The WA Forest Conflict: The Construction of the Political Effectiveness of Advocacy Organisations

David Worth

Ian Marsh contends that in Australia ‘every major addition to the political agenda in the past decade was originally championed by an issue movement’.1 Such a statement is heartening to those involved in ‘issues’ campaigning today. However, struggling as an activist in peace and environment organisations throughout the 1980s, I often questioned how effective we were in achieving our aims. My interest in non-profit organisations (NPOs)2 and their effectiveness grew from these years of working for social change in various Australian advocacy organisations.3 These organisations belonged to a sub-sector of non-profit organisations demanding changes in or by government,4 and were part of broader social movements.5 Marsh’s statement reveals the importance of studying social movements in an Australian setting. Similarly, Considine6 identified the importance of researching environment policy-making in an Australian State government context, as he found that this policy area was the only one where a clear majority of the new policy issues were sponsored by non-government organisations as opposed to other policy stakeholders, such as the business sector.

This paper will discuss why two Western Australian NPOs on opposite sides of the logging debate continue to contest the policy issues after thirty years.7 Implicit in this research focus is an understanding that other major Australian environmental debates were concluded well before this period.8 Why does the native forest debate remain unresolved? Surely, if either of these two organisations had been ‘effective’ in their actions over the past thirty years, then their policy proposals would have ‘triumphed’ over those of their ‘countermovement’.9 This research project aims to gain an understanding of how Australian advocacy organisations are constructed as ‘effective’ by internal or external stakeholders.10 In particular, this paper reports on the usefulness of a theoretical approach from political science, Paul Schumaker’s model of the political effectiveness of organisations.11

The broader research underlying this study is based on three sets of data. The first is a three-year (1998–2000) media analysis of the local newspaper of record, the *West Australian*, the *Sunday Times* and the national daily, the *Australian*. These dates encompass the release of the *Regional Forest Agreement* (RFA) by the Court Liberal Government and the election of the Gallop Labor Government in February 2001. Both pro- and anti-logging groups were unhappy with the Court Government’s attempts to find a middle road in native forest logging policy. In contrast, the ALP promised to stop logging in ninety-nine per cent of old-growth native forests if elected. The ALP won power and swiftly moved to stop the logging of old growth native forests.12 The second input was a study of historical material reaching back to the commencement of logging in Western Australia in
1840. These documents included the analysis of three Royal Commissions into logging and forestry issues in Western Australia. Finally, thirty interviews were conducted with a range of internal and external stakeholders of two organisations: Liberals for Forests (LFF), who were campaigning for the cessation of logging in native forests in WA; and Timber Communities Australia (TCA), who represent the interests of the WA forest industries and their member organisations. These two organisations are counter-movements, or NPOs with diametrically opposite views as to how native forests should be managed in Western Australia. The interviews were conducted with policy network members identified from the newspaper analysis and a focus group of tertiary environmental studies students. The interview questions were a mix of open-ended and closed questions. Schumaker’s framework was described to the interviewees, who were then asked to rate the political effectiveness of the two organisations being studied — TCA and LFF.

This article will begin with an outline of the difficulties of assessing NPOs. A brief history of the forest conflict (as addressed by the Western Australian government) will be given, followed by a description of the RFA, the most recent and most public battle of the forest lobbyists. Newspaper accounts of the RFA process will be surveyed and, finally, the assessments of members of the TCA and LFF will be analysed and compared with the assessments of external stakeholders.

Advocacy organisations: the problems of analysis

In his seminal work, Rudolf Heberle stressed that the main criterion of a social movement was that it aimed to bring about ‘fundamental changes in the social order’. Individual advocacy organisations that are part of important social movements range from those that seek revolutionary change to those with small but concrete goals (for example, an organisation campaigning for women’s refuges as part of the broader women’s movement). The definition of an advocacy organisation used in this research is an amended version of Craig Jenkins’s widely cited definition: ‘An advocacy organisation is one that attempts to influence the social and political decisions of an institutional elite, the outcomes of which benefit a broader range of society than just its own members’.

Australian advocacy organisations are part of a broad non-profit sector that ranges from voluntary groups to hospitals and universities, from sports clubs to unions and political parties. Mark Lyons estimates that in 1991 there were approximately 110,000 NPOs in Australia. The vast scope of the Australian non-profit sector is revealed by Lyons and Hocking’s estimation that during the period 1995–1996 NPOs spent between 27 billion and 43 billion Australian dollars. Lyons indicates that approximately 47,000 people are employed in the ‘interest group’ (or advocacy organisations) sub-sector alone, and these organisations spent about three billion dollars during 1995–1996. Many of these groups are small and rely on volunteers to operate. Lyons and Hocking estimate that Australians over the age of fifteen volunteered approximately twenty million hours to these advocacy organisations. This is equivalent to about one-tenth of the Australian public volunteering one hour per month to advocacy groups.

Despite significant activity aimed at changing important aspects of Australia’s political and social landscape, there has been little research undertaken as to the
effectiveness of Australian advocacy organisations. A comparable research gap was identified by Jo Freeman in her study of the North American feminist movement. She comments, ‘The study of social movements and that of public policy are two fields that have heretofore been treated primarily as distinct and unrelated areas in the scholarly literature’.23 This study hopes to draw these two separate fields together, but first, the concept of ‘effectiveness’ must be explored further.

Effectiveness is one of the strongest and most persistent themes in the literature on organisations. Most theories of organisations introduce effectiveness considerations, and many research reports comparing organisations claim to speak to effectiveness issues. Despite the considerable activity, there is little evidence of any cumulation of knowledge concerning the relationship of organisational characteristics to effectiveness.24

The task of determining the effectiveness of social advocacy organisations is complicated by the research methods used to assess for-profit organisations. The for-profit sector has a number of agreed methodologies for determining the efficiency and effectiveness of individual businesses. For example, the stock exchange provides an immediate and public indication of how the market believes listed companies are performing. The price at which investors are willing to invest in a particular company provides its board and management with immediate feedback on how effective they are perceived to be by critical stakeholders. For some non-profit organisations in sectors with for-profit counterparts (for example, hospitals) there are effectiveness indicators that are used in both sectors and are reasonably easy to calculate (for example, bed usage rates).25 However, for advocacy organisations, the question of organisational and management effectiveness is very difficult to assess, as their main goal is to assist in changing a societal value or governmental policy. Even if the goal is achieved, it may be difficult to link the particular actions and strategies of an individual advocacy organisation with any subsequent policy shift. With regard to advocacy organisations, William Gamson warns that ‘there is no more ticklish issue in studying social protest than deciding what constitutes success’.26 Many of the past and present theories of organisations speak to and of effectiveness — the central (and contested) dimension of this research project. To propose a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of specific social advocacy organisations, it is helpful to describe how the understanding of ‘effectiveness’ has changed over the past five decades.

The goal-attainment approach was an early model of assessment. Robert Thorndike was one of the first authors to note a general trend among organisational researchers to measure effectiveness, especially in terms of the accomplishment of some ultimate criterion or goal.27 Chester Barnard carefully distinguished effectiveness from efficiency and proposed one of the earliest and most general definitions of organisational effectiveness as ‘the ability of an organisation to bring about some objective state of affairs’.28 John Campbell refines this definition slightly further by defining organisational effectiveness as ‘the degree to which the task objectives (or goals) judged to be “ends” should be accomplished, given the prevailing conditions in which the organisation must work’.29 James Price, on the other hand, states bluntly that ‘effectiveness is
defined as the degree of goal-achievement’. While goal attainment was the major measure of effectiveness in these early studies, later writers questioned ‘whose goals’ were being achieved. Such interrogation reflects the evidence gathered between 1950 and 1970 on research into organisational effectiveness and goal attainment. This body of research found that within organisations there was a lack of agreement in relation to understandings of the organisation’s actual goals. Stephen Robbins questioned whether studies should focus on the organisation’s officially stated goals, the actual or operative goals, or the informal goals uncovered by research. Michael Hannan and John Freeman tried to resolve this complexity by arguing that survival is the organisation’s most critical goal. Weick suggests the closely related concept of adaptability as the critical organisational characteristic or goal. These conflicting and inconclusive positions present significant theoretical problems for those evaluating the work of advocacy organisations. All advocacy organisations have stated, overarching goals, but may also be trying to achieve some other short- or medium-term goal within their political environment. For example, the National Roads and Motorists’ Association (NRMA), based in New South Wales, is a NPO that was established to provide motoring assistance to its members; however, it has recently been advocating environmental programs to reduce air pollution in Sydney. Some advocacy organisations may have what could be termed ‘impossible goals’ (such as preventing global warming or achieving global nuclear disarmament) that would make the evaluation of their effectiveness difficult over the short or medium term.

In response to the difficulty of clearly defining effectiveness in terms of goal achievement or a single unique criterion, researchers then proposed an alternative organisational effectiveness model based on defining an organisation as an open system. Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum proposed the ‘systems approach’ as early as 1957, but it was not widely adopted until the goal-attainment model was shown to be of limited theoretical usefulness. They believed that focusing on univariate measures was inconsistent with the broad meaning attached to effectiveness in the research literature. Another early convert to this new approach was Amitai Etzioni, who also criticised the then-prevailing goal-centred approach. His systems view emphasises that the factors likely to increase the long-term success of an organisation are its ability to acquire resources and maintain itself as an on-going organism, as well as its ability to attain its goals successfully. Organisations are seen as sub-units of the enveloping business or policy environment, and need to draw essential resources from this environment to survive and prosper. This approach is also known in the non-profit research sector as the ‘resource mobilisation’ theory.

The latest insight in ‘the grail-like search for a unified framework’ was provided by Terry Connolly et al., who argue that the answer to the question of how well an organisation is performing is inevitably contingent on whom one is asking. They propose that effectiveness is a multi-constituency social construction, and that the goal and system approaches are only partial insights into organisational effectiveness. Robbins identifies a more recent refinement of this approach as the ‘strategic constituencies model’. These are the constituencies or stakeholders in the organisation’s environment that are critical to its survival.
an advocacy organisation, these constituencies could be seen as the political ‘elite’ within their chosen sphere of activity. This social construct approach was extended by Raymond Zammuto’s proposal that there are multiple constituency models of effectiveness with both direct and indirect constituencies that need to be considered. In this research project, the direct or strategic external constituencies of advocacy organisations within the political environment in which they operate would seem to be members of a policy network that includes the media, academics, bureaucrats, politicians and the business sector.

Finally, it is important to understand the insight provided by Alberto Melucci that, while advocacy organisations are engaged politically with the ‘elite’ and powerful bureaucracies, they are also creating new cultural values within the general population. This could lead to differing views of the effectiveness of an advocacy organisation by members of the elite, supporters and the wider public.

The work of Schumaker is helpful in defining a clear approach to studying how an advocacy organisation could be assessed for its policy success in the macro political environment (or, in the terms of this article, effectiveness as a social construct). He contends that policy-making success can be defined in terms of the political system’s responsiveness to an advocacy organisation. Schumaker presents five incremental stages of responsiveness:

1) access responsiveness, or the willingness of a government to hear the NPO’s concerns;
2) agenda responsiveness, or the willingness of a government to place the NPO’s concerns on the policy agenda;
3) policy responsiveness, or the willingness of a government to adopt the NPO’s concerns;
4) output responsiveness, or the willingness of a government to implement the NPO’s concerns; and
5) impact responsiveness, or the degree that the actions of the government succeed in alleviating the grievances of the NPO.

Level one of Schumaker’s model provides the NPO with basic access to the government process, while level five sees the government implementing their proposed policies or programs. These new policies or programs are seen as having a positive impact on the issue on which the NPO is campaigning.

The beginnings of conflict: Royal Commissions

The first Royal Commission into the WA forests was in 1903 and it was established after eight timber companies came together to form ‘The Combine’. This new company had a virtual monopoly on timber exports and the growing local market. A number of small timber companies had campaigned against The Combine in 1902, after the Lands Department refused to grant them timber leases, depriving the smaller companies of forest areas to cut for local timber needs. In its first progress report (1903), the Commission recommended to the Governor that the Forest Department be reorganised and managed by an Inspector General with suitable experience and scientific training in forestry. This Commission found that about forty-three per cent of the timber cut from trees for the purpose of hewing railway sleepers in the forest was wasted. One of the Commission’s statements on the logging practices of the day resonates one hundred years later...
and uses language similar to that used by the anti-logging groups at the end of the twentieth century:

State acquiescence in the destruction of good timber only because the trade demands it, is a crime against coming generations; and any attempts to increase the export in the interest of foreign companies, or with the object of inducing more men to join in timber getting at the expense of posterity, needs wise resistance …

The 1922 Royal Commission was established because of conflict between the Forest Department (and the Conservator Lane Poole, in particular) and the timber industry represented by the larger companies. These companies (such as Bunnings, Millars, Whittakers) had great political power and actively lobbied parliamentarians for better timber leases and lower royalties. In a letter to a former Australian Governor General, Poole wrote of his constant battles with the timber industry ‘Their [Millars’] influence is so great that they have always been able to dictate the Forest policy to the Government of the day’. In many ways the core findings of this Royal Commission closely reflected those of the earlier one. In regard to timber royalties (an issue that reverberates throughout the history of the debate on forests in WA) the Commission reported that ‘the price charged is a very low one; compared to the charges in the Eastern States it is much too low’. It sheets the blame for this situation directly home to the political power of the timber industry, and in particular one company. ‘The stumbling-block to the fixing of an equitable price is Millars’ Timber and Trading Co, Ltd, which, owing to its favourable position, makes it almost impossible to fix a really just price’. The report of the 1922 Royal Commission is the first time that the previous view of the forests as ‘limitless’ had been officially challenged and brought to light a warning made nine years earlier by the Acting Inspector General of Forests, C Richardson:

Western Australia has now arrived at the stage when it is sheer folly to sacrifice the forests of the State even in the interests of land settlement, and it is to be hoped that in the future a more vigorous policy of reserving permanently large areas of forest country will be possible. The people of today hold the forests in trust for the generations to come after them, and if we are to profit by the lessons of the past, it is for us to look beyond the present to the future.

The Government’s next attempt to break the WA timber companies’ stranglehold on the industry precipitated the 1950 Royal Commission on Forestry. The decision in 1950 by the Forest Minister Gerry Wild to tender 33,000 ha of new jarrah forests to the Kauri Timber Co (a New Zealand-based company) seemed to be aimed at undermining the power of the local timber companies, who he said in colourful language ‘have not played the game by the people of the State and the industry and had the Government by the short hair’. After the lobbying of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition by five WA-owned timber companies, Bunnings in particular, a Parliamentary Select Committee recommended the establishment of a Royal Commission into every phase of the forest industry in WA. In a wide-ranging inquiry, the Commissioner, Mr Rodger, spent considerable time questioning the Conservator of Forests, Mr Stoate, about wastage in the milling process. His question ‘You know that some people maintain that sawmilling is an antiquated, cumbersome and wasteful method of converting forest products to human use?’ foreshadows the arguments to be used twenty
years later by many groups opposing the logging of WA’s old growth forests. These Royal Commissions raised a number of important concerns in the way in which the WA’s native forests were being logged, but environment organisations required broader changes in public attitudes to occur before they could be successful in changing WA’s forest policy.

The RFA Process

The Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), developed in WA by the Court Government during the period 1997–2000, is at the centre of this research. It is part of a national forest policy prepared under the aegis of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). This national policy was one of the recommendations of an extensive inquiry undertaken by the Resource Assessment Commission in 1991 to identify and evaluate the options for the use of Australia’s forest and timber resources, with a particular focus on ensuring a permanent forest estate in Australia. The National Forest Policy Agreement was signed by all State Governments (with the exception of Tasmania) in December 1992. The RFA process required State agencies to prepare comprehensive management plans identifying the remaining areas of old growth forests and mapping the full range of values contained in these forests. The process was undertaken in different ways in different states and in WA had been commenced by the Lawrence Labor Government in 1993. Its conclusion in 1999 was seen as a major factor in media reporting of forest issues in that year and the public activities of both anti- and pro-logging social movement organisations.

The battle for the forests: Newspaper Analysis

The analysis of the newspaper articles studied for the years 1998–2000 indicated that the reporting of forest issues in Western Australia was an overwhelmingly local issue; few articles were published in the national paper, the Australian, except during 1999 when the RFA was announced and later revised (see Table One). This information clearly shows that 1999 was a key year for debate on forest issues in WA as there were nearly four times as many articles published during this year than in the other two years. The proposed RFA was quickly amended in mid-1999 and some important changes to the policy positions of some of the political party stakeholders also took place. The articles carried by the West Australian on forests in this period were the main channel for news and opinion for the WA public; articles in the West Australian, WA’s sole daily newspaper, amounted to approximately ninety per cent of the newspaper coverage received by the forest debate.

Table 1: The number of articles published by each newspaper on forest issues, 1998-2000

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<th>Paper</th>
<th>1998</th>
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<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>141</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>168</td>
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There were no editorials about forest issues in any of the newspapers during 2000 and for most of 1998, but during the twelve months between November 1998 and November 1999 there were twenty — a rate of nearly one per fortnight. During 1998–2000, the *Australian* published one editorial, the *Sunday Times* six and the *West Australian* thirteen. Of interest is that the *Sunday Times* published only four per cent of the forest articles in 1998–2000 but thirty per cent of the editorials, indicating a greater editorial interest in this policy debate than the other two papers. The analysis of the newspaper articles also helped identify that there were times during the three years that media coverage increased around specific events. Three specific events were identified that had a significant impact on the number of articles published and on the overall direction of the forest debate in Western Australia.

The Mick Malthouse ‘affair’ completely changed the tenor of the debate on WA’s forest policy by WA newspapers. On 4 June 1998 a large colour photo of Malthouse (the coach of the West Coast Eagles — the first WA team in the national AFL competition) beside a large karri stump appeared on the front page of the *West Australian* with a story announcing his opposition to the logging of old growth forests in Western Australia. His intervention in the debate in opposition to the logging of old-growth forests led in the next few days to a large number of highly emotive letters-to-the-editor from those in favour and opposed to his intervention into the forest debate. The power of this personal intervention into the forest debate is reflected in comments made by a timber union organiser, on its impact on the policies of the WA Premier, Richard Court:

... and the other person who was in my judgement hugely influential was Mick Malthouse. Now when Richard Court did his [RFA] back flip on the karri, Tim Daly [AWU Branch Secretary] and myself went and spoke to Richard Court ... And he [Richard Court] said, he had spoken to a number of people, but he continued to talk about his discussions with Mick Malthouse, so I believe that Richard Court was significantly influenced by one [emphasis in original] individual — Mick Malthouse.

Of greater significance than this personal intervention was that within four days of Malthouse’s public stance, the *West Australian* reported the formation of a new political force — the Liberals for the Forests (LFF). This report mentioned other prominent Western Australians opposed to logging who supported the new LFF: Liz Davenport (fashion industry), Dr Keith Woollard (heart surgeon) and Dame Rachel Cleland (described as the ‘matriach of the Liberal Party’). The article indicates that the public plea for the end of logging made by Malthouse was the spark that saw the establishment of the LFF.

Earlier, on 8 December 1998, the debate over forest policy had been disturbed by a front-page article in the *West Australian* reporting an Environment Protection Authority (EPA) review of the Department of Conservation and Land Management’s (CALM) compliance with its own logging regulations. The EPA’s report claimed that CALM was overcutting the native forests in the south west of Western Australia. An official from the timber industry peak body Forest Industry Federation of Western Australia is convinced that this intervention into the debate by the EPA was a key event in turning the public opinion against the
logging of old-growth forests, as it seemed to be associated with an anti-RFA focus within the articles published by the *West Australian*:

... one of the most damaging things that happened was the report the EPA put out which basically said the government was overcutting [the WA forests] … got the press going, the *West* particularly, and that led to a very sustained campaign by the *West* … they ran a campaign for four or five months on the RFA and it was significant in changing public perception …

The EPA report was also of importance in that it generated the first articles in the *West Australian* suggesting that the Liberal and Labor parties were lagging far behind public opinion on forest policy70 and that the 'campaign against logging is starting to look like an unstoppable force'.71 This first attack on CALM’s credibility was followed later in 1999 by an even more serious attack, initiated by CALM’s own scientific input to the RFA. One of the important claims by the central anti-logging stakeholders (eg LFF and the WA Forest Alliance) was that CALM could not be trusted to manage the RFA process in an even-handed and unbiased fashion. The EPA report in December 1998 was the first dent in CALM’s credibility as a manager of the RFA process and the forests from a policy ‘insider’, but an even more serious attack was generated by a report on the maps used by CALM in the RFA. These maps outlined the vegetation types in the south west and defined the limits of the proposed new forest areas to be protected from future logging. Two months after the Premier announced the RFA with new forest reserves, CALM had to admit that some of the maps it used during the RFA process were wrong and that a number of claimed forest reserves were in fact gravel pits, a rubbish tip, 7,000ha of cleared farm lands and coastal shrub regions.72 The article reporting these claims suggested that up to thirty per cent of the new RFA reserves were not, in fact, forests.73 Within two weeks of this controversy the Premier announced a revised RFA with lower logging limits,74 and within four months a new CALM CEO to replace Dr Syd Shea (who had been its Director for sixteen years) was announced.75

**Interview results: stakeholders’ perceptions of effectiveness**

Interviews were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders from the forest policy network. These stakeholders were questioned in relation to their evaluation of the two case study organisations using Schumaker’s five-level framework. The interviews produced three clear results. First, all interviewees found the framework easy to understand and helpful as a way of suggesting the organisational effectiveness. However, the Schumaker model was found to be a more useful framework for evaluating specific policy proposals, as opposed to an overall measure of the organisation’s efforts. This insight is exemplified by the comments of a TCA staff member:

I mean we did have a little success last week, for example, we put just over a particular local issue … we put to the Government that the town of Pemberton is likely to be a casualty after the year 2003 with the karri cut-back … after eighteen months nothing had happened with the promised plan for Pemberton … it was not
forthcoming. We put a four-point action plan to the Premier. Well, on that particular instance we are at level five, but overall … [interviewee trails off and indicates that they cannot determine the overall level of success].

The relationship between NPOs and government is not of a fixed nature, so resists a generalising assessment. The fact that many NPOs operate with a voluntary workforce adds to this instability — the goals of an organisation, the specific policy changes they advocate and their success in achieving government responsiveness to these aims are likely to change with the composition of their supporter base and with the activities of their opponents. In the assessment of campaigns, however, the Schumaker model can easily be applied to a short-term project with well-defined goals. As the above interview excerpt illustrates, the Schumaker model is ideal for the assessment of a NPO’s success in a specific campaign.

The second outcome of the interviews was that it was very difficult to elicit a rating or response for the political effectiveness of the TCA and LFF from the politicians questioned. They tended to talk around the issue rather than stating their view of the level of political influence of each group. This response was common across all political parties:

- Liberal Cabinet Minister: So you’d have to ask them, not me. From my point of view, one, there was always access, ready access.

- Labor Shadow Minister: It is a bit hard for me to know, if you know what I mean, because particularly with the TCA, I would really have little idea of what they have done.

- Greens Legislative Council Member: I think that they sort of changed over time, and that they … with TCA I think they have gone through an interesting thing too … all this is in flux, none of this is in a final state for us all to look back and say, well, this is how it all finished ….

By not answering the questions directly, the politicians avoided indicating what they considered to be successful tactics or strategies that needed improvement. It might be suspected that the politicians wanted to diminish the role of social advocacy or interest groups in forming policy. One may speculate that the interviewees did not wish their views to be made public, or that an admission of high-level influence would represent the parliament and political parties as being easily swayed by public opinion. Just such an assessment of the relationship between parliament and advocacy organisations has been proposed by Melucci. A similar finding has been made in recent research into the effectiveness of a South Australian service-based NPO reported by Talbot and Saj. They too found that stakeholders within the public service were unwilling to provide a judgement on the effectiveness and the tactics of non-profit organisations. Further research is needed on this interesting issue to understand whether these stakeholders decline to provide their judgements because they don’t wish to provide useful feedback to advocacy organisations; whether they wish to deny or prevent a formal role for NPOs as intermediaries between the public and parliament; or because they were unable to conceptualise the influence of the organisations in an objective way.

The most striking aspect of the results — and the outcome that has the most significant implications for the further study of social activism in Australia — is
the wide variation found in NPO members’ assessments of their own organisations. The results from these interviews using Schumaker’s framework confirm the assertion of Connolly et al. that an organisation’s effectiveness is constructed differently by different stakeholders in the policy network. A general tendency was for interviewees to minimise the impact their own organisation had made on the policy process, but to emphasise the impact of their opposing group. However, interviewees’ assessments of their own organisation varied widely. The following interview excerpts (three from each organisation) illustrate this variation:

LFF supporter: Certainly if you are looking at the influence that we had on government policy, while access [level one] certainly wasn’t a problem, anything past putting the forests on the policy agenda I’m afraid didn’t appear too successful.

LFF board member: Whether we just take Liberals for Forests as by itself or whether you include all the other green groups having forced the change in the RFA, I’d say somewhere between [level] three and four.

LFF worker: Well … yes, we have had access [level one], full stop. One, I guess, yes, it was on the agenda they made those minor changes to the RFA and minor changes to policy, so I guess … it went to number five, initially,xxix but since then nothing.

TCA supporter: Timber Communities of Australia would have to be at level one, now you say, a willingness of government to hear an organisation’s concerns ….

TCA supporter: So from our perspective I suppose … we even struggle to get access responsiveness [level one] …

TCA worker: I know, but it is difficult for me to say … we are not at five overall, ‘output responsiveness’ … well we are certainly at [level] two, we have got agenda responsiveness — to adopt the organisation’s concerns — well, you know, I’d put us at about two and a half, to be honest with you.

Those interviewed had worked closely with one another, and it might reasonably be expected that they would have held similar views as to how effectively they were influencing the forest policy process, yet this was not the case. The interviews were undertaken just before the State election, when this policy issue was receiving wide media coverage. Both the LFF and TCA were campaigning heavily, and those interviewed were working together on their organisation’s activities. The absence of a common or shared understanding of how well they and their opponents were doing is a great surprise. The following comments on opposition organisations suggest that members of each group believed that their competitor’s effectiveness was always greater than their own:

LFF supporter: I think they went right through to impact responsiveness [level five]

LFF worker: Oh, well they have had access, certainly been on the agenda, the government have listened to them, and I guess where we are now, the fact that they are still logging means that they’re still have an impact [level five].

TCA supporter: Oh yeah, the only thing is that I wouldn’t be prepared to say publicly what I know is going on behind the scenes, but you would have to say that they [LFF/Greens] have won every round and that at this stage the government is listening totally to them …
TCA supporter: The Liberals for Forests are right up to number five within a few months.

This outcome is somewhat predictable. The campaign on changing the forest policy in Western Australia had reached a point where many of the pro-logging stakeholders interviewed accepted that their campaign to retain the existing policy had ‘lost’. On the other hand, the government’s forest policy as outlined in the new RFA was still in place and CALM still had undisputed power to manage the forest as it saw fit. Neither faction achieved a clear victory. Also, at this time it looked as if the Liberal–National Party Coalition would retain government at the forthcoming election, as the ALP required a gain in seats that had never before been achieved. Therefore, the anti-logging stakeholders thought that while they may gain some cut backs in logging levels, the overall forest policy based on a ‘sustainable’ level of jarrah logging would continue post-election. Given this background, and the exhaustion of a lengthy campaign, it is not surprising to see both sides rate their opponents as more effective.

Other external stakeholders seem to have a range of views on each organisation’s level of effectiveness at impacting on policy:

Senior union official: [long pause] … I reckon they are both at two, both at two, I don’t think either of them has won resoundingly the higher level of responsiveness.


Businesswoman: Well, they have [both] probably gotten up to about level four — output responsiveness — or where the Government is willing enough to implement an organisation’s concerns — they have actually — whether it was a willingness or not, they have implemented or they have been aware that they need to implement an organisation’s concerns because they have made some changes.

Newspaper journalist: It is difficult to judge, I mean in some respects I think the impact responsiveness [level five] … it is at a stalemate position. I think they are fairly equally matched.

Table 2 Stakeholders’ judgements on organisational effectiveness

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<th>Average Effectiveness of the TCA</th>
<th>Average Effectiveness of the LFF</th>
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<td>LFF Stakeholders</td>
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Table Two outlines the different average values for organisational effectiveness for the two case study organisations as seen by the interviewees when they are grouped into three sub-groups: those working for LFF, those for TCA and other network stakeholders. It is likely that the external stakeholders’ assessments were shaped, first and foremost, by media coverage of the forest conflict. The external stakeholders assessed the access levels achieved by the competing organisations as being more equal than did the stakeholders of each group. This may be a reflection of even-handedness in media representations of the issues at stake,
despite, for example, the *West Australian*’s supposed ‘anti-RFA’ campaign. While how the media judges newsworthiness is not always clear, it would seem that there was a definite shift in reporting the forest conflict in mid-1999.

**Conclusion**

While the development of the timber industry was important for enabling the establishment and survival of the new Swan River colony, over the past century there has been a dramatic drop in the value of timber exports from the south west of Western Australia as new resource exports, such as iron ore, were developed. Similarly the family-owned timber companies disappeared with the last, Bunnings, bought out by Wesfarmers in the early 1990s. These changes have reduced the ability of timber industry stakeholders to influence the public debate on forest policy, particularly in the past thirty years as new industries (such wine and tourism) have flourished in the south west of Western Australia. The growth of these new industries has been associated with a dramatic public shift in attitude to the utility of timber.

In a national poll conducted during its 1991 inquiry into the Australian forest industry, the Resource Assessment Commission found that the majority of Australians were in favour of the halting of logging in National Estate forests, even if it caused economic hardship. In Western Australia, old-growth native forests are now seen to have greater value if left uncut and in their natural state. These new attitudes are seen to have had precursors in some of the comments made during the three Royal Commissions into the timber industry. The debate between the pro- and anti-logging movements was at its greatest during 1999 when a new RFA was announced and then quickly amended by the Court Government. This debate was given increased momentum and prominence by local newspaper coverage. The media, particularly the *West Australian*, shaped public perceptions of the forest debate and helped to create the social groundswell necessary for the social movement organisations to gain higher levels of responsiveness from government.

Interviews undertaken with key forest policy stakeholders at the time of the RFA have yielded some important but inconclusive results in terms of analysing the organisational effectiveness of advocacy organisations. The outcomes of the use of Schumaker’s framework in analysis by social movement organisation stakeholders confirm the approach of Connolly *et al.* — that there is no one common construction of the organisational or political effectiveness of social advocacy organisations. Schumaker’s framework has proven to be a useful one for exploring the impact on the policy process of the two organisations being studied. Its usefulness is much greater, however, if the model is used to analyse the impact of individual policy proposals rather than as a way of assessing the overall effectiveness of the organisation. An important factor arising from this research was the problem of stakeholders trying to identify an influence order (or causality) in the effectiveness or impact of the organisation’s policy proposals being studied. Another difficulty raised by interviewees is one that follows the suggestion of Joseph Banks: that the efforts of advocacy organisations may be historically specific. This is similar to an earlier suggestion from Heberle, that these groups are driven by the ‘problem of political generations’. These authors argue that the
construction of effectiveness in a particular organisation differs over time and with the values of the enveloping popular and political cultures. Further exploration of perceptions of effectiveness would be assisted by a longitudinal study in addition to a cross-sectional one as used in this project. A far harder issue is a sentiment echoed by a number of the interviewees in their discussions of the native forest logging issue and their perceptions of organisational effectiveness: George Marcus’s premise that ‘human endeavours may well be governed more by emotional processes than by rational or cognitive processes’.
Notes to pp 76–83

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David Worth

2 Non-profit organisations are allowed to make surpluses, but the key distinction between them and public companies is that no surpluses are allowed to be distributed to their members or staff. See Mark Lyons, *Third Sector*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2001, p 5.
3 US and European literature use the term social movement organisation (SMO) in the same sense as I use advocacy organisation.
5 As an example, the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) is a NPO and part of the broader Australian women’s movement.


14 The names of the interviewees have been removed for this article although they will be included in the final thesis.


22 Lyons and Hocking, op. cit., p 4.


26 Gamson, op. cit., p 248.


Notes to pp 86–89

35 Gamson's study followed his fifty-three organisations over the incredible time period of 1800 to 1945. Gamson, op. cit., p v.
40 Goodman and Pennings, op. cit., p 163.
42 ibid., p 214.
46 It is possible that these external stakeholders may have a collection of other ad hoc measures that they have internalised over time. Peter Drucker utilises such a list of process-type measures when he names the Salvation Army as ‘by far the most effective [non-profit] organisation in the US’. His principal criteria are: clarity of mission, innovative ability, clear definition of results and willingness to measure performance. Peter Drucker, ‘Peter Drucker’s Picks’, *Forbes*, vol 160, no 3, August 11, 1997, p 97.
48 Schumaker, op. cit.
49 ibid.
50 Mills, op. cit., p 33.
51 Royal Commission, op. cit., 1903, p10.
52 ibid., p iv.
53 Mills, op. cit., p 69.
54 Royal Commission, op. cit., 1922, p 16.
55 Royal Commission, op. cit., 1903, p 18.
56 This successful tender by the Kauri Timber Co was won with the assistance of their auditor Charles Court (later Sir Charles and State Liberal Premier from 1974–82).
58 ibid, pp 161–62.
59 ibid, p 165.
61 ibid p 19.
63 For example, the ALP moved to a position of opposing the logging of old growth forests at its May 1999 State Conference: Anne Burns, ‘CALM Admits RFA Error’, *West Australian*, 14 July 1999, p 7.
64 1998–1999 Newspaper editorials on forest issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>29 November</td>
<td>Cutting down our heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>Judicial inquiry into CALM needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1999</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>Political pain forces Court’s hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>Tuckey’s tactics are out of order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>21 March</td>
<td>Gallop talks sense in forest row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>5 May</td>
<td>Premier’s challenge is to sell RFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>9 June</td>
<td>Police must be seen as non-partisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>No public good in trivial charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>Court must heed alert on forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>27 June</td>
<td>End the killing of our rare forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>17 July</td>
<td>Court must take over forest issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>18 July</td>
<td>Forest fiasco gets worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>28 July</td>
<td>Court stranded on forest policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>29 July</td>
<td>Salinity the real crisis in the bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>1 August</td>
<td>Court reaps a bitter harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>Timber row erodes Court poll hopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>5 August</td>
<td>Timber deals must be questioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>8 August</td>
<td>Forests row reaches flashpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>Many hands primed forest violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>27 November</td>
<td>Changing times seal Shea’s fate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65 Mr Malthouse ad taken the Eagles to the AFL finals in all of his years coaching them, including winning 2 Grand Finals in 1992 and 1994. He was seen as a hero in WA for this and he was also seen by many as above politics.


67 Interview conducted as part of research study.


76 The evasiveness may also have been due to worries about the confidentiality of their comments. The Liberal politician refused to sign the standard university ethics clearance before the interview and only agreed to complete it at the conclusion of the interview.

77 Melucci, op. cit.


79 This refers to the Court Government’s backdown on its original RFA proposal within twelve weeks of releasing it.


82 Heberle, op. cit., p 118.