose to opt out of the official discourse. It has a relatively sound financial base that ensured a level of independence. As a smaller unit the group has strategically aligned with a larger network where it can extend its influence and potentially change the NRM discourse from this position.

8.1.4 Summary of Case Study 1 RCIP: collaboration and contestation across discourses at regional level

The RCIP case study presents the dominant discourse as the Official voice – the voice of government. The Official voice controls the RCIP process, channels information and manages interactions with NRM stakeholders. A feature of this discourse has been the reliance of government on their representative agents to effectively reach other stakeholders and convey official messages. This Official discourse is confusing as it carries the intent and language of command and control but also espouses ideas of collaboration and co-operation. Discursive practice arising from the discourse is similarly confused as governments seek to involve stakeholders but only on government terms. During the time of the study there was a shift in the Official discourse from the regionalisation of NHT to a more centralized CfoC. This shift changed the planning process and derailed pre-existing thinking and relationships.

The Utility and Action discourse is crucial for creating a place where ideas are considered and brokered for an implementable outcome. Voices in Utility and Action are most often those of NRM intermediaries and those immediately affected by NRM policy and its consequences as they have the greatest stake. Community groups making a positive contribution communicate through the Utility and Action discourse. In the RCIP case study Utility and Action is represented by three voices (1) the CMA and (2) the government Facilitators and (3) community network. The CMA voice is somewhat conflicted by competing roles as a regulator and/or service provider for Government programs, and its local responsibility to engage and represent the local region. As managers, the CMAs used the Official discourse of regulation and compliance and as brokers the CMAs needed the discourse of Utility and Action to interact with their partners.

The second voice presented in Utility and Action was the Facilitator. Like the CMA, the Facilitators had to respond to the changes between NHT and CfoC. The Facilitator role was to transmit the government message and this was initially done through the extensive networks
and relationships that had been built. Under Caring for our Country the motive was less about relationships and more about negotiating an acceptable outcome with stakeholders.

The third voice presented is the community network Basalt to Bay. Basalt to Bay is driven by both on ground action and establishing a positive track record. This is their modus operandi. The network seeks to negotiate terms with prospective partners and will compromise when required on order to achieve a satisfactory outcome. It is focused on building relationships with individuals (landholders) and entities (including philanthropic, corporate and government) that will assist to achieve the networks aims.

The two voices of Resistance represented in this study focus on local priorities and local empowerment. Both had devised alternative practices to either engage or disengage with the dominant Official discourse and to elevate their objectives to a higher priority for action. Trust for Nature worked within the dominant Official discourse but retained a more parochial focus that potentially limits the local branch of the Trust to stimulate a wider more effective discourse as a partner in regional planning. The second voice, the community group, chose to opt out of the Official discourse altogether. The sound financial base enabled the group a high level of autonomy and therefore power. Nonetheless the ‘opt out’ resistance is less helpful where the implementation of regional plans is desired by the wider public. How can regional partners work with citizens that don’t play by the rules?
8.2 Case Study 2: People and Partnership

Case Study 2 is an embedded case study that explores the context of the regional discourse, the actors and their intent. In this study NRM actors use the Utility and Action discourse as a place of consensus and long-term solutions. Thus collaborative decision making is a key feature. Utility and Action encourages actors to negotiate a position. The discourse is dependent on effective relationships, leadership and capacity building.

8.2.1 Gunditjmara country

In the past 25 years, the Gunditjmara people from the Lake Condah area have acquired some 10 properties totaling over 3800 hectares along the Mt Eccles / Tyrendarra volcanic lava flow. These acquisitions resulted from an extension of Indigenous protected areas and a native title determination. In 1994, Gunditjmara heritage values and landscape were declared on the Australian National Heritage List as the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape. The Australian Government declared this landscape for outstanding national values including possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history (Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 2004). In 2007 the Federal Court of Australia made two consent determinations recognising the Gunditjmara People’s non-exclusive native title rights and interests over the majority of almost 140,000 hectares of vacant Crown land, national parks, reserves, rivers, creeks and sea north-west of Warrnambool in Victoria’s western district. These rights and interest sit alongside the rights and interest of the broader community. The Gunditjmara and Victorian State Government have agreements that involve the cooperative management of Mt Eccles National Park. Management is overseen by the Budj Bim Council and Parks Victoria. This accounts for a further 8375 hectares of the Mount Eccles Landscape Zone of the Victorian Volcanic Plain. The Gunditjmara peoples’ rights and interests in native title, cultural heritage and caring for country are represented through the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

8.2.2 The Project

The Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project was a partnership between Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, RMIT University, Federation (formerly Ballarat) University, Monash University, local government and others working in natural
resource management in south west Victoria. The project supported Gunditj Mirring’s capacity to identify, collect, analyse and provide advice in land management practices and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK).

Beginning in 2009, the project was funded for four years through the federal government Caring for our Country program. The project was managed by a reference group (nine members) and delivered by the project team. The reference group consisted of representatives from Gunditjmara Elders, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Glenelg Hopkins CMA board and project staff, Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The project team consisted of two staff from Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, one from Glenelg Hopkins CMA, and one from RMIT University.

The Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project contributed to NRM practice through activities that strengthened regional partnerships; fostered two-way communication between Indigenous and the broader community; established an extension program informed by practice on aboriginal owned and managed lands. The ethos of the project recognised that NRM is multi layered and understood across social, cultural, spiritual and ecological dimensions. The project also developed an extension toolkit that continues to be applied throughout the Budj Bim landscape. This toolkit incorporates a field guide, fact sheets, the upgrading of the Gunditj Mirring website including videos related to the project, an Indigenous engagement guide, a seasonal calendar and the Yarns on Farms extension program. The extension toolkit has evoked particular interest from farmers, Landcare groups, schools and various government agencies involved in natural resources management.

In addition, the project provided an enriched understanding of NRM practice through the collection and analysis of insights as they arose in the practice of land and water management on the Gunditj Mirring properties and in the wider community. The Gunditjmara people, the recognised traditional owners for south west Victoria, have a rich living culture whose heritage is embodied in the physical landscape. The diversity of landscape is described by the Gunditjmara as Sea Country, Stone Country, River Country and Forest Country. Gunditjmara people are also connected to country through dreaming stories, language, oral histories, cultural law/lore and customs (Parks Victoria 2012). The Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project was conceived within a broader social agenda of restorative justice and self-determination of
Indigenous peoples. The guiding project principles included community relevance, voluntary participation, mutual capacity building and benefit for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

8.2.3 Exploring the Partnerships

GMPP partners represent cross-sectorial government agencies (local, state and federal), community (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), universities and consultants. This allowed the project to draw on the skills, resources and competencies of each partner. The investment into the project by respective GMPP partners is described in Table 8.1 under three groups: 1.Core, 2. Support and 3.Contributing.

Core partners co-designed the project, invested project funding and resources, provided ongoing advice/mentoring, and representation on the Advisory Reference Group. Support partners provided advice, resources and representation on the Advisory Reference Group. Contributing partners provided advice and mentoring.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core partners</th>
<th>Project design</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Project advice</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Reference group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg Hopkins CMA</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks Victoria</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for our Country</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support partners</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg Shire</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moyne Shire</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT University</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation University</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Sustainability &amp; Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing partners</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation University</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Blitz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oliver’s five indicators of effective partnerships were used to inform the analysis of interview transcripts and project documents. These indicators were discussed at Section 6.4.6 Coding for Case Study 2 and are: (1) partnership built on personal relationships; (2) motivation for being involved; (3) continuity of adequate funding and resources; (4) skilled, enthusiastic coordinator/project team; and 5) can work in changing environments). Two additional indicators (6) high levels of trust and reciprocity and (7) effective leadership, were identified through the coding process and added to the original list.

The next sections expand on descriptions of the partnership indicators presented in Table 6.7 Effective partnership indicators, and explore in greater detail the context of actor responses in relation to each indicator. These voices are from the Utility and Action discourse. To illustrate the findings in this the case study, interpretations are supported by quotations from the raw data.

8.2.3.1 Partnerships built on relationships

A consistent theme from the data related to the importance of personal relationships to developing effective partnerships. This was in terms of long term ‘tested’ relationships that resulted in effective working partnerships. Accordingly shared effort among individuals, groups and government was seen as the only effective way to address any problems that had no simple solutions i.e. wicked problems. The descriptions of relationship varied. Some actors referred to the necessity of taking time to build and nurture relationships.

Put in that genuine time into those relationships then you generally come out pretty well in the end (Ref: 01:11)

Others reflected on long standing relationships.

What I noticed is that people work in the same locations for a number of years – this was a very distinct element. There were long standing relationships where people had known each other for thirty or forty years through the footy club or whatever (Ref: 02:11).

Good interpersonal relationships were considered essential in the early stages of project building.

You feel confident you can get on the phone and say look I’ve got this great idea, why don’t we do this and get something started (Ref: 022:10).
The strength of the relationships existed not only on a professional basis but also a personal basis – it was inherent in the way people operated. Yet the value of these ties and networks was not necessarily counted in the workplace.

The relationship stuff is not explicitly written into work plans. (Ref: 016:10).

The strength and the longevity of the relationships was perceived to be a specific characteristic of south west Victoria. Interdependence, cooperation, and conflict resolution also peppered the descriptions of relationships. These relationships existed in cross sectorial, cross community settings and enabled a build-up of a bank of goodwill, as described by one actor. The notion of a bank of goodwill was referred to by a number of respondents and believed to assist partnership/relationships withstand various challenges.

For example, when we had to have tricky and sensitive negotiations (Ref: 021:11).

The bank of goodwill can be considered in terms of social capital (i.e. moral obligations and norms, social values (especially trust and reciprocity) and social networks commonly shared. Oliver (2004) notes that if a region has a successful accumulation of social capital then it will lead to a well-functioning economic and social system with a high level of integration. The strong social capital in the south-west region did not mean that the partners necessarily cooperated on a daily basis, rather the partners and personnel worked together on an as-needs-basis. Although longevity of relationship was generally viewed in a positive light there was a cautionary observation that the same staff in the same region over a long period of time could encourage an insular approach to seeing the world, with staff set in their ways. The maintenance of effective working relationships, particularly between the project team and the Gunditjmara people was important and enabled the project to move at a pace that was more consistent with community timeframes. Given the high level of participation of government agencies and other stakeholders in Reference Group meetings there was strong evidence of a commitment to the working relationships by all parties and this demonstrated a high degree of mutual respect (Field 2013). As one partner observed:

…it was important to not lose sight of what made this partnership really strong (Ref: 03:11).

While there may have been key differences in the priorities of GMPP stakeholders there was no evidence that this impacted on the ability of the GMPP to achieve its objectives. The
overwhelming findings show that the strength and effectiveness of working relationships was a key enabler of the success of the GMPP.

8.2.3.2 High levels of motivation

Participation in this project was voluntary and the data shows mostly high levels of motivation for involvement by project partners. The project team was responsible for implementing a project that was a forerunner in community engagement and capacity building. They were both excited by the challenge but also a little cautious.

It’s exciting in terms of what it can do…but daunting as well by what it (the project) can do (Ref 030:11).

One clear motivation for being involved in the project was a need for collaboration. From observations made by project partners it seems that that the further away from centres of power and decision making (Melbourne and Canberra) the greater the need for the region to cooperate.

Different government departments have said we can’t believe how well you guys do partnerships down there…it seems that the further they get away from Melbourne the better the partnerships are (Ref: 015:11).

The local imperative for collaboration had been brought into sharper focus over time as more and more public services retracted to the larger regional centres of Ballarat and Geelong. As a consequence service staff were located an hour from Melbourne but at least four hours from, for example Portland. This was problematic for the citizenry that required service and attention.

As GMPP progressed, more partners were attracted to joining with the project. This resulted in expanded networks, knowledge, benefits and outcomes. These partners self-identified when opportunities arose, for example, the Monash University’s Holding Gunditjmara Knowledge project to preserve and share intergenerational knowledge of Gunditjmara history. Lead researcher Dr Shannon Faulkhead liaised closely with the GMPP project team and provided important advice and support.

Similarly the GMPP contributed to other significant projects, for example, the application for World Heritage listing of the Nationally Listed Budj Bim Landscape. Engagement with landholders adjacent to the nominated area was a fundamental component of the application
process. The GMPP Yarns on Farms extension program provided support to this engagement process whilst concurrently delivering the GMPP extension program. In this sense the motivation for involvement between the two activities has been of mutual benefit. This implied that the activities partners undertook led to outcomes both partners sought to achieve and enabled a greater legitimacy of the activity.

8.2.3.3 Continuity of funding and resources

The Caring for our Country funding cycle had been extended to 4 years, yet despite this the timeline was widely acknowledged by project partners as too short a term for appropriate engagement with Indigenous communities. Project timelines, especially with a project focused on community engagement and relationships, were not complementary with community timelines.

The GMPP was always the first stage of a two-part process. Four years wasn’t going to be long enough to achieve what we intended to do. (Ref 031:10)

Working within the limits of a project budget prompted the GMPP project team to share resources between their respective organisations. An example of this was the use of field equipment between the CMA and the Gunditj Mirring when mapping areas of cultural and environmental significance.

We are a very small work centre and in order to reach our goals it’s nearly impossible to do this on your own and where there is not enough funding we can utilise resources between organisations (Ref 018:10).

Resource sharing between the project partners also extended to training and education opportunities, for example, the CMA supported GMPP project team members to attend a regional native grass identification training course. Project team members also participated in a month long law and policy program at the University of Arizona, learning from internationally recognised Indigenous academics such as Professor Robert Williams and Professor James Anaya (who is also the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Issues).

A final issue raised by respondents was the diversion of human resources in response to emergency events, such as, the bushfire or floods. These unforeseen events significantly impacted on the ability of some regional project partners to remain actively involved in the GMPP. The Victorian fire season of 2012–13 was significant, with department staff posted to fires for over three months from December to March.
8.2.3.4 Skilled, enthusiastic coordinator/project team

The GMPP functioned under a structure that accommodated the two primary project partners, the project delivery team, the project reference group and the Full Group (see Figure 8.1 below). Gunditj Mirring is governed by Full Group meetings which bring together Gunditjmara traditional owners on a monthly cycle for discussions and decision making. All key GMPP decisions required ratification from the Full Group which contributed to positive outcomes and maintained the support of the community throughout the project. The project reference group served in an advisory capacity for the project and comprised representatives from Gunditjmara Elders and Gunditjmara youth, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and other key regional stakeholders. Lastly the project team carried responsibility for project implementation. Activities included on-ground works, botanical and cultural surveying and mapping; the development of training and education material, and the delivery of the Yarns on Farms extension project. The team provided regular reports to the CMA, the reference group, the Caring for our Country program and the Full Group.

The GMPP team consisted of three officers and a project manager and operated across two sites, Gunditj Mirring, Heywood and Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Hamilton. Team members held regular meetings and developed yearly works programs that addressed projects targets through appropriate activities, milestones and monitoring. Managing relationships between the two organisations was sometimes challenging as the respective work places had different organisational, cultural and administrative expectations.

I’m trying to be collaborative and consultative but … if I’d taken a step back it wouldn't be where it is now. I don't want to be negative and I don't know anything about people outside the reference group meetings, but two people were meant to get back to me on the field guide and neither have (Ref 17:10).
This situation was somewhat overcome through secondment arrangements that organised for staff to work from a hot desk located at each site. Secondment enabled team members to familiarise and immerse themselves with the daily business of each workplace. A mentoring program was also established for project staff. Field (2013) observes the positive effect on project staff through the mentoring and support program.

This skilled people up and given them confidence…and built capacity in people to take the lead and speak to groups at all levels. I have seen the excitement it generates…that two young Gunditjmara people are out talking about this project (Field 2013).

One further constraint observed in the data was that project team members would often be asked by their respective organisations to work on projects other than GMPP. This caused slippage in project timelines and consequently deadlines weren’t met.

The Australian Government raises the issues of deadlines…getting a project finalised and ticking off all those output boxes and meeting all the requirements (Ref: 026:10)

The GMPP was coordinated by an overall project manager but in liaison between Gunditj Mirring CEO and the CMA. The challenge for the project manager was to work across the two organisations, which was difficult at times.

8.2.3.5 Working with change

During the four-year project partners’ levels of participation varied, usually as a result of personnel movement or emergency events. Partners could also engage on an as needed basis. For example, Department of Sustainability and Environment commenced the project with a relatively low profile but became an important partner toward the end of the project when fire management was a focus. Likewise RMIT had a limited role at the commencement of the project but in the third year provided a role as interim project manager, then a mentoring role and a lead role in evaluation. The movement of key personnel presented a challenge, especially when the project lacked the full complement of staff. Field (2013) noted this disruption in his review of the project.

At one stage there were three Project Managers in the space of one year. These changes in such a key position have, among other things, significantly impacted on the GMPP. While this has been a significant cause of the delays that have been experienced throughout the operation of the project it is a credit to all involved, particularly the current Project Manager that the GMPP has been able to meet its key targets and objectives within its timeframe (Field 2013).
Staff succession was more widely expressed in the data as both an organisational and regional issue.

Who carries the torch after I have gone? (Ref 029:11)

It’s not up to one person. That’s become obvious to me since XX left. I’m still here but he’s not – it’s up to me to become that person (Ref 020:10).

One senior manager observed that future staff retirements may cause potential disruptive outcomes for the current networks and structures.

The challenge is going to come in the next five years with retirement in the various workforces…there might be a period where there’s almost a need to start again in rebuilding some of those connections (Ref 024:10).

In regard to coping with change two respondents spoke about the need to articulate a joint vision and joint direction. Another referred to the ability of organisations to withstand staff turnover in terms of scale.

In an organisation of sufficient size there is resilience and corporate ethic and corporate memory which can survive staff turnover (Ref: 010:10)

The data revealed that while most actors understood the potential for changed circumstances as a component of working in NRM there were concerns about the retention of knowledge skills and memory, in addition to the disruption to productivity and relationships when change occurred.

8.2.3.6 Trust and reciprocity

Two significant characteristics of effective partnerships drawn from the GMPP data analysis were trust and reciprocity. As one partner observed it was a leap of faith to go with this project, yet people and organisations were prepared to share the risks. A high level of trust existed between the core project partners, the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners and the CMA. This had developed over a long period as the respective organisations shared mutual regional NRM objectives and had a track record in implementing projects together. This trusting environment positively affected other partners who became involved in the project and resulted in an inclusive, respectful and tolerant environment that valued the diverse NRM perspectives. A project partner interviewee noted:

The partnerships was (sic) mutually beneficial and completely egalitarian (Ref 026:11)
Mutual trust enabled core partners to work more effectively by reducing transaction costs and other partners and individuals were able to contribute without feeling that they risked disapproval. This helped to facilitate increased participation, new ideas and creativity in approaches.

We spoke directly with XX who just made the decision…it save a lot of time and energy (Ref 027:11)

I felt confident that my ideas were valued even if they weren’t used (Ref 017:11)

The data shows that partner relationships matured as respect and trust were built through working cooperatively. The concept of reciprocity (mutual exchange) between partners was strong and explicitly written into project activities. Reciprocity is observed through activities that occurred between the team, managers and all partners. For example a private consultant worked on a botanical survey with the project team, on-country and in two-way Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge exchange and Federation University staff arranged for the project team to visit the university where they could learn archiving procedures. Another noteworthy activity was the Yarns on Farms team arranging a reciprocal tour of the Indigenous owned and managed properties on the Budj Bim landscape for the farmers and land managers who had participated in the program.

Lastly one interviewee observed the negative outcome of another project with local community that did not produce the same results as the GMPP.

We went through a whole process of community consultation and planning but we’ve lost the good will and trust because we don’t have the resources to achieve those plans (Ref: 015:11).

The good will and trust that may have been built during consultation and planning phases were eroded as plans could not be implemented.

8.2.3.7 Effective leadership

Leadership has been included as an additional indicator as it was frequently referred to in the interview data. The references to leadership were often in the context of the importance of effective leadership within the project, by participating communities, agencies and organisations and at State and Federal government level. Interestingly, a shared general observation about the GMPP was that individuals who took a leading role in any of the
project activities were perceived to be furthering the interests of the whole community and region. This can be explained by the collaborative nature of the project where leadership endeavours were encouraged across all participants and did not rest exclusively with those in positions of power i.e. project managers and community leaders. In evaluating the GMPP project Field (2013) noted that:

The project has contributed significantly to the development of leadership qualities among the team members by providing them with access to training, treating them with respect and trusting them to undertaken the tasks required.

A source of significant leadership came from the community based Lake Condah Sustainable Development Leadership Group (LCSDLG). This long established group was organised to enable wide stakeholder participation and to provide support and advice for a number of Gunditj Mirring projects. A number of GMPP interviewees noted the LCSDLG as contributing significantly to regional discussions, planning and partnerships, and an example of effective leadership in practice. Individual effective leaders were described in the data in terms of enabling, as a driving force, insightful, courageous, supportive and passionate.

XX had a can-do and want-to-do attitude (Ref 16:10)

The can-do and want-to-do leadership style is in keeping with the pragmatic values of the Utility and Action discourse.

8.2.4 Summary of Case Study 2 GMPP: cooperation and collaboration at regional level

Oliver’s five indicators were used to observe the effectiveness of the GMPP partnerships and strategies for collaboration. The analysis produced two new indicators (1) Trust and reciprocity and (2) Effective leadership.

The data shows that strong and effective relationships led to partnerships at the organisational and individual levels that were built on pre-existing trust and the previous work. Mutual trust enabled core partners to work more effectively by reducing transaction costs. This helped to facilitate increased participation, new ideas and creativity in approaches. Although NRM stakeholders had their own independent objectives there was a share a common goal and understanding between the project partners. The motivation for pragmatic and workable outcomes that led to mutual benefits is consistent with key characteristics of the Utility and Action discourse.
GMPP partners felt a sense of remoteness from the centres of power and decision making. Nonetheless this stimulated greater cooperative efforts and more effective use through sharing and combining resources.

Effective leadership within the community was considered crucial and based upon mutual respect and trust between Elders and young leaders; and between the project partners. One critical area that impacted on the GMPP was the capacity of project proponents to cope with change, particularly with the turnover of staff.

The Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project was jointly initiated by Gunditjmara Elders and the Glenelg Hopkins CMA. This was in response to the Australian Governments Caring for our Country Business Plan that called for projects to engage with Traditional Owners and use Indigenous Ecological Knowledge.

There were two components to this project: traditional knowledge and traditional owners… the project had a large component which was about capacity building for the traditional owners so they could respond to landowners who wanted information and for agencies who wanted the information…as the (Caring for our Country) target was traditional knowledge we had to gather that traditional knowledge (Ref: 031:11).

The project plan evolved through an iterative process between the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the CMA, and guided by the Australian Government Indigenous Facilitator. As the GMPP developed Parks Victoria personnel became involved, as they were simultaneously developing their approach to writing the Ngootyoong Gunditj Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan.

The GMPP was supported by a group of core, support and contributing partners. This multiple partner approach shared the same common interest and outcome focus, the ability to jointly solve problems and to re-organise and share resources as required. This meant that the issue of staff turnover could be managed to limit adverse impact on the project. Nonetheless these measures were temporary responses as staff turnover hadn’t been considered in the project risk management plan. As Field (2013) notes:

…turnover… is a significant problem for similar types of projects including Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Areas. Given that much of this knowledge exists within the department, it is arguable that the Caring for our Country program and MERI process focus more on ensuring that future projects are better prepared for what are likely changes in key personnel.
The findings show that the robust organisational and governance capacity of participating partners was integral to effective project management and delivery. Another important feature was the open lines of communication between those involved in the project. This included the respect shown to the Gunditjmara peoples' rights, interests and aspirations in relation to their country and their knowledge and by working within their cultural, business and organisational arrangements. The close working relationships generally catalysed both formal and informal dissemination of information. Formal communication occurred in meetings, communiques and reports. Informal communication occurred through conversations, joint activities and simple encounters such as the morning tea room catch-ups.

Support for the project continued as a result of multiple partner commitment, strong organisational and governance capacity and open lines of communication. There was a strong sense that we’re all in this together. Thus the partners were willing to jointly solve problems and share resources to ensure the continuity of the project. The GMPP occurred in an interconnected web of relationships and partnerships. Information dissemination, knowledge generation and local knowledge brokering relating to Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and NRM were characteristic of the GMPP.

The actors in this embedded case study regularly referred to the importance of the relationships and partnerships. They also stressed the importance of building goodwill. That is, generating and accumulating social capital by acting through social networks and establishing trust and reciprocal relationships. Strong social capital provides a broader pool of knowledge, skills, technical and financial capacity that can be essential when resources are insufficient. With limited resources it is better to work in partnership.

The diversity of partners had potential to reach and influence a wider range of people both within and external to the region. The findings from this study concur with Oliver (2004) in that a region with accumulated social capital will have a well-functioning economic and social system with a high level of integration.

Generally most constraints related to project delivery issues, such as underestimating the time it would take to transform Indigenous Ecological Knowledge into an extension toolkit. This was more time consuming than originally anticipated due to the scope of information obtained. Government programs like Caring for our Country work within timeframes that are governed by funding cycles and administrative processes. Government requirements to
demonstrate deliverables on time and on budget can become onerous and overwhelm project proponents. Still communities need long lead times to consult and negotiate when deciding on the final project design, objectives and outputs. When multiple partners are involved even greater lengths of time are required for appropriate negotiations to take place.

What worked well in the project was a combination of long-term relationships of trust, respect and honesty; valuing the knowledge and skills of Indigenous people; the clarity of project purpose and the relevant scale of the project. This was supported by effective communication and governance arrangements within the Indigenous community and their project partners. The reciprocal opportunities and mutual benefits that came from the GMPP partner collaborations are highly significant and bodes well for future engagement of the Gunditjmara people in natural resource management.

Findings from this embedded case study demonstrate that respectful and sincere partnerships have the power to create positive change and can be the catalyst for moving from restrictive bureaucratic cultures to support flexible, collaborative arrangements. In this analysis the opportunity for change takes place in the Utility and Action discourse.
9 Conclusion
9.1 Summary of the Research

This thesis has produced an account of regional natural resource management, located in the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region of south west Victoria. The aim was to probe ‘what lies beneath’ – to explore the NRM discourse(s) that interact and compete for meaning and power. The study also describes the discursive struggle between actors at a regional level, as well as those beyond the region at state and federal tiers of government.

Three objectives – each with an associated research question – were set out in Section 1.6 above, to guide the study. The first research objective is to describe regional NRM discourse and the actors involved, in so doing addressing the question: “What are the roles and responsibilities of actors as ascertained through discourse, and how do these roles and responsibilities function in practice?” The second objective is to explore and describe the power relationships, in so doing addressing the question: “How are actors using their power and what is their intent?” The final objective was to identify effective NRM collaboration at regional level, in so doing addressing the question: “What is the nature of communication and discursive practice between NRM actors?”

The research questions thus link directly to the research problem and objectives and were co-identified with NRM stakeholders. The questions also influenced the sample size, sampling scheme employed and selection of data analysis techniques.

NRM is embedded within contextualised social practices and behaviours. Citizens and governments define their realities or worldviews through discourse and discursive practice. Studying discourse reveals how identities, power, activities, relationships and shared meaning are created. Therefore, discourse analysis provides insight and understanding for how civil society and government can work together.

Australian NRM is nested within wider debates over the appropriate roles, responsibilities and resources of government and concepts of federalism and regionalism (Brown 2007; Brown & Deem 2016). Since the 1980s NRM has been characterized by shifts from centralised, traditional models of management where government drove planning and implementation to the decentralized NHT regional model with authority residing in regional citizen boards and statutory committees. The 2009 Caring for our Country program heralded a return to more centralized approaches with narrow government agendas, high transaction costs and
competitive bidding (Robins & Kanowski 2011; Tennent & Lockie 2012). During these phases major paradigm shifts occurred with the Landcare movement, integrated catchment management, sustainable development, neo-liberalism and regionalism (Robins 2007). These evolving NRM phases are layered with people, politics and problems.

The establishment of the NRM administrative regions (regionalisation) relied on civic regionalism where communities would be part of decision making. Thus regional bodies had their origins in regionalisation but were characterised by regionalism. This paradox gave rise to pressure points and limitations whereby citizen participatory processes, i.e. Community Based NRM, were compromised by the institutional cultures that sponsored them. Dryzek’s taxonomy of democratic pragmatism provides a basis for the analysis. A critique of specific examples was used to emphasize characteristics of that particular discourse.

9.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has demonstrated the utility of discourse analysis in enabling elucidation of NRM at regional level. It has revealed key insights under each of the three research questions that were set out to guide the study, as follows.

Research Question 1: “What are the roles and responsibilities of actors as ascertained through discourse, and how do these roles and responsibilities function in practice?”

The research led to the identification of three co-existing discourses that are recognisable in Dryzek’s pragmatic democracy, and to the existence of a newly described discourse Utility and Action. Thus the research accords with and builds upon Dryzek’s work, providing new insights, with implications for policy and for further research (see next section). This third discourse, Utility and Action, introduces a new environmental discourse characterized by its focus on relationships and action. This discourse is distinct from Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism. The three discourses, Official, Resistance and Utility and Action, identified across the collected data are present in the two case studies that are used to illustrate NRM discourse in the Glenelg Hopkins study area.

The newly described discourse, Utility and Action (middle ground) is not apparent from Dryzek’s strategic level analysis. Identifying this discourse is very important as Utility and Action is linked to action. Action is delivered through stakeholders who are often absent from
Official and Resistant discourses, therefore analysis confined to those areas omits a crucial voice.

Utility and Action is qualitatively different from the other two discourses described. It is not just half-way between Official and Resistance but has an independent intent and moves beyond compromise (occupying the middle ground between opposed views) to encompass utility and action. It is distinguished from the Official and Resistance discourses by its intent, which is ‘to get the job done’. It is pragmatic, solutions-focused and locally-oriented.

**Research Question 2: “How are actors using their power and what is their intent?”**

The regional NRM social interface - now described through discourse analysis - is where civil society, government and others negotiate positions on the often conflicting objectives of economic, social and environmental worldviews. Analyzing discourse enables us to understand and recognize our own and other worldviews, a first step toward thinking of reasoned responses to complex environmental issues.

The Official and Resistance discourses are recognizable within Dryzek’s taxonomy of democratic pragmatism yet somewhat distinct as they exist in the narrower operational space of regional NRM. The dominant discourse is the Official voice of government. This discourse controls the NRM process, channels information and manages interactions between NRM stakeholders. A feature of this discourse is the reliance of government on their representative agents to effectively reach other stakeholders and convey official messages. The Official discourse is confusing as it carries the intent and language of command and control but also espouses ideas of collaboration and co-operation. Discursive practice arising from the discourse is similarly confused as governments seek to involve stakeholders but only on government terms.

The Resistance discourse focuses on local priorities and local empowerment. Those actors identified in the Resistance discourse devise alternative practices to either engage or disengage with the dominant Official discourse and to elevate their objectives to a higher priority for action.

The analysis records shifts in NRM paradigms and highlights the dynamic nature of NRM discourse. In so doing, it reveals the dynamic nature of NRM discourse as the Official
discourse moves away from its initial alignment with Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism and towards administrative rationalism. This reveals a second new insight that builds upon the work of Dryzek; that Dryzek’s taxonomy may be applied differentially over time.

With the 2009 change of federal government and environmental policy direction the Official discourse moves from its initial alignment with Dryzek’s democratic pragmatism towards administrative rationalism. The shift emphasizes the fluidity and dynamic nature of NRM discourse. Thus there are implications for policy and practice; actors and commentators need to be aware that the discourse will change over time in response to political policy and local conditions (see next section). Change allows innovation and new thought to enter the discourse. In this analysis the tensions that arise where the Official discourse interacts with other discourses, notably the Resistance discourse, enables development of new world views and realities.

Research Question 3: “What is the nature of communication and discursive practice between NRM actors?”

The application of discourse analysis in this study also provides insight into participatory processes. In particular, it provides a new understanding of how processes serve to create and defend a particular discourse and potentially limit divergent views in NRM. Thus analysis provides insight into participatory processes through highlighting the discursive practice among the NRM actors.

Curtis et al (2014) note the importance of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and the necessity for engaging and building communities as a precursor for effecting change. The authors ask ‘what relationships and conversational domains are necessary to work together to produce desired futures’ (Curtis et al. 2014, p. 193). Discourse tells us what people care about and how they enact this. Interactions that recognize and use the Utility and Action discourse are more likely to succeed as they align to the pragmatic position of the stakeholders (communities, landowners and industry) and link directly to action.

Case Study 1 explored the respective perceptions, claims and counter claims and discursive practice of (1) Official, (2) Resistance and (3) Utility and Action discourse. Case Study 2 the Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project reported on the nature of the relationships between
project partners and drew on analytical explanations from the discourse analysis and Case Study 1. It highlighted the potency of the social transactions (i.e. goodwill, long-term relationships, trust, respect and honesty) that underpinned the language used to accomplish meaningful interaction and communication. This was supported by effective communication and governance arrangements within the Indigenous community and their project partners.

Findings from this embedded case study demonstrate that respectful and sincere partnerships have the power to create positive change and can be the catalyst for moving from restrictive bureaucratic cultures to support flexible, collaborative arrangements. In this analysis the opportunity for change takes place in the Utility and Action discourse. The characteristics of Utility and Action capture the perspectives of those who will put action into practice that is apparent at regional level but less so at strategic level. Furthermore the Utility and Action discourse suggests conditions for potential negotiated spaces where interaction between official bodies and resistance and pragmatic stakeholders can occur. Interaction could be increased through resourcing and supporting social networks, which in turn links to questions of policy implications of this research.

9.3 Recommendations for Policy and Further Research

Three recommendations are presented with a preceding rationale.

The geographic scope of this doctoral dissertation uses the Glenelg Hopkins CMA catchment area. No two regions are exactly the same as local and external imperatives influence regional dynamics and regional relationships. The subjective nature of this study produces an account and findings that can be built on and further explored in other contexts. Therefore, Recommendation 1 is to undertake further research that applies discourse analysis to other NRM regions, power relationships, spatial and temporal scales and contexts.

Discourse will change over time in response to political policy and local conditions. Change allows innovation and new thought to enter the discourse. In this analysis the tensions that arise where the Official discourse interacts with other discourses (notably the Resistance discourse) enables development of new world views and realities. Thus Recommendation 2 is to further explore the areas of tension and identify emerging discourse(s) to capitalize on the development of new world views and realities in the NRM context.
This study describes regional NRM in terms of its players and their interaction in a rapidly changing policy environment. The study also found that confused communication from different arms and levels of NRM government and the fairly constant turnover of government personnel impacted negatively at regional level. Disconnection in the discourse impedes action and prevents successful outcomes. This must be an active target for intervention to improve outcomes.

The NRM Facilitators are front-line officers that liaise between all levels of government, the regional bodies and civil society. As Fenton’s (2007) survey shows the Facilitators have built extensive NRM networks and relationships, are trusted and keep communication channels open and refreshed. The Facilitators also use strategies to create space for discourse, discussion and negotiation. Based on these findings Recommendation 3 is to reinvigorate, invest in and strengthen the NRM Facilitator network.

9.3.1 Reflection and Concluding Remarks

The first reflection relates to the application of social theory and research findings to the workplace. During the study learning and research findings were shared by the researcher with workplace colleagues, community members, agency staff and others. Some of this learning was adopted and adapted with immediate outcomes, most notably within the CMA.

The CMA refined the way it worked with government and its agents. For example to gain a better understanding of government functions and to expand professional networks secondment was arranged for CMA staff to work with their counterparts in federal and state agencies. The CMA also initiated and hosted visits from government staff to the region. These exposure experiences provided both entities with the transfer of explicit and implicit workplace knowledge and serendipitous opportunities. Internal processes were also introduced to improve communication lines between the CMA and government. These included installing compatible software programs and regular newsletter updates from the CMA to government, agencies, NGO’s and other partners during the investment planning phase.

The CMA also refined the way it worked with partners. Findings from the focus group discussions informed a rewrite of the RCIP Communication and Engagement Plan from a previous version that invited regional partners to submit projects for consideration to an
approach whereby regional partners worked alongside CMA staff to design projects. Self-reflection was used by the Gunditj Mirring Partnership Project team as a technique to improve their extension and community engagement skills. Equipped with a better understanding of participatory processes the CMA improved their engagement with community and others by using pragmatic and constitutive devices, as exampled in the Glenelg River Restoration Project.

The second reflection relates to participation and partnerships. After decades of national effort and investment into environmental remediation many of Australia’s biggest environmental problems have remained the same. Rutherfurd and Campbell argue that ‘long-term environmental problems and long-term productivity challenges in agriculture demand long-term responses, with durable core funding, complemented by enough flexibility to allow for adaptive management’ (Rutherfurd & Campbell 2014). This will require policy dialogues that promote mutual interests and identify common priorities, partnerships and principles for cooperation. The challenge is to arrange an operating space that enables full civic participation, allows for independent advocacy and where dominant interests and discourse can be held to account.

Greater participation in NRM debate and futuristic thinking will enable society wide understanding of the issues and tap into the wisdom, knowledge and experience that resides in civil society. Local action is likely to be more effective where high levels of community participation, responsibility and ownership exist (Wallington, Lawrence & Loechel 2008; Woodhill 2010).

Ultimately the extensive transformations that will be required to address environmental and social issues demand a broad and more highly developed understanding of social life. There is a need for more dynamic approaches to participation and partnership that recognise and address the underlying differences in power. The tensions that occur between local autonomy and dominant interests should be further explored and could actually become a creative force, where new discourse and worldviews emerge.
10 REFERENCES


Bäckstrand, K & Lövbrand, E 2006, 'Planting Trees to Mitigate Climate Change: Contested Discourses of Ecological Modernization, Green Governmentality and Civic Environmentalism', *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 50-75.


Bardsley, DK & Rogers, GP 2010, 'Prioritizing Engagement for Sustainable Adaptation to Climate Change: an example from natural resource management in South Australia', *Society and Natural Resources*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1-17.


Botterill, L, 2003, *From Black Jack McEwen to the Cairns Group Reform in Australian Agricultural Policy*, National Europe Centre, Australian National University, Canberra ACT.


Builth, HC 2003, 'The Archaeology and Socioeconomy of the Gunditjmara: A Landscape Analysis from Southwest Victoria, Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, no. 56, p. 57.


Cohen, JL & Arato, A 1994, Civil Society and Political Theory, Mit Press, USA.


233

Cox, R & Pezzullo, PC 2016, Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, 4th edn, SAGE, USA.


234


Davidson, J, Lockwood, M, Griffith, R, Curtis, A & Stratford, E 2008, Status and Good Practice in Australian NRM Governance Report No. 5 Pathways to Good Practice in Regional NRM Governance, University of Tasmania, Hobart.


Department of Environment and Heritage and Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, 2003, Natural Heritage Trust Phase 1 Final Evaluation Scope and Terms of Reference, Canberra, ACT.


Dick, B 1991, Helping Groups to be Effective, Interchange, Chapel Hill, Australia.


Farrelly, M 2006, 'An Evaluation of Integrated Environmental Plannning in Selected Australian Natural Heritage Trust Regions', University of Western Australia.


Fraser, H 2005, 'Four Different Approaches to Community Participation', *Community Development Journal*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 286-300.


Great South Coast Group, 2012, Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan, Warrnambool, Victoria.


Guthrie, G 2010, Basic Research Methods: an Entry to Social Science Research, SAGE Publications, California.


238


James, P, Nadarajah, Y, Haive, K & Stead, V 2012, *Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Development: Other Paths for Papua New Guinea*, University of Hawai’i Press.


Kuhn, TS 2012, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, USA.


Pratt, A 2013, 'Australia, the 'Clean Green Food Bowl of Asia'', paper presented to Global Food Forum, Sydney.


Prime Minister Robert Hawke, PMa Cabinet 1989, *Speech by the Prime Minister Launch of Statement on the Environment, Wentworth, NSW*.


Victorian Auditor-General, VAGs Office 2014, *Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities*, VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT PRINTER.


Weir, JK 2009, *The Gunditjmara Land Justice Story*, Monograph series, Native Title Research Unit, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.


Young, I 2012, paper presented to Science Meets Policymakers Summit, Canberra, 24 February.


### 11 APPENDIX

#### 11.1 Documents gathered for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Data type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
                               | Surveys: Key Partner Survey  
                               | Wave 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Regional Survey  
                               | Evaluation of the Community Facilitator Program 2004  
                               | Board meeting minutes  
                               | Executive Team meeting minutes  
                               | Corporate Documents  
                               | Glenelg Hopkins Corporate Plan 2006 - 2013/2018  
                               | Glenelg Hopkins CMA Business Plan 2012-2013  
                               | Statement of Obligations - CaLP Act 1994  
                               | Statement of Obligations - Water Act 1989  
                               | Annual Reports  
                               | Annual Report 2013-2014  
                               | Annual Report 2012-2013  
                               | Annual Report 2011-2012  
                               | Annual Report 2010-2011  
                               | Annual Report 2009-2010  
                               | Annual Report 2008-2009  
                               | Annual Report 2007-2008  
                               | Annual Report 2006-2007  
                               | Regional Catchment Strategies  
                               | Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2019  
                               | Draft Regional Catchment Strategy 2012  
                               | Regional Catchment Strategy 2003-2007  
                               | Reports  
                               | Victorian CMAs Actions and Achievements 2013-14  

| **Review of 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response - Comrie Review** |  |
| Dec 2011 |  |
| Victorian Government Response to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee Enquiry into Flood Mitigation October 2013 |  |
| **Presentations** |  |
| Sustainable Agriculture Review Group, Glenelg Hopkins CMA |  |
| Regional Catchment Investment Plan presentation, December 2010. |  |
| Delivering on-ground works in partnership with landholders, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Regional Catchment Investment Plan presentation 2008. |  |
| Communities Program: Regional Capacity Building Including Regional Communications, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Regional Catchment Investment Plan presentation 2007. |  |
| **Media, newsletters, references and brochures** |  |
| RCIP Updates newsletter Issues. 1,2,3 & 4 2005-2006 |  |
| Promoting Partnership Projects 2012 |  |
| Dryland Salinity on the Basalt Plains |  |
| Wildlife Guide for Landholders |  |
| Glenelg Hopkins CMA Revegetation Standards 2010 |  |
| Celebrating 10 Years of CMAs |  |
| **Federal government** |  |
| A National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality |  |
| Natural Heritage Trust Annual Report 2007-2008 |  |
| Caring for our Country Business Plan 2009-2010 |  |
| Caring for our Country Report Card 2008-2009 |  |
| Caring for our Country Business Plan 2010-2011 |  |
| Caring for our Country Report Card 2009-2010 |  |
| Caring for our Country Business Plan 2011-2012 |  |
| Caring for our Country Report Card 2010-2011 |  |
| Caring for our Country Review: the story so far |  |
| Caring for our Country an outline for the future 2013-2018 |  |
| **State government** |  |
| The Health of Our Catchment Victorian Report Card 2002 |  |
| Catchment Condition Report 2007 |  |
| Green Paper on the Environment |  |
| Securing Our National Future: a White Paper for Land and Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Regional briefing 18 January 2010 |  |
| Civil society | Submissions to the following inquiries:  
Commonwealth of Australia, Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy, Submissions received as standard form letters, including form letters with additional individual comments. Tabled 15 June 2009  
Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, Inquiry into Sustainable Development of Agribusiness in Outer Suburban Melbourne, No 306 of Session 2006-10, Tabled May 2010  
| Landcare Australia Limited | Website  
National Landcare Magazine |
| **Non-Government Organisations** | Communiqués to Glenelg Hopkins CMA  
Annual reports  
Strategies  
Meeting minutes  
Websites  
Habitat 121.  
Trust For Nature.  
Greening Australia.  
South West Sustainability Partnership.  
Waterwatch Victoria  
South West Climate Change Forum.  
Wentworth Group of Scientists. |
| **Government Organisations** | Communiqués to Glenelg Hopkins CMA  
Annual reports  
Strategies  
Environment Australia.  
Murray-Darling Basin |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission.</th>
<th>Meeting minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Land And Water Resources Audit Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Victoria</td>
<td>Websites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.2 Letter: 1 Glenelg Hopkins CMA approval

1 October 2008

[Address]

Dear [Name],

Re: Glenelg Hopkins CMA support of PhD research

I wish to advise the Design and Social Context Human Research Ethics Subcommittee that Glenelg Hopkins CMA fully supports the workplace based PhD research project: A discourse analysis of civil society, regional agency and government relationships in regional natural resource management.

The researcher, Mary Johnson, CMA Strategic Partnerships Manager, works in the areas of strategic partnerships and investment. This research will contribute to a greater understanding of CMA relationships with both government and community.

The research will identify and explain the opportunities and barriers, and strategies used by government, regional agency and community for achieving their respective goals which will also provide a greater understanding of how communities and government can work toward better natural resource management outcomes.

This will benefit not only the CMA and government but potentially support development and understanding with landholders in the region.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Peter Butcher
CEO

www.glenelg-hopkins.vic.gov.au
29 August 2012

Ms Mary Johnson

Dear Mary,

**Freedom of Information Request**

Having further considered your FOI request I have deemed it appropriate to waive the FOI process in honour of the original agreements held with previous CEO’s of Glenelg Hopkins CMA and thus allow you access the CMA’s archives in support of ongoing research between State and Federal Governments and regional agencies and the aforementioned with civil society in natural resource management.

As advised in your letter, it is agreed that only you may access the CMA’s archives, that such information will be treated in confidence and that individuals will not be personally identified in any published works or presented research findings.

I ask that you contact [Redacted] our Administration, Records & Facilities Supervisor to arrange access to the archives at a mutually convenient time.

I wish you well with your research and look forward to the CMA receiving a copy of your published findings.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Wood
11.4 Letter of Consent

Dear

I am undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy at RMIT University. The title of my research is: A discourse analysis of civil society, regional agency and government relationships in regional natural resource management. My PhD supervisor is Professor John Fior, RMIT University.

The research explores the relationships between State and Federal governments and regional agencies and between such agencies and civil society in natural resource management.

The research will also:

1. Identify the perceptions/experiences of regional NRM across different levels of policy making as it pertains to the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and region.
2. Identify and explain the opportunities and barriers, and strategies used by government, regional agency and community for achieving their goals.
3. Identify appropriate NRM policy processes for successful collaboration and success of regional NRM.

The research will be conducted through a case study of the development of a Regional Catchment Investment Plan by the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Victoria.

A number of people involved in the delivery of natural resource management will be interviewed and you have been approached because of your involvement in Glenelg Hopkins CMA activities. The interview takes approximately one hour and focus on these activities and your relationship with the CMA. Sample questions have been provided with this letter.

Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer particular questions and are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. All interviewees will be assigned a pseudonym and will be identified only in relation to the organisation they represent. You may request a copy of the information you have provided.

The information collected will be retained for a period of 5 years. Records will be held on the hard disk of a password protected computer and in locked filing cabinets within a locked office at RMIT, Hamilton Centre. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to this information.

After 5 years, all electronic and paper based records containing information about the identity of informants will be erased from files and paper documents will be shredded.

Results from the research will be published in a thesis, academic journals, and conference presentation and associated press releases. No individuals will be personally identified in presentations or publications of the research findings. However while every effort will be made to protect anonymity, there is a risk that because of a small sampling or restricted sample group you may be identified.
I will contact you shortly to organise an appropriate interview time and place. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

Mary Johnson