

**Power, policy and remote citizen activism:  
a case study of the  
Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy**

PhD thesis submitted by

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## Acronyms List

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
EDA	Economic Development Agencies
CWQ	Central Western Queensland
DDT	Deliberative Democracy Theory
DERM	Department of Environment and Resource Management
DCQ	Desert Channels Queensland
ESD	Ecological Sustainable Development
HPA	High Preservation Area
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
LEB WR	Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers
LEBWRAP	Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel
LNP	Liberal National Party
NFF	National Farmers Federation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
QCL	Queensland Country Life
QRWN	Queensland Rural Women's Network
RAPAD	Remote Area Planning and Development Board
ROC	Regional Organisation of Councils
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
TWS	The Wilderness Society

## **Timeline - Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers**

**2005** The Wild Rivers Act enacted to support the preservation of rivers that are in a natural or near-natural condition and to preserve the natural values of the Lake Eyre Basin.

**2009 (March)** Conservation groups including The Wilderness Society and the Western Rivers Alliance launched a campaign to protect the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers through Wild Rivers policy.

**2009 (March)** Bligh Labor Government responds to the Western Rivers Alliance, promising to extend the Wild Rivers initiative to the Georgina, Diamantina and Cooper Creek Basins if re-elected.

**2009 (March)** Bligh Labor Government re-elected.

**2009** The Department of Environment and Resource Management held information and consultation meetings in the region to discuss wild river issues for the Lake Eyre Basin.

**2009 (July)** First Wild Rivers stakeholder forum held in Longreach by RAPAD.

**2010 (Feb)** Tony Abbott introduces the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 into the House of Representatives.

**2010 (March)** The Wild Rivers Lake Eyre Basin Policy Consultation Paper was released.

**2010 (May)** Second RAPAD Wild Rivers forum held in Longreach. Communique sent to the Minister following the forum.

**2010 (May)** RAPAD/AgForce joint submission sent to the Queensland Government on Wild Rivers.

**2010 (Oct)** Queensland Government introduces the *Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010*, which includes a series of amendments to incorporate the Lake Eyre Basin river systems, and clarify a number of other issues.

**2010 (Nov)** Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 is passed in the Queensland Parliament, allowing the Government to proceed with Wild River nominations for the Lake Eyre Basin river systems.

**2010 (Dec)** Draft Cooper Creek Wild River proposal released for public consultation, with submissions due by the end of April 2011.

**2010 (Dec)** A moratorium on mining, clearing of native vegetation, and water-related development, took effect for the proposed wild river area on 17 December 2010.

**2011 (June)** Date for submissions now closed - a total 47 submissions were received by the department.

**2011** Cooper Creek, Georgina and Diamantina Rivers were declared Wild Rivers.

**2013 (Dec)** The Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers declarations under the new Queensland Government replaced by an alternative management strategy to protect the rivers while allowing sustainable development to proceed.

## Abstract

This PhD research examines what influence women and men in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) have on natural resource management policy that significantly impacts on their lives and livelihoods. It uses the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy development and deliberations as a case study focusing in particular on the period from 2009–2011. Sociological research in remote Australia is rare, especially research conducted by a long-term community based insider researcher.

Some organisations and individuals expend a substantial amount of time and money to influence government policy from remote areas, with varied success. This case study provides evidence of policy being shaped by remote citizens despite widely disparate views being held by participants and a perception that Wild Rivers policy was imposed on them.

The topic is explored using a critical theory approach drawing on Lukes structural theories of power. Gender and intersectionality are also used to frame the research as are the concepts of Deliberative Democracy and Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD). Geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity are specifically examined as potential sites of marginalisation. Methods included the use of semi-structured interviews with activists and a media content analysis.

While resistance was evident, many of those trying to influence policy were engaged in activism. The terms 'remote' and 'activist' have almost been mutually exclusive. However while some dominant sectors had the power to influence policy this was not the domain of any one organisation throughout the policy development period. While it was largely urban based conservation advocacy groups that ensured that the Wild Rivers policy was on the government agenda initially, of necessity their representatives collaborated with diverse stakeholders in remote based deliberative forums to shape the policy. Through this process, other sectors also had influence (in particular agriculture and local government). Some sectors such as mining lobbied government more actively outside regional deliberative forums.

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) were influential in the process, using a power-to mechanism to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, to deliberate on policy before official regional government consultation. This strategy, as well as negotiation between forums and meetings, proved useful to shape the emerging policy despite the fact that some sectors were more dominant at times and others such as women and Indigenous people were marginalised.

There are major barriers for remote area activists which need to be recognised by governments. First and foremost is the cost of travel across vast distances. Other significant barriers include volunteer burnout, cultural barriers, seasonal climatic and geographic constraints and limits on internet connectivity.

The marginalisation of female voices was very evident in the lack of women participating in regional deliberative forums and commenting on the policy via the media. Indigenous participants in this research, while initially excluded, felt they had been relatively well included in government and other consultative forums. Despite the considerable barriers and power imbalances remote citizens had influence as they re-shaped the existing Wild Rivers policy to fit the Lake Eyre Basin through collaboration, negotiation and the use of other activist tactics.

## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



## Acknowledgements

There are a number of people I wish to acknowledge at the completion of this five year PhD journey. While undertaking the PhD I have gone through some major life changes including moving from a remote sheep and cattle station after 30 years to coastal NSW, building our dream home on the coast – the first home we have owned completely on our own, changes to our family grazing partnership upon the death of one partner and re-establishing my consultancy business at a distance from my usual clients.

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I was fortunate to receive a 3.5 year scholarship from GLASS, without which I could not have completed my research as conducting research in a remote area, like activism, simply costs more for us than for our more centrally based colleagues.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Monash University Caulfield campus library staff. I received some excellent help from librarians supporting the Social Work Department (Penny Presta and others) well above and beyond the call of duty. As someone trained in teacher–librarianship I know that library staff are not always recognised for their work but provide fantastic assistance on various critical aspects of research.

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## SECTION A: RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### Chapter One: Policy, power and remote area activism

Rural and remote Australia is largely portrayed in academic literature as being in crisis or decline. The key factors creating this portrayal are declining population, declining services, youth out-migration, fluctuating commodity prices, globalisation, changing demographics of towns, agriculture declining in importance as a sector while others such as mining are increasing, lack of political representation and drought (Alston 2009; Alston & Kent 2004; 2006; Barr 2009; Bourke 2001; Brown 2010; Cheshire 2006; 2001; Fitzhardinge 2012; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Gray & Sinclair 2005; Herbert-Cheshire 2003; Higgins & Lockie 2001; Lockie 2001; Lockie & Bourke 2001; McManus et al. 2011; Measham et al. 2012; Measham et al. 2009; Plowman et al. 2003; Reeve 1991). While these factors continue to shape rural and remote Australia, the people who live in these vast areas have limited access to policy decision making that will influence and shape their futures. As a long-term resident of Central Western Queensland (CWQ) I witnessed many attempts by members of my community to influence policy from remote Australia. How this occurs and how power is manifested throughout these processes is central to this PhD research study. In this thesis I critically examine the following central research question: What influence do women and men in CWQ have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources? The Wild Rivers policy development and consultation process for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers (that is the Georgina, Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) from 2009 – 2011 is used as a case study. I specifically scrutinise those who may be marginalised in policy processes because of geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity.

#### Why this topic?

Remote areas are characterised by rugged terrain and sparsely settled population. Citizens in regions such as CWQ are geographically dispersed across large areas with a low population base – although telecommunications have assisted to some extent to overcome the *tyranny of distance*. As a resident of CWQ from 1982–2012 I witnessed quite dramatic decline in my community – the Morella district and the wider region. Morella is an agricultural area named for a railway siding about 70 kilometres north-west of Longreach. Dramatic changes are not confined to remote areas and have been highlighted in detail by others in key texts on rural decline (Barr 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Lockie & Bourke 2001). However in my community, decline has been manifest in many obvious ways over the last

30 years including: the closing of Morella as a railway siding – thereby losing first the stationmaster then the fettlers who had been based at the siding (and whose children attended the school); the demise of recreational community events run by Morella locals including the tennis club; the gymkhana and the gun club; and finally and most recently the closing in 2010 of the one teacher primary school (Evesham State School located on our property ‘Evesham’), a school our three children attended.

Over the years those owning agricultural properties in the Morella district followed nationwide trends and bought more property and / or managed resources more economically to remain sustainable, in other words ‘getting big or getting out’ (Lockie & Bourke 2001, p. 178). This trend in CWQ is also noted by Brown and Bellamy (2010) who contend that:

The region's population decline is mostly associated with the shift from sheep to cattle, consolidation of properties, and reduction in family-owned farms in favour of larger, export-oriented agribusiness-owned properties employing caretakers and contract workers. (Brown & Bellamy 2010, p. 158)

Increasing difficulties in sourcing labour, declining terms of trade within the wool industry plus an impending wild dog problem saw many graziers in the area convert from sheep (for wool and meat) to cattle in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Many continued to run a mix of livestock, as we did ourselves. At the same time agriculture has declined in importance to the nation's economy.

The economic importance of agriculture to the nation is now small. Gone are the days when the nation rode on the sheep's back and we in agriculture would do well to recognise the changes that have taken place over the last 30 years. (Fitzhardinge 2012, p. 37)

Nonetheless in CWQ agriculture is still economically the dominant industry (Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board November 2009) and therefore remains important to the region although this is changing rapidly with the incursion of mining and coal seam gas.

Over the 30 years I lived in CWQ there were several serious droughts (Alston & Kent 2004; Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology 2010; Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008; Productivity Commission 2009; Rickards 2010). Those engaged in agricultural production and other impacted businesses received lessening input from governments as they moved away from financial support towards an expectation that farmers would look after themselves, a ‘self-help’ approach (Herbert-Cheshire 2001; Rickards 2010). As a result

this has created significant structural changes in the social relations of agriculture. For example, women have moved into the paid workforce off farm where possible, a move that provides them with social and professional opportunities, as well as economic advantages (Alston 2009; Barr 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Pini 2007; Poiner 1990). However employment opportunities when living some distance from a small town are limited. Many children of remote families, sometimes with their mother's encouragement, are opting out of returning to the family-owned farm. Many in agriculture must deal with difficult succession of businesses from older generation family members to younger and / or grapple with managing farm businesses in a mixed generation family partnership arrangement (Barr 2009; Davidson 2001; Farmar- Bowers 2010; Gill 2008; McGowan 2011; Muenstermann 2011; Pini 2007) as our family did.

There are other external pressures facing family farmers. For example, in a world of rapidly declining natural resources and increased competition for the use of resources such as water, there is a noticeable shift towards managing the environment more *sustainably*. There is an increasing expectation from those outside agriculture, as well as from within, that graziers (and farmers) will practise environmentally sensitive methods while they try to maintain or increase production and hence profitability (Gray & Lawrence 2001). However as highlighted by Lockie (2001, p. 238) it's not easy being 'green when you're in the red'.

Politically both federal and state seats within CWQ, that is the Federal seat of Maranoa incorporating Longreach and other towns and the state seat of Gregory, have been held for more than 24 years by National Party members. During the recent Federal election in 2013 a new tool called Election Compass, instituted by the ABC to gauge voter preferences, found that the geographically vast seat of Maranoa was the farthest right leaning seat in Australia (ABC News 4 September 2013). Even though the Labor party originated in Barcaldine (also in the seat of Maranoa), these are deeply conservative seats.

However while the decline noted by academic researchers is evident to those still living in these areas, I concur with Herbert-Cheshire (2003) that it is 'unhelpful' to consider the 'state' (that is government/s) as having all the power and the people none. For this reason I choose to focus on what seems a proactive effort on the part of a community to influence policy in CWQ. Having been involved in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) deliberations as a consultant / facilitator, I deliberately chose to critically examine what appears to be a positive example of community activism as it would seem there is much to learn from the interactions between geographically remote activists and governments. Additionally there are *voices* within the activist and the consultation / engagement processes that are not well heard and it is critical that those marginalised voices are also considered. For example,

geographically remote citizens, rural women and Indigenous people can feel particularly marginalised in policy processes despite their significant community contributions.

### **Gaps in the research**

There has been very little sociological research conducted on remote communities and their attempts to influence policy amidst the *rural crisis*. The focus of studies has mostly been on *rural* communities (Alston 1995; Barr 2009; Bellamy & Brown 2009; Bourke 2001; Bryant & Pini 2011; Gray & Phillips 2001; Herbert-Cheshire 2003; Poiner 1990; Whittenbury 2003) rather than *remote*. Of the few that focus on remote communities these concentrate on barriers (Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012) while offering suggestions for improved *engagement* by governments. Herbert-Cheshire (2001) examined the agency (the ability to act), including the resistance, of rural citizens. However I am unaware of any Australian study that has focussed specifically on the *activism* of remote based citizens. This research project aims to fill, at least in part, this research gap.

Activism is not a term my interviewees would use to describe what they do. However some stakeholders involved in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy development proactively used activist strategies (Ricketts 2012). I use the term 'activist' deliberately as it casts a positive light on what can be described in negative terms (resisting policy) or as being merely reactive.

There is a resurgence of interest in activism in general (Marsh & Vromen 2012) that includes a wider population than those noted in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, *radical* environmentalists fighting the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania for hydro-electricity are a very different demographic to the activists engaged in my research. There are also new ways of undertaking campaigns. Groups like Get Up and others use social media and other avenues to gather support from citizens who may elect to participate in new ways. Global environmental activist groups such as The Wilderness Society (TWS) and Pew Environment Group continue to operate on the environmental front, transnational citizen activism such as Occupy Sydney is mobilised using social media (Marsh & Vromen 2012) and major campaigns on gay marriage equality are recent examples of new activism. Southern Cross University now offer a course in Public Interest Advocacy and there are step-by-step handbooks available for activists, for example *The Activists Handbook: A Step by Step Guide to Participatory Democracy* (Ricketts 2012). The former connection with

*radical* activism is possibly why activists in remote areas have resisted the term as they may associate it with extreme action, protest and left wing politics.

## **My background**

My experience in CWQ allows me to bring a multi-pronged *insider* perspective to my critical analysis of this research. *Insider* research has been missing from the small (but important) amount of sociological research conducted in my unique region. There are no universities based in CWQ and of necessity anyone conducting research, other than an insider residing in the area, has to travel a long way at considerable expense.

Other roles in my life and the intersections between them have led me to this topic. Despite my childhood being spent in a populated coastal region of NSW, I married into an agricultural family and business located in a very remote area of Queensland. Through marriage I became a landowner and partner in a mixed generation family grazing enterprise. I completed two other postgraduate qualifications in distance education mode. As a result of one of these, I was an enthusiastic participant in an early, groundbreaking action research project – the rural women's Information Technology Trial conducted by Queensland University of Technology starting in 1996 (Lennie 2002).

In 1997, I convinced the state government to employ me on a trial basis as a home based teleworker; a Senior Project Officer (A06) position for the Brisbane based Office of Rural Communities (ORC). I worked from my remote farmhouse office and represented ORC within the region as well as informing senior management of the impacts of policy in my region. With others, I started a local branch of Queensland Rural Women's Network (QRWN) in 1997 and was the inaugural President. Through QRWN I initiated and chaired a project called BridgIT from 1996–2001, for which QRWN received \$3.1 million of Networking the Nation funding. This funding, possibly the biggest funding ever received by a rural women's organisation, was for low cost in-the-home internet training in rural / remote Queensland (Simpson, Pini & Daws 2001).

Critical to my development was completing the Australian Rural Leadership Program, a two-year national leadership program funded by industry – my \$42,000 scholarship was provided by the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland. Being a Board member and then President of the national rural women's organisation, the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women, provided me with opportunities to advocate for women as well as conduct training such as Women on Boards for rural women. I became a passionate advocate / activist for rural / remote teleworking opportunities and undertook several media

interviews and presentations on this topic. I was invited to address a national inquiry into teleworking conducted by the Australian Telework Advisory Committee in Canberra in 2005 – the only remote based speaker asked to present. I requested the national inquiry committee run a roundtable consultation meeting in Longreach, a request that was accepted. This was the only rural round table consultation other than the Gold Coast.

Critical to widening my perspective on rural / remote issues, especially those relating to agriculture, was my experience in working for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI). This enabled me to witness a government perspective of agriculture, and the policy making process. I continued to work as a teleworker even when I became Manager of Communication and Information for DPI in Western Queensland. Finally, the experience I gained recently as a consultant working for a range of clients including local government, Natural Resource Management bodies, and the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD)<sup>1</sup> has widened my knowledge of regional issues and solutions.

### **Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Wild Rivers (WR) – a case study**

As I have been formerly involved more in the production side of agriculture (as a landowner, a grazing enterprise partner and working for the Department of Primary Industries), a sociological study of environmental policy may not seem like an obvious choice. However like many graziers I am well aware of the community expectation to run our grazing properties in more environmentally sustainable ways. I have been a member of Desert Channels Queensland (the regional Natural Resource Management body) for several years. Like many, we capped our artesian bore to stop evaporation of Great Artesian Basin water from open bore drains and like some have secured Caring for Our Country funding through Desert Channels Queensland to protect a riparian area around Maneroo Creek on our property.

Increasingly water is becoming a major issue. The Wild Rivers campaign emerged from TWS, a largely urban based environmental advocacy organisation. Previously the Commonwealth Government had conducted studies that revealed which rivers in Australia were compromised in terms of environmental damage and overuse. Conservationists thought it would be beneficial to protect those rivers that were still largely unspoiled. According to TWS, most of Queensland's rivers are still at risk from damaging development and in Western Queensland, irrigation and especially mining (including coal seam gas) are

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<sup>1</sup> The Remote Area Planning and Development Board is known locally as RAPAD. Not a completely accurate acronym but one that is in common use. I also use the acronym RAPAD throughout the thesis.

seen as threats (The Wilderness Society 2011) because of the potential for toxic spills of waste material and the overuse of water.

The *Wild Rivers Act* was passed in 2005 in Queensland and six rivers nominated for declaration, were supported by the Liberal party at the time (The Wilderness Society 2011).<sup>2</sup> Soon after, there was a public outcry generated by Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson who saw Wild Rivers as constraining Indigenous economic activities. Despite ongoing media protest, and after public consultation, the rivers nominated for Cape York were declared in 2009. A Wild River declaration is a statutory document under the *Wild Rivers Act*. It sets out the:

... extent of the declared wild river area and its various management, any caps on resources that can be taken in the declared wild river area (eg. water, any rules or limits that must be complied with when undertaking new development activities (such as quarrying, agriculture and mining) in the declared wild river area and any development assessment codes that must be applied, including any relevant parts of the Wild Rivers code. (Queensland Government January 2014)

The three Lake Eyre Basin rivers (the Georgina, Diamantina and Cooper Creek) were nominated after pressure from an alliance group called The Western Rivers Alliance (formed just prior to the 2009 Queensland Government election) which included TWS, Pew Environment Group, the Australian Floodplain Association and Cooper Creek Protection Group.

It was TWS's view that:

The Wild Rivers initiative is now operating in a highly politicised space, with [then] Federal Opposition [Leader] Tony Abbott determined, in his words, to "overturn" the Queensland legislation. This Parliamentary Inquiry into indigenous economic development, including the operation of Wild Rivers, is a result of the overblown rhetoric of the anti-Wild Rivers campaign. (The Wilderness Society 2011, p. 7)

Many citizens in CWQ had witnessed the media furore over Cape York Wild Rivers with growing trepidation and activists decided that when Wild Rivers came to the Lake Eyre Basin they would approach it differently. Under the stewardship of RAPAD a non-confrontational approach was deliberately taken. Initiated by a request from a Councillor from a remote shire in CWQ, RAPAD invited impacted / interested stakeholders to attend a facilitated forum in Longreach to find common ground, discuss differences and look at where compromise might be possible. The meeting notes were then sent to government for consideration. A second

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<sup>2</sup> The National Party abstained from voting (The Wilderness Society 2011).

deliberative forum was held in 2010 to further this process with the Department of Environment and Resource Management actively involved. From this emerged a communique which was sent to government and media stating what the group had agreed to in relation to this issue.

Over this time period the state government conducted information forums and consultation was occurring in (and no doubt outside) the region. After receiving some strong criticism on their initial consultation processes from citizens, the department listened and responded by rerunning and improving consultation forums across CWQ, making this one of the most extensive pieces of government consultation. My experience of these processes led me to undertake this study.

## **Research question**

The research question and subsidiary questions I seek to answer through this PhD research project are stated in full below.

What influence do women and men in CWQ have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources? The Wild Rivers policy development and consultation process for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers (that is the Georgina, Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) from 2009 – 2011 is used as a case study.

## **Subsidiary questions**

- a) How did this issue get on the policy agenda in the first place? That is – why this issue and why this way? What becomes a policy priority and why and who has the power to shape this?
- b) Are there learnings for people (in remote areas) and government from the LEB WR policy development and citizen-led lobbying process?
- c) What are the barriers to participation in policy development – who has been included and excluded – why and how?
- d) What processes are currently being used by government (to consult and develop policy) as well as by those lobbying government to influence policy?
- e) How successful are these and what other processes / strategies could be used to aid participation by remote citizens in shaping policy?

## **Theoretical framework**

This thesis draws on Lukes' (2005) *radical* theories of power. It also draws on a post-structural understanding of power and gender relations (Allen 2009, 2013; Butler 1997) – in particular in rural settings (Alston 1995, 2003b; Alston & Wilkinson 1998; Shortall 1999). The intersectionality of gender, rurality and indigeneity (Bryant & Pini 2009, 2011) is also relevant to this case study. Deliberative Democracy (Carson 2008a; Carson & Hart 2007; Chambers 2003; Dryzek, J.S. 2007; Gutman & Thompson 2004; Thompson 2008) and Ecological Sustainable Development are also used to frame this research.

## **Aims of the research**

The aim of this research project is to answer the research question/s but also to highlight why the question/s are important in the first place. As outlined previously, remote communities are rarely researched and remote activism perhaps very rarely. Academic research conducted by long-term insiders in remote communities is rare but important because insiders can provide a different and possibly unique perspective. Many people and institutions in remote areas spend a lot of time and resources trying to influence government policy that will impact on their communities. At the same time governments spend significant amounts consulting remote communities. If both can learn how to work better together in order to develop policies that have had input from all sectors while managing power imbalances, the resulting policy may be better accepted and understood by the community and government. However it is also important to consider whether seemingly fair and democratic processes to develop policy actually were so, especially when viewed through the prism of prior literature and the research findings.

My aim in conducting this research is to: highlight issues and positive strategies that remote based activists use when trying to influence government policy; highlight any gender, racial or other barriers; add to the literature on deliberative democracy with a remote perspective; and highlight positive activist approaches in contrast to the (important) literature on rural / remote decline and issues.

## **Methodology and methods**

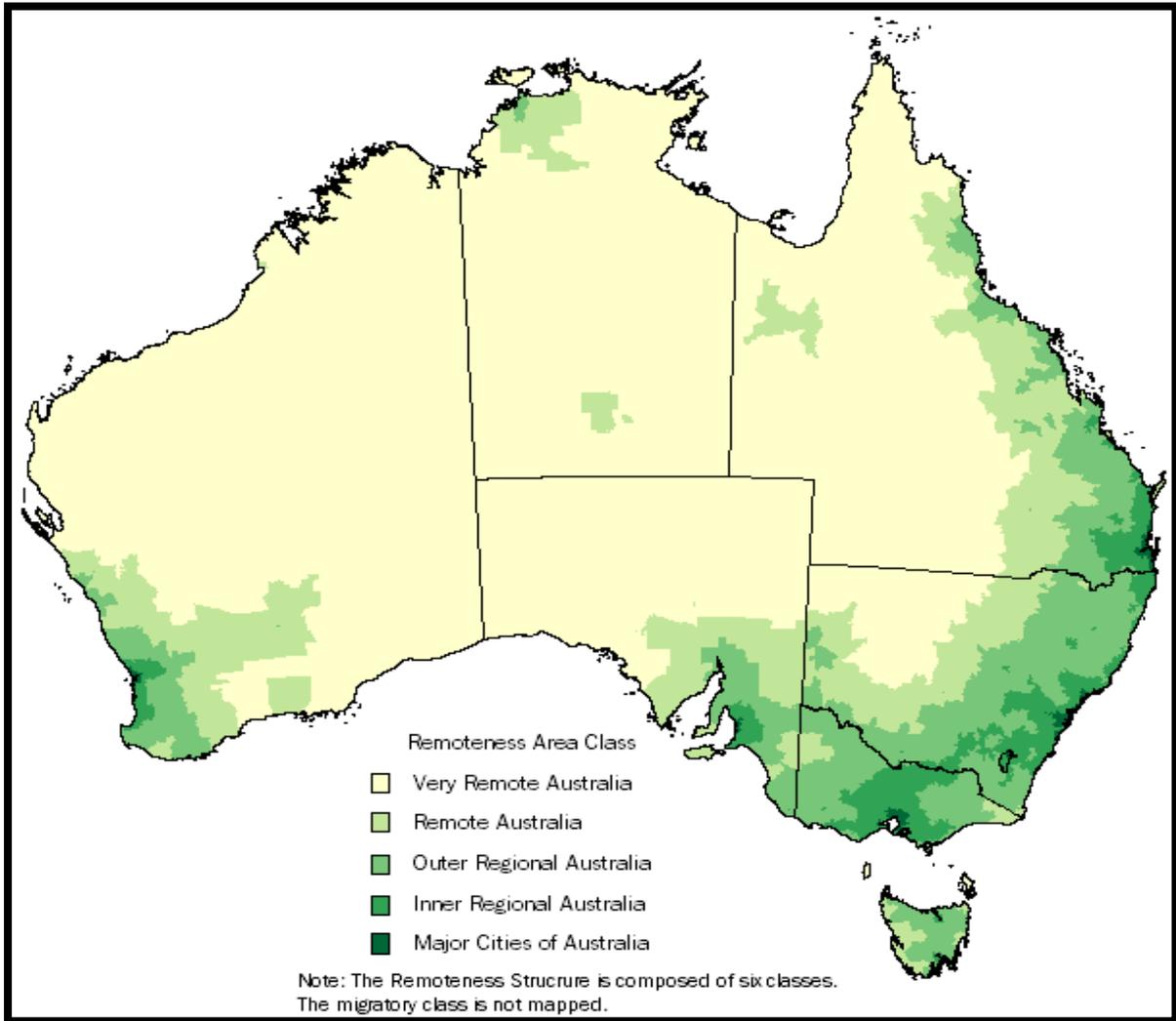
I use a gender-sensitive, critical theory approach in order to understand the nuanced differences in the experiences of remote based women and men trying to influence government policy. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 activists

including government staff who had some opportunity to influence the LEB WR policy. As an extension to the interviews reflexive memos were written after each interview and a content analysis was conducted on three media outlets. This included the largest newspaper in CWQ the Longreach Leader, the Queensland Country Life (QCL) and ABC radio. Data was coded using NVivo enabling a thematic analysis of my findings. A grounded theory approach was used to conduct this research using an iterative method between preparation, data collection, analysis, memoing and theory development.

### **Location of research - defining remote communities**

There is lack of clarity in the various definitions of regional, rural and remote in Australia and internationally. Gray and Lawrence define rural communities as communities that are economically and socially dependent on agriculture (Gray & Lawrence 2001). They do not draw a further distinction to define remote communities. Lockie and Bourke (2001) however include remote as a component in their description of rurality but agree that a universally accepted definition is impossible. They argue that rural is a social construction and that 'meanings and identities have been constructed over time with ... culture' (Lockie & Bourke 2001, p. 8). They accept four components of rurality, which include: rural, regional, remote and urban. They see the urban rural difference as a 'continuum rather than a dichotomy' (Lockie & Bourke 2001, p. 9).

Australian Government definitions of rural and regional also vary. The ABS uses population numbers to define urban, rural and regional amongst other categories. The ABS also uses a scale that defines remoteness based on population numbers, which is part of the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC). This is refined after each Census (due to population change and changes to roads). The ABS recognises the importance of communities being defined as remote for influencing policy, as the provision of many government services is influenced by the vast distances people are required to travel in these areas. Their purpose in defining remoteness is to inform policy development by classifying Australia into large regions that share common characteristics of remoteness (Australian Bureau Of Statistics 2010).



**Figure 1.1** *The remoteness structure (Australian Bureau Of Statistics 2010)*

This case study adopts the ABS boundaries, which show that all of CWQ fits into the category of Very Remote. CWQ by almost any definition (spatial, population based or socioeconomic indicators) can be regarded as remote and / or very remote.

**Outline of thesis**

There are ten chapters in total in this thesis. The first section of this thesis provides all the background on the research topic. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature selected to illuminate scholarship in and around the research question. The main areas I review include: changes to agriculture and rural / regional / remote communities in Australia

and government policy development; governance and activism and the often interchangeable concepts of consultation; community engagement and participation.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter Three details the theoretical framework. Lukes' theories of power provide me with a useful framework for examining those marginalised by power imbalances. It also aids an analysis of how governments worked with activists in the LEB WR policy development. I cover the gender-sensitive critical approach taken to understand the differences in the experiences of remote based women and men trying to influence government policy. Post-structuralists concerned with gender and power including Allen (2009, 2013) and rural feminist theorists such as Shortall (Alston 1995; Shortall 1999, 2002, 2008; Shortall & Shucksmith 2001) and Alston (Alston 1995, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Alston & Wilkinson 1998; Whittenbury 2003) are drawn on. I examine intersectionality including rurality (remoteness), gender, and race (indigeneity) (Bryant & Pini 2009, 2011) in relation to the LEB WR policy development.

In this chapter Deliberative Democracy Theory (DDT) is covered including Australian deliberative democratic theorists Dryzek (Dryzek, J.S. 2007, 2013, June 2009; Dryzek, John S. & Neimeyer 2003; Thompson 2008) and Carson (Carson 2005, 2008a; Carson & Hart 2007; Hartz-Karp & Briand 2009) as well as international deliberative democratic theorists (Chambers 2003; Gutman & Thompson 2004; Thompson 2008; Young 2003). Finally I also discuss the framework of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) in this chapter as current conservation policy needs to be understood in the light of that framework.

In Chapter Four, the choice of critical methodology is discussed and justified. I then discuss intersectionality and how this impacted on methodology, reflexivity, insider research, case study research and issues to be managed when conducting research in remote regions such as CWQ. This section includes photos taken during research to highlight the issues (and beauty) of working in such rugged terrain. I explain the choice of methods used to conduct my research, as well as ethics requirements and the demographics collected from interviewees. Coding and the use of grounded theory, as well as methods used to ensure rigor and trustworthiness, are addressed.

Chapter Five gives contextual information on the research site including governance of the Lake Eyre Basin and the development of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy.

The second section of my thesis includes the four findings chapters including an analysis as well as the conclusions chapter. The first of my findings chapters, Chapter Six, provides a

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<sup>3</sup> A demographic profile of the Lake Eyre Basin and Central Western Queensland is included as Appendix 1.

detailed examination of what emerged from the media content analysis. The framework used (Ewart & Cokley 2007) for the analysis of the media outlets selected: the Longreach Leader, the QCL and ABC radio (transcripts online) is discussed. I discuss the findings using tables of results. In order to ascertain who was dominant in the media I look at the amount of coverage and prominence, which sources by sector were dominating the media and why. I examine media sources in relation to remoteness, gender and indigeneity. This media analysis identifies that women and indigenous people were marginalised in public discourse. Three dominant discourses were found in the media analysis: a green discourse, a neoliberal / pro-production discourse and a *government speak* discourse.

Chapter Seven is about Policy. I start by examining what public policy is and how it is created. I examine Wild Rivers policy and what generated the development of this policy. I discuss which sectors were impacted by the policy and the reaction to it, with a focus particularly on the potential marginalisation as a result of geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity. I look at how citizens understood the policy and the difficulties inherent in this. I examine community engagement in relation to the LEB WR policy including the amended process adopted by the Queensland Government after receiving critical feedback from geographically remote citizens following their first consultation in CWQ. I explore barriers to influencing policy and what processes governments used to enable input from citizens. In the final section of Chapter Six, I examine discourse and discuss Bacchi's approach to analysing policy. I also discuss the three dominant discourses found in the media analysis which were also evident in the policy deliberations.

Chapter Eight focusses on power as being central to examining how and why remote based citizens can or cannot influence government policy. I start by exploring what power is, including Lukes and other conceptualisations as well as who was influencing the LEB WR policy debate during the time period of the case study (2009 – 2011). I examine why some sectors are perceived to have more influence than others and which sectors are marginalised and why. Geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity are examined as potential sites of marginalisation in terms of power and I also look beyond the three sectors for other sites of marginalisation. As policy is always developed in a political environment I look at the way politics impacts on remote citizens attempting to influence policy. I move then to examine the power of governments as well as issues for government with regard to policy development.

In the last of my findings chapters, Chapter Nine, I examine the key topic of activism (what the people did) and also governance (what government did) in relation to the LEB WR case study. I specifically explore remote region activism, which sectors activists were from and

why. I then examine what enables activism including the role of regional coordination, looking specifically at the role RAPAD played in this case study. I examine other factors that support remote based activism. I discuss the media analysis and why certain sectors dominated the media outlets chosen for this study and why others did not. I explore who was perceived to be successful as lobbyists and why. I then examine the (surprisingly similar) outcomes activists were seeking and what was actually achieved. I examine governance and what government could potentially do as perceived by my interviewees and what government representatives said worked well for them in regard to the consultation process.

In Chapter Ten, I conclude the thesis by discussing the key findings of this PhD research project for each research question. The implications of the findings, recommendations for future research as well as limitations of research is covered also.

## **Conclusion**

The need for research on remote based activism and issues for those trying to influence policy from a geographically remote region has been explored in this chapter. I have highlighted the aims of my PhD research project as well as epistemological and methodological approaches. I move to explore in Chapter Two the academic and other literature that underpins my research including some more information on research gaps.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

There are two main conceptual areas that frame the research. First is an examination of: rural / remote decline including changes to agriculture and rural / regional / remote communities in Australia. The development of rural policy and the role of governments and citizens is explored in the second section.

### ***Section One: The decline of agriculture and rural / remote communities***

Contemporary rural and remote communities in Australia have diverse economic and social bases of which agriculture is often only a small part. However agriculture is still the dominant economic sector in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) where this case study is located, though other sectors are increasing in importance. The proposed Wild Rivers (that is the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) flow through the occasional outback town and quite a number of remote agricultural properties (as well as non-agricultural land) and residents of these properties may be directly impacted by the policy. It is important to understand how the agricultural sector is faring in terms of influence especially with regard to shaping policy. The agricultural sector is a key stakeholder involved in and largely opposed to the development of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy.

There is an abundance of literature examining rural decline (or the *rural crisis*) including causes and effects of rural and agricultural decline. Related to that is literature on Australian government policy directions for agriculture and rural and remote communities. Literature was selected to understand what is currently impacting on communities in remote regions such as CWQ in order to appreciate how rural decline impacts on citizens' ability to influence government policy.

#### **The changing face of agriculture in Australia**

Agriculture in Australia has undergone major changes over the last century (Alston 1995; Barr 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 21; Lockie & Bourke 2001) and this has resulted in significant decline and pressure on rural and remote communities (Barr 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001). A historical analysis of the changes impacting the grazing industries of CWQ and the wider Lake Eyre Basin provides important background for understanding why women and men may feel disempowered with regard to influencing government policy.

The history of agriculture within Australia has been analysed by sociologists examining gender relations, increasing pressure to manage natural resources and changes to agricultural production and rural communities (Alston 1995; Barr 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Higgins & Lockie 2001; Lockie 2001; Lockie & Bourke 2001; Poiner 1990; Whittenbury 2003). Australian agricultural policy is closely linked to regional and Natural Resource Management (NRM) policy and analyses highlight the steady move towards decreasing government support for agricultural production and declining protection from fluctuating markets (Barr 2009; Cockfield & Botteril 2013; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Higgins & Lockie 2001). Despite this (and perhaps in part because of this), agricultural production has risen steadily while the number of farms has declined. Currently there are 134,000 farm businesses in Australia and 'growth in the farm sector ... increased steadily over the 30 year period from 1974–75 to 2003–04 at an average rate of 2.8 per cent, consistently out-performing other sectors' (National Farmers Federation 2012).

### **A short history of Australian agriculture**

Australian governments, and sometimes industry bodies, have not always served agriculture well. Indeed some policies have hastened the decline of agriculture and rural communities. Rural policy was traditionally synonymous with agricultural policy as most communities were dependent economically on their agricultural base.

Even in the nineteenth century there were problems for agriculture in Australia. Australian farmers tried to emulate the small intensive agricultural systems that existed in the United Kingdom and Europe which did not work well in Australia's very different climate and terrain (Gray & Lawrence 2001; Lockie & Bourke 2001). Squatters took and developed land for agriculture across Australia (usually for grazing livestock), from what they saw as an empty landscape or '*terra nullius*' (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 5) blatantly ignoring any rights of the original Indigenous residents. In the early 1800s export based agriculture was established based on the wool industry (Higgins & Lockie 2001).

In Queensland, unlike NSW and Victoria, governments were obsessed with 'developing a rural-agrarian rather than industrial-urban economy from the mid-nineteenth century through to the 1960s' (Cameron 2005). The core industries of sheep and cattle grazing provided much of the impetus for economic development in Queensland during the nineteenth century and since then broadacre grazing has proved to be the most viable form of primary production for the conditions in Queensland. The importance of the pastoral industry to

Queensland's economic development also allowed pastoral interests to dominate the political arena for much of the nineteenth century (Cameron 2005).

Native title too has been a contentious area of legislation and policy which has pitted farmers against Indigenous people seeking recognition of prior ownership of land. When the Mabo court decision in 1992 opened up some agricultural land for potential claim by Indigenous traditional owners, the agricultural sector swiftly organised to oppose it. Only some agricultural land tenures are now open to claim and some leases such as Grazing Homestead Perpetual Leases and freehold extinguish native title. The portrayal of Australian history during settlement as peaceable was questioned during the debate over native title as the unfair treatment of Indigenous people has been a hidden part of Australia's social, economic and political structures (Watson, V 2001). Native title highlighted Aboriginal disadvantage by:

... emphasizing dispossession over discrimination, thus pushing the agenda beyond legal equality. By asserting indigenous entitlement to land on grounds that could not be claimed by other Australians, land rights emphasized Aboriginal distinctiveness. (McGregor 2011, p. 173)

### **Riding on the sheep's back – the history of agricultural production impacting on remote Queensland**

The history of the wool and cattle industry has particular relevance for CWQ citizens trying to influence policy as agriculture is still the dominant sector in the region's economy. Agriculture in CWQ primarily consists of grazing enterprises namely sheep (wool and meat) and beef cattle. Major issues in these industries have been felt in the Central West even though the region has become more diversified, for example, with the expanding sectors of tourism, government services and more recently mining. The decline of wool, and to some extent the cattle industry, impacts on the agricultural sector's ability to influence government policy.

Wool is currently still the only 'major Australian agricultural industry in which Australia is a dominant exporter in world markets' (Barr 2009, p. 15). The cattle industry is Australia's highest performing agricultural commodity, with a gross production value of \$7.3 billion and is the second highest commodity exporter (behind wheat) valued at \$4328 million. In 2010–2011, the value of Australian wool exports was \$3.047 billion (National Farmers Federation 2012).

Because of the export revenue wool generated nationally up to and in the 1950s, the wool industry experienced moments of great prosperity and the Australian economy was referred to as *riding on the sheep's back*. This had immense significance for the large remote sheep stations. However the industry has a history of unstable wool prices (Barr 2009, p. 15) and governments and the wool industry itself attempted to intervene in order to improve outcomes for the industry.

The Korean War fuelled demand for wool in the 1950s in Australia and created a boom in demand for wool. This resulted in prosperous times for woolgrowers when wool was referred to as being sold for a *pound for a pound*. However this triggered inflation and the Commonwealth Government moved to restrict imports and increase exports through agricultural expansion. The policy to increase output was pursued through mechanisms such as tax concessions, subsidised prices, low interest credit and bounties. Production increased by over 30 per cent during the 1950s and 1960s when Keynesian economics, based on government intervention to support markets, directed Australian Government policy (Higgins & Lockie 2001, p. 182).

By 1976 wool was no longer Australia's major source of export income being surpassed by coal and occasionally wheat, alumina and iron ore (WoolProducers Australia). When the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) dissolved in 1991, though they had once been a major purchaser of Australian wool, the new Russia could no longer afford to maintain imports of Australian wool. This had a significant detrimental impact on the wool industry.

A Reserve Price Scheme established by the wool industry in 1974 with the intention of guaranteeing Australian woolgrowers a minimum price for their wool (WoolProducers Australia) proved to be a disaster for Australian woolgrowers (Massey, C 2011). A statutory authority purchased all wool that failed to meet a reserve price at auction. The resulting stockpile was to be sold when market prices exceeded the reserve price. However when wool prices rose significantly at the end of the 1980s the reserve was raised by 70 per cent. The scheme failed when the majority of wool was under the reserve prices and was purchased for the stockpile. It took 10 years for the stockpile to be sold and woolgrowers bore this cost as the statutory authority had gone into debt to pay wool producers the reserve price. In the 1990s wool producers had to pay off that debt (Barr 2009, p. 15).

Consequently the Australian wool market collapsed and the reserve price scheme was suspended after the stockpile reached 4.75 million bales. The Australian Government, in consultation with industry, agreed the scheme could no longer be maintained

(WoolProducers Australia). The impact of the stockpile on wool prices was felt by woolgrowers across Australia (ABC rural radio 6/08/01) including in CWQ.

Some woolgrowers lay the blame for this *politically sanctioned* (Massey, C 2011) collapse of the wool industry at government as well as industry's door arguing that:

Compared to the more recent Australian Wheat Board scandal, 40 times more funds were lost in the downfall, and vastly more collateral social and economic damage was done to this country. (Massey, C 2011)

While this may be an oversimplification, government policy and industry leadership did little to aid the wool industry. Farmers protested vigorously at the time but were powerless to affect any political solution and wool farming businesses felt the impact severely. This crisis in the wool industry fits with the general move in Australian Government policy from Keynesian economics to neoliberal, *market rule* approaches.

## **Neoliberalism**

Changes in agriculture were propelled in part by the global move of liberal democracies from Keynesian economic policy development to current neoliberal, market-driven, economic rationalist policy approaches. Keynesian economics is based on the premise that:

Private decisions sometimes lead to inefficient macroeconomic outcomes and therefore, advocates active policy responses by the public sector, including monetary policy actions by the central bank and fiscal policy actions by the government to stabilize output over the business cycle. (O'Sullivan & Sheffrin 2003).

Such actions include protection from markets by way of tariffs, subsidies and other interventionist tools that are still used in the European Union under the Common Agricultural Policy (South Centre March 2011) and in the US (Cockfield & Botteril 2013) to protect farmers and farming. Neoliberalism on the other hand is a market rule, economic rationalist type approach that liberates individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills in an economic environment that supports private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2007). Governments using neoliberal approaches create policy with that overarching premise.

The economic rationalist approach of neoliberalism is not confined to agriculture and has been criticised by rural sociologists for ignoring social and environmental impacts (Alston

2004; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Higgins & Lockie 2002; Pritchard 2005). Pritchard (2005) contends that:

A stark dichotomy exists between the tendency of much agricultural analysis to celebrate the efficiency of Australian agriculture, and the disclosure by many social scientific studies of considerable economic deprivation and social problems in Australia. (Pritchard 2005, p. 12)

However neoliberalism has become hegemonic. It effects the way people think about the world:

... to the point where it has become incorporated into the common sense way many of us interpret, live in and understand the world. (Harvey 2007, p. 3)

Market rule and the economic bottom line dominate much of government agriculture policy development thereby disempowering those who are economically challenged.

Trade liberalisation, as an example of the neoliberalist approach to Australian agriculture, while supported by governments and the National Farmers Federation, has been especially critiqued by social scientists for inducing hardship for some and causing environmental degradation (Alston 2004; Dibden, Potter & Cocklin 2009a; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Pritchard 2005). While declining terms of trade due to globalisation were perhaps inevitable some argue that governments should not bolster inefficient farmers through reverting to protectionist policy. The 'slow and almost imperceptible pain in previously protected farming communities will be balanced by slow and almost imperceptible benefits for farmers in Australia' (Barr 2009, p. 21). While agricultural restructuring is not the only contributor to rural / remote population decline for those who live in rural and remote Australia, the emptying of agricultural communities over the last few decades is very visible. This population loss impacts on those communities' ability to influence policy development.

### **Rural adjustment in Queensland**

In a neoliberal policy environment, farm adjustment policies dominated Australian agriculture from the 1970s resulting in increased pressure on the agricultural sector to become more efficient. Higgins and Lockie (2001, p. 178) describe adjustment or structural adjustment as a 'relatively benign sounding word used by economists to describe the entry and exit of firms from industries undergoing some sort of structural change'. For agriculture in Australia this

meant many farmers leaving farming bringing 'rapid social change' for farming families (Alston 1995, p. 1).

The Rural Adjustment Scheme (RAS) started by the Fraser Government in 1977 sought to assist farmers to become more efficient by *adjusting* to market determined prices. The aim was to restore economic viability and keep farmers on the land. The social value of farming was still then regarded as important (Higgins & Lockie 2001).

Productivity and efficiency became the aim of those working in agriculture. *Self-reliance* was now encouraged and welfare dependency discouraged by governments. Farming was touted as no longer *just* a lifestyle but dependent on management and business skill, 'something government assistance was only seen to hinder' (Higgins & Lockie 2001, p. 184). By the early 1990s self-reliance was seen as the way to solve farm adjustment issues and was the approach taken in the RAS and in drought policy.

Gray and Lawrence (2001) point out that this change led to low income farmers, with the bulk of their financial worth tied up in land, opting to struggle on in agriculture while the quality of life in nearby country towns declined as well. Drastic new regional governance approaches are required to alleviate these issues. Though this may be very unlikely to occur in the short-term, others have also examined the potential for constitutional and structural change to benefit governance in rural areas (Bellamy & Brown 2009; Brown 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010; Brown & Bellamy 2010).

Also impacting on participation and activism with regard to policy development is the ageing workforce of agriculture. The median age of farmers is 52 years which is much higher than the median age of 40 years for all other Australian occupations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, March 2009 quoted in National Farmers Federation 2012). There is a visible lack of young people coming back into the industry as more profitable occupations beckon in towns or cities with more services. Mining in particular is enticing workers that would previously have worked in agriculture by paying much higher wages. This further exacerbates the difficulties in procuring labour for agricultural enterprises in rural and remote areas.

Despite these issues the agricultural sector is still important even though it only comprises around three per cent of Australia's total economy, but with reliant industries in the agricultural supply chain it makes up to 12 per cent (Barr 2009, p. 142). 'Australia's history is replete with attempts by government to constrain the impact of markets on farmer's incomes' (Barr 2009, p. 14). The agricultural sector has a history of fighting policy which is expressed

in political action and non-political resistance (Dibden & Cocklin 2007). Some examples are native title, tree clearing and more recently the ban of live cattle export to Indonesia.

## **Trends in agriculture**

Key trends, such as the declining terms of trade, potentially impact on the agricultural sector's ability to participate in policy development. Declining terms of trade (that is, the ratio of prices received to prices paid) occurs because of the need to become more efficient (that is, the need to increase productivity while input costs rise such as chemicals, fuel and veterinarian supplies). 'In 2005 Australian farmers produced twice as much output as Australian farmers in the 1970s' (Barr 2009, p. 7). The need to become more efficient resulted in pressure to increase farm size by *getting big or getting out* (Higgins & Lockie 2001). This trend was very evident in CWQ where farm sizes have significantly increased in the last thirty years. Neighbours have bought out neighbours and original blocks are sometimes split between several neighbours although land sales do not occur very regularly (Department of Natural Resources and Mines 2014).

Trends identified by the Australian Productivity Commission that impact on agriculture include: globalisation; trade liberalisation; changing consumer tastes; technological advances; and innovation and environmental constraints (Australian Government Productivity Commission 2005). These may constrain the capacity of remote citizens to influence policy.

Globalisation has meant that increasingly farmers have to become more aligned to global market trends as most of Australia's agricultural output is being exported (National Farmers Federation 2009). Because of this, issues in importing countries can become paramount. For example, China is starting to produce its own wool even while still importing Australian wool and eventually this may affect Chinese demand for Australian wool. Gray and Lawrence (2001) point out that farmers now are more reliant than ever on overseas buyers with whom they do not have a relationship or even know much about. In between them and the end customer are transnational global corporations or agribusinesses.

Another important dimension of globalisation is that more and more urban values are shaping rural / remote policy further pressuring the agricultural sector. The LEB WR policy development is an example of urban values influencing remote community policy as it was an urban environmental advocacy group, The Wilderness Society, which first proposed the Wild Rivers policy. Policy change to stop or stifle sheep mulesing and live animal export are other examples. Global advocacy groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals (PETA) successfully encouraged purchasers to refrain from buying Australian wool arguing that the methods used for blowfly control were cruel.

Similarly the live sheep industry has undergone pressure to introduce more humane practices, (the Como Express incident in 2003 is a well-known example) and more recently the live cattle industry. Recent issues with the supply of Australian live cattle to Indonesian buyers (outside Australian government control) were highlighted in the media and by animal activist organisations as being inhumane. The Australian Government in 2009 temporarily halted cattle exports while these issues were addressed.

Barr (2009) highlights that most of the Australian population these days now lack a personal connection with farming (for example farmer relatives), as most Australians live quite some distance from where farming is conducted and 'generally lack an understanding of the practical constraints under which farm businesses operate' (Barr 2009, p. 101). It is expected that such tensions between farmers and animal rights groups will continue in the future. The lack of understanding and empathy for farming practice and culture is a major issue when farmers are trying to influence policy largely developed in urban environments by centralised governments.

Trade liberalisation, the second trend identified by the Productivity Commission, is an example of neoliberal policy direction. The move to a free trade environment resulted in some farmers feeling that their voices and needs were lost again within global trade negotiations as they showed resistance to this policy direction to varying degrees (Dibden, Potter & Cocklin 2009b). Governments with full support of the farm industry body, the National Farmers Federation (NFF), worked toward the free trade platform we have now in order to encourage efficiency. However the *level playing field* hoped for in world trade negotiations still does not exist and Australian farmers compete with protected farmers in other countries putting them at an economic disadvantage.

The third trend, changing consumer tastes, may bring benefits as well as negatives for the Australian farmer who wants to influence policy. An example is when animal rights groups lobbied fashion houses in the United States to boycott Australian merino wool as the sheep had been mulesed. Changing consumer tastes may also impact on sheep meat and beef industries although meat sales have remained static since the late 1970s. 'Fruit and vegetable consumption on the other hand increased by almost 40 per cent between 1978–79 and 1998–99' (Australian Government Productivity Commission 2005, p. 51). Any factor that affects the wealth and significance of the farming sector (or grazing sector more specifically in CWQ) directly relates to how well that sector can influence policy. Also the

diminishing farming sector is seemingly less influential than some of the increasingly powerful global lobby groups such as the animal welfare lobby groups.

Technological advances and innovation have improved productivity where economically viable. These advances often result in labour savings – a contributing factor over the years to decreasing rural populations. ‘New technologies appear to have exacerbated the problem of long-term unemployment’ (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 29).

The fifth global trend identified by the Productivity Commission – environmental constraints – is examined in more depth below in the wider context of sustainable development. When the trends impacting on agriculture result in decreasing income for remote citizens, their ability to participate in policy development may be seriously constrained. This is important because one of the most significant barriers to remote citizen participation in policy development and activism is financial cost.

## **Sustainable development**

Farmers and citizens of rural and remote communities are key stakeholders in environmental policy as stewards of much of Australia’s landmass. However they may not have much input into the shaping of the policies that impact on them. Scholars who examine environmental issues and agriculture usually frame this within the context of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) (Aslin & Lockie 2013; Brooks 2013; Craig & Vanclay 2005; Dovers & Wild River 2003; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009; Lockie & Bourke 2001; Moffatt 2005; White 2013). The environment, now regarded as highly important by many, was largely invisible at a policy level in Australia until the 1970s (Dovers 2013; Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 142). The landmark Bruntlandt report (the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development) in 1987 defines sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (quoted in Black 2005, p. 31). The Australian Federal Government then developed a discussion paper ‘A National Strategy for Sustainable Development’ and a ‘National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development’ in 1991 and ensuing policies that came out of these created the platform that exists today for managing the environment for sustainable development. Dovers (2013) suggests that environmental policy in Australia moved from being just about the environment, to sustainable development with an increasing mixture of policy instruments being used. Sustainable development has become a discourse in its own right – the dominant global discourse of ecological concern (Dryzek, J.S. 2013).

Good environmental management of land is now an expectation of farmers and others by citizens and environmental groups (Aslin & Lockie 2013). The need to increase productivity of agriculture in general over the years has sometimes come at the cost of quite serious environmental degradation. Some of the issues with regard to managing the environment include the:

... sheer scale of environmental crisis, resistance from some citizens to state intervention in how private property is used and enjoyed and apparently conflicting social demands to protect environmental values and to maintain economic growth. (Aslin & Lockie 2013, p. 2)

Bartel and Barclay (2011) note resistance by Australian farmers to environmental regulation. They conducted a survey of 5235 farmers across Australia and identified four types of reaction to environmental policy – one group that complied and three associated with ‘non or creative compliance’ (Bartel & Barclay 2011, p. 176) including resistance.

A report commissioned by the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation in 2000 estimated that rural environmental degradation in Australia cost in excess of \$2 billion annually (Lockie 2001, p. 231). Governments in Australia and other developed countries are expected to and have taken environmental issues seriously and some feel that a substantial amount has been done to address these issues (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 142). Currently 55 per cent of land use in Australia is used for grazing which, along with invasive species and fire, has a significant impact on the environment. However recent reports on the environmental impact of grazing ‘appears to be mixed, with impacts diminished in some regions but increased in others since widespread monitoring began in 1992’ (State of the Environment Committee 2011). Brooks (2013) however argues that farmers will not embrace environmental ideals for altruistic reasons and that market forces and government incentives are useful to encourage good ecological citizenship (Brooks 2013). Gill (2013) warns that farmers are engaged with the environment to a certain extent but that by imposing legislation and policy this may ‘impair the ability of individuals to act, to manage risks and, further may alienate some social actors already engaged with environmental activities at a local level’ (Gill 2013, p. 85).

In Queensland while more than 80 per cent of land is used for agricultural purposes, fewer than 20 per cent of people live in rural and remote areas where the majority of agricultural enterprises exist (Moffatt 2005). The risks associated with governments neglecting to engage a small sector of the community was demonstrated by ‘civil disobedience in

Queensland with up to 60,000 hectares of vegetation suspected of being illegally cleared during a recent three year period' (Moffatt 2005, p. 1).

The Australian Government's commitment to sustainable agriculture most recently has included \$180 million being invested in landcare through the *Caring For Our Country* program from 2008–2013 (Australian Government Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries 2014). Funding for conservation activities on private land on farms and in water catchments at the regional level through the Landcare program started in the 1980s and is largely regarded as a successful model in raising awareness of environmental degradation and in community engagement to work on environmental problems (Lockie 2013; Tonts 2005). Landcare groups conduct environmental planning activities, extensive tree plantings and other such activities designed largely to conserve soil and maintain productivity.

However:

What can reasonably be expected of private landholders in the absence of substantial public investment and of coordinating at broader spatial scales ... [and] reliance on moral persuasion and voluntary compliance as the basis of coordination is not enough to manage critical ecosystem processes as common property. (Lockie 2013, pp. 158-9)

Hence the desire of environmental advocacy groups to develop legislation for the protection of public assets such as water.

Others criticise Landcare because of poor management of programs by state and federal governments (Curtis 2003) and their avoidance of responsibility for the ongoing erosion of the environment as agricultural policy along with global economics has forced farmers to overexploit their land.

Virtually all of the current natural resource management strategies tend to overlook these constraints and in devolving much of the responsibility for land rehabilitation to the local and individual level, are likely to perpetuate the problem. (Tonts 2005, p. 203)

Despite successes (and limitations) of programs and the continued decline of Australia's natural resource, the environment still struggles to find a place amongst the highest priorities of Australian governments. Meanwhile rural communities and farmers are still expected to carry the burden of stewardship of this national resource largely in a voluntary capacity. These tensions are evident in the LEB WR policy development.

## **The impact of climate change – drought in remote Queensland**

Drought, as an example of climate change, is another major factor impacting on the sustainable management of Australia's natural resources, further pressuring farmers and others in rural and remote communities. According to the State of the Environment Report (2011) the principal drivers of the environment in Australia are climate variability and change, population growth and economic growth. The challenge is to:

... mitigate the degree and potential impacts of climate change, and to decouple national growth from increased pressures on our environment. (State of the Environment Committee 2011, p. 10)

An increasing risk of severe drought is predicted by the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO over the next 20 – 30 years (when compared to the past 100 years) and this will be exacerbated by rising temperatures (Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008, p. 5). While there is some uncertainty about the degrees of risk, using various climate change models, the majority of scientists agree that climate change is real and created by humans (Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO 2010; Garnaut 2008). This will place further pressure on those working in agriculture and on reliant, rural and remote communities.

Drought is not a new phenomenon and involves a prolonged, abnormally dry period when there are water shortages. The agricultural sector is the first to feel the impact as the natural resource base of farming enterprises declines. This pressures agricultural productivity and has a flow-on effect to rural Australia and the national economy. The risk of serious environmental damage through vegetation loss and soil erosion has long-term implications for the sustainability of agricultural industries (Bureau of Meteorology 2014).

It has been recognised that recent (and other) long-term droughts have caused severe hardship and distress for those working in rural, regional and remote Australia (Alston & Kent 2004; Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008). In 2007–2008, 23 per cent of Australia's 143,000 farms received drought assistance, totalling over \$1 billion, with some on income support continuously since (Productivity Commission 2009). This figure is questioned by Alston who contends that despite government claims of expending \$1 billion on drought, by 2004 'less than half had been spent' (Alston 2009, p. 139). From 2002–2003 to 2007–2008, on average, about 70 per cent of dairy and broadacre farms in drought areas received no drought assistance at all (Productivity Commission 2009) during the 'worst and most sustained drought on record' (Alston 2009, p. 139).

A change in policy direction by Australian governments with regard to drought is quite evident. Drought in the past was regarded as a *disaster* and was funded under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangement. The Commonwealth Government believed that this scheme was poorly targeted and 'distorted farm input prices and worked as a disincentive for farmers to plan and prepare for drought' (Australian Government Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries 2010). In 1992, in the National Drought Policy, the term drought changed from *natural disaster* and became something that should be planned for and managed as part of a farmer's normal risk management strategies. This shifted the responsibility for dealing with risk from the government to the individual (Higgins & Lockie 2001, p. 185).

Drought then became an *exceptional circumstance* and now new drought policy refers to drought as *dryness* (Rickards 2010). 'Existing responses attempting to deal with dryness are wearing away at the social fabric and capital of rural Australia and threatening the future viability of some rural communities' (Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008, p. 5).

The issues connected with drought and climate change impacts on the ability of farmers (and others) to participate in developing critical policy for their region. Another component shaping remote Queensland is gender relations. The status of women in agriculture relates directly to their lack of participation in deliberative forums or activism to influence government policy (Alston 2003b).

### **Gendered relations of agriculture**

The gendered nature of agriculture impacts on agricultural productivity and viability and the invisibility of women's work on farms has been identified by several Australian researchers as an issue for Australian agriculture (Alston 1995, 2009; Pini 2007; Poiner 1990) and by researchers internationally (Sachs 1996; Shortall 1999). This is relevant in remote Queensland where large distances between properties and towns and women's status within the farming enterprise makes women's work even more invisible.

Women in agriculture lack power and status due to patrilineal inheritance of property (Alston 1995; Shortall 1999). There is a deficiency in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other statistics that accurately quantify women's contribution to the farming enterprise (Alston 1995; Sheridan & Haslam McKenzie 2009) yet they are increasingly having to manage off farm work as well as work on farm (Alston 2009; Kelly, R & Shortall 2002). Further, women lack representation on agripolitical bodies (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006).

Although Farmar-Bowers (2010, p. 145) suggests generational change is bringing increased recognition of women's contributions on farm and women are now less likely to be regarded as a 'farm helper' and more likely to be seen as a 'farm manager', this does not correlate with numbers of women on industry and agripolitical bodies (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006). The 'Revisiting Missed Opportunities – growing women's contribution to agriculture' report (Sheridan & Haslam McKenzie 2009) quantifies women's contribution to agriculture in Australia and 'examines the reasons for women's [continued] low representation in formal leadership positions in agricultural and regional organisations' (Sheridan & Haslam McKenzie 2009, p. ix).

In some instances women's off farm work is considered necessary to keep the family farm financially solvent or viable in Australia and elsewhere (Alston 1995; Kelly, R & Shortall 2002; Sachs 1996) and this is bringing some changes to the family dynamics on farm (Kelly, R & Shortall 2002). As women in agriculture have historically provided a significant amount of volunteer labour to community and service organisations in their communities, their lack of availability for volunteer work is also impacting on their communities (Alston 2004).

### **Changing rural and remote communities**

Rural and remote communities which are reliant on agriculture have borne the brunt of agriculture restructuring. Much of the literature on rural communities is focussed on rural decline resulting from neoliberal policy approaches and a move to self-help ideologies (Cheshire 2006; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Measham et al. 2012) 'yet it remains to be seen how these critiques assist rural communities to progress towards regional sustainability' (Measham et al. 2012, p. 176). As well as the decline of agriculture, other issues such as youth out-migration, declining services in banking, education and health care have also had noticeable impacts on the regions (Bourke 2001; Gray & Lawrence 2001). Luck, Race and Black (2011) identify two broad patterns relating to rural demographic change: that of population decline as a result of restricted opportunities and population growth resulting from counter urbanisation. Many rural communities are experiencing population decline and as government funded services are calculated on population levels, services are also declining (Alston 2009). The social capital of rural areas is perceived to be declining (Bourke 2001) as it becomes difficult to attract and retain professionals especially in more remote areas. Youth are leaving for better opportunities for work and education in the city and many rural / remote communities (as well as those in agriculture) have ageing populations. Also, more women than men are leaving agricultural areas for work in the city, further masculinising that sector

(Barr 2009; Pini 2007). These trends deplete the base of potential citizens who can participate in policy development.

In some areas the tree or sea change phenomenon is a positive for rural communities as urban dwellers move for lifestyle reasons to attractive rural towns mainly on the coast – (sea change) or the bush or mountain locations – (tree change) to work or retire (Barr 2009; Salt 2004). However remote towns with fewer social amenities usually do not attract this demographic. Plowman et al. (2003) and others suggest innovation as to why some Australian rural towns and regions seem to thrive and others do not (Barr 2009; Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Plowman et al. 2003; Salt 2004). What makes a difference is not necessarily size, existing industry, or scenic attractiveness; instead it is mobility of people. Those towns with net inflows tend to have a vitality and energy that other towns lack. Conversely, those with net outflows tend to lose their innovative talent, leaving behind an increasingly conservative monoculture (Plowman et al. 2003, p. 1). Other factors contributing to healthy rural communities, such as access to a choice of services such as health and education, can be constraints for families considering living in remote areas.

There is becoming an even greater disparity between urban and rural / regional / remote as well as between struggling regions and thriving regions. Unfortunately within regions and between regions, towns compete for funding for projects and infrastructure (Barr 2009). This means that some towns lose out to bigger centres even within their own region as larger towns ('sponge centres') are able to attract more government facilities and services (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003, p. 97). What this means for participation in policy development is that activists are more likely to be located nearer the larger centres, for example in Longreach in CWQ, as travel costs even within the region and certainly beyond can prohibit or stifle participation and activism in centrally located meetings.

Many rural towns and dwellers are regarded as being disadvantaged and a seminal report by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HRAEOC), the 'Bush Talks' report, highlighted the severity of this in 1999. Governments were regarded as failing rural communities:

Direct preventive services are simply not there; rural decline, if I can be forgiven a shorthand term for a complex phenomenon, is directly undermining the capacity of rural families to protect, support and assist their children and young people and the capacity of communities to secure the future for themselves and their youth. And the abject neglect of remote communities systematically undermines every good intention of family and community leaders. (Australian Human Rights Commission 1999)

There has been little improvement since, as the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) indicate. The SEIFA reveal that rural Australia is still largely disadvantaged compared to other areas within Australia. These indicators are indicators only but have proved to be useful for health status at least (Alston 2009, p. 10). SEIFA indexes for CWQ are discussed in Appendix One.

## **Remote and very remote communities**

The changes occurring in rural communities are likely to be exacerbated in remote and very remote communities (a definition and map for remote and very remote Australia is provided in Chapter 1). Remote regions tend to have the following characteristics: low population; few towns; higher Indigenous population; spread over a vast geographic area; long distance from government decision making centres; and many remote areas endure difficult boom and bust environmental cycles in arid or semi-arid zones. However as:

The forces that make government distant from desert regions will ... never go away – there will always be more people, more voters, more genuine need for services and sales in cities, and so there will always be more attention paid there. Desert dwellers need to accept this ... they need to think about how to manage for and take advantage of this reality, not fight against it. (Stafford Smith 2008a, p. 12)

Issues for remote areas have been highlighted in a recent report to governments conducted by Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA), *Fixing the hole in Australia's Heartland: How Government needs to work in remote Australia* (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012). The report contends that governments have consistently failed remote Australia. The report's definition of remote Australia includes 85 per cent of Australia's landmass and includes communities that are a long distance from centres of economic and political decision making (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012).

The authors argue that without a national interest in micro-economic reform in remote Australia, remote communities will continue to be disadvantaged. Solutions will continue to be *bandaid* and not sustainable in the long-term. They suggest that community engagement and decentralised governance approaches seem the most likely way to deliver benefits to remote areas. Currently attention is only spasmodic and focussed mostly on crises such as aboriginal disadvantage or issues connected with fly in / fly out mining (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012, p. 10). The report highlights an approach called *Royalties for Regions* which purports to keep some of the revenue from mining in the regions from which

the resources were extracted. The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) (based in CWQ), which played a leadership role in the LEB WR deliberations, is showcased as an *inspiring* example of overcoming *governance dysfunction* by providing local services that would not be available otherwise.

Others have also focussed on governance issues for remote Australia (Brown & Bellamy 2010) community engagement in the Lake Eyre Basin and remote Queensland (Cheshire 2006; Desert Channels Queensland 2004; Herbert-Cheshire 2000, 2001, 2003; Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005, 2007) and issues for the rangelands (the vast majority of the interior of Australia's landmass which is grazed by domestic or wild animals) (Fitzhardinge 2012; Kelly, D 2005).

### **Power and rural**

As power is a central concept in this research it is useful to consider the rare empirical studies that directly address power in relation to rural people or rural environments. Gill (2008) considers power relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law as manifested through occupancy and use of the main homestead, *the big house*, on Australian farms. She found that through this manifestation of power, tensions inherent in farming were channelled away from the farm and onto the female kin-keepers relationships thereby protecting the farm. However despite the tension, overt hostility was averted through important relationship management engineered by female farm partners. Power based decision making with regard to who lives in the *big house* and what that actually means was explored in this research.

Graham (2014) examines the connection between trust and power in achieving collective action in managing a highly invasive and noxious weed (serrated tussock) occurring across a vast area on Australian farms in two locations. This study found that the interrelation between trust and power was useful for understanding positive and negative relations amongst the stakeholders involved including government staff and farmers. She found that when trust and power worked well together land managers and government staff were more likely to share information, be supportive and accept enforcement. However when one is present and the other not, resistance and disengagement occurred. This study has relevance to the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy development as it shows that collective action on a Natural Resource Management issue will only be achieved 'when the focus shifts from enforcement to building stronger rural social relations in which trust and power work in synergy' (Graham, 2014, p.87).

## ***Section Two: Developing rural policy***

Government policy for regional, rural and remote Australia until recently has been sectorally focussed on agriculture. Agricultural restructuring however resulted in the decline of importance of agriculture to the Australian economy and the recognition that rural communities are more diverse than just their (in some cases former) agricultural base. Rural, or as its sometimes termed regional, development policy has largely grown out of agricultural policy. Rural policy making has been dominated by economics (neoliberalism) (Gray & Lawrence 2001) and it is unlikely to work well for remote communities when 'market forces (alone) determine population distribution and indirectly, provision for that population' (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 38). They and others (Alston 2009; Higgins & Lockie 2002) argue that rural policy in Australia needs to have a greater emphasis on social policy.

As previously mentioned, governments in Australia moved away from supporting and encouraging the development of agriculture as a tool to open up and develop rural communities to decreasing government support, based on economic rationalist thinking. 'The emergence of farm adjustment as a policy objective during the 1970's marked an important shift in rural policy goals' (Higgins & Lockie 2001, p. 180). This change is part of the broader move to neoliberal approaches to policy in general in Australia (Alston 2009; Brown & Bellamy 2010; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Higgins & Lockie 2002). A move towards a focus on self-help in rural policy has been evident for example in drought, regional development and NRM policy.

Farmers and rural community residents have been noted as resisting policy (Aslin & Lockie 2013; Dibden & Cocklin 2007; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Gray & Sinclair 2005; Herbert-Cheshire 2003). Resistance is often portrayed as lack of ability to adapt to change (Dibden & Cocklin 2007), however resistance can prove useful to reshape policy to meet local needs – as some concessions may be gained. Negotiation to shape policy to local needs is referred to as a *translation* of policy by Herbert-Cheshire (2003, p. 455) and explains part of what happened with the shaping of Wild Rivers policy in the Lake Eyre Basin. I understand resistance in this context to mean action taken in opposition to 'structures of inequality or oppression' (Spencer 1996:488 cited in Dibden & Cocklin 2007) and responses to 'threatened livelihoods, a sense of moral injustice, or political disagreement' (Kull 2002 cited in Dibden & Cocklin 2007, p. 177).

Some of the key issues for current rural policy development identified by researchers include: increased cost shifting from commonwealth to state and state to local governments without full devolution of authority and control, lack of resourcing and legitimacy for local

government, institutional barriers between the layers of government (Brown 2005) and citizen participation and engagement issues (Brown & Bellamy 2010; Cavaye 2004; Head, B, W. 2007; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005). The latter will be explored more fully below.

## **Influencing policy through regional governance**

While the two *lower* tiers of government are the most visible layers of governance in Central Western Queensland, other bodies including Economic Development Agencies (EDA) and regional NRM bodies play an important role in regional governance. Regional governance is understood as ‘the combination of institutions, processes and relationships that govern economic, social and environmental decision making at the regional scale’ (Brown 2005, p. 19). Governments play a major role, but many people and organisations outside government are involved (Ryan S et al. 2010). These bodies can play a critical role in shaping policy at times as RAPAD did in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy development.

Governance issues have been examined for regional Economic Development Agency (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Brown 2005) and regional NRM bodies (Brown & Bellamy 2010; Head, B 2005; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moore 2005; Ryan S et al. 2010). Constraints on the regional organisations include: tension between funder expectations and client needs; lack of reliable funding and lack of legitimacy in the eyes of clients and sometimes funders; wide ranging roles; the absence of community and political support; and a perception by Economic Development Agency practitioners that their impact on the economy or their region or community is limited (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003, p. 146).

Regional Economic Development Agencies are often relatively powerless with limited funding and few regulatory powers. Unlike governments, they cannot take direct action to achieve change and are therefore driven to influencing decision makers in the public and private sectors (Beer & Maude 2005). However their communities and funders often have big expectations of what they should deliver. While a number of issues limit their ability to perform ‘perhaps the greatest challenge is to find ways to persuade central government to transfer genuine power – and resources – to the governance agencies they have established’ (Beer & Maude 2005, pp. 75-6).

Despite the growing recognition and importance of local government it too has its own share of problems in that Australian local government remains ‘formally, financially and politically weak by most comparative standards’ (Brown 2005, p. 21). Local government’s share of ‘own-purpose public sector expenditure is around 6% of total government spending as

against 18% in Canada or 24% in USA' (Brown 2005). Brown (2005, 2007, 2008, 2010) examines issues between the three tiers of government which constrain local government's ability to perform. RAPAD, the regional development organisation for CWQ, is largely funded by and represents local government. Constraints on such organisations weaken their ability to take facilitatory or leadership roles in policy development. Despite these, RAPAD still managed to play a critical role in the development of the LEB WR policy.

When considering how citizens can influence policy in remote areas the region, as a spatial scale and as a site of potential activism and leadership, is important. Regions are a construct of various bodies including governments as a tool to deliver services and manage responsibilities. Regions vary greatly geographically, environmentally and demographically from each another and under current systems are forced to compete with each other for funding as are towns within regions (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Gray & Lawrence 2001). Some regions are able to 'generate or attract innovation and change for the better, while others lack that capacity' (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003, p. 4). The establishment of various regional bodies including EDAs and NRM bodies occurred due to the need to serve the needs of individual members on a regional basis and also to better attract (or disburse) funding and attention that individual members (shires for example) may not be able to.

While regions have been around since the early days of federalism Brown (2005) notes that there still:

... remains a frequent mismatch between rhetorical (and usually genuine) commitment to increased community driven regional development and the lack of significant development in the governance frameworks needed to sustain it on the ground. (Brown 2005, p. 18)

Governments in the past saw value in decentralisation in order to build rural communities including where relevant state government departments as well as businesses were based in regional Australia rather than the city. Others suggest that it is a dated concept and did not work previously for good reasons (Rainnie 2005; United Nations 2008). Regional development would be better served by a real devolution of power to rural and remote communities to shape their own futures. Collits (2011) suggests this could be partly achieved by increasing the funding of regional development organisations. This could enhance their ability to lead regional deliberations on policy depending on where the extra funding is sourced. There are constraints in funding from state government when trying to influence state government policy for example, and this is one of the reasons RAPAD moved to a self-funded model.

The congested nature of regional boundaries also poses a challenge for those trying to influence policy. Government bodies and other organisations use different, confusing and overlapping boundaries for even the same region (for example the Statistical Division or regional planning area). The ‘congested landscape of regional governance’ in Central Queensland for example has been highlighted by Everingham (2006) and noted by Brown and Bellamy (2010). Careful management is required when deciding who is included and excluded from regional policy deliberations when regional boundaries can be interpreted differently.

### **Natural Resource Management (NRM) policy**

Because this research focuses on a NRM policy – managing (wild) rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin – some understanding of NRM policy is necessary. Governments around the world have increasingly been forced to develop and deliver policy on sustainable natural resource management due to a rising environmental consciousness in the population including concerns about degradation and overuse of natural resources.

Regional delivery of NRM in Australia originated in the Landcare activities of the 1980s and 1990s, integrated catchment management and the first iteration of the Natural Heritage Trust in the late 1990s (Moore 2005). Tensions between a state-based push for development and the slowly evolving framework for ecological sustainable development were evident in clashes between state and federal leaders over World Heritage listed sites after the 1970s (Head, B 2005). By the 1990s, while the Federal Government had expanded its range of NRM activity through specific purpose programs, it still had to find ‘politically acceptable trade-offs between conflicting localised values and material interests’ (Head, B 2005, p. 140).

Integrated natural resource management at a regional scale has become the normative approach to solve complex ecological sustainable development problems outside metropolitan areas. Graziers are key to NRM policy with 55 per cent of Australia’s land used for livestock grazing (State of the Environment Committee 2011). Financial pressure to remain viable in an increasingly competitive world sometimes induces farmers to push the limits of their land resulting in environmental issues that ultimately reduce the capacity of the farm. The relationship between farmers and the environmental movement, as demonstrated also in the LEB WR policy development, has been an ‘intriguing mix of conflict, cooperation and misunderstanding on both sides’ (McManus et al. 2011).

The concept and discourse of participatory natural resource management has become important as governments increasingly devolve responsibility to the regions (local

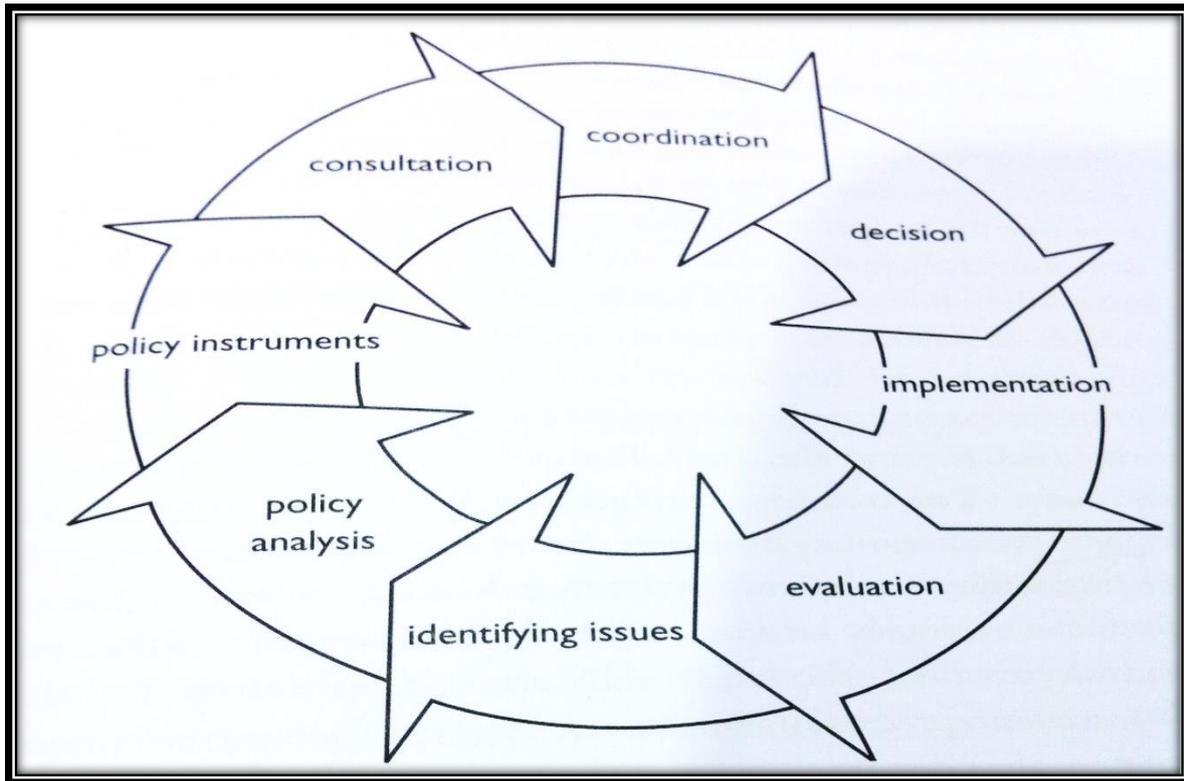
government, NRM bodies and landholders and others). Yet many authors have expressed concerns about how well people in the regions are able to influence NRM policy (Craig & Vanclay 2005; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Head, B 2005; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005; Moore 2005) despite new participatory processes. Issues to do with participation and engagement are explored below.

### **Policy development, consultation and the policy agenda – the power of government**

While participatory processes are on the increase, public policy in Australia is largely developed by public servants who work for state or federal government (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007) although ultimately it is the Minister who makes the final decision on policy (Woodward, Parkin & Summers 2010). However despite this other people from formal lobby groups, local government and regional development organisations for example can and do influence the Minister on policy. There are differing theories about the steps in the policy cycle but citizens are mostly excluded (sometimes quite appropriately) from quite a few of these steps (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007).

Government consultation of citizens in its myriad forms is more likely to be one step at least in the policy cycle. However 'no single procedure guarantees a successful result; governments can make howling errors even using the most rigorous and exact policy processes' (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 33). This makes the need for well-designed, inclusive consultation and engagement even more important. Political imperatives, bureaucratic advice, lobbyists and citizens impact on policy development. What makes it onto the policy agenda is influenced by government officers carrying out the dictates of the elected government. Public servants have a 'form of delegated power that allows them to influence the selection and construction of policy problems and to propose solutions to these problems' (Maddison & Denniss 2009, p. 133). They are expected to provide *frank and fearless advice* even when this may conflict with a government's views or ideology.

Below is one recognised version of the policy process.



*Figure 2.1 The Australian Policy Cycle (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 37)*

The question of what makes it onto the policy agenda and how, is an important one for those trying to influence policy.

The policy agenda involves the narrowing of an infinite array of possible policy problems to those that command government interest ... Policy officers must develop sensitivity to the nature of issues, to minimise surprise and anticipate problems. They must also understand how lobbyists work to influence government agendas and the self- interested nature of many proposals offered as public policy solutions. (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, pp. 43-4)

How well rural / remote citizens can influence this very centralised government controlled activity is debatable. If urban public servants shaping policy are not well-informed about rural / remote communities, the development of policy that impacts on those communities will be problematic.

Participation in public policy decision making involves some citizen input into policy which otherwise would be the sole right of government. This involves a sharing of authority and government acknowledging the right of people to have a say in policy that affects them (Bishop & Davis 2002). Rural / remote citizens wishing to influence government policy would

do well to understand the policy development cycle particularly where and how to intervene. The agenda is 'set often not by policy opinion or media attention but by influential elites either already in government or with access to decision makers' (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 49). The issue for governments in democracies is the expectation that they will manage power inequities amongst those trying to influence government. It is difficult for governments to meet the expectations of stakeholders especially when diverse opinions on policy are held.

Evidence-based policy (sometimes using science or other research) is a concept that has become more popular as it provides substance to policy development. Connecting researchers with government is supposed to lead to better policy through independent research (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). However there is a disjuncture between the worlds of research and government due to the sectors having different priorities, languages, timescales, reward systems and ends (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). Qualitative researchers especially may struggle to convince governments of the validity of *undesirable* research outcomes (Porter & Shortall 2009). This may make it difficult for rural sociologists (or activists) to use research to influence the policy process.

Some policy problems are viewed as being *intractable* or *wicked* (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; Head, B, W. 2007; Head, B 2009). Intractable policy problems are not open to easy solution (an example is policy on abortion) and governments sometimes choose to ignore them or will rely on existing laws due to the extremely divided views. Wicked policy problems, such as climate change (Garnaut 2008), are those issues that cannot easily be defined or are not open to easy formulation (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). It can be extremely difficult to find solutions that stakeholders can agree on (or live with) even with best intentions by all involved and even when good community engagement and consultation practice is used. Wild Rivers could almost be regarded as a wicked policy problem despite the fact that all stakeholders agreed that they wanted the rivers protected.

### **Community consultation, engagement and participation to shape policy**

Used interchangeably by many, the concepts of community engagement, citizen participation and consultation usually involve governments working with citizens and citizens trying to influence government or public policy decision making. Aslin and Brown (2005) however delineate clearly between the three. Consultation happens when an organisation or individual seeks purpose driven advice from someone else. However it does not mean that anything will be done with the advice. Participation is similar to involvement and means

being involved in policy development by communicating through activities such as: letter writing; phoning key people; attending events; or sending emails. Engagement is an extension of participation as it involves capturing citizens' attention and focusing their efforts on the particular civic matter. It implies that the civic matter is now important enough to demand their attention. It also implies a commitment to a process which includes decisions and resulting actions (Aslin & Brown 2004, p. 5).

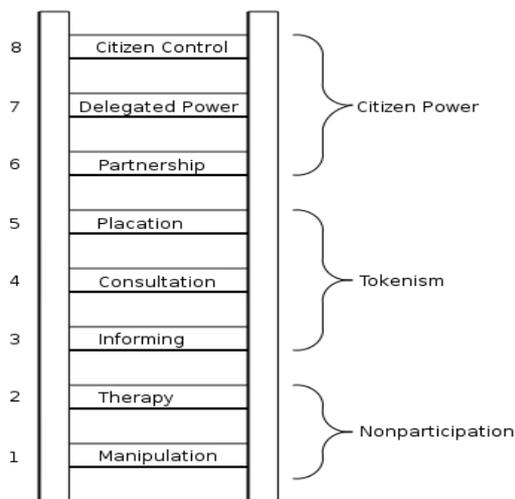
The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), a lead organisation for community engagement, concurs with this definition, defining community engagement as 'any process that involves the community in problem solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions' (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 19). The IAP2 definition also shows participation and consultation as fitting into the wider concept of community engagement. However the terms are often used interchangeably which can be confusing. In this case study IAP2 definitions of community engagement are used.

Community engagement is important as citizens today expect to have some input into government policy development that significantly affects them (Head, B, W. 2007; Moffatt 2005; Twyford et al. 2006). Citizen engagement, if well conducted can improve the quality of decisions made, (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 19) increase accountability and transparency (Twyford et al. 2006; United Nations 2008) and is more likely to lead to solutions *that stick* while giving government policy decisions legitimacy (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). While governments and citizens usually accept that both sectors can benefit from community engagement there is no one size fits all solution to how citizen engagement should be shaped and because of the differing expectations of stakeholders it is regarded as a 'contested concept' (Bishop & Davis 2002, p. 27). Good engagement is more about a 'mindset than it is about particular skills or techniques. That mindset is based on a belief in the value of engaging people in decision making processes' (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 11). However governments do not always value the input of citizens in policy development and citizens do not always appreciate the challenges for government officers in meeting government requirements in the policy development cycle.

Both internationally and nationally citizens, researchers and governments are grappling with the issues surrounding community engagement though all parties recognise it can be extremely useful. Those involved in community engagement have to manage issues to do with who controls and designs the process, communication within the process, who sets the policy agenda, when and if citizens should be involved and how involvement occurs, outcomes generated and how those outcomes are acted upon.

## Models of participation and community engagement

Community engagement practitioners and others outline various models for participation including ladders, spectrums and continuums of participation which categorise the levels of involvement of the public in policy decision making. An early model is that of American community activist Sherry Arnstein (1969) – the Ladder of Citizen Participation (see below).



**Figure 2.2 Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969)**

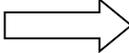
This model did not include an analysis of blockages to achieve the levels of participation or clear methods on how to conduct processes at the higher levels but it provided a base that inspired many after her to build on her concept. Early models are criticised as being very *attached to* direct democracy thereby rejecting as tokenism much that is legitimate public participation to shape policy (Bishop & Davis 2002).

The IAP2 spectrum of participation (see below) is underpinned by seven core values for public participation which are often quoted and used at least in principle. They stipulate that:

- the public should have a say in decisions that affect their lives
- public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
- public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants including decision makers

- public participation seeks out and facilitates the participation of those potentially affected
- public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision. (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 92)

While these principles are a good basis to work from and are being used around the world by practitioners, they are still very open to interpretation. Carson and other IAP2 members (2008b) have critiqued parts of the IAP2 model.

Increasing level of public impact 

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>Public Participation Goal:</b>	<b>Public Participation Goal:</b>	<b>Public Participation Goal:</b>	<b>Public Participation Goal:</b>	<b>Public Participation Goal:</b>
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the Public:</b>	<b>Promise to the Public:</b>	<b>Promise to the Public:</b>	<b>Promise to the Public:</b>	<b>Promise to the Public:</b>
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>Example Techniques to Consider:</b>	<b>Example Techniques to Consider:</b>	<b>Example Techniques to Consider:</b>	<b>Example Techniques to Consider:</b>	<b>Example Techniques to Consider:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fact sheets</li> <li>● Web sites</li> <li>● Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public comment</li> <li>● Focus groups</li> <li>● Surveys</li> <li>● Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workshops</li> <li>● Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Citizen Advisory Committees</li> <li>● Consensus-building</li> <li>● Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Citizen juries</li> <li>● Ballots</li> <li>● Delegated decisions</li> </ul>

Figure 2.3 IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Twyford et al. 2006)

Government departments at all three levels in Australia sometimes quote this model when designing community engagement processes though probably rarely work at the Empower end of the spectrum where ‘we will implement what you decide’ (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 133).

What constitutes good community engagement has been captured in ‘*The Best of Practice: Community Engagement in Australasia, 2005–2009*’ which details how case study projects align with IAP2 core values (International Association for Public Participation 2010).

However there are also a number of critiques of problematic or difficult consultation and engagement efforts (Boxelaar, Paine & Beilin 2006; Dukeshire & Thurlow 2002; Head, B

2005; Head, B, W. 2007; Kane & Bishop 2002; Kelly, D 2005; Manwaring 2010; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005; Moore 2005; Neef 2009; Ross & McCartney 2005) and a plethora of guides on how to engage citizens for a range of audiences (Aslin & Brown 2004; 2005; Queensland Government, Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries 2002; Fritze, Williamson & Wiseman 2009; Markey, Halseth & Manson 2010; Moffat 2005, The Queensland Department of Communities 2004; United Nations 2008).

Some critics express scepticism about the intentions of government in community engagement highlighting:

Serious limits on the potential influence of the citizenry and community groups ... there is little evidence that the widespread advocacy and adoption of community engagement and partnership approaches have yet involved substantial power-sharing. (Head 2007, p. 452)

Government and communities do make some decisions jointly, but often project goals are predetermined (Cavaye 2004). Governments tend to retain control of community engagement processes through funding, service contracts and regulation and thus have difficulty devolving power and control (Head 2007).

Whatever the perspective community engagement / participation / consultation is on the increase and is expected by citizens and advocated by organisations including many governments around the world and organisations like the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD 2006; United Nations 2008).

### **Remote communities and citizen engagement (and research gaps)**

As mentioned previously there are only a handful of studies which discuss community engagement in remote communities in Australia (Kelly, D 2005; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005). Three important studies examine aspects of Natural Resource Management as they impact on remote areas. Moffat's (2005) research examines Australian farming land as the largest area of land where beneficial NRM activities are required to be conducted. She posits that if engagement is not well conducted civil disobedience occurs as evidenced during recent land clearing policy development and implementation. She includes an engagement practice framework for those wishing to engage Queensland based farmers.

Measham, Richards, Robinson et al (2009) found that there was tension between deliberative democratic approaches to Natural Resource Management in the Lake Eyre Basin and neoliberal, governing-through-community type approaches, with regard to citizen participation. A set of factors for public engagement in remote areas is provided based on their research similar to Moffatts. They found neoliberal understandings of engagement to be stronger amongst research participants than deliberative interpretations.

Kelly (2005) focussed on community participation in Natural Resource Management in the rangelands. The research found some major differences in understanding between government staff and farmers on what the issues were and how they could be addressed. This study also provided strategies to improve citizen participation in NRM activities in remote areas.

There is however almost a total lack of sociological research coming from an *insider* researcher perspective. An insider in this instance is a researcher who has lived and worked in the remote location and is therefore studying their own *backyard*. The spectrum between insider and outsider research is discussed more fully in Chapter Four. Under any definition this case study has been conducted by a remote community based insider researcher thereby providing a perspective rarely heard in academic circles.

Rural and remote communities in Australia have their own challenges with regard to community engagement some of which were discussed earlier. Rural and remote people trying to influence government policy also contend with the decline in influence of the party that supposedly took the issues of country people forward in parliament – the National Party or formerly the Country Party. Antony Green (2001) contends that almost all societies have seen political differences mobilise around rural and urban interests but Australia is unusual among western democracies in that the city-country divide created a political party to represent rural interests. For decades it was an important part of Australian politics but has always faced the challenge of being a rural party in a predominantly urban nation while the number of rural based people declined. 'Bound to coalition policy the National Party has been weakened in its inability to present a separate image to rural and regional Australia' (Green 2001, pp. 61-2). Voters in general have expressed dissatisfaction with usual party representatives which has seen an increase in the number of independents in parliament and the rise of the Greens (and the Democrats in times past) in the recent elections. The seats in CWQ remain staunchly National Party despite these trends. Whether through representative democracy or through lobbying and activism, it seems it is harder for geographically remote citizens to be heard by government and to influence policy that affects them.

## **Barriers and challenges for community**

Barriers and challenges for both communities and governments in policy development have been identified in many studies. A research project from Nova Scotia, Canada (Dukeshire & Thurlow 2002) identifies the following barriers and challenges to policy development faced by communities: a lack of understanding of the policy process; lack of community resources; reliance on volunteers; lack of access to information; absence of rural representation and certain community groups in the decision making process; relationship between government and rural communities; time; and policy timelines restrictions. Many of these barriers have been reiterated by Australian researchers who note overuse and exhaustion of volunteers (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005), stakeholders involved in consultation or engagement exercises not being fully informed about the process or limits of a consultation exercise (Craig & Vanclay 2005), unclear aims and objectives, and power inequities where certain sectors are regularly unconsulted or under consulted ((2009; Brackertz & Meredyth 2008; Cavaye 2004; Moffatt 2005; Moore 2005; Ross & McCartney 2005). However Herbert-Cheshire (2003) shows how rural policy can be shaped to better fit rural communities through the agency of rural people.

## **Challenges and barriers for government**

Challenges for government policymakers identified in the Nova Scotia study include: perceived resistance of communities as a partner in policy development; jurisdictional issues (who does what); the attitude of government towards rural communities (having an urban bias); and structural barriers within government (Dukeshire & Thurlow 2002). These issues also occur in Australia and have been examined by a number of Australian researchers (Boxelaar, Paine & Beilin 2006; Brown 2005; Brown & Bellamy 2010; Head, B 2005; Head, B, W. 2007; Moffatt 2005).

The need for representativeness and social inclusion is one of a number of core issues in community engagement (Brackertz & Meredyth 2008). Who has been included and how, who has not and why not and who decides that, are key questions for all such processes. Certain sectors of the community are regarded as being regularly under consulted, hard to reach or excluded. Researchers generally pinpoint women (Alston 2009; Moore 2005; Ross & McCartney 2005), Indigenous people (Australian Government 2009; Saggars 2005), older people (Leonard & Johansson 2008), youth, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse populations (Queensland Government 2007a) and people with disabilities (Queensland Government 2007b) as those less likely to be included in decision making forums. Twyford et al. (2006) stress that the people who should be included in participatory processes are:

not simply those with an obvious and direct involvement in a decision ... the community comprises anyone who thinks they will be affected or who has some interest in the outcome ... The community includes those who perceive that that they will be affected as well as those who are affected. (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 42)

Simply naming identified hard to reach groups is not always useful as the same groups are not always marginalised in other contexts and locations (Brackertz & Meredyth 2008).

### **Sites of marginalisation – women and Indigenous people**

The Commonwealth Government Inquiry into Women's Representation on Regional and Rural Bodies of Influence (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006) found that rural women, despite government efforts to increase participation, were very under-represented in decision making bodies as the table below shows.

#### **Gender Composition on a selected group of regional bodies with influence**

- Agricultural commodity councils (91% male; 9% female)
- Rural industry research and development corporations (84% males; 16% females)
- Rural representative bodies (87% males; 13% females)
- Publicly listed major agricultural companies (93% males; 7% females)
- Regionally-based area consultative committees (72% males; 28% females)
- Regional development boards (75% males; 25% females)
- Catchment management authorities (74% males; 26% females)
- Local government authorities (data available for mayors / shire presidents only, of whom 83% were male and 17% were female).

**Figure 2.4 Gender composition on a selected group of regional bodies with influence (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006, p. 6)**

There are a range of identified barriers to women's representation including: organisational cultural resistance to women; rural culture more generally which is highly gendered and does not often see women as legitimate leaders; organisational practices that exclude women – for example holding meetings in pubs and clubs or at times when care responsibilities restrict women; inadequate information on entry point; organisations relying on known

networks – the *'old boys club'* mentality; lack of mentoring and traditional expectation of women's gendered roles (Alston 2009; Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006).

Indigenous people also are often under-represented in mainstream community decision making forums or are included in tokenistic ways. Some NRM participatory processes, for example the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee, seem to be making more effort to include Indigenous stakeholders in greater numbers and in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner. However sometimes it is difficult for non-Indigenous decision making groups to engage Indigenous people in consultation or research (Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009). Alston (2003a) points out that for Indigenous women a *'triple jeopardy'* exists as far as disadvantage goes – gender, rurality and indigeneity. She argues that the intersectionality of these factors create a bias against Indigenous women's participation in community decision making forums.

### **Rural / remote activism – power, resistance and agency**

Activism is an important part of the Australian social and political landscape. Since the emergence of a democratic system of governance in Australia 'people have sought to have their voices heard ... on issues that matter most to them' (Maddison & Scalmer 2006). It is the 'work of activists and social movements which pushes society along, prompts it to deal with its own failings and inequalities and helps it to manifest a vision of a better world' (Ricketts 2012, p. 6).

It is of concern that there is little sociological material or even awareness (academic or mainstream) of the activism conducted by those in remote areas. Indeed the terms *remote* community and *activism* seem to be almost mutually exclusive. Remote communities are referred to as places where policy is imposed and governance is done poorly (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012) or the focus is on community engagement and what governments can do (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009). The term activism is deliberately used in this research rather than lobbying or advocacy to describe at least in part what some refer to as agency (see Herbert-Cheshire and others). Activism in this sense is more than passive resistance or mere participation. The term activism was also chosen because geographically remote stakeholders trying to influence Wild Rivers policy used activist strategies to influence policy. While very few of my interviewees whom I started to refer to as *activists* very early in the research project would describe themselves as activists, activism is what quite a few practised with regard to the

Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy development. The term activism was not used perhaps because it has connotations of protest and possibly more radical politics.

Use of the term activism places a positive lens on approaches to influencing government policy by remote citizens rather than viewing such approaches as (the more passive) resistance. It could be argued however that even participating in processes to deliberate on LEB WR policy could be seen as activism in a remote area as it often requires quite some effort even to just get to such forums! However despite the significant barriers some remote area individuals and groups are highly organised and strategic in trying to influence policy to better fit their communities or organisations. Some of these are members of pressure groups or organisations with an interest in the relevant policy. Remote activists (representatives from pressure and other groups) led by RAPAD (a Regional Organisation of Councils) were active in shaping Wild Rivers policy in the Lake Eyre Basin as it stood at the end of 2011.

Herbert-Cheshire (2003) notes that:

Rather than seeing the choices available to local people as either the faithful acceptance of policy, or its refusal through overt strategies of resistance, a sociology of translation was seen to provide a more sophisticated way of moving beyond these dualisms. (Herbert-Cheshire 2003, p. 468)

She examines what rural citizens are doing to shape policy while not ignoring what is disempowering them. While the latter is important few take her more positive approach to power inequities. This Wild Rivers case study has a focus on positive approaches to influencing policy in remote areas without ignoring the barriers.

Activism is understood as:

the actions and activities intentionally designed to exert influence within democratic processes ... Democracy as the process and activism as the specific actions and activities taking place as part of that process. (Ricketts 2012)

Political action can include a vast range of activities such as formal representations by organisations, protest actions, lobbying of policymakers (Dibden & Cocklin 2007). Political action can be conducted by individuals as well as groups.

Some mobilised, organised groups in rural and remote areas are experienced at working with government and use their power to influence government as far as they are able. Some

are more organised to lobby than others. Pressure groups are political organisations that seek to influence decision making by pushing their interests, for example business conditions, employment rights or environmental outcomes. Their aim is to convince decision makers of their particular position. They use strategies to exert influence based on the accessibility of relevant decision making structures (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009, p. 113). Some organisations fall outside this definition and some governments try to rectify the dominance of economic interests in, for example, advisory groups by providing funding for under resourced groups such as women and Indigenous groups (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009). Funding may constrain independence from governments though and 'does not necessarily translate into political access and influence' (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009, p. 117).

In the 1980s farmers used protest as a method to influence policy (*agro-politics*) though more recently farmer groups are using more conciliatory methods. Dibden and Cocklin (2007) contend that the need to be more efficient forced on farmers by globalisation and neoliberal government policy and supported by industry peak bodies, has resulted in a winners or losers dichotomy (Dibden & Cocklin 2007). It is not uncommon for environmental policy development to be viewed this way. For example, Whelan and Lyons (2005) note shortfalls in deliberative processes on tree clearing and applaud conservationists for bypassing such procedures as 'activist groups mobilised community opinion and action to bring about an **historic conservation win**' [my bolding] (Whelan & Lyons 2005, p. 596). This sets up a winner-loser dichotomy and ignores the perspectives of farmers who invested time and energy into consultation processes that were abandoned midstream leaving them feeling very disenfranchised. Pressure groups seek to *win* policy outcomes through activism ignoring at times valid arguments from other sectors as to solutions. Deliberative democratic processes seek to overcome this through educative processes and the willingness to give ground. If convinced by the arguments of other stakeholders, participants will give some ground in order to reach a compromise that all can support.

Lobbying is another term that is used when examining activism and is carried out by interest or lobby groups. These are an association of organisations or individuals which attempts to influence government policy but not by being elected to Parliament. Their efforts to influence policy occurs in a number of ways (Woodward, Parkin & Summers 2010, p. 335). A formal register of *professional lobbyists* has been held by Australian governments since 2008 as professional lobbying (often ex-parliamentarians):

raises significant issues for those who argue that the policy process is open, transparent and evidence based. If this were the case, why would

individuals and companies spend millions on buying professional help?

(Maddison & Denniss 2009, p. 115)

Rural women's bodies have experienced blockages to wide-ranging consultation as they are often consulted on *women's issues* and not wider issues (Sachs 1996). A study conducted by Fincher and Panelli (2010) is one of the very few which document the *activism* of rural women, specifically the national Australian Women in Agriculture group. Pini (2002a, 2002b) examines barriers for women in the sugar industry to agripolitical leadership positions and Alston (Alston 1995, 2003a, 2004; Alston & Wilkinson 1998) looks at how women are excluded from agripolitical leadership. There are evident barriers for women to participate in policy development or activism and this is demonstrated by the lack of women who participated in the regional deliberations to develop the LEB WR policy.

Maddison & Denniss (2005) argue that government attitudes in Australia are hostile to non-government policy advocacy organisations, that their contribution is undervalued and they are being increasingly constrained and excluded and that this is 'contrary to the development of good governance in Australia' (Maddison & Denniss 2005, p. 387). This may result in such groups being constrained in influencing policy development.

There are a number of standard ways citizens or advocacy groups can influence government including submission writing, media campaigns contacting local MPs as documented in *The Activists Handbook: A Step by Step Guide to Participatory Democracy* (Ricketts 2012). However it seems that when the normal channels for getting government attention do not work some may resort to more radical measures. One example is Peter Spencer, a Cooma farmer, who went on a 52 day hunger strike to protest property rights and land clearing issues relating to Kyoto protocol targets (Taylor, G 2/9/2010). How effective these attempts are despite media attention is debatable.

How well activism fits with deliberative democratic processes is a key issue for this research. Environmental activists involved in campaigning against land clearing in Queensland deliberately bypassed deliberative processes to get the outcomes they sought because they viewed deliberative governance as resulting in environmental advocates being 'co-opted, institutionalised and neutralised' (Whelan & Lyons 2005, p. 596). Deliberative processes were not bypassed in the LEB WR policy debate, although many stakeholders lobbied government directly outside the remote-based deliberative processes held by RAPAD and the Queensland Government. It could be argued that this is a more democratic approach for all stakeholders.

## Deliberative Democracy

Deliberation is understood as debate and discussion held to produce well-informed opinions. Participants are willing to revise their positions after discussion, new information and claims by others. Consensus is not necessarily an outcome of deliberative discussions and participants are expected to argue for their interests. Legitimacy of outcomes is an overarching aim and is understood as justification of outcomes to all those affected (Chambers 2003). Participants are informed about an issue with all its complexities, questionable areas and trade-offs. Deliberators reason and argue together, and question underlying concepts. The aim is that participants negotiate with each other after reflecting on their own preferences and the arguments of others (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009). By doing this they become members of a broader group, find similarities and differences and can then seek common ground. Governments need to aim as much as possible to be democratic and inclusive and also to protect themselves from charges of exclusion. By using deliberative processes they can better manage power imbalances and give interested stakeholders an opportunity to participate in deliberation. Who gets a seat at the table when members from advocacy groups or community sectors are sought out for deliberative processes is fraught with power imbalances. There are sectors regularly regarded as missing out including women, rural / remote people and Indigenous people.

The Queensland Government has produced Guides for Community Engagement to foster the development of inclusive processes for government staff (Cavaye ; Queensland Government, 2004b, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). Governments with declining budgets may include the obvious and noisiest activists (those using the media, seeking government meetings, writing submissions, key industry groups) as well as other *relevant* stakeholders. The act of deciding who is relevant will exclude some. How well-resourced groups are affects their ability to participate in such processes especially from remote areas where costs for travel are large. 'Despite deliberative approaches between government and regional communities efforts in the formulation of NRM policies, considerable stakeholder dissatisfaction persists' (Craig & Vanclay 2005, p. 155).

For this reason some deliberative democracy theorists (Carson 2005, 2008a; Carson & Hart 2007; Dryzek, J.S. 2007) espouse the use of lay citizens rather than partisans. 'Reflective deliberation may be achieved more readily by non-partisan lay citizens, if they are more open to argument and persuasion than are entrenched partisans' (Dryzek, J.S. 2013). Citizens' juries, consensus conferences, deliberative opinion polls, twenty-first century town meetings and planning cells are examples. An important difference is that participants are

randomly selected rather than self-nominating or being selected to represent an organisation or sector.

### **Lack of trust**

A barrier to influencing policy is the issue of lack of trust in government which has been well documented by a number of authors (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; Bishop & Davis 2002; Cavaye 2002; Craig & Vanclay 2005; Eversole & Martin 2005; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Head, B 2005; Head, B, W. 2007; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005; Moore 2005; Neef 2009; Twyford et al. 2006). The challenge for governments is how to strengthen trust by arranging public governance so that citizens can participate openly. This includes delegating a range of work, notably tasks that require specific technical proficiencies to government implementation. The degree to which citizens can actively contribute to governance is important as well as how they can benefit from government systems and processes (United Nations 2008). Cavaye's (1996) PhD research in the US and Canada showed that local relationships can be built and will help overcome cynicism about government, as 'many community people respected and felt "connected" to local public servants while despising their agency or government as a whole' (Cavaye 2002, p. 12).

### **Social capital and community capacity building**

The social capital (or lack of) in rural and remote communities also impacts on the ability to advocate for positive change. Social capital is based on the premise that social networking can bring benefits for the community as a whole (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; Putnam, R 2001; Putnam, RD 1995). Social networking is understood as people in a community who trust each other, work and socialise together. Social capital in remote areas is a different concept as distances between people in the region plus small numbers of people in isolated towns and / or on isolated farms a long distance from centralised governments adds another element to any government capacity building exercises. People in rural and remote communities are sometimes presumed to have harmonious relationships and a greater feeling of membership or community. This is an oversimplification especially as populations decline and people work harder on increasingly isolated properties to maintain profit. However remoteness does often seem to encourage cooperative relationships between distanced stakeholders or colleagues.

A common development practice of government departments a decade ago was to build community resilience and social capacity. This is termed Community Capacity Building (CCB). Similar to social capital, CCB is:

community effort, time, resources, leadership and commitment directed towards community identified goals and change ... Intrinsic to most descriptions of community capacity are ideas and practices of community participation. (Verity 2007, p. 5)

From a government perspective CCB was an essential strategy to strengthen the wellbeing of individuals, families in communities and underpinned much of the work of government and non-government agencies (Verity 2007). Cavaye (2004) makes an important point however that:

The idea of building community capacity undervalues the existing often informal capacity of communities and reinforces paternal approaches to communities. Community capacity building needs to be reframed into capacity appreciation or extension, or helping local people build their community's capacity. (Cavaye 2004, p. 11)

An example of this kind of paternalism is government's lack of appreciation of or use of community (including but not limited to Indigenous) knowledge in environmental decision making. Local knowledge is seen as lacking rigor or being unreliable and it exacerbates issues when locals work on the same committees as technical experts (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009).

Whether the use of new interactive communications technologies can enhance social capital in communities is debated (Pigg & Crank 2004). However for those geographically remote Interactive Communications Technologies (ICTs) is one option which may aid participation in policy decision making.

### **eDemocracy – a way to influence policy from remote communities?**

eDemocracy involves the use of technology, usually the internet, to allow citizens to comment on policy online or vote and so on. While this may work well for some in remote communities it will not provide equal access but will enable those who have access to such technology and the literacy skills to respond adequately. Lack of infrastructure and connectivity in remote areas is of course a key issue. Rural and remote based women in Queensland were early adopters of ICTs and are quick to use technology to suit their needs

(The Rural Women and ICT's Research Team 1999). Key identified issues include: equitable access; responsiveness and security; and authentication (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). While this is in its infancy in Australia, the Queensland Government established an eDemocracy Unit and has an eDemocracy Policy Framework (Queensland Government 2004a). Queensland was the first state in 2012 to appoint a Minister with responsibility for e-democracy. eDemocracy in its various forms may prove useful in the future for citizens in remote communities if issues surrounding it are managed.

### **Queensland Rural Women's Network: Policy to Possibility Report**

In 2011 the author was commissioned (as a consultant) by Queensland Rural Women's Network to conduct a government funded statewide research project into how the Queensland Government was engaging rural women and how rural women were engaging or working with the Queensland Government. Methods included 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews – 20 with rural / remote women from a range of locations, work and ethnic backgrounds and 20 government staff whose work included rural women (again from across the state and from a mix of departments). A survey was also conducted with rural women and Queensland Government staff, a comprehensive literature review was completed and a resources list compiled. The findings of this project are directly relevant to this PhD research on how women and men in remote areas can influence government policy (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011).

The report is still in draft and has not been published possibly due to concerns about some of the findings at the time when a difficult state election was looming. The findings did capture some of the discontent that was evident in that landslide defeat. Like others, see for example, (Porter & Shortall 2009) some of the findings perhaps were *unpalatable* to government steering committee members as it was tabled just before the election was announced and government staff were already in unofficial election mode, preparing themselves for what they knew would be a tough election.

The project was initiated by anecdotal evidence that rural women in Queensland were feeling disengaged. The research showed that many rural women are under-consulted or at times poorly consulted. Other rural women reported being engaged and consulted and / or lobbying and some (a small number) are recognised as having a great deal of influence on policy. Other findings of relevance to influencing policy include: finding government a difficult maze to navigate through; negativity towards government; community engagement being regarded as consultation; rural women are a diverse, non-homogenous group; problem

solving, that is offering solutions should be used more as a strategy to engage governments; and the Queensland Government was considered to be South East centric.

Other findings of relevance to this research include: negativity towards government was evident; and there are barriers to rural women participating in community engagement activities reiterating what other researchers have found (Alston 1995, 2003b; Alston & Wilkinson 1998; Bryant & Pini 2011; McGowan 2011; Pini 2002a; Poiner 1990; Ross & McCartney 2005; Sheridan & Haslam McKenzie 2009; Shortall 2002, 2008; Whittenbury 2003). The issues that constrain the participation of rural women include: distance from meetings (most women who answered the survey lived outside rural and remote towns); lack of information on consultation activities being held; lack of faith in the outcomes; lack of time to attend them; cost to business; not being able to attend due to job obligations; and lack of care support, for example for childcare, the elderly and special needs. Participation in community engagement activities for rural women is largely an *age and stage* phenomenon. Once rural women are past early career, childrearing and distance education teaching roles (for isolated farm women) they are more inclined to participate in civic activities. Those rural women who work for the state government are constrained in their ability to participate in consultation and lobbying and sometimes other engagement activities.

A major factor excluding women is that gender is often not considered in the make-up of advisory or consultative groups. The report also found that consultation needs to occur earlier in the policy process. Some of the issues with setting boundaries could be overcome if citizens are more involved in the initial stages. Government needs to genuinely listen to rural citizens and value community-based experience. Often the same people are consulted – the easy to consult, the skilled / educated / experienced / wealthy and accessible. The random selection processes of some deliberative democracy forums could overcome this issue and that of ensuring both genders are adequately represented. Consultation comes at a sometimes considerable financial cost to those travelling to rural centres to be consulted. There is a tension between declining government resources (sometimes referred to by government staff as *government efficiencies*) and the need to consult in a respectful and effective manner. While consultation is occurring across Queensland there is a lack of use of more innovative methods for example, citizens' juries, Speak Out, and so on. More innovative methods of consultation should be considered. Consultation processes need to be made more transparent, accountable and better explained.

This chapter has outlined two relevant bodies of literature. Section one covers the changes to agriculture and rural and remote communities in Australia and how these changes may impact on remote citizens' ability to influence policy. Section two examines literature on rural

policy and the role of governments and citizens in shaping it. The next chapter, Chapter Three, outlines the theoretical approach taken in this research including a discussion of Lukes radical theories on power, power and gender, intersectionality, deliberative democratic theory and Ecological Sustainable Development frame this research.

## Chapter Three: Theory

I draw on a number of theories to examine what influence women and men in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) can have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources. In particular I draw on Lukes' radical theories on power (Lukes 2005). Deliberative Democratic Theory (DDT) is also of relevance to this research and is used to assist in the analysis of data.

Because civic leaders with positional power in remote communities tend to be older white males, gender and intersectionality are critical concepts in my analytical framework. Finally I draw on Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) to frame the research. In this chapter these concepts are explained in some detail – including why these lenses were chosen and how they will enhance an understanding of power and influence in the increasingly important policy arena of water use / conservation.

My ontological position is a useful place to start to explain my choices of epistemological lenses as 'ontology logically precedes epistemology which logically precedes methodology' (Blaikie quoted in Grix 2002, p. 177). A critical theory approach rather than a positivist, postpositivist or constructivist approach is used in this research. Basic beliefs underpinning the critical approach include that reality is shaped by history including social, political, cultural, ethnic and gender values that are crystallised over time (Guba & Lincoln 2005). My ontological position includes a world view which values women as well as men.

As a long-term rural / remote community resident and insider researcher I value rural / remote communities. Taking a critical approach meant probing some uncomfortable *truths* for me as an insider researcher and former remote community resident. Key to this approach is the desire to seek an understanding of why things are the way they are as well as to find possible solutions. While there is extensive research literature focussing on the 'despair and demoralisation [felt] in many parts of rural Australia where the effects of the rural downturn have been felt most acutely' (Herbert-Cheshire 2003, p. 468), there is a lot less focussing on positive approaches to address rural decline. Like Herbert-Cheshire who examined the agency of rural people to influence policy, this research also seeks to address this balance by looking at activist efforts and the capacity to influence policy even where there are deeply divided perspectives.

Epistemology then is concerned with the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validation and the 'possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be. In short, claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known'

(Blaikie quoted in Grix 2002, p. 177). Derived from the Greek words episteme (knowledge) and logos (reason), epistemology focuses on the knowledge-gathering process and looks at the development of new models or theories. Knowledge, and the ways of discovering it, is not static, but forever changing (Grix 2002). Epistemologically critical theorists believe that reality is transactional / subjectivist and includes value laden findings (Guba & Lincoln 2005).

Lukes and others guide my conduct of the research and examination of the research findings. These theorists are discussed below.

### **Power: A Radical View**

Steven Lukes *Power: A Radical View* (2005) was first published in 1974 and was extremely influential in aiding the debate on the theory of power as well as how and if his theory on power relations could be tested empirically. Its original focus was the American political system. Lukes develops and defends his theory by critiquing other theorists' work including Foucault, Gramsci, Dahl, Weber and Marx. Foucault 's theories on power and knowledge Lukes calls *ultra-radical*. The original three faces of power he posited in his 1974 version of his book are re-argued, reshaped and critiqued by Lukes himself in 2005 and defended against (often quite virulent) criticism. Despite the criticism of his approach Lukes has much to offer a study on power and Natural Resource Management (NRM) policy involving women and men in Central Western Queensland. Other sociologists concerned with power, gender and policy have used Lukes at least in part (Poiner 1990; Shortall 1999; Whittenbury 2003) to highlight structural impediments to the participation of women in agricultural businesses and in rural life. Bacchi (2009) also develops her policy analysis framework by situating it in relation to Lukes' three dimensions of power.

Lukes argues that we need to think about power broadly and consider the effects of power that are not visible or obvious. Powerlessness and domination or *power-over* are key principles. The central question of Lukes' thesis is 'how do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate – and more specifically how do they secure their willing compliance' (Lukes 2005, p. 12).

The first face of power is a simplistic notion of power that conceptualises it as occurring when 'A exercises power over B in a manner that is contrary to B's interests' (Lukes 2005, p. 12). Lukes himself critiques this, now seeing power as a *capacity* to act not necessitating an actual action. Sometimes not acting, for example withholding a vote, is powerful. He recognised also that one can also be powerful by progressing others' interests. 'Domination

is only one species of power' (Lukes 2005, p. 12). Interests, discussed later, are also a key principle in *Power: A Radical View* and are important to this research topic.

The second face considers the ways in which decisions are prevented from being made on issues where there are visibly conflicting interests. He sees this as being exemplified in policy preferences and what he calls 'sub-political grievances' (Lukes 2005, p. 25). It includes control over the agenda within policy development. That is, what gets onto the government agenda and what does not. This neatly encapsulates one of my research questions on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy.

- a) How did this issue get on the policy agenda in the first place? That is – why this issue and why this way? What becomes a policy priority and why and who has the power to shape this?

Agenda setting - what made it onto the government's agenda and what did not - is very relevant to the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy as by the time Wild Rivers policy was being developed and discussed by interested stakeholders it was already an election promise. Despite promises of government consultation the policy was almost certain to be approved. It was now just a matter of how and whether it could be shaped to suit competing interests. What was not on the agenda perhaps is policy that reflected the interests of other stakeholders who may have had less power such as – pro- irrigationists, Indigenous people claiming the right to access water, agriculturalists concerned about mining and other environmental aspects that impact on production and local government officials wanting assurances they could continue to maintain weirs and conduct quarrying for road building material. Initially green interests advanced the policy onto the government agenda. This thesis examines those competing interests and the power relations inherent in the deliberations.

In discussing the third face of power Lukes critiques the first two faces as having too much focus on individual behaviour. He defends this by saying that it is still important to examine the ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics through social forces, institutional practices or through individual decision making (Lukes 2005, p. 28). He now sees that situations where power is contested can occur without overt conflict (as it may have been averted) but the potential for conflict is still there. He says *latent conflict* may occur when there is a difference between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude. The central question in Lukes' radical view of power and still the most vexed question for all power theorists over the last 30 years is 'why subordinated agents frequently appear to consent to their own domination?' (Clegg & Hauggard 2009, p.5).

Lukes also critiqued his earlier theorising on power arguing that it was inadequate because it considered only binary relations between people who were assumed to only have one interest. This is rarely the case in reality and is exemplified in the development of the Wild Rivers Lake Eyre Basin policy as many of the stakeholders unsurprisingly came to the deliberation table with multiple perspectives. For example a stakeholder might have worked in an agricultural business, but could also be involved in local government and may also be a member of the regional Natural Resource Management body. This example does not identify some of the less obvious perspectives that might shape such a person's view (for example they may see mining as a major opportunity for the Central West). People's interests are many, they may conflict and are of different types. For example how might gender shape a person's view as opposed to the sector from which they draw an income? This is deeply hidden from view and complex and probably difficult to dissect except through acute reflexivity. Shortall (1999) also suggests that any analysis of empirical power relations should seek to identify, as much as is possible, the multiple factors that led to its exercise in order to avoid superficial analysis.

Despite the fact that power relations are likely to be at their most effective when least visible Lukes sets out a three step process to test such cases empirically. He suggests researchers search for observable mechanisms of what he calls the third face of power (where the powerful gain compliance of those they dominate without a fight and sometimes even with acceptance or resignation). The second step involves looking for ways to falsify this, that is how and why could this mechanism of power not truly be a mechanism of power? Thirdly, he suggests we identify characteristics, relations and other phenomena of power for which the first (where A compels B to act against her own interests) and second face of power (agenda setting) cannot account. He also notes that even if one cannot falsify a case, it does not mean the power relations do not exist. It is more likely that the means to test them do not exist (Lukes 2005, p. 64). In terms of assessing whether a person's or groups' power was greater than another in a given situation Lukes suggests that the more powerful agent exhibits greater contextual range. That is they can exert this power beyond this one example into other fields (Lukes 2005, p. 79).

Lukes also argues that power is value-laden in that the definition of power and any given use of it is tied to contextual values which determine the range of its application. It has to be understood in situ but even then the attempt to define and understand power relations can be difficult as others may perceive it differently.

A key part of his theory rests with viewing the 'existence of power as the imposition of internal constraints. Those subject to it are led to acquire beliefs and form desires that result

in their consenting or adapting to being dominated, in coercive and non-coercive settings' (Lukes 2005, p. 13). This is the approach that Shortall takes in 'Property and Power' which views the owning of agricultural property in Ireland and patrilineal inheritance of property by sons as equating to power for men, thereby diminishing the power of farming women though this was largely accepted as the norm. She invokes Lukes who suggests:

is it not the most supreme and insidious form of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they can see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (Lukes 1974 cited in Shortall 1999, p. 19)

### **Power and Interests**

One of the main criticisms of Lukes' work relates to his notion of *real interests*. He suggests that people may not know what their real interests are and that others might be in a position to better understand these. Linked to this concept of people failing to recognise their own (best) interests is the Marxian concept of *false consciousness*. Gordon (2009) suggests that 'such an assumption embodies the adoption of a sovereign position of power which is somewhat contrary to its grounding in the pursuit of democracy' (Gordon 2009, p. 265). Lukes argues that we cannot just assume that people who do have options or are not coerced 'endorse the lives they lead, if those options are loaded and internal constraints work against their interests' (Lukes 2005, p. 146).

Lukes also draws on Flyvbjerg's (1998) examination of the securing of stakeholder compliance by dominant interests. Flyvbjerg found that institutions supposed to represent the public interest were actually 'deeply involved in the hidden exercise of power and the protection of special interests' (Flyvbjerg 1998, p. 225). He puts forward principles to test in future research to probe power and democracy that are relevant here. They include: power defining reality, rationality being context dependent, rationalisation presented as rationality being a principal strategy in the exercise of power, the greater the power the less the rationality, stable power relations are more typical of politics, administration and planning and confrontation and power relations are constantly being produced and reproduced (Flyvbjerg, 1998, pp.227-231). The LEB WR processes were largely peaceful with little open confrontation unlike previous consultation conducted in Cape York. Flyvbjerg points out that even though there may be relatively stable relations in political scenarios such as policy shaping and planning this still masks less obvious power imbalances.

The way interests are shaped by those in power is a complex process. Flyvbjerg (1998) sees this as power shaping rationality. That is what is supposedly reasonable and based on fact or reason is shaped by the powerful. For example it is too simplistic to suggest that rural women in Central Western Queensland completely fail to recognise their own best interests and accept being subjugated by men. Following Flyvbjerg's (1998) approach, one must also question whether their interests were shaped by dominant interests and, if so, whose interests? Was this willing compliance and if so how was this secured?

The prevailing culture in Central Western Queensland is still one based on an agrarian economy. Men do largely inherit agricultural land and women are far less represented on local and regional decision making committees such as local Councils and boards as discussed in Chapter Two. Though there were not many women involved at the deliberation stages of policy development, agricultural women were involved in the Wild Rivers policy development. Currently many rural women are partners in family farming enterprises and own some of the land on which those enterprises operate. While Shortall's contention that women lack power due to a lack of access to land ownership is somewhat dated the question needs to be asked - has the status of agricultural women changed since 1999 in terms of their power to influence policy? Lukes' conceptualisation of power will be used to explore this with regard to the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy.

In terms of power and interests, Lukes suggests that it is not surprising that there are different views with regard to what real interests might be, and that this is connected with politics and morality. He suggests that the first face of power supports a liberal view of interests, the second face a reformist and the third radical. By this he means:

[In the first view] extremely crudely one might say that the liberal takes people as they are and applies want-regarding principles to them, relating their interests to what they do actually want or prefer, to their policy preferences as manifested by their political participation. The reformist [the second face] seeing and deploring that not every one's wants are given equal weight by the political system, also relates their interests to what they want or prefer, but allows that this may be revealed in more indirect and sub-political ways – in the form of deflected, submerged or concealed wants and preferences. The radical view however maintains that people's wants may be themselves a product of a system which works against their interests and in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want or prefer, were they able to make the choice. (Lukes 2005, pp. 37-8)

This radical view explains how subordinated groups adopt views that may not have been in their best interests.

## **Aspects of domination**

It is also essential to understand the nature of power as domination (power over). Lukes views this as 'the ability to constrain the choices of others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgement dictate' (Lukes 2005). Domination with respect to identities (individual and group) which Lukes concedes can be difficult to define, can occur through insufficient recognition of, for example, racial minorities (such as Indigenous people) or geographic identities (remote Australia, the bush or the outback are examples) which members of such groups endorse. If such people feel undervalued they may see themselves as 'irredeemably defined by a fixed and unalterable inferior and dependent status and set of roles from which there is no exit' (Lukes 2005, p. 119). This can be applied to the political powerlessness, anger and apathy that many rural people profess to feel with regard to their ability to influence policy. It is clear that many people in remote regions feel that they do not get the attention of government that they would like (Walker, Porter & Marsh 2012).

Sometimes those unhappy with a group identity ascribed to them are pressured into accepting it for reasons of solidarity. In a more macro setting dominant groups can:

control the means of interpretation and communication, project their own experience and culture as the norm, rendering invisible the perspective of those they dominate, while simultaneously stereotyping them and marking them out as "other" (Lukes 2005, p. 120).

This is of particular significance to the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy development and raises the following questions: who dominated the media? Was any sector influential in influencing discourse surrounding this policy? Was any sector rendered invisible in the policy development processes? Was there a cultural norm at play? Were any sectors denoted as *other*?

Finally Lukes drawing on Foucault, Scott and Nietzsche does allow for the possibility of resistance. He notes that Foucault saw resistance occurring wherever there was power. He also suggests that the transformation of dominance can occur through the conformity to prevailing norms (Lukes 2005, p. 100).

## **Gender and power**

Amy Allen (2009, 2013) draws from Lukes as well as Foucault, Judith Butler and Habermas amongst others to posit her theories on power and gender. While some theorists view the

self as being made up by power relations Allen says that the ability to critically reflect allows the possibility of self-transformation (Allen 2013).

Following the second wave of feminism, power has been a central concept in feminist theory about gender yet this is rarely explicitly explored in discussions on gender, race, oppression and subordination. Despite having a common aim of understanding, critiquing and changing oppressive power relations feminist theorists employ a wide range of different strategies and concepts of power in their analysis of gender (Allen 2009). Power has been viewed as oppression or domination (or subordination) by second wave feminists and therefore a form of *power over*. However, more recently, feminist theorists have examined what could empower women and emphasised concepts of *power to* or *power with* (Allen 2009, p. 294).

Post-structuralist Judith Butler (1997), a noted feminist theorist linking gender and power expands on Foucault's notion of subjection, drawing on Freud and others to look at the psyche (Allen 2009). She highlights the complex nature of power as having a mix of domination and subordination.

If following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are.  
(Butler 1997, p. 2)

Butler credits Foucault with giving us an understanding of the diverse nature of subjection but she says he does not show us mechanisms that account for the way the subjected self is formed. Butler and other post-structuralists argue that 'the category of gender itself is power-laden, that it can serve as a mechanism of exclusion' (Allen 2009, p. 300).

The intertwining of power and domination (power over) and empowerment is argued by these theorists. Allen sees Butler as saying that when power and domination occur together subjection may result. However she views the individual as being empowered in and through subjection to power because of the possibility for agency. However this agency is always situated in existing relations of power and other prevailing norms (Allen 2009, p. 302). So while being subject to state legislation on water, women (and men) are able to try to shape policy while confronting various barriers (existing power relations and cultural norms) and their experience of this (and other such experiences) shapes who they are (subject formation). This is not denying barriers and difficulties but does recognise an ability and opportunity to act.

Allen argues that post-structuralist and ethno-methodological analyses need to be expanded in the future to encompass the notion of collective power (power-with). The concept of power-with is needed to make sense of individual or group empowerment and resistance to domination. Power in and through collective social movements generates conceptual and psychological resources that make individual empowerment and resistance possible. Allen argues that post-structuralism, ethnomethodology and intersectionality will illuminate a new and complex conception of power:

... encompassing and theorising the interconnections between domination (understood as a form of power over) and individual and collective empowerment (power to and power with respectively) – that will be capable of illuminating the intersecting and cross cutting axes of power along lines of gender, race, class and sexuality. (Allen 2009, p. 306)

Unlike Butler and others McNay (2000) argues that in order to focus more on agency (arguably power to or power with), researchers need to move away from focussing on Foucault in order to make the concept of agency significant in women's studies. However, many rely on Foucault as a basis for understanding agency and resistance, if not for the detail, as a conceptual platform from which to start.

Rural feminist theorists whose research examines the experience of women in agriculture (Alston 1995; Pini 2007; Sachs 1996; Shortall 1999) and the complexity of Australian rural women's lives (Little & Panelli 2003; Poiner 1990; Whittenbury 2003) provide key theoretical insights for analysing and understanding remote community activism. Shortall (1999) for example examines how the structure of farming culture in Ireland affords men more power than women due to patrilineal inheritance of property. Property ownership is a source of power which manifests into other fields such as leadership roles in the community. She understands power as a generalised means which can be used to maintain a situation or to achieve change, to the selective advantage of a small or broad social group. She draws on Lukes' theories of power where power can be 'exercised without visible coercion, grievance or dissent on the part of those over whom it is exercised' (Shortall 1999, p. 15). She sees change occurring through direct intervention by the state, spilling over into the lives of women and through the collective action of women (Shortall 1999, p. 27).

Alston notes that the politicisation of feminism through feminist women's movements over decades was largely urban based and tended to alienate rural women who did not relate to the more radical parts of that movement. Many rural women today still do not see themselves or refer to themselves as feminists, though social change has bought more equity for women in some arenas. She sees farm women as having power based on their

'private power ... because of her importance to the enterprise' (Alston 1995, p. 25). She argues that farm women's *family consciousness* leads farm women to be 'threatened by any attack on the family, despite the fact that farm family arrangements place restrictions on the autonomy of farm women' (Alston 1995, p. 24).

Alston and others note that the power differences between men and women in agriculture places limits on women due to social relations in farming. Women's *secondary* position as farm wife is reinforced by family members, the media and significant others off the farm ... [and women collude in this] 'because such collusion affords them significant emotional and financial benefits' (Alston 1995, p. 65). She argues that should women not consent to unequal gender relations they risk losing their marriages and it may also threaten the viability of their businesses; an unhappy alliance forging compliance.

While women may not be happy with their subordinate role 'the threat of retribution or community disapproval is enough to ensure women continue to perform their subordinate role as the farm wife' (Alston 1995, p. 65). Women now have more options, for example off farm work providing: income; skill recognition; and independence (to some extent). However this has not resulted in increased involvement for women in decision making roles off farm (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006; Maddison & Partridge 2007; Sheridan & Haslam McKenzie 2009) and women lack equality at the highest levels of work and politics (The Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc. 2009, May 2007).

The gendered imbalances in power for women in agriculture is also highlighted in the work of Barbara Pini (Pini 2002a, 2002b, 2007) in the sugar industry and elsewhere in Australia and Carolyn Sachs (1996) with agricultural women in the United States. The lack of women involved in key policy decision making is still evident in remote areas where civic leadership positions are dominated by men allowing them much greater avenues to influence policy as was demonstrated in the Wild Rivers case study. Over the years rural women in Australia formed their own organisations such as The Country Women's Association, the formerly state based Rural Women's Networks and organisations such as Australian Women in Agriculture in order to take their issues forward and provide other services to women and their families. More recently the National Rural Women's Coalition which provides input to the Minister for Women ( a position currently held by our male Prime Minister), an alliance of six peak rural women's organisations, also struggled to find a voice and have the influence it sought.

A National Rural Women's Summit held in 2008 and led by Labor MP Tanya Plibersek listed women's representation as one of the key areas to be addressed. The following action

highlights that there are still major barriers to women influencing policy - 'Women from all backgrounds will work with government for better policy and on ground outcomes' (2008, Australian Government).

Ross and McCartney whose work with rural women was based in South West Queensland point out that existing strategies for public engagement do not easily foster rural women's participation and the constraints of time and confidence in particular are hard to surmount (Ross & McCartney 2005). They note that women's *framing of issues* is more holistic than men and needs to be valued.

Current rural gender theorists continue to seek equity for women in representative work, training opportunities, (McGowan 2011) and / or in the workplace. It is the view of some that gender equity may have actually declined in recent years and therefore must be actively pursued (Maddison & Partridge 2007). Little and Panelli (2003) contend that gender research has moved from conceptualising rurality as a *container* for the creation, performance and contestation of gender roles to seeing the rural as integral to the actual construction of gender identities and to the ways they are performed and negotiated. It is evident that gender is a significant factor defining power and leadership in remote areas.

## **Intersectionality**

Nonetheless feminists have criticised the use of gender as a single category purporting to speak universally for all women and have argued that gender intersects with race, class and sexuality. Much previous research on gender had focussed on the experience of white middle class women and claimed to speak for all women's experience. McCall (2005) sees intersectionality as *the* most important contribution to women's studies theory thus far.

Some consider that methods for analysing the intersections between these categories are still fuzzy (Allen 2009) and the theory needs further development. Australian rural feminist theorists Bryant and Pini (2009) extend this concept to include rurality. They note that few studies have explored gender and rurality in relation to other aspects such as: indigeneity, class and so on. They contend that this needs to be addressed and note that there is a body of literature on rurality and gender but much of it focusses on the experience of white women in agriculture. They reject:

... totalising claims about male dominance and female insubordination ... [and seek to understand] how at particular times and in specific spaces inequalities

are produced and contested between women and men and further between groups of women and men. (Bryant & Pini 2011, p. 2)

Like other theorists, they found rural spaces to be gendered but they also find, as does Poiner (1990) that while respondents did not recognise class in their community they found that 'class is critical to the gendering of rural space' (Bryant & Pini 2009, p. 53). They further contend that gender and class in rural settings is 'actively constructed and reconstructed through daily interactions, the nature of one's work, volunteer activities, leisure choices and memories' (Bryant & Pini 2009).

The intersection of how rurality, gender and indigeneity affects one's ability to influence policy is of importance to this study. Alston (2003a) also points out that for rural Indigenous women a *triple jeopardy* exists. She argues that the intersectionality of these factors impact on Indigenous women's ability to participate in community decision making forums.

### **Deliberating Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin – Deliberative Democracy Theory**

Deliberative Democracy Theory includes a focus on stakeholder deliberation to influence policy. This case study included two key deliberative stakeholder forums initiated by the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) and a Ministerial advisory committee on Wild Rivers established in CWQ, the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP). These forums were based on some of the values underpinning deliberative democracy. DDT is widely used and there are many reports by practitioners on practical uses of DDT. While there is a range of definitions there is some common ground as well as differences which will be highlighted below. While some aspects of the deliberations on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy do not fit purist notions of Deliberative Democracy Theory it is still a useful concept through which to view this research especially as democratic decision making, to develop policy through deliberation, was an objective of all the forums. Though the Minister had the final say in all three examples he was advised, and policy amended, based on citizen input coming from the deliberative forums (as well as from other consultative exercises conducted by government).

Chambers (2003) contends that Deliberative Democracy Theory has moved beyond the theoretical stage and to the '*working theory*' stage. She points out that the number of scholars working with a model of deliberative democracy or writing about this model is enormous. Thompson (2008) contends however that theorists and researchers need to pay more attention to each other's work. This seems to be occurring as evidenced by the number

of practitioner articles appearing in the Journal of Deliberative Democracy which reference Deliberative Democracy Theory.

Many researchers examining policy development in democratic society support the use of deliberation to develop policy (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; Aslin, & Lockie 2013; Carson 2008a; Chambers 2003; Dryzek, J.S. 2007; Gutman & Thompson 2004). Most see deliberative democracy as enhancing not replacing aggregative democracy where voting is the main form of democratic action and some scholars also use the theory to critique governments and policy development (Chambers 2003). However the current push for participatory processes is seen by some as an attempt by government to avoid difficult decisions (Craig & Vanclay 2005, p. 175).

Chambers defines deliberation as debate and discussion held to produce well-informed opinions. Participants are willing to revise their positions after discussion, new information and claims by others. Consensus is not necessarily an outcome of deliberative discussions and participants are expected to argue for their interests. Legitimacy of outcomes is an overarching aim and is understood as justification of outcomes to all those affected.

Deliberative democrats are interested in answering the following questions:

... how does or might deliberation shape preferences, moderate self-interest, empower the marginalized, mediate difference, further integration and solidarity, enhance recognition, produce reasonable opinion and policy, and possibly lead to consensus? (Chambers 2003, p. 310)

These questions can be asked of the stakeholder forums held in CWQ to deliberate on Wild Rivers policy in order to influence the Minister who was about to implement Wild Rivers policy.

Lyn Carson and Janette Hartz-Karp in the *Australian Policy Handbook* (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007) suggest three criteria that guide effective deliberative processes: influence; inclusion; and deliberation. This approach shows that governments are recognising the right of citizens to have input into the policymaking process. What is important is who is at the table and how governments manage power imbalances to produce outcomes once participants are there. For this reason some proponents suggest a model of Deliberative Democracy Theory that uses random selection (thereby bypassing interest groups) to deliberate on policy. Examples of this approach include: citizen's juries; focus groups; and deliberative polling (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). There are many examples outlining and extolling the random selection approach (Carson 2008a; Dryzek, J.S. June 2009) but there are limited opportunities to use such an approach. Interest groups too will wish to have

their say though it is possible for the latter to occur in random selection deliberative processes by involving activists in separate processes (Hendriks 2011).

Dryzek (2007) like Thompson (2008) agrees that theorists and researchers need to work more closely together and lists nine *tasks* for deliberation. They include: a particular kind of communication (within Deliberative Democracy forums that should aid reflection and decision making on the information presented on the topic at hand); preference change (consensus is an aim not a requirement); democratic legitimacy; impact (on public policy); problem solving rationality of deliberation; making collective choice more tractable; political quality; social learning; and making more responsible citizens (Dryzek, J.S. 2007). He contends that some research does not support these and / or some are difficult to test. He says studies on Deliberative Democracy Theory were overwhelmingly theoretical until recently and that the new 'empirical findings are quite capable of discomfiting theorists just as theorists are quite capable of discomfiting empirical researchers' (Dryzek, J.S. 2007, p. 250).

Others agree that deliberative democracy is a form of public education that assists citizens to sympathise with the plight of elected officials. Deliberative Democracy techniques can help citizens appreciate that 'politicians face the complex task of making decisions in the interests of the common good and not just based on their own or a select group of preferences' (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 100). Those involved in deliberations in Central Western Queensland did understand better the difficulties for government staff in implementation and consultation on Wild Rivers and became better informed about this policy process and their own ability to influence. Compromises were made and by the end of 2011 most stakeholders had agreed to the policy as it stood then. Since then a change of government has seen the policy overturned and the value of reaching a compromise (a Wild Rivers policy that included amendments and adjustments based on advice from stakeholders) that most agreed to is now moot.

Some see interest groups or advocates / lobbyists / activists as being outside the boundaries of deliberative democratic models (Young 2003) and yet many deliberative forums include representatives of organised groups (Chambers 2003). Deliberative forums held in Central Western Queensland to shape Wild Rivers included interest advocates. The ideals of Deliberative Democracy decision making differ somewhat markedly to those of activists creating a tension with regard to how Deliberative Democracy can include activists. Deliberative Democracy values include: mutual respect; equality; reciprocity; and a search for fairness (Gutman & Thompson 2004).

A core component of Deliberative Democracy processes is the willingness of participants to change their preferences in the light of new information. Those from organised lobby groups such as agri-political organisations or green advocacy groups may find it difficult to do this during such forums due to the very real-time constraints of checking back with their organisations and whether central organisations are willing to amend their views. This was an issue at times in Wild Rivers deliberations when representatives who participated became willing to concede some ground on the policy after discussion but their organisations were less inclined. Hendriks (2011) argues that interest advocates can be incorporated into random selection procedures such as citizens' juries by allowing interest advocates to present their position to panels of randomly selected citizens who would then make decisions based on the information they had been given and their own knowledge and leanings.

While Deliberative Democracy Theory is still developing and much research is now being conducted on it (Rosenberg 2007), Chambers (2003) argues that even a decade ago deliberative initiatives were quite common in a range of policy arenas. Open meetings to consult the community for example, have been around for decades but current approaches to Deliberative Democracy are becoming 'more sophisticated, innovative, and sensitive to such issues as including marginalized groups or canvassing silent sectors' (Chambers 2003, p. 316). Marginalised groups such as Indigenous people were deliberately included in Wild Rivers deliberative forums in CWQ and limited financial support given to stakeholder representatives to attend Ministerial advisory committee meetings.

A criticism of participatory models is that they assume that citizens take part only at the end point or well into the process of policy development. Chambers however contends that:

A deliberative model involves citizens **at every stage of policy formation, including research and discovery stages** [my bolding]. Thus, a deliberative model offers a way to overcome NIMBY [not in my backyard] by getting citizens to cooperatively solve policy dilemmas rather than simply vote on policy options. Furthermore, within the public process of deliberation, many NIMBY-type arguments are difficult to justify. (Chambers 2003, p. 317).

Citizen input into policy rarely happens in the early stages of policy development especially citizens in remote areas (Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009). Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis (2007) provide a key guide used for public policy training of government staff that outlines typical policy processes used in Australia whereby policy is often fairly well developed by the time the public is officially consulted. Certainly some citizens (interest advocacy groups or activists) lobby for policy to be considered by governments and if

successful at least get the policy onto the government's agenda, but government staff have a fair degree of influence in developing policy especially early in the policy development process (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). In the case of Wild Rivers an alliance of green advocacy groups lobbied the government to *protect* the rivers through Wild Rivers policy but there was a view from many CWQ residents that this policy had been *imposed* without consultation. Consultation followed as did the establishment of the RAPAD deliberative stakeholder forums.

While most Deliberative Democracy theorists agree that Deliberative Democracy approaches include citizens changing their minds and opinions being transformed at least somewhat, some also are concerned about the direction in which minds are changed and most do not stipulate consensus as a requirement. Some believe that deliberation has a tendency to 'broaden perspectives, promote toleration and understanding between groups, and generally encourage a public-spirited attitude' (Chambers 2003, p. 318). Group polarisation research argues that 'members of a deliberating group predictably move toward a more extreme point in the direction indicated by members' pre-deliberation tendencies' (Sunstein 2002, p. 1).

Thompson (2008) also warns that the more deliberation is influenced by unequal resources including talents, social status and power, the more deficient it is. Because deliberative democracy is based on principles of reciprocity and mutual respect this requires citizens treating each other as equals 'even if, or especially if, they are not equal in power' (Thompson 2008, p. 506). However it is not uncommon to find that even if special measures are taken, membership and participation in deliberative forums is unlikely to be equal (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs 2004). While critics of Deliberative Democracy say that inequality with regard to participation means deliberative democracy is flawed, Deliberative Democracy theorists believe that deliberation can help expose inequalities amongst stakeholders. This can serve as a:

... justification for leaders who would undertake special measures to counteract the inequalities – such as requiring proportional representation of disadvantaged groups in deliberative bodies. (Thompson 2008, p. 506)

One of the main benefits of deliberative democracy for proponents is that it may:

... expose inequalities to public criticism and create less unjust conditions in the future. They believe that deliberative politics can provide a more level playing field for the disadvantaged because, compared to competitive or other forms of interest group politics, it does not track so closely the existing distributions of

power in society. Still, unequal resources are likely to produce unequal participation in the deliberative forum. (Thompson 2008, p. 507)

The table below provides an insight into when deliberative processes that use random selection could be used.

<b>WHEN TO USE? When...</b>	<b>WHEN NOT? When...</b>
It's a complex issue that requires considered debate.	An expert working party would provide the answers.
It's a political "hot potato" and best to let citizens decide.	No decision is pending.
Creative, acceptable options or priorities are needed.	Organisers not willing to act on recommendations.
Staff is enthusiastic about process.	No independent, skilled facilitation is available.
Organisers are prepared to accept recommendations.	Bring pressured to include stakeholders with an agenda (so no random selection).
Wanting to avoid "usual suspects".	Staff not enthusiastic about process.
Needing to know what an informed general public would want.	Simple issue or question and survey would do – or if pre-debate opinion is needed.
Interested in diverse opinions.	Diverse responses are unimportant.

**Table 3.1 When to use and not to use random selection deliberative processes (Carson 2012)**

## **Deliberative Democracy and Natural Resource Management (NRM)**

Craig and Vanclay (2005) found that despite deliberative approaches by government and rural communities to develop Natural Resource Management policies, considerable stakeholder dissatisfaction with outcomes persists. This is in part due to government actions such as perceived poor consultation influencing stakeholder acceptance of Natural Resource Management policies. Governments seem to believe that by using deliberative processes with broad representation that this will foster a greater acceptance of Natural Resource Management decisions.

However deliberativeness can contribute to stakeholder satisfaction with Natural Resource Management decisions. Mistrust of government and the perceived outcomes of the decisions themselves may impact negatively on this (Craig & Vanclay 2005, p. 170). Following Lukes' conception of power as agenda setting, governments do tend to retain control of setting policy frameworks despite participatory frameworks (Head, B 2005) refuting Chamber's (2003) claim that under deliberative democratic processes stakeholders are involved at all stages of policy development. There is considerable tension for regional based government staff between their community roles and government roles when participating on Natural Resource Management deliberative committees (Craig & Vanclay 2005).

Craig and Vanclay (2005) contend that governments need to be realistic about how and when they apply deliberative processes to Natural Resource Management policymaking. Government agencies are more likely to place a greater emphasis on democratic committee processes while community members focus more on the outcomes. They contend that governments need to consider NRM decisions from a non-government perspective and not just rely on internal government mechanisms to assess the value of deliberative efforts (Craig & Vanclay 2005). Hence independent evaluation of deliberative efforts is required.

Measham et al. (2009, p. i) found that for Natural Resource Management in the Lake Eyre Basin there is:

... tension between deliberative and neo-liberal conceptualisations of engagement; and second, the evidence for neo-liberal interpretations of engagement are stronger than for deliberative interpretations of engagement.

Much Natural Resource Management policy, whether deliberated upon by citizens or not, is set within the overarching policy framework of Ecological Sustainable Development and it

needs to be made clear to deliberative committees that this means participants are required to work within the parameters of this discourse (Craig & Vanclay 2005, p. 171).

## **Ecological Sustainable Development**

A number of scholars examining Natural Resource Management and participatory processes and policy development give background on Ecological Sustainable Development as Ecological Sustainable Development frames their work as it does this Wild Rivers case study (Black 2005; Brooks 2013; Craig & Vanclay 2005; Dovers 2013; Foxwell - Norton 2006; Gray, & Lawrence 2001; Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009; Head, B 2005; Moffatt 2005; Sachs 1996; Tonts 2005). Though governments in Australia espouse ESD or sustainable development they still struggle to meet the requirements of it while taking into account linked social and economic factors (Tonts 2005). This remains a major challenge for governments currently.

The term sustainable development has been used since the 1980s though definitions as to what it means vary (Black 2005). Environmental sustainability policy in Australia fits into a number of policy arenas such as agriculture and regional development causing confusion (Dovers 2013).

Ecological Sustainable Development is an international concept originating from a report by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report. It defines sustainable development as:

... a process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. (World Commission 1987, p. 46)

It has a major focus on better fulfilling the needs of the impoverished while also protecting the environment. Both rich and poor nations aim for sustainable development in a number of ways. It is significant because it gained widespread support across the world for the concept of sustainable development and became a *blueprint* for the second United Nations conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009).

The Brundtland Report and other factors led to the development in Australia of a discussion paper titled Ecological Sustainable Development in 1990 and to the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (Commonwealth of Australia 1992). ESD is defined as 'development which aims to meet the needs of Australians today, while conserving our

ecosystems for the benefit of future generations' (Commonwealth of Australia 1992). Though its focus was the environment at the expense of other sectors, when more broadly applied economic sustainability was more likely to be included than social sustainability (Tonts 2005) fitting with neoliberalist government approaches of the time. Its core objectives still resonate today and they reveal the breadth of the policy. They include:

... to enhance individual and community wellbeing and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations; to provide for equity within and between generations and to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems. (Commonwealth of Australia 1992, p. 8)

While there were a large number of recommendations in the report for a range of sectors including agriculture and industry, there was no governmental process to implement the policy (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009).

An Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment by all three levels of government in Australia was signed in 1992 further cementing an intent to aim for better management of natural resources while striving for sustainable development. While more recently a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage carried out an Inquiry into sustainability and recommended that the Australian Government establish a Sustainability Commission (as other countries such as the United Kingdom have) this did not occur (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009, p. 28). Some regard current government reporting on Ecological Sustainable Development under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* to be very loose though it did create increased awareness in the community of how people use natural resources (Brooks 2013).

The concept of a *triple bottom line* often quoted in government circles emerged to link the environment with social and economic. Despite or perhaps because of the number of arenas around the world where integrated environment policy is used, the term ecological sustainability or Ecological Sustainable Development still remains contested. In order to provide some clarity to assist future management of sustainable development principles have been developed by many different organisations around the world as a guide to action. Common elements regularly include: equity or fairness incorporating inter-generational equity and intra-generational fairness (recognises the unequal distribution of resources by people and groups around the world); conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity; the precautionary principle which encourages action to address environmental damage or concerns even if there is not completely solid scientific evidence; integration of

environmental, economic and social aspects in decision making and public participation (Harding, Hendriks & Mehreen 2009).

Such principles implicitly frame deliberative discussions by activists on Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin. State government is usually the site for most Natural Resource Management and environmental decision making and as in this Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers case study the state was:

... preoccupied with finding acceptable trade-offs between conflicting localised values and material interests [as] the states have shown greater willingness to work with the major industry and community interests to explore the application of ESD principles to specific sectoral development. (Head, B 2005, p. 140)

## **Conclusion**

The three theoretical approaches on power, gender and deliberative democracy are applied to different parts of this research. Lukes' power theory guides the analysis by exposing how competing interests were managed in the development of the Wild Rivers policy. Specifically the research analysis examines potential sites of marginalisation including geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity.

Because Lukes does not address gender in a substantial way, I draw too from feminist theory. Lukes conception of power supports the work of feminist theorists who view women as being marginalised in a power-over construction of power relations. Lukes' focus on understanding how and why the dominated willingly comply with the unequal distribution of power in society is reflected in feminists' perceptions of power relations. For example Butler saw a flux between domination and insubordination. Despite the constraints of societal structures that impede the marginalised, Lukes' conception of power allows for the possibility of resistance.

While the case study being examined does not lend itself to purist notions of deliberative democracy (for example random selection committees), the wider definition and use of deliberative democratic theory is useful to view aspects of this research. Some argue that the inclusion of interest advocacy groups in deliberative democratic processes cannot work because their aims are diametrically opposed (Hendriks 2011). The inclusion of such groups and activists in remote region deliberative debates may mean that outcomes are undemocratic and are likely to be influenced by access to resources and related opportunity. My interest is in determining whether using the principles of deliberative democracy in policy

development forums will moderate this. That is did the deliberative democratic processes used to develop the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy assist the potentially marginalised to influence policy? Relatively independent bodies such as governments or groups such as RAPAD can assist in shifting the balance of power – did this happen and did government manage this? Did any sectors benefit from these processes or were any disadvantaged and what interests were they protecting?

Deliberative democracy theory is specifically used to critique the deliberative nature of the RAPAD Wild Rivers stakeholder forums and the process and outcomes of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel discussions.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

The aim of this research project is to explore the development of Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy in order to ascertain whether and how people in geographically remote regions such as Central Western Queensland (CWQ) influence government policy. Conducting this research in my remote community was important to me having lived in CWQ for thirty years. Little research is done *out there* due to cost and distance from Universities – the nearest University to Longreach is in Rockhampton approximately 700 kilometres away. At times the weather and terrain also provide challenges for researchers wanting to move around the region.

In this chapter I discuss the methodological approaches I have taken. I have chosen a qualitative approach because this approach is inherently inductive. It discovers rather than tests explanatory theories. Qualitative methodology is more ‘naturalistic, favouring in vivo observation and interviewing of respondents over the decontextualizing approach of scientific inquiry’ (Padgett 1998, p. 10). The degree of closeness that a researcher has to the researched and an absence of controlled conditions is more appropriate for this study as it is exploratory. Qualitative research aims to uncover the ‘complex worlds of respondents in an holistic manner using “thick description”’ (Padgett 1998, p. 10).

### **Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods – a critical approach drawing on feminist methodology**

What a researcher thinks can be researched (ontology) as well as what it is possible for us to know about the topic (epistemology) and how we might go about acquiring this information (methodology) are interrelated. A researcher’s ontological position has an impact on what and how we study the world. All research emanates from the researcher’s view of the world and is shaped by the experience they bring to their research (Grix 2002).

Before discussing my approach and justifying why I made these choices some terms are defined. As ‘ontology is the starting point of all research, after which one’s epistemological and methodological positions logically follow’ (Grix 2002). I begin by defining my ontological position. Neuman (2011) describes ontology as the ‘fundamental nature of reality’ and says that when we conduct research we make assumptions about where what we study fits in the world. He describes two ontologies – realists who believe the world exists independently of human interaction and nominalists who interpret the world subjectively according to their reality. Subjective-cultural beliefs influence what a researcher can see and how they

experience reality. Their biography and cultural world view shape their experiences of the world into categories and patterns (Neuman 2011). Grix refers to these ontologies as *objectivism* and *constructivism* (Grix 2002, p. 177). A constructivist is more likely to conduct qualitative research as I have in order to answer my research questions. Statistics or scientific experiments are unlikely to aid me in answering them.

Epistemology is a 'theory about knowledge, about who can know what and under what circumstances knowledge can be developed' (Sprague 2005, p. 5). I have outlined in detail the epistemological frameworks I use as a lens for shaping, collecting and analysing my research in Chapter Three. Conceptual frameworks chosen as lenses to analyse my research include Lukes theories on power, feminist theories of power and gender including those offered by rural feminist theorists Alston, Pini and Shortall, Deliberative Democratic Theory (DDT) and finally the framework of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD). I select these theorists and theories because I scrutinise power – who has influence over Wild Rivers policy? 'Power issues are central for all research originating from a critical paradigm' (Kirby, Greaves & Reid 2010, p. 14).

Sprague (2005) defines methods as a system for gathering and analysing information. Methods chosen should be guided by the research questions but it is our 'ontological and epistemological positions that shape the very questions we may ask in the first place, how we pose them and how we set about answering them' (Grix 2002). When epistemology and method are delineated methodology is the arena where philosophy and action meet and it is where the 'implications of what we believe for how we should proceed get worked out' (Sprague 2005, p. 5).

Methodology is 'understanding the entire research process – including its social-organisational context, philosophical assumptions, ethical principles and the political impact of new knowledge from the research enterprise' (Neuman 2011). I am taking a constructivist approach tapping into a range of theorists from varying disciplines that fit my research question and ontology.

### **My position – a critical paradigm with a gender lens**

A [research] paradigm is a "place to stand" from which to view reality' (Patton 1975 quoted in Kirby, Greaves & Reid 2010, p. 12). I use a gender-sensitive critical theory approach in order to understand the nuanced differences in the experiences of remote based women and men trying to influence government policy. Critical theory provides an appropriate framework to examine my research question as it is concerned with issues surrounding power and

oppression. A critical approach to research will highlight power relationships and expose hegemonic structures and injustice. It invites researchers and participants to discard shallow or false understandings of the world and to open themselves to new interpretations while taking action for change (Crotty 2010). The goals of critical research, just society, freedom, equity (Crotty 2010) are perhaps idealistic but also a basis of democratic societies. Some remote based citizens would contend however that people in remote areas cannot influence government policy or only very minimally.

Critical theory, or critical inquiry as it has become known, has certain elements that make it a good fit for this case study research. Some key components are outlined in the table below with a brief comment as to how key aspects are relevant for my research.

<b>Critical theory / inquiry</b> (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994 cited in Crotty 2010)	<b>Relevance to my research – examples</b>
All thought is mediated by power relations that are social in nature and historically constituted.	Traditionally agriculture and white landowning men have dominated civic leadership and land ownership in Central Western Queensland. Women and Indigenous people (and other marginalised groups) have not had the same resources or position in society to influence policy. There may be other sectors also marginalised. For example, do urban interests dominate rural / remote when policy is developed?
Facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from ideological inscription.	An understanding of what constitutes ' <i>sustainable development</i> ' will be markedly different for an urban green advocacy group representative compared to someone working in the agriculture (grazing) sector.
The relationships between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption.	Who owns land / business, who has wealth (and resources) is related to power and knowledge and therefore influence. My own position as a landowner and government worker impacts on interviewees as do other positions we both hold. This is not fixed.

Language is central to the formation of subjectivity – both conscious and unconscious awareness.	Discursive constructions were identified in interviews with activists and media coverage of Wild Rivers. Some of these have the power to shape or frame thinking. For example, the term <i>wild rivers</i> itself has come from a <i>green</i> discourse and became a commonly used phrase implying a need for protection of the rivers.
Certain groups in any society are privileged over others, constituting an oppression that is most forceful when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable.	Women and Indigenous people are not dominant players in the civic leadership landscape of Central Western Queensland for a variety of reasons and many accept this as the norm.
Oppression has many faces, and concern for only one form of oppression at the expense of others can be counterproductive because of the connections between them.	The intersection between remoteness (location), gender and race is explored in my research. Other factors such as wealth i.e. access to resources, class and (access to) education has an impact as well.
Mainstream research practices are implicated, albeit often unwittingly, in the reproduction of systems of class, race and gender oppression.	Very little academic research is conducted by <i>insider</i> researchers in remote areas. Nearly always any research that is conducted is done by outsiders who will have a different perspective to those embedded in the local culture and this preferences an urban frame of reference over rural / remote.

**Table 4.1 Key components of critical theory and relevance to the research project**

Critical theorists are concerned with ‘dominative relationships’ (Crotty 2010, p. 158). Gender is only one important target concern of my research with regard to oppression or power imbalances and remoteness and indigeneity are others.

Gender research does not equate to women alone, though it is sometimes understood that way, as men experience oppression as well but in different ways from women. Historically feminist researchers undertook research that was not only about women but also to benefit women (Liamputtong 2013) as women’s experience has been under researched. Others suggest that a feminist approach can include a focus on men as well as men can also be oppressed by the patriarchy (Price 2010). Pini (2002a) and others include men in their research as they are understood to be part of the oppression. My research is about women and men who live in remote areas and about how and why both struggle to influence policy. In order to conduct gender sensitive research I draw from the critical feminist approach.

Feminist research principles accord with my research goals in that feminists try to be aware of intended and unintended consequences of their research. They are interested in how research is conducted as well as the research itself and they are interested in the power of knowledge. This includes the assumptions we hold about knowledge, the development of knowledge, who knows what and how we know it, and the way these assumptions and understandings shape the way we undertake research (Ackerly & True 2010). Feminist researchers consciously write women into *his-story* and look at 'challenging, resisting and changing sexual and social inequalities' (O'Neill 1996 cited in Liamputtong 2013, p. 12). Adopting a feminist methodology means that researchers tend to include their own experiences, as women and researchers, in the conduct of their research and in a sharing of their subjectivities with their research participants.

There is now recognition of the need to pay more attention to the experience of carrying out research and the impact of that experience on data collection, analysis and presentation. (Liamputtong 2013, p. 12)

Feminist researchers do not support the idea of objective value free science arguing that the goal of research must be to understand how oppression works in order to fight against injustice. Some reject the simplistic concept of binaries, or *logical dichotomies*, as these do not emerge from empirical observation. Most dualisms that are used to describe everyday life are not logical dichotomies, but points on a spectrum (Sprague 2005). An example from my research would be people for and against Wild Rivers policy – there is a much wider range of views than simply for and against and these are not static especially during deliberative forums. The reality is much more complex.

Some feminist researchers (Allen 2009; Bryant & Pini 2009; Edmonds-Cady 2011; Hancock 2007; McCall 2005; Purkayastha 2012; Shields 2008; Sprague 2005) emphasise the value of not studying one aspect, for example gender, in isolation from other interrelated factors such as class, race, sexual preference – a concept Sprague (2005) calls *abstract individuation*. While intersectionality (an answer to counteract abstract individuation) has been hailed as the 'most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far' (McCall 2005, p. 1771) there are concerns about how the various *axes of domination* (Purkayastha 2012) are considered in relation to each other. Intersectionality, the 'attempt to think through the relationships between multiple and interrelated dimensions of social / political subordination along lines of race, class, gender and sexuality' (Allen 2009, p. 305), has in recent times been extended to include other intersections such as religion, disability and location for example. Feminist researchers understand that a participant's social location will be reflected in the intersecting identities

and must be recognised in any investigation of gender. Gender must be understood in the 'context of power relations embedded in social identities' (Shields 2008, p. 301).

While intersectionality came from the experience of black women who felt gender studies were largely conducted by white middle class women, it is important to point out that intersectionality is not confined to their experience though they do experience *multiple oppressions*. A key premise of the intersectionality approach is that a researcher cannot understand the power relations of any person without understanding how race, class and sexual privilege shapes that positioning as well (Allen 2009).

While international feminist scholars (Allen 2009; Hancock 2007; Kerner 2010; McCall 2005; Purkayastha 2012; Shields 2008; Walby, Armstrong & Strid 2012) advocate the use of intersectional approaches they also express concern about the methods used to understand how the intersecting social locations chosen for a research study, for example gender in relation to the other oppressed positions such as race and class, may be explored in relation to each other. Walby, Armstrong and Strid (2012) for example suggest ways to disentangle, address and solve issues relating to intersectionality. They say that the way to address the preference for the visibility of each inequality (in my research remoteness, gender and indigeneity) in the context of 'mutual constitution' is to:

... reject it and to replace it with the concept of mutual shaping of equalities and projects ... [and it is] more appropriate to conclude that inequalities mutually shape each other rather than mutually constitute each other at the point of intersection. (Walby, Armstrong & Strid 2012, p. 237).

In an Australian context Byrant and Pini (2011) contend that intersectionality has largely been missing from studies on gender and rurality and they address this by examining gender, rurality and other interrelated factors such as indigeneity, disability, ageing and class. Price (2010) argues the value of including men in feminist research projects and points out that feminist research had largely excluded men from feminist research projects - though there are feminist research projects that do include men in their research including Pini (2002b), Poiner (1990) and Whittenbury (2003). Price points out that men also suffer 'distressing impacts of a patriarchal way of life' (Price 2010, p. 82) and by including men her research was:

... highly successful in developing a greater understanding of how the persistence of patriarchy within the culture of family farming informs the development of gender theory in feminist geography. (Price 2010, p. 92)

Alston and Bowles (2003) outline a feminist approach in an Australian context: the use of multiple research methods; an aim to create social change; including the researcher as a person; developing special relations with the people studied; and seeing that 'all knowledge is socially constructed' (Alston & Bowles 2003, p. 16). Drawing from feminist thinking that rejects the objectification of research participants while noting that this occurs more often with disadvantaged sectors of society (Sprague 2005), feminists seek a closer relationship with the researched than other approaches and use reflexivity to interrogate their own biases in research design, approach and analysis (see Daley 2010; Liamputtong 2013; Pini 2004). The ability to examine and understand one's self is an important skill for qualitative researchers as the issue for qualitative researchers is not whether the researcher is biased but what kinds of bias exist and how can they be documented and understood in the context of the research (Padgett 1998). This requires ongoing vigilance and reflexivity is a tool used to assist qualitative researchers.

The use of reflexivity is especially important to me as an insider researcher – someone who is researching their own culture or location – in order to attempt to uncover ways of seeing the world that might impede analysis. According to Alvesson and Skoldberg reflexive research is 'a particular specified version of reflective research, involving reflection on several levels or directed at several themes' (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2009, p. 8). Daley (2010) finds reflexivity important as a critical research practice to understand power relations within the interviewing process, the impact of power on the recruitment of participants especially the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the research process, as well as assisting to understand the limitations of the research.

Garton and Copland (2010) agree that reflexivity can assist in the analysis of the formation of the interview and also aids an understanding of how data is produced as a result of previous relationships. Pini (2004), who conducted feminist rural research in Queensland's sugar industry, adopted a reflexive position to analyse identities she inhabited when conducting her research. These included: a nice country girl; farmer's daughter; Italian Australian woman; and academic feminist. She sees reflexivity as being useful to rural research as it 'has the potential to make transparent the context in which knowledge is produced and thus opens it up to scrutiny and interrogation' (Pini 2004, p. 169).

### **Conducting 'insider' research in a remote area – benefits and issues**

'Insider research is not faultless, nor should one presume that as an insider, one necessarily offers an absolute or correct way of seeing and / or reading the culture under investigation'

(Taylor, J 2011, p. 6). Insider researchers aim to make the *familiar unfamiliar*. An insider researcher may have presumed they were familiar with the terrain explored in their research yet it is often the case that what was presumed to be familiar when examined from a different vantage may actually prove to be unfamiliar (Ely et al. 1991).

Feminist researchers reject the idea of binaries and this extends to insider research. There is no such thing as a total insider researcher. Feminist *outsider* researchers also form empathetic research relationships that impact on the researcher's ability to collect and analyse data. Corbin Dwyer (2009) argues that the membership of the researcher to the group or area being studied is relevant to all qualitative research as the researcher plays such a central and personal role in data collection and analysis.

There is a space between the binary of insider and outsider (though you may be more one than the other) that qualitative researchers inhabit (Corbin Dwyer 2009). The personal nature of qualitative research prevents any researcher from remaining a complete outsider to the experience under study. However the role of researcher also stops any insider researcher from being a complete insider (Corbin Dwyer 2009, p. 61).

As a researcher more towards the insider end of the *space between*, there are advantages to conducting insider research in your own *backyard* as well as issues that need to be carefully managed, using reflexivity at all stages of the research project. The researcher's *backyard* is a space where the researcher has regular contact; where the researcher's personal relationships are deeply embedded; where the researcher is a key social actor and because of this becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation and where the researcher has undocumented historical knowledge of the people and culture relevant to the study (Corbin Dwyer 2009).

The benefits of insider research include having better access to interviewees and data, and participants being willing to share information. In my research interviewees ranged from good friends, and / or cooperative and respectful clients and peers, through to people I had never met before, who knew nothing of me or me of them prior to this research. A participant who trusts you due to years of positive interaction and / or shared membership of a culture – the (remote) *bush* or *outback* – may tell an insider more than an outsider interviewer and such an insider may have a better understanding of body language, sensitive topics, detecting falsehoods and detecting emotive behaviour (Taylor, J 2011). Providing an insider view in the case of remote research is to provide an academic research perspective that is rarely heard and therefore important for that reason alone. Insiders *speak the language* and

as language can exclude, knowing the words to use without even being consciously aware of doing so can show membership of a culture and engender trust.

Sprague (2005) notes that *privileged* outsider researchers studying marginalised groups have sometimes benefitted their own careers more than improving the lives of the people they researched while insider researchers may generate faith that the research will benefit the community and not harm it. An insider may get more valid data because research participants from marginalised sectors are used to negative stereotypes prevalent in the dominant culture and may withhold information that would confirm those stereotypes from an outsider. Insiders may more easily see through any artifice adopted by research participants for the researcher's benefit (Sprague 2005).

Morgan (2006) agrees that insider researchers can benefit from a deep understanding of the culture under study including a knowledge of informal structures and history; knowing and speaking the vernacular of the culture studied; having established relationships with members of the population under study and ease of access to people and information. 'However, as is often the case, each of these opportunities can also be experienced as challenges' (Morgan 2006, p. 39).

Issues to be managed by the *insider* researcher include: professional and personal ethical conduct; accountability; potential for data distortion; lack of objectivity and possible insider blindness; role displacement or confusion and vulnerability of friendships; and where to draw the line when conducting research that you hope will benefit the community under research if there are negative findings (Morgan 2006; Taylor, J 2011; Van Heughten 2004). Sprague (2005) argues that sharing one aspect of identity for example gender or location does not always mean a common experience. This is especially the case when the researcher differs from research participants in other areas of social inequality and researchers can be deluded about shared identity.

Issues that arose for me as an *insider* (qualitative) researcher included: the expectations of those you interview that your research will benefit them and my hope that it will also; seeing beyond my filters (cultural, social, educational, historical) or at least recognising them and trying to critically analyse what research participants are saying and not saying; trying to translate my findings into language others (urban universities) will accept and understand; overcoming community perceptions about what interviewees think you think (analysing whether they are telling you what they think you want to hear); overcoming old enmities and finally being clear about the role you are in when conducting the research (which *hat* you are wearing).

Rigorous methods need to be applied to manage the issues of insider research. Firstly I attempted to interrogate my own biases through memos that were written as soon as possible after interviewing research participants. I posed myself a series of questions that I hoped would assist me to probe my previous relationship with the person and how that may be impacting on the interview and what they were telling me as well as underlying (hidden) structures relating to power and gender. These were sent to my supervisors for checking to aid trustworthiness and they were discussed for meaning.

I deliberately interviewed a range of people relevant to the research – from good friends and work colleagues to complete strangers as a strategy to manage any insider blindness. I was fortunate when conducting my analysis and write up of my research to have relocated to a new coastal home in another state – some 1800 kilometres from our outback sheep station home. This gave me some physical and mental distance to view and analyse my findings.

I also kept a research journal where some of these thoughts were kept. I found it did take time for me to see people I had known for decades in a *different light*. An example is my perception of a prominent local (male) grazier who has always taken on community leadership / spokesperson roles. Upon reflection I realised he was exhibiting what one of my interviewees referred to as an *entitlement to speak*. I had always felt some resentment about this but I had not previously questioned his way of operating in the world and why he was able to be this way. Looking at power and gender in my research uncovered some of the underlying structures that support male hegemonic positions in society and for me at times when looking afresh at colleagues and neighbours this was uncomfortable and new territory. I found discussing such *issues* with my supervisors and peers invaluable at times when I was struggling with such aspects of the research. I sent my memos to my supervisors who read and responded in a way that would extend my thinking. One such response was 'lots of subterranean gendering'. For me this was a breakthrough I had not expected – I realised now my world was very gendered and that needed analysis! I had never plumbed to that depth before. I am a female in a very male dominated world – father-in-law and husband as dominant business partners, men dominating the civic leadership landscape, two sons (and one daughter) and the isolated agri-landscape where I live and work where men well outnumber the women especially when you include the musterers, shearers, truck drivers, overseers, drovers, fuel deliverers and backpacker workers. Landownership in my community is largely handed down to sons through patrilineal inheritance. Women most often enter remote area farming through marriage thereby becoming partners of their husband's business but in general having less say in some important aspects of the business. Government management positions in CWQ are no different and men hold the

majority with a few notable exceptions. This research allowed me to more critically reflect on the gendered landscape in which I'd lived for much of my life.

### **Case study methodology**

A single case study was used as part of my research methodology. A single case study approach is appropriate when the research question explores something about which there has been very little related research, particularly when the subject is an experience or concept previously invisible or comprehended in only a superficial or anecdotal way (Ackerly & True 2010). A case study is a single specific phenomenon that has designated boundaries. A case study can be bound by time, location, event or activity and once set will assist to limit data collection (Liamputtong drawing on Ragin, Creswell, Stake and Yin 2013). Yin (2009) further elaborates by saying that case studies are the preferred method when *how* or *why* research questions are being asked, the researcher has little control over events related to the case and the focus is on a current phenomenon within a real life context.

My research examines how women and men can or cannot influence important government policy from remote areas with the case study on the LEB WR policy. What influence do women and men in CWQ have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources? The case was bounded by an event – the proposed Wild Rivers declaration, and a location – the Lake Eyre Basin rivers in Queensland. The research time frame chosen was January 2009 – December 2011. These dates were selected based on the announcement to declare the Lake Eyre Basin rivers by the Queensland Government after their re-election in March 2009. Prior to that time and close to the election key strategic lobbying from environment advocacy groups occurred. The Queensland Government subsequently promised if they were re-elected that they would declare the rivers wild after consulting the public. There is a timeline of events on page 16.

Thus a case study approach was part of my methodology. Case studies draw on rich and complex phenomenon with many more variables than data points and for this reason it is essential to use multiple sources of evidence. (Yin 2009). Liamputtong (2013) outlines pros and cons to the case study approach including that a case study can provide some evidence that we can translate beyond the case and a case study has the ability to explore and describe things in great depth. Challenges include it being difficult to identify the case and decide on the boundaries as there are many choices and some boundaries may be difficult to set but need to be decided on and satisfactorily justified. Case study research is labour intensive. It has been criticised by positivists for a 'lack of rigour, being prone to bias and

having a general lack of accuracy and generalizability' (Liamputtong 2013, p. 215). However the case study is well regarded by many if multiple sources are drawn on. As Yin (2009) points out, the path begins with a thorough literature review and careful and thoughtful posing of research questions and a dedication to formal and explicit procedures when doing the research.

While there are some concerns that there is limited transferability of case study research to other arenas, this Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy case study will contribute to the literature on the power of people in remote areas to influence policy development. However new theory constructed from this research will need to be prudently applied to other locales.

### **Research question**

What influence do women and men in CWQ have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources? The Wild Rivers policy development and consultation process for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers (i.e. Georgina, Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) from 2009 – 2011 is used as a case study.

### **Subsidiary questions**

- a) How did this issue get on the policy agenda in the first place? That is - why this issue and why this way? What becomes a policy priority and why and who has the power to shape this?
- b) Are there learnings for people (in remote areas) and government from the current Wild Rivers policy development and citizen led lobbying process?
- c) What are the barriers to participation in policy development – who has been included and excluded – why and how?
- d) What processes are currently being used by government (to consult and develop policy) as well as by those lobbying government (to influence policy)?
- e) How successful are these and what other processes / strategies could be used to aid participation by remote citizens in shaping policy?

## Issues to be managed in conducting research in remote areas such as Central Western Queensland

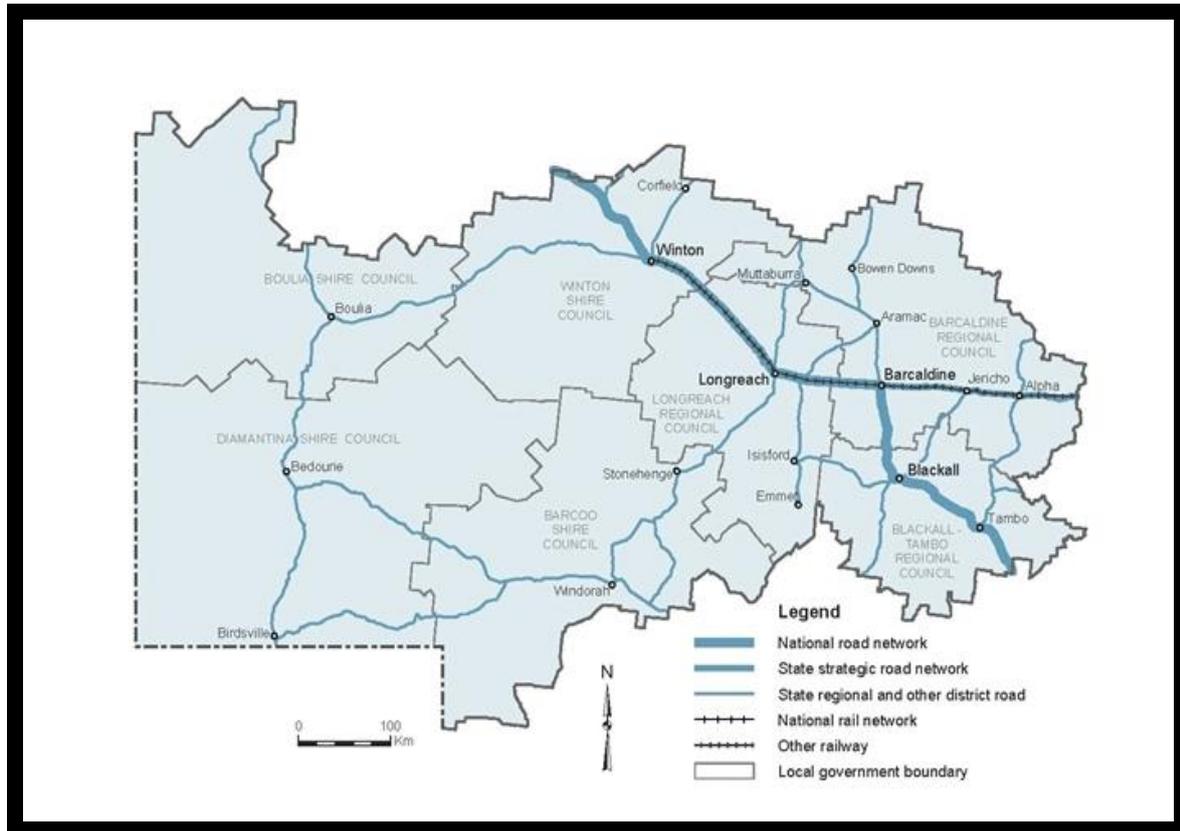


**Figure 4.1** *Maneroo Creek, north-west of Longreach in CWQ, in flood during the wet season.*

Issues related to conducting research in remote areas have been explored by outsider researchers with experience in the Lake Eyre Basin (Kelly, D 2005; Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005) and there is a Queensland Government guide for those conducting rural community engagement (Cavaye). However the difficulties and costs of conducting research in a remote area need to be re-emphasised. Distances are vast, weather conditions can be challenging during the wet season and driving on unsealed roads is difficult in areas where mapping of back roads is not easily obtained or fully detailed. For example, I managed to *get lost* on a dirt back road when I was heading to a property outside Stonehenge using a hand-drawn map the property owners had supplied. This was a road I had not been on before and I missed one not very clearly marked turn-off. This is not a good way to start an interview even with a woman I had known for some years! Adding to this there are strict limitations to mobile phone coverage.

For example, despite much lobbying almost all of Barcoo Shire beyond one kilometre around Stonehenge had no mobile phone access at the time the research was conducted.

A map of main Central Western Queensland roads is provided to show the terrain covered during my face to face interviews. Interviews were conducted in or near: Winton, Stonehenge, Longreach, Windorah, Barcaldine and Blackall.



**Figure 4.2 Map - Central Western Queensland (2015, Department of Transport and Main Roads)**

Driving in such conditions requires a four-wheel drive vehicle, a two-way radio or satellite phone. Changing tyres on big four-wheel drives is something taught to government staff who travel in the region but can prove a challenge to females (and males) who may struggle with the heavy wheels and sometimes very tightly screwed on bolts on the tyre rims. I have included some photos that capture some of the issues I encountered in travelling around the region to conduct my research.



*Figure 4.3 Using a four-wheel drive in the rain to get to Blackall from 'Evesham'.*

Four-wheel drives are a must on dirt roads, especially after rain and even then it is not always possible to travel. Travelling to Blackall to interview a research participant during rain meant I opted to use my husband's work vehicle as it had a two-way radio (in case I got stuck and needed assistance outside mobile phone range). I was fortunate to have this option.



***Figure 4.4 An unsealed road off the main highway which becomes untraversable in wet weather.***

Very high temperatures (often over 40 degrees Celsius) are experienced in summer hence there is a need to carry water in vehicles at all times. Occasionally there are heat related deaths in CWQ when someone gets stuck in an isolated place without water. Of course these things can be and are managed with experience, the right equipment and prior preparation as locals manage to live and work in this (at times difficult) terrain.



***Figure 4.5 Bushfires in Barcoo Shire on the way to conduct an interview.***

While I was conducting my research I saw several small bushfires (just starting) in Barcoo Shire – these were of concern and the Councillors and the Shire Council Chief Executive Officer had been fighting the fires to assist local graziers. Bushfires are of concern as they can burn kilometres of agricultural property and with so few people to fight them locals try and put these out as quickly as they can. This can require every person available in the location to assist.



**Figure 4.6** *A four-wheel drive vehicle with a two-way radio is a must in wet weather.*

Rain or the threat of rain saw me use a four-wheel drive vehicle with a two way radio installed for some interviews. Imminent rain prevented me from driving to interviewees at the end of the year during the *wet season* and phone interviews were conducted instead. The amount of grass on the side of the road shows that the area was actually experiencing a *proper wet season*, not the drought conditions of several years before when very little rain falls.



***Figure 4.7 Our grazing property 'Evesham' is an island in February 2012. The one teacher state school in the forefront has been closed for several years.***



***Figure 4.8 Getting to a compulsory student higher degrees workshop at Monash University in Melbourne required the use of a helicopter to get to Longreach during floods.***



**Figure 4.9** *Flying from ‘Evesham’ to Longreach during floods to attend a PhD student workshop at Monash University.*

In February 2012 we (Capels at ‘Evesham’) were an island cut off by creeks a kilometre either side of our house. This was not a cause for alarm except that there was no way of getting over the flooded creek to get to town (Longreach). In order to get to a compulsory higher degree workshop at Monash University in Melbourne I had to hire a helicopter (more expensive than the flight from Longreach to Brisbane) to transport me to Longreach (87 kilometres away by road) in order to catch the daily plane out to Brisbane and on to Melbourne. The region is not always difficult to travel around but it can be and this makes research in the region challenging at times.

## **Methods**

I chose to use semi-structured in-depth interviews including memos on observations made during the interviews and a media analysis to answer my research questions. Because I wanted to examine the experience of women and men in the Lake Eyre Basin in terms of how they are able or not to influence the Wild Rivers policy, semi-structured in-depth

interviews were an obvious choice. Memos were written after every interview and I wrote these reflexively to uncover my own biases, looking at how the participant may have been presenting their answers based on our relationship with general reflections on how the research participant felt about the interview, as well as recording any observation relevant to my research topic. Participant observation at the RAPAD stakeholder forums was not possible as they occurred before the research commenced and the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel meetings were closed to the public. A media analysis was chosen due to the *controversial* nature of (the earlier) Wild Rivers policy development and consultation with Indigenous communities in Cape York. Much negative media coverage was generated during the divisive policy development in Cape York. By the time the Wild Rivers policy came to be considered in the Lake Eyre Basin in 2009 it was already generating media interest. Thus examining how the Lake Eyre Basin discussions were represented in the media, who was speaking and who was not and why was likely to aid my understanding of power and influence. While media coverage may not necessarily change opinions on a topic it does reflect the views of dominant stakeholders with access to the media. Also government policy staff regularly monitor media for opinion in order to develop better policy and / or devise strategies to assist in policy delivery to stakeholders.

## **Ethics**

Approval from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) to commence research was received in October 2010 (see Appendix 2). The following forms were used during interviews as part of my agreement with MUHREC: 1) A permission form to interview organisational representatives was sent to all heads of organisations and signed prior to interview; 2) An explanatory statement was sent to all heads of organisations and interviewees once I had ethically established contact with them respecting privacy laws. The explanatory statement includes information about research goals and potential benefits, where interviews would take place and what the interviews would involve, options to withdraw from the research, confidentiality, secure storage of interview data and where to request reports on the research form; 3) A consent form was signed by all interviewees with options to agree to the interview, agree that the interview be taped and an option for those who wanted a copy of their transcript for editing; 4) A document listing counselling services available was held by me if needed though none of my research participants became overly distressed during my interview with them so this was not used. Data was stored in a secure location and anonymity preserved where comments are used from interviews in this thesis. Pseudonyms are used instead of real names to hide identification and ensure anonymity – this is especially important in a small community where people can be more easily identified.

Interviewees were sourced from publicly held documents, for example the RAPAD Board website which listed attendees at the RAPAD Wild River stakeholder forums.

### **Semi-structured in-depth interviews**

Twenty-five semi-structured, audiotaped interviews of one and a half to two hours duration were conducted with women and men who had an interest in trying to influence the LEB WR policy. Most interviewees<sup>4</sup> were people who used activist strategies and techniques to influence policy (even though they did not term themselves activists). I deliberately included government officers who were actively involved in developing the policy and conducting the community consultation. A purposive sample from publicly held information was chosen from the sector representatives who attended the RAPAD, Wild Rivers stakeholder forums in Longreach in 2009 and 2010. As government consultation started with Cooper Creek first, the first of the three Lake Eyre Basin rivers proposed, I too largely chose activist interviewees from that area. This incorporated sections of the shires of Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall / Tambo, Barcoo and Winton. Snowball sampling enabled me to seek out further research participants that were of interest because of different perspectives that they may be able to bring to the research. For example, a green advocacy group representative suggested I interview an Indigenous elder who was an activist on Wild Rivers but who had not attended the RAPAD forums. The same interviewee suggested I interview a female Manager in the state government department responsible for Wild Rivers and though I sought this person I was unsuccessful. However because of this I then was able to interview another similarly ranked female and male manager also involved in the consultations.

I sought to interview representatives from a range of impacted sectors including: agriculture; green advocacy groups; natural resource management groups including catchment committees and regional bodies; local government and state government; mining; Indigenous people; and a mix of women and men. Because men dominate the civic leadership landscape in CWQ, men are usually their organisation's spokesperson and representatives on such a controversial topic. Because I was interviewing activists involved in the Wild Rivers policy development I interviewed more men (17) than women (nine) though I deliberately sought out women involved in, or sometimes on the peripheries of, the debate to try to fill the gap of women's experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview participants are referred to as interviewees to avoid confusion as the words participant and participation are used regularly with regard to policy forums and consultation.

I also gained an additional understanding of rural women's experience of how well the Queensland Government engaged them and vice versa through a statewide consultancy research project I undertook for Queensland Rural Women's Network (QRWN) in 2011 involving 40 interviews across the state. I also sought out people who might be regarded as *outliers* when I was coming towards the end of the research.

Interviews were mostly held at the interviewee's office or home as being in a remote area I did not want people to drive large distances to come to me especially as most of my interviewees are very busy people, often running businesses as well as doing voluntary work. Due to previous relationships, most people were very accommodating and some even organised times for me to interview them when they were coming to Longreach for voluntary work (rather than me driving to, for example, Boulia some 700 kilometres away). The RAPAD General Manager kindly provided me with an office to use when this occurred. I did a significant amount of travel by road in a four-wheel drive to get to some of my interviews. For example, to interview one interviewee in the Barcoo Shire took six hours of driving, over 600 kilometres in total. When I could, I took a small gift with me to offer research participants, for example home-grown tomatoes, as I was most grateful that busy people were willing to give me two hours of their valuable work time.

Prior to the start of the interviews a schedule of questions was developed and I later amended these slightly after my first few interviews (see Appendix 3). Original questions were developed to probe the area relevant to my research questions but I found a question relating to gender was not well answered and was getting a yes or no answer especially from male respondents. The question was: Do you think men and women participate differently in policy discussions? Why? What are the differences if any? I amended this question to elicit a broader response. The new question was: What would improve women and men's participation in policy discussions in CWQ?

Another question that I amended very quickly was one asking who lobbied for or against wild rivers policy. I removed this as it positioned stakeholders involved in the policy discussions as being fully for or fully against when there was a lot of middle ground. Other questions on lobbying elicited more useful information on lobbying and activism. They included: Who do you see as effective lobbyists in this policy discussion and why? What tools do they use? What advantages do they have (if any)? Why do they have influence and others not? And what does a good lobbying process look like? How well do groups and individuals lobby government from out here?

Interviews were recorded after permission was received and forms signed according to the University's ethics requirements. These were downloaded to a secure computer and I transcribed 14 of these myself. The rest were transcribed by a professional transcriber when typing up proved to be too time-consuming. I found initially that transcribing was useful to immerse myself in my data but also found that re-listening to the audiotapes could provide this opportunity as well.

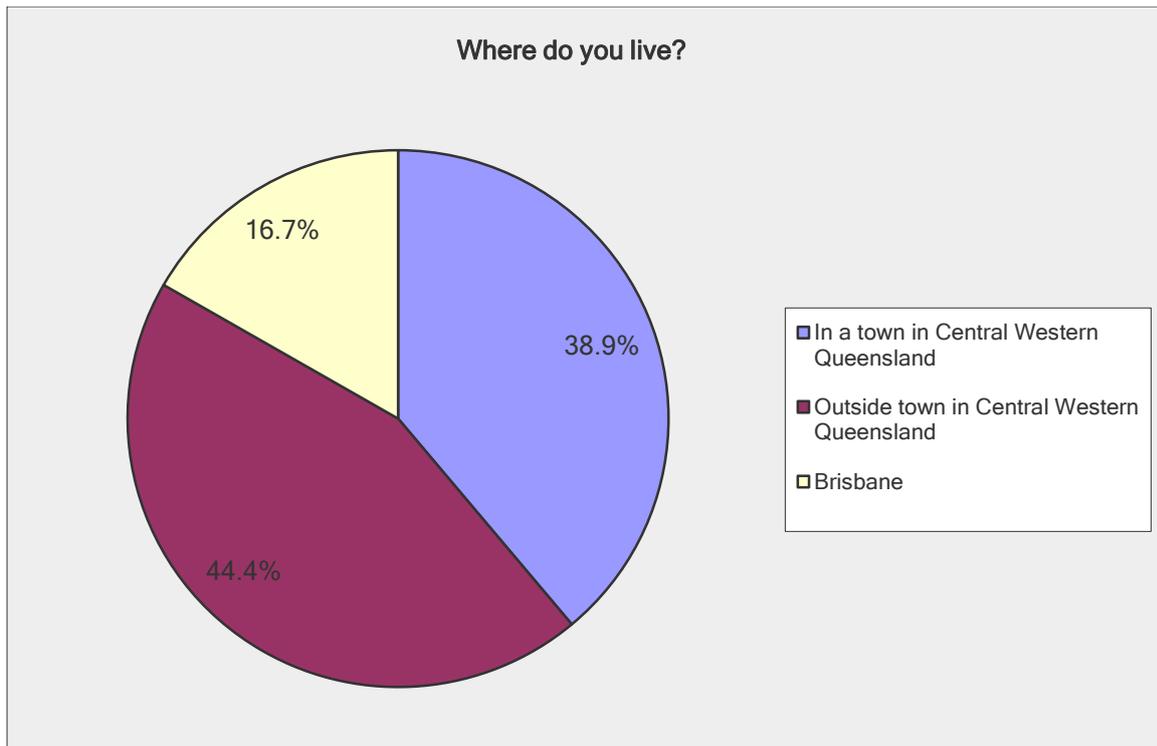
Interviewees were asked if they wanted to see (and amend) copies of the transcript. Sixteen of my interviewees did ask for a copy of the transcript though most accepted the transcript as written and had very minimal changes. However the most senior government managers based in Brisbane made quite significant changes to their transcript. The state government at that time was gearing up for an election that saw the incumbent Labor government replaced in a landslide victory by the Liberal National Party about four months later. Presumably senior managers were already in election mode and were being extremely cautious about anything that may have been unclear or was ambiguous.

When weather conditions during the *wet season* became too tricky to predict, for example whether a dirt road in an isolated area would be traversable if there was rain (rain, even under 25mls can sometimes cause four-wheel drive cars to bog) I opted to conduct phone interviews. Temperatures can soar to over 40 degrees in summer and it is not wise to get bogged on an isolated road where there is no mobile phone coverage. As I did not have a two-way radio in my car (or satellite phone as some government agencies do) I decided to interview the final five interviewees by phone (one of these was a delayed interview in Brisbane and I could not justify flight costs back to Brisbane again to conduct the interview).

All interviewees were asked to complete a demographics form and the results are shown below.

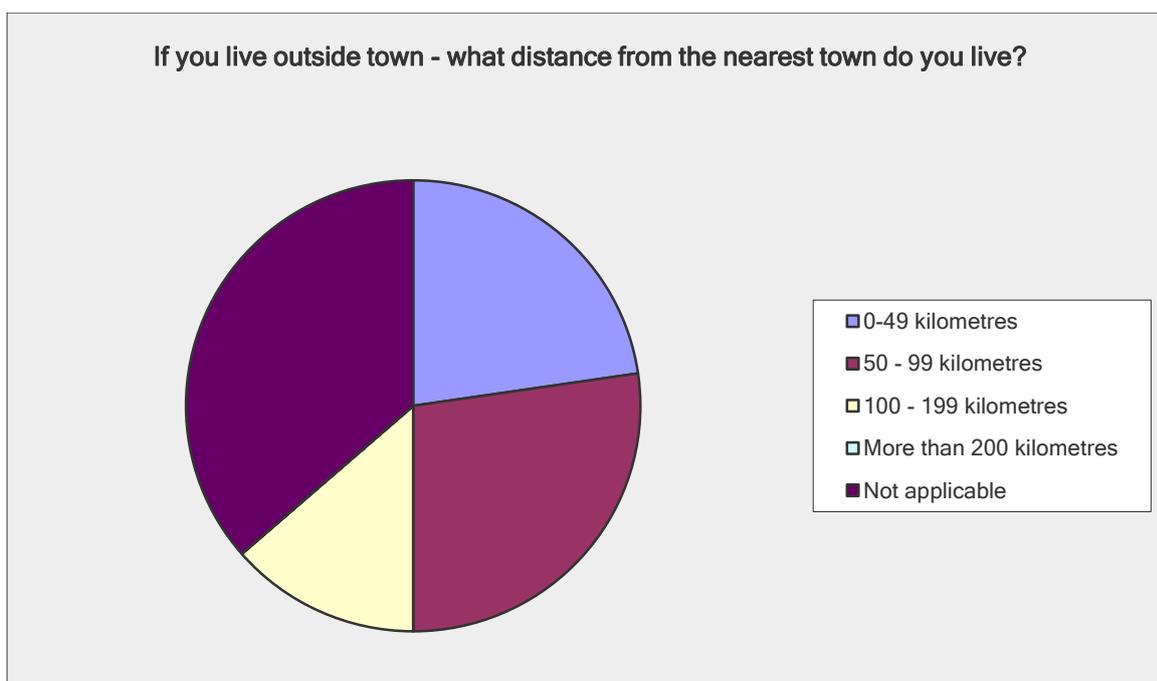
### **Demographics of activist interviewees**

25 interviews were conducted with one interview including a second person therefore 26 people were interviewed. 65 per cent of people interviewed were males (n = 17) and 35 per cent (n=9) females.



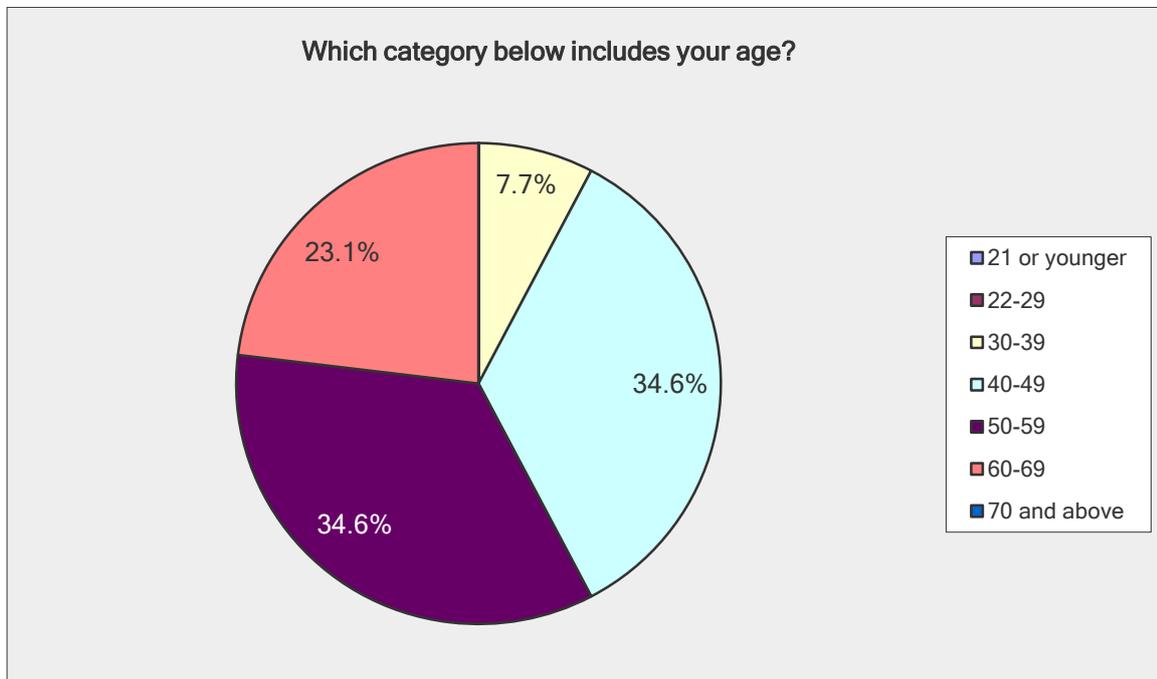
**Figure 4.10 Demographics question – location of residence**

When asked where they lived nine interviewees answered *other*. Four of these lived in remote Queensland as well making those who resided in remote Queensland the largest category with 19 people (83.3 %). As my focus is on how remote citizens influence policy it was important that the majority of interviewees lived in remote Queensland.



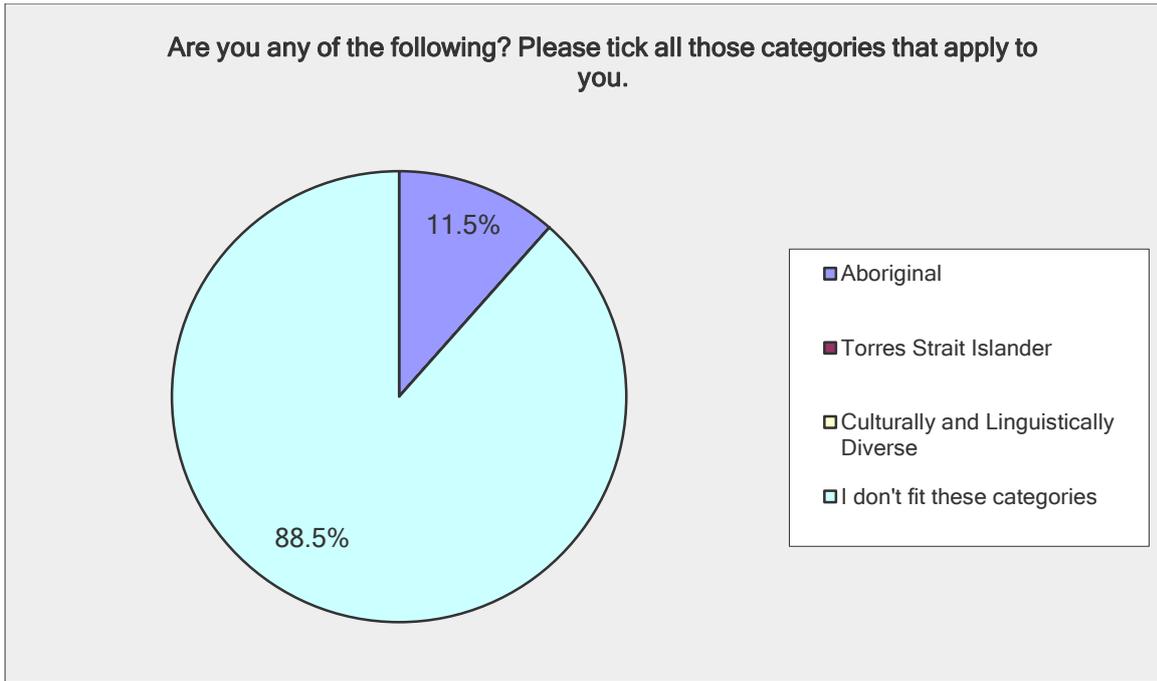
**Figure 4.11 Demographics question – distance from nearest town**

This question aimed to reveal just how isolated some activists were from their nearest town. Sometimes the nearest town may have a population well under 1000 people and not have flight services to major centres. Over half lived outside their nearest town with 13.6 per cent living 100–199 kilometres from their nearest town.



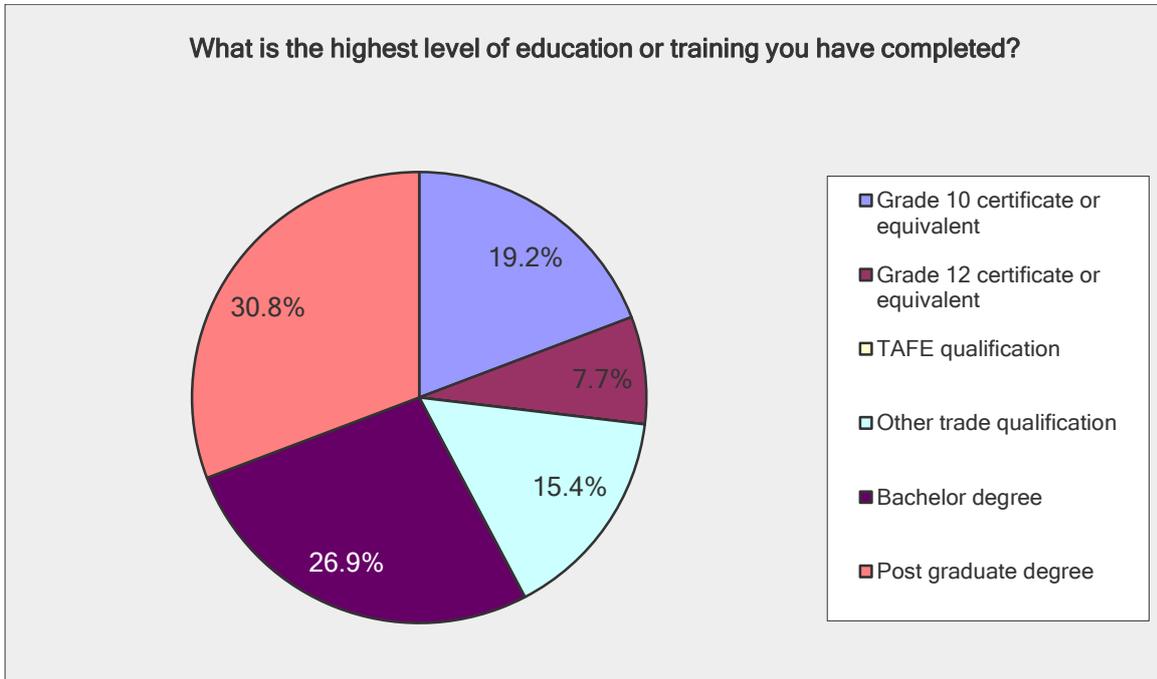
**Figure 4.12** Demographics question – age

The majority of activists interviewed (including Government staff) were between 40 and 60 years of age (69 per cent) with only 23 per cent in the 60–69 year age group. Only 8 per cent of interviewees were in the 30–39 age group due probably to early career and childcare responsibilities deterring many in that age group from involvement in activist activities. The QRWN report showed that participation in engagement type activities such as civic forums and consultation activities was largely an *age and stage* phenomenon. Rural / remote women have more time for those activities when children have grown up and moved on.



**Figure 4.13 Demographics question – race**

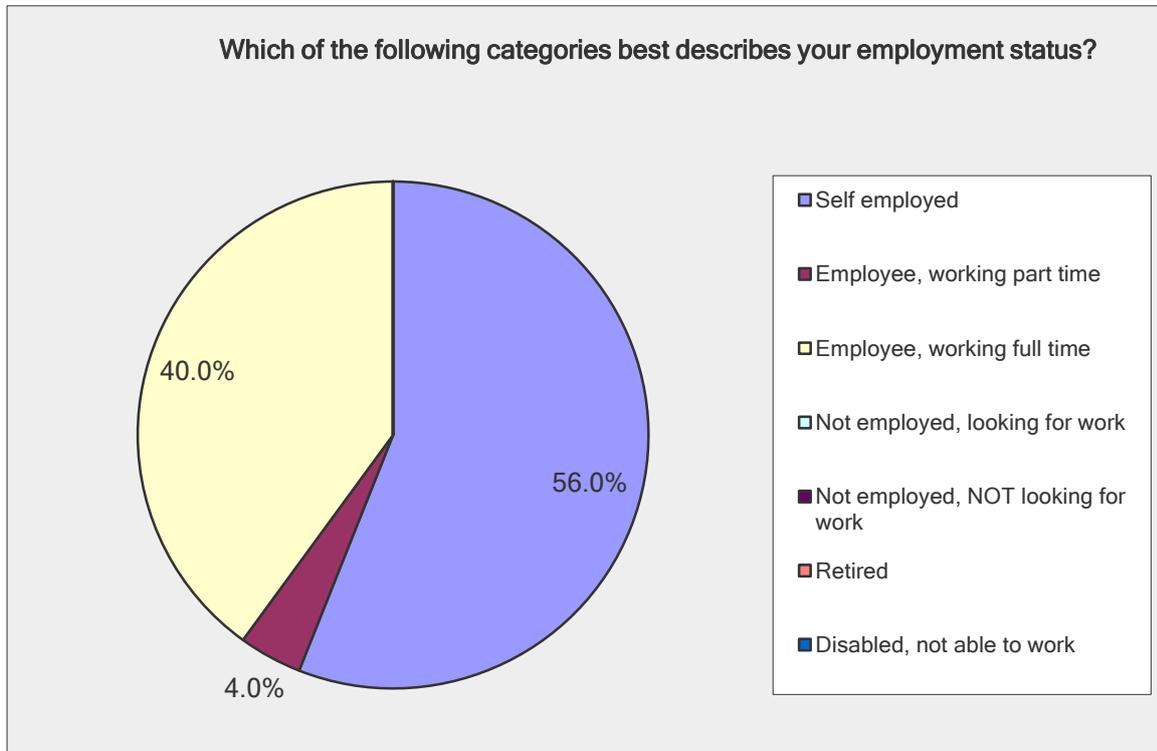
Three (11.5 per cent) interviewees were Aboriginal and the remainder white Caucasian.



**Figure 4.14 Demographics question – formal education**

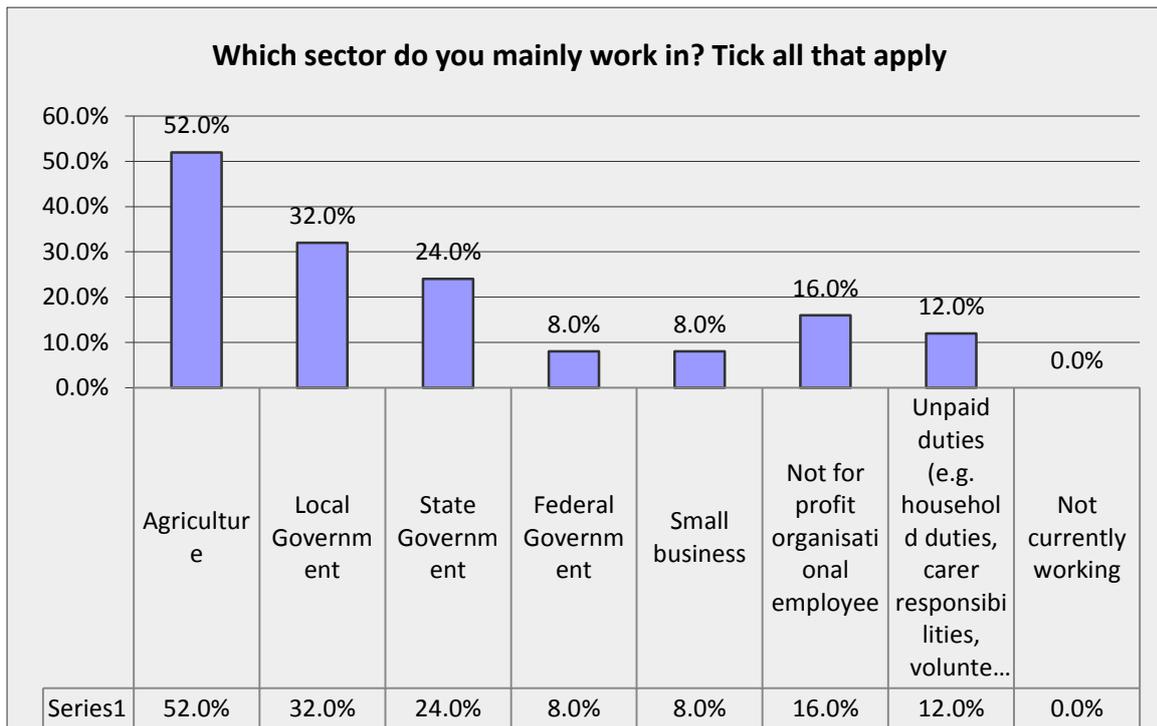
While statistically education levels are lower in CWQ (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013) interviewees (not all of whom lived in CWQ) were relatively well educated with 31 per cent having a postgraduate degree and 30 per cent a Bachelor degree. 17 per cent of

interviewees had a lower level of formal education with a Grade 10 or 12 certificate. Mostly those trying to influence policy in this case study had higher levels of formal education than is average for CWQ.



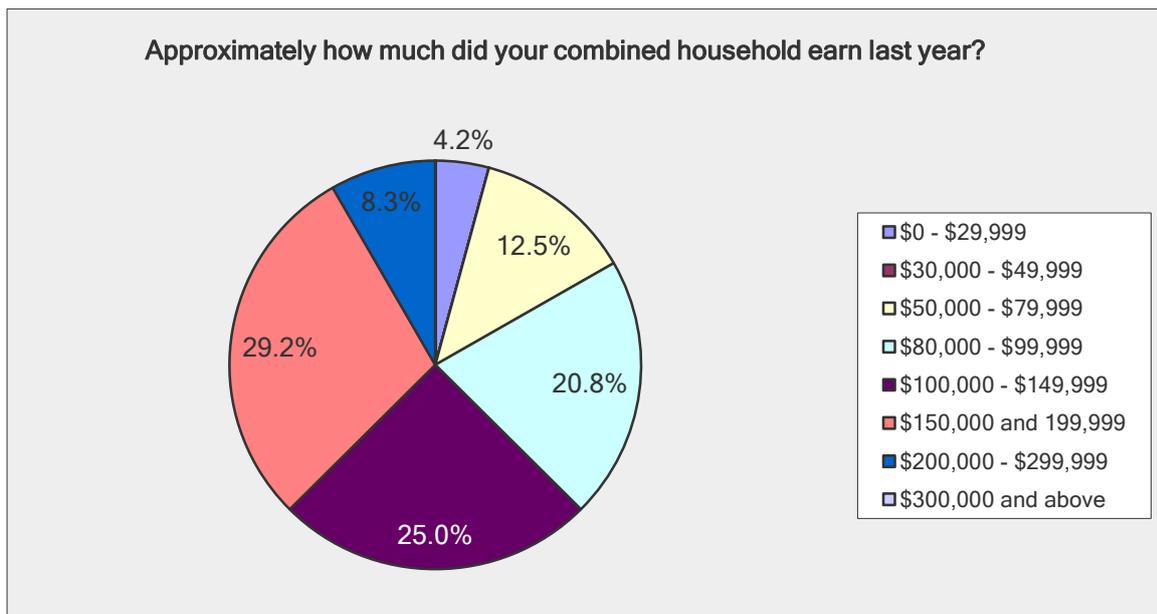
**Figure 4.15 Demographics question – employment status**

Unsurprisingly the majority of interviewees (56 per cent) were self-employed, giving them perhaps more freedom to participate in activist activities when required. 40 per cent of employees work full-time and only one employee was working part-time. Quite a few of the interviewees own agricultural properties which they and their families manage.



**Figure 4.16 Demographics question – employment sector**

Agriculture is the dominant sector in which interviewees work (52 per cent). A significant proportion (32 per cent) of local government people were also involved in this research. Four state government Managers were interviewed (24 per cent). Quite a few had unpaid duties as well. I suspect that the extent of voluntary work was not fully captured by this question.



**Figure 4.17 Demographics question – income**

Two people skipped this question. Income levels in agriculture fluctuate significantly according to seasons and commodity prices and CWQ was experiencing a reasonable season when I conducted interviews. The largest proportion of people involved in the Wild Rivers policy development (and this includes state government workers) earned between \$150,000 – \$199,000 (29.2 per cent) a year and 25 per cent earned \$100,000 – \$149,999. These figures are higher than average for the region and supports the notion that activists require a certain degree of wealth to participate regularly in activist exercises such as attending consultation meetings and travelling to central locations such as Brisbane and Canberra to lobby.

A final question was: Please list all the organisation/s for whom you do representative work? Please include your position/s. eg. Agforce Branch Secretary, XX Shire – Mayor. All interviewees except for the urban government staff listed quite long lists of voluntary commitments. Many of the activists were active in quite a few organisations which may provide them with the option of choosing which *hat* they wear when making comments to the media.

## **Memos**

Memos were written as soon after each interview as possible, ideally within a few hours although this was not always possible. Observations about location of the interview, body language, dress, facial expressions and other things that I noticed were recorded. I also used a series of questions to interrogate my own biases and potential blindnesses as I was interviewing quite a few people I knew prior to the interview – some well. They included the following probes: body language; extent to which they are telling me what they might think I want to hear; what are they not saying; differences between what men and women telling me; how am I impacting on the interviewee; and what is my former relationship with the interviewee?

Writing reflexively under these headings assisted me to probe blind spots and think beyond surface answers for any responses that may not have accorded with what was said. While Padgett (1998, p. 57) cautions that it is important to ‘avoid a reliance on pre-existing ideas, theories or categories and to acknowledge this when it occurs’ I did write observations with a firm eye on the theories I was using to interpret my data. For example, Lukes radical notions of power, other power theorists, gender theory and so on and would suggest that by doing so I was analysing the basics of what, where, when and how. So my memos included both direct observation but also included any analysis that I felt related to my research question,

the interview experience and overarching epistemological theories. To enhance rigour I shared all memos with my supervisors and these were discussed at our regular meetings and via email.

## **Coding and thematic analysis**

Interviews and interview memos were coded using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program. First level coding was conducted using a range of methods as outlined by Saldana (2009). This included: initial coding; structural or holistic coding; descriptive coding; versus coding (for example city versus country, production versus the environment); and in vivo (using participants' actual words) initial and values coding amongst others. Codes were continually reworked as per a grounded theory approach and I was constantly revisiting, merging and adding codes. Codes were grouped into themes in three layers / levels starting with the initial coding layer but this did not occur in a linear process. Higher order themes that emerged were: barriers (to influence); governance; influence; narrative; outcomes; outlier views; processes; regions; and values.

Thematic analysis is a way of identifying, analysing and documenting patterns or themes in the data and was used to interpret my research. More specifically a theoretical thematic analysis was conducted as 'researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments and data is not coded in an epistemological vacuum' (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 84) though I did not pre-set codes and was open to emerging new categories from the data (inductive thematic analysis). The analysis was conducted with the research question and my theoretical framework in mind. The research question evolved through the coding process (Braun & Clarke 2006) and the main question slightly adjusted and sub-questions were eliminated or reworded. A research journal was kept during the whole research period but especially used during initial coding right through to thematic analysis. Coding continued till saturation was reached and no new useful codes emerged.

## **Grounded theory method**

I take a grounded theory approach to this research (Bryant & Charmaz 2007) so emerging theory from my research is grounded in the data. Grounded theory developed by Strauss and Glaser (1967) is a flexible approach (more a method than a theory) which involves constant comparison analysis. It is iterative and starts in an inductive fashion which then becomes deductive but moves back to being inductive again. Themes emerge from the first round of coding (inductive phase) and then researchers need to go through the data again to

ensure that all the data is coded using the full list of themes generated in the first round (deductive phase). During the subsequent rounds of coding some new codes may still emerge (inductive phase) (Padgett 1998). Despite this my methodological approach is not purely grounded as it is underpinned by the theories outlined in Chapter Three. However this research is much closer to theory construction than theory testing.

A foundation method of qualitative inquiry, Charmaz (2011) contends that any theory developed using grounded theory is an interpretation of the world being researched. The implied meanings of research participant's experience and researcher's final grounded theories are all constructions of reality.

Interviews and memos were coded using an iterative process. Two were initially coded then gone back through again for checking against the codes I had established at that point. Thoughts were recorded in the research journal. I then coded the first five interviews before repeating the process and looking back at earlier interviews with new codes that had emerged. After all interviews were done a further check back over all interviews was undertaken with new codes in mind.

A research journal was written which provides a record of my analytical process. This was also iterative and was revisited for gaps when new information emerged.

## **Media analysis**

A media analysis was chosen as my third method because Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin, while not quite as controversial as portrayed by the media coverage of Cape York Wild Rivers, still generated a significant amount of media coverage in local, state and national media outlets. I chose three media outlets that I thought activists involved in the LEB WR deliberations would access. This included the Longreach Leader (the largest newspaper in CWQ, The Queensland Country Life (which has a large agricultural readership) and ABC radio (a media source many of my interviewees said they listened to that was regarded as providing balanced coverage).

I used a content analysis framework previously developed and adapted by Ewart and Cokley (2007) to examine women and male hegemony in a remote community newspaper in Blackall (in CWQ) – the 'Barcoo Independent'. This research was based on evidence that rural newspapers usually under-utilise women as news sources thereby presenting news largely from a male perspective. They found this was not the case in the re-established Barcoo Independent in Blackall (in Central Western Queensland) a non-commercial

newspaper at the time coordinated by a voluntary committee made up of largely women. The researchers developed a content analysis framework to examine this. I adapted this to suit my research.

## **Rigour and trustworthiness**

Qualitative research views reality as being socially constructed by people and while this cannot be measured objectively, it can be interpreted (Liamputtong 2013). There are a number of methods a qualitative researcher can use to enhance rigour.

In order to enhance the rigour or trustworthiness of data collected and analysis, several key tactics were employed. Padgett (1998) suggests six strategies for enhancing rigour and I employed most of these. She suggests prolonged engagement in the research field. Prolonged engagement with some interviewees and discussion on the topic of Wild Rivers occurred through regular exposure to local media and conversations with key informants before, during and after the research period.

I also regularly sought peer debriefing and support through my supervisors and colleagues in the Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) research unit at Monash University and attended and presented on my research at two annual Higher Degrees Research meetings conducted by the Department of Social Work at Monash University in Melbourne. A further method to enhance rigour was member checking. This mostly occurred by email if I had a question arising from an interview. Because of my insider status those I questioned further were very cooperative about providing extra written responses post interview.

I conducted what Padgett (1998) refers to as negative case analysis – I deliberately sought opposing views to any dominant views that emerged from the research. Alston and Bowles (2003) suggest that *outliers* provide a greater understanding of the normative view. Padgett (1998) also suggests keeping an audit trail of research documents including codes and memos so others can assess how you interpreted them. I shared these with my supervisors and fellow PhD students at regular students meetings to improve my practice. Liamputtong (2013) further suggests methodological choices (and justification), rich description (using participants words in vivo) to honour what interviewees have told you, interpretation, evidence and reflexivity also aid rigour and trustworthiness.

## **Conclusion**

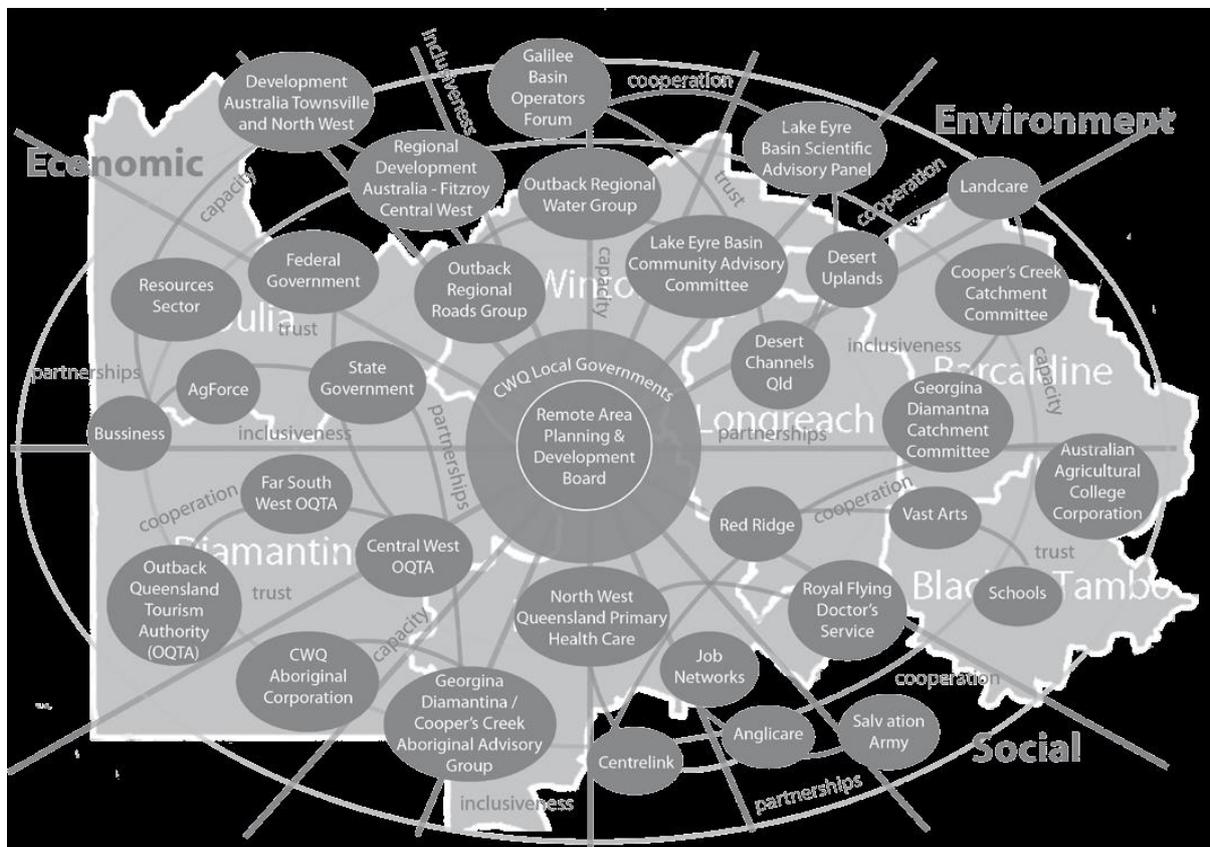
I use a critical theory approach that is sensitive to gender to answer my research questions. I take a qualitative approach to my research where a core belief is that reality is socially constructed. My life and experience in remote Queensland has impacted on the choices I have made in regard to what to research, the approach taken and analysis. Methods included semi-structured interviews including reflexive memos written after each interview and a media analysis. Grounded theory was also used although as research was underpinned by theories of power, gender and deliberative democracy I was alerted to the possibility of power imbalances in the development of Wild Rivers policy by Lukes thus an eye was kept on which groups may dominate and why and which groups may have been marginalised. Gender theory encouraged me to keep a watchful eye on potential marginalisation due to gender and deliberative democracy informed me about the way democratic processes should work. A thematic analysis of coded data was used to illuminate findings. I also employed strategies to enhance rigour and trustworthiness.

## Chapter Five: Contextual Background to Findings

An outline of regional governance arrangements for the Lake Eyre Basin and the Wild Rivers policy development process in the Lake Eyre Basin.<sup>5</sup>

### Governance of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers

The congested landscape of regional governance was referred to in Chapter Two. The busy landscape of governance in Central Western Queensland is well illustrated in the following graphic (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2012). This graphic documents those departments and organisations based in this remote region but of course there are many other institutions with business in CWQ not listed - including federal government departments involved in management of the Lake Eyre Basin.



**Figure 5.1 Regional Governance in Central Western Queensland (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2012)**

The Lake Eyre Basin *wild rivers* (Georgina and Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) flow across several state borders. The focus of this research is on CWQ and citizen mobilisation to influence Wild Rivers policy and government consultation efforts in CWQ.

<sup>5</sup> A detailed demographic profile of the Lake Eyre Basin and CWQ is included in Appendix 3.

The Lake Eyre Basin rivers are covered under the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Agreement which covers all of the catchments which flow into Lake Eyre (not just the Queensland portion of the Basin). The Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement is a joint undertaking of the Australian, Queensland, South Australian and Northern Territory governments, in conjunction with the Basin community, using scientific and technical advice. The purpose of the Agreement is to 'ensure the sustainability of the Lake Eyre Basin river systems, in particular to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts' (Department of Sustainability Environment Water Population and Communities et al. 2010). Under the Agreement, the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum is required to review the condition of all watercourses and catchments including: the catchments; the rivers; floodplains; overflow channels; lakes and wetlands in the area covered by the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement. A Community Advisory Committee and a Scientific Advisory Panel provide advice directly to the Minister on water and natural resource management issues in Lake Eyre Basin.

The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* was passed by the Queensland Parliament October 2005 with the aim to 'preserve the natural values of rivers that have not been significantly affected by development – that is, rivers that have all, or almost all, of their natural values intact' (Queensland Government 2010c). The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* regulates new development within a declared wild river and its catchment area, and regulates the taking of natural resources from the area. The Act includes the declaration of wild river areas which may include high preservation areas, preservation areas, floodplain management area or sub-artesian management areas (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2009). Wild river requirements do not apply to everyday activities such as feeding stock, refuelling machinery or fishing and camping along the rivers, or to developments existing at the time of declaration (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2009).

Amendments to the (original) legislation include *The Wild Rivers and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006*. This Act amended the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* (and a number of associated Acts) as well as other unrelated legislation.

These amendments ensure low-impact development can proceed in a declared wild river area, while retaining the original intent of the wild rivers policy. These development activities include low impact mining, transport and agricultural development, and development in urban areas. (Queensland Government 2010c)

The amendments also included the *Wild Rivers Code* and provided a process to amend the code if required. The *Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act*

**2008** was passed 21 May 2008. Amendments were again made to the **Wild Rivers Act 2005** to reflect these changes.

It is important to note that a number of development activities are already regulated in the wild river areas under various other acts, for example the *Vegetation Management Act*, *Water Act* and so on. Wild Rivers is a policy that is entwined with 13 other pieces of legislation making it difficult for citizens to understand, at least at first glance, just what development activities it allows and what it doesn't. However as the LEB WR policy became more concrete, fact sheets were prepared by the Queensland Government to clarify this.

Ten rivers were declared in Queensland before the Lake Eyre Basin rivers were nominated for Wild Rivers status. After consultation and community input the three Lake Eyre Basin rivers were declared wild in December 2011. Since then and after the change of government in March 2012 the LEB WR status has been revoked and new legislation is now in place. Some stakeholders involved in previous deliberations and activism feared that their hard work to reach a satisfactory compromise would be disregarded though some stakeholders, for example AgForce, always maintained a position of opposing Wild Rivers.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond the Lake Eyre Basin, the focus in national and state media had very much been on opposition to the Wild Rivers legislation in the Cape York area (Beattie November 6 2010; Kirk 1 October 2010; Marinner 15/1/2010) to the almost entire exclusion of the more peaceable Lake Eyre Basin processes which rarely got a mention outside the Central West and agricultural media (Arthur & Nancarrow 26 November 2010; Honeywill 2009).

Government consultation with Indigenous elders in the Cape York area, including Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson, was accompanied by hostile exchange between Pearson and state government (Beattie 6/11/2010; Marinner 15/1/2010), and more recently federal government (Kirk 1/10/2010) and between Pearson and other Indigenous stakeholders (Owens & Wilson 2010; Sales 2010). Pearson's opposition is based on a perception of the erosion of Indigenous property rights or land rights (Owens & Wilson 2010) as he feared Indigenous economic development opportunities would be stifled by the proposed legislation. It pitted him directly against The Wilderness Society who lobbied for the legislation.

After consultation with Pearson, the then federal opposition leader Tony Abbott introduced a private members' bill, opposing the Wild Rivers legislation (Kelly 15/11/2010) amid controversial media debate during the course of 2010. A national inquiry into the Wild Rivers

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<sup>6</sup> Agforce is the peak body representing broad acres farmers in the sheep, wool and beef industries in Queensland. Agforce were opposed to Wild Rivers arguing that it would constrain grazing management practices in a number of ways.

legislation was then announced by the Prime Minister Julia Gillard, denounced by Pearson (Kirk 1/10/2010) but supported by other Indigenous leaders in the Cape York region (Drape 30/9/2010). A thorough content analysis was conducted on media coverage of the LEB WR which follows in Chapter Five.

## **Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers**

The inclusion of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers in the Wild Rivers declaration policy process, occurred due to a Queensland Government commitment at the 2009 election. The Queensland Government was lobbied by the members of the newly formed Western Rivers Alliance (Wilderness Society, Australian Floodplain Association, Cooper Creek Protection Group, Pew Environment Group) for long-term protection of Cooper Creek (The Wilderness Society 16 Sept 2009).

Prior to official government consultation on the LEB WR policy, a remote shire Councillor approached the RAPAD Board early in 2009 to host and facilitate a forum to:

seek common ground on opportunities and issues / concerns, raise opportunities and issues / concerns surrounding the wild rivers codes being developed, develop any actions on common ground where possible and to identify areas where negotiations may be possible in order to achieve an agreed outcome, amongst the various stakeholders both in our region and those who have an interest in the issue from a policy and implementation perspective. (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2009, p. i)

A forum was held in Longreach in July 2009, prior to the Wild Rivers Lake Eyre Basin Policy Consultation paper being released and Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) representatives attended. The policy consultation paper was released for comment in March 2010. RAPAD held a second forum in May 2010 which again included DERM representatives and regional and other stakeholders. DERM also held information sessions and other consultation meetings around the region as well.

Two joint submissions were sent to DERM by the unusual pairing of RAPAD and AgForce, following the RAPAD Wild Rivers forums. These further state their case with regard to wild rivers (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2010). The second submission aimed to fit with the official consultation time period of March to May 2010. The submissions are publicly available on the RAPAD web site at [www.rapad.com.au/web/guest/policy-and-submissions](http://www.rapad.com.au/web/guest/policy-and-submissions)

A communique was sent from the second RAPAD forum to the Minister listing what the stakeholder groups had agreed they wanted with regard to Wild Rivers policy. This included: the desire for properly regulated mining in the region; a support package; a 10-year review of the legislation; old *sleeper licences* for irrigation to be retired subject to the owner's consent; recognition of good land management (because of Wild Rivers declaration being premised on a pristine water system); no new allocations for irrigation above existing arrangements; unimpeded building of town weirs; access to sand and gravel for road works; and a request for an advisory committee to be set up (Remote Area Planning and Development Board March 2010).

Due to tight timeframes and lengthy processes required to consult all Aboriginal groups that sit under the Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG), the AAG (which has 18 member groups) was unable to get sign off on the communiqué before it went to the Minister and the AAG input was attached as an appendix. The AAG Chair agreed that they be listed as supporting the communiqué. Their input was finalised later. The communiqué is available to the public on the RAPAD web site at [www.rapad.com.au/web/guest/policy-and-submissions](http://www.rapad.com.au/web/guest/policy-and-submissions)

The process RAPAD developed to facilitate this drew both support and criticism. The Wilderness Society representative praised the process, stating:

I think the process that RAPAD is hosting and leading is remarkable. I think it is without precedent in Australia where the community has got together and bought together some very diverse groups. (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2010 p. 40)

The Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Stephen Robertson announced the passing of the following legislation in Parliament on November 26 2010 – the 'Exposure Draft – Water and Other Legislation amendment Bill 2010 – Wild Rivers' (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2010) which he indicates addresses feedback from various consultations including the RAPAD forums and the joint submissions (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2010). As the Minister notes in his correspondence to RAPAD in October 2010 key amendments included a:

... new zoning designation, the special floodplain management area (SFMA), which will be used to manage the unique river system of the channel country. The SFMA will act as an alternative to the high preservation area (HPA) over the extensive land uses and development activities that depend on the channel country, particularly those associated with grazing:

- allowing the repair, raising and replacement of existing weirs and the construction of new weirs for the purpose of town water supply to occur in-stream
- allowing for the continued access to in-stream sand and gravel sources where there are no viable off-stream alternatives
- allowing existing vegetation clearing arrangements to continue, including in the HPA and SFMA
- an amended definition of the term “agricultural activity” that does not include land remediation activities such as ripping and shallow water ponding. (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2010, p.40)

RAPAD was asked by the Minister in October 2010 to form an advisory committee (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2010) the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP). This was a RAPAD forum recommendation to the Minister that was acted on. The LEBWRAP was to provide feedback to the state government on codes and policy for the wild rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin area. Their recommendations helped shaped the policy when the rivers were declared wild in 2011. After the 2012 election (outside the case study period of 2009 – 2011) a new advisory committee was formed to advise the Newman government on methods to develop an approach that allowed for the protection and sustainable use of Queensland’s Western Rivers. The Wilderness Society was excluded from this advisory group at this point and complained through the media. There have been criticisms of the overturning of the Wild Rivers legislation by environmental advocacy groups and praise from agripolitical representatives in local media.

## SECTION B: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this research project and the analysis of the findings are presented in the next four chapters as a media analysis chapter and three theme chapters. There were overlaps between all four chapters and chapters are written with findings and discussion of analysis integrated rather than separated.

### Chapter Six: Media Analysis

It is widely understood that news organisations thrive on conflict and entertainment, on the one hand, while also relying heavily on established governmental news sources for information on the other. (Altheide & Schneider 2013, p. 29)

#### Why a media analysis?

Wild Rivers in Cape York was regarded as a *controversial* topic in the media even before the Queensland Government announced its proposal to nominate the Lake Eyre Basin rivers for Wild Rivers listing in 2009. Examples of sensational headlines include:

'Labor accused of selling Cape down the river' (November 14 2007) in The Australian

'Land Council opposed wild rivers protection push' (December 12 2008) on ABC radio.

The controversial nature of media coverage of Wild Rivers in Cape York prior to 2009 was a contributing factor to the concern expressed by some citizens in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) when the Lake Eyre Basin rivers were nominated. Wild Rivers in Cape York was characterised by loud protests in the media including by respected Aboriginal lawyer / activist Noel Pearson against the State government on this policy. The then federal leader of the opposition Tony Abbott liaised with disgruntled Indigenous people in the Gulf to challenge the legislation by way of a private members' bill in November 2010. Nonetheless some Indigenous citizens in the Gulf were publicly for Wild Rivers including activist Murandoo Yanner from the Carpentaria Land Council. A very divisive media debate occurred.

In CWQ, leaders from the Remote Area Planning and Development (RAPAD) Board decided that whether people wanted Wild Rivers policy or not they were going to get it and their best position was to try to influence the policy to fit the Lake Eyre Basin. They deliberately did not seek to speak in the media in a way that inflamed opinions against the government as they wanted to work with the government to shape the policy to the Lake Eyre Basin and meet stakeholders' needs as much as possible.

Media is an important source of information in remote communities though there is limited access to news media. 'Many areas have access to only one local daily newspaper' (Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 100). Further to this people in CWQ have relatively expensive and limited connectivity to the internet thus further reducing their access to information.

To determine who was influencing the Wild Rivers policy in the Lake Eyre Basin a content analysis of media coverage provides some insight into who was speaking publicly on this topic and what they were saying as well as what voices were missing.

I selected media sources I knew were widely accessed. However I was aware that people also sought other information at times on Wild Rivers via the internet despite constraints with connectivity in remote areas. For example, people looked at information from the Department of Environment and Heritage (DERM) website – in particular the page on Wild Rivers. They read other papers online or received information from representative organisations like AgForce and RAPAD.

Some organisations like The Wilderness Society (TWS), RAPAD, the mining company<sup>7</sup> and government were monitoring media on Wild Rivers as well. Media also played a crucial role when the Western Rivers Alliance was formed, just prior to the 2009 Queensland Government election, to seek protection for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers. A media event including a barbeque with organic meat was held in front of Parliament House in Brisbane. Spokespersons, including *green* graziers from Western Queensland, spoke on television news about the need for river protection and video footage was shared by organisations like Desert Channels Queensland and The Wilderness Society. As a result of this and the long-term campaign by TWS the Queensland Government listed the Lake Eyre Basin rivers for Wild Rivers nomination when they were re-elected (The Wilderness Society 2011).

This analysis provides the opportunity to use Lukes' (2005) conceptualisation of power in determining whether the interests of any sector dominated the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers

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<sup>7</sup> The mining company is not named to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee from that sector.

policy development. Further, if this was the case, why those dominated complied and what mechanisms of power were used to make this happen?

## **Media outlets**

The three media outlets chosen for this study were: The Longreach Leader, The Queensland Country Life (QCL) and ABC radio. These three media outlets were chosen because they are key media outlets that activists in this study were likely to use for information. Activists based in the region mentioned these sources amongst others as key sources of information on Wild Rivers as did others outside the region. Furthermore recent work conducted by the RAPAD Board involving a statistically significant random phone polling survey across CWQ conducted by Market Facts to ascertain attitudes towards coal seam gas and information needs, found that locals rely on their local newspaper for information (Market Facts QLD 2011). Others have also highlighted the importance of local newspapers for information, cultural definition and identity (Capel & Cokley 2005; Ewart & Massey 2005).

A community comes to recognise and hence know itself through its representation in local media but part of what it comes to “know” is actually “imagined” by journalists working for those local media. (Capel & Cokley 2005)

I did not select national news outlets such as *The Australian* which had covered Wild Rivers at times as I could not ascertain how many local activists read that newspaper. Many grazing families live a significant distance outside their nearest local town and do not subscribe to daily newspapers as mail is usually only delivered up to twice weekly (depending on where one lives). Internet connection is also well behind urban speeds for many in this remote region depending on where one lives so reading online is restricted as well. Recent RAPAD research on local attitudes towards coal seam gas showed that 73 per cent of respondents rely on local print media for information (Market Facts QLD 2011) hence the choice of the Longreach Leader, the biggest newspaper in CWQ, for analysis.

QCL historically has been the farmer’s (grazier’s) newspaper of choice and as agriculture is a dominant sector in the Lake Eyre Basin deliberations I chose the QCL as an important information source. ABC radio was a source mentioned by several of my interviewees from all sides of the Wild Rivers debate as a balanced and useful source of information.

## **Media outlets – Demographics**

### **Longreach Leader**

The Longreach Leader is a weekly newspaper with its head office located in Longreach. It is the biggest local newspaper in Central Western Queensland with a print run of 2800 copies each week. According to the editor readership numbers are estimated at 8100. The paper is still independently owned with five male business owners on the Board of Directors. The Longreach Leader is usually around 16 pages each week depending on advertising. The female editor is based in Longreach.

### **Queensland Country Life (QCL)**

Touted as the *bible of the bush*, QCL is owned by Fairfax and agricultural publications are managed through Fairfax Agricultural Media, formerly Rural Press. Approximately 1000 papers are sold in CWQ (Fairfax Media) and content is available online as well. Also a weekly paper, its total circulation is estimated at 30,472 (Fairfax Media).

According to the editor:

As far as content goes QCL is driven by the needs and expectations of the QCL's rural audience across northern Australia. There are prescribed sections in each edition including agribusiness, livestock, grains and cropping and town and country ... This creates a need to generate this specific material. (Phelps, personal communication 2012)

The male editor is based in Brisbane. This newspaper is often over 100 pages long.

### **ABC radio – Western Queensland**

The national broadcaster ABC is funded and owned by the government. The ABC remains independent editorially as per the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*. The broadcast area for ABC Western Queensland covers around two-thirds of the state – one of the largest broadcast zones in the Southern Hemisphere.

Local news items that are broadcast via 4QL are often authored and read by Longreach based journalists. Some but not all of these news items are selected by editors based outside the Central West to be placed on the ABC website. I used the transcripts of radio

news stories placed on the website for my case study research; thereby only a portion of the news stories on Wild Rivers that went to air were selected for the website and were able to be used for this research. When I inquired about editorial selection processes with regard to what percentage of stories and why stories were selected for the website an ABC journalist, after consulting her colleagues, responded by saying:

The upshot is the ABC can't put a figure on it ... it really depends on so many different variables and there are so many different departments / divisions dealing with their own program content and they have their own guidelines / staff etc. to upload stories on the net ... Sometimes I can't work out why my strongest local stories are not the ones which end up on the website ... someone above me decides and picks and chooses – and I think it depends on staff availability etc. and even what's happening on the day news-wise elsewhere. (Arthur, personal communication, 2013)

I selected news stories only for this analysis and of necessity drew from the articles that were transcribed and placed on the ABC website as this was the only record of articles that I could access.

### **Framework used / adapted for analysis and why**

A content analysis framework developed and adapted by Ewart and Cokley (2007) was used for this case study. The Ewart and Cokley model was formerly used to examine women and male hegemony in the *Barcoo Independent*, a remote community newspaper in Blackall, CWQ. Their content analysis framework had a foundation in earlier research conducted by Ewart using and adapting others' approaches (Ewart & Cokley 2007, p. 159). In the Barcoo Independent research they found that despite usual trends 'the expected manifestation of gender bias found in country newspapers did not play out in this case study' (Ewart & Cokley 2007, p. 164).

I adjusted their framework and code sheet to suit my research questions (see Appendix 4 for my coding sheet). I chose categories that would illuminate dominance (power) or marginalisation of sources in media coverage of LEB WR and manually did the counts. Which sectors were using the local media to influence public opinion on Wild Rivers in the Central West? Who was not being heard and why?

## **Process used for article collection**

The collection process for each media outlet was shaped by how each media outlet stored their archives. The research time boundaries were set, based on key events during the Lake Eyre Basin deliberations. The end date of December 2011 was when the Queensland Labor government declared the three Lake Eyre Basin rivers *wild*. My chosen start date for my research was January 1, 2009 as the 2009 state election was held on the 21st March 2009 and some key lobbying on Wild Rivers occurred just prior.

Articles selected were listed in order of date for each media outlet (see Appendices 5, 6 and 7) and each article was printed in tabloid size for coding using the adapted framework mentioned above. Coding sheets were stapled to each article and numbers counted for each category though the analysis and approach is qualitative.

### **Longreach Leader**

After being given access to the archives by the editor, I went into Longreach (my local town 87 kilometres from my home) in person for a half day and located 40 articles relevant to my topic, some more relevant than others. As an insider researcher who regularly reads this paper I had read most of the relevant articles previously.

I searched a hard copy archive for each of the three years 2009, 2010 and 2011. It took me four hours to sort through the three years of archived papers. I sent a list of requested articles to the very cooperative editor and she sent me the .pdf files of the full page the articles were on. As I was saving these to my computer I removed any that did not fit my search terms. For example, I removed a related article titled *Reference panel to guide Cooper Creek water management plan* as it was not specifically about LEB WR.

### **QCL**

Being a much larger newspaper with a much larger readership there were a lot more articles to search at the QCL. Nonetheless many coming up under my search terms of Wild Rivers and Lake Eyre Basin were just meeting notices on the AgForce page about Wild Rivers meetings. Rather than include all these (and there were many) I culled them though the regularity and titles give some insight into how seriously AgForce was taking Wild Rivers as an issue for their members.

AgForce have a regular page or sometimes more in the QCL every week so AgForce was able to be very prominent on Wild Rivers and other policy matters concerning their members. I asked the Editor about this and whether it was paid for by the organisation and he said not, it was historically something they had always done (a page or so for leading industry bodies) as farmers are a target audience of this paper. I note there is no space set aside for rural women's organisations, for example the Queensland Rural Women's Network (QRWN) or Australian Women in Agriculture though many of their members would read this paper.

I excluded articles on North Queensland Wild Rivers.

I noted the following in my research journal as I was reading the sourced articles for the first time:

I am struck by the style of journalism in this paper – unbalanced, with, at times, sensationalist writing and very openly anti the Labor government. This is not balanced coverage probably in order to meet the readership's expectations ... Sensationalist language is used in opinion articles for example "Opinion: Labor's tricky treat: another wild power grab" (December 15, 2011) was the headline with the following as first sentence: "In Queensland, Labor's polldancing slide to the bottom has it unelectable. This government has just three months to live".

At the QCL office in Brisbane the editor generously gave me access to their electronic archives and I emailed all relevant articles to myself. I used the search terms Lake Eyre Basin and Wild Rivers to start with which provided a narrow range of articles so I widened the search by just using the term Wild Rivers and got a lot more. Some related to North Queensland which I did not select. I noted in my research journal that 'the searching took all day till 3pm (solid work no lunch starting at 9am) to do this search. Hard work!'

I ended up doing further culling of articles when I got home and made the following decisions: of the articles that were only partially on Wild Rivers I culled those that only mentioned Wild Rivers in passing once and I excluded meeting notices.

### **ABC radio**

Transcripts of ABC radio articles on Lake Eyre Basin proved to be a more difficult search task with some serious limitations. I contacted local ABC staff who informed me they do not archive many of their stories so I would have to search the internet but not all radio stories go onto the internet either.

I started by searching the ABC Western Queensland website to little avail. I knew from my own listening to radio news items over the three years that there had been quite a bit of coverage by ABC radio news of the LEB WR. The search terms Lake Eyre Basin and Wild Rivers was not giving me the amount of articles I knew had been aired. I contacted ABC staff again and as mentioned earlier no one could comment on how articles were selected to go on the website or what percentage – this is a process carried out outside CWQ. At one stage I considered searching the internet using my search terms (rather than just conducting the search on the ABC website) but this resulted in thousands of hits, many of which were not relevant and proved too onerous to sort through to get what I needed for my research period of 2009 – 2011. So I went back to the ABC website and ran the search again. While recognising that this process did not bring some of the news items on LEB WR that had been aired, it did list those that remained on the ABC website that were accessible using their search engine. The articles found (while incomplete in terms of what went to air) do give a flavour of what was covered and which sector representatives were speaking.

### **Process for analysis**

Using the Ewart and Cokley model, which I adapted to suit my research questions, I checked every article for the various categories chosen to highlight power differentials between stakeholders and wrote this on a media content analysis coding sheet. One coding sheet per article was stapled to the relevant article. I counted totals manually, double checking each tally. Using a grounded theory approach I continually compared what I was finding to what I found from the interviews I conducted as one set of findings illuminated the other.

The article types used for this research included the following: News, AgForce snippets, media articles, opinion, letters to the editor and editorial.

## Results and analysis

Prominence in media	Longreach Leader	QCL	ABC radio
Total number of articles	27	47	26
No. of articles in 2009	8	7	5
No. of articles 2010	7	19	12
No. of articles 2011	12	21	9
Position of articles in first quarter of the paper	Page 1 – 7 articles Page 2 – 0 article Page 3 – 6 articles Page 4 – 1 article	Page 3 – 4 articles First 10 pages – 19 articles First 20 pages 35 articles	N/A
Total number of paragraphs	332	474	227

**Table 6.1 Number of articles**

### Prominence of Wild Rivers in the media

The amount of coverage from all three outlets reveals Wild Rivers to be an important issue for readers / listeners. Unsurprisingly the QCL, the much bigger newspaper, had more articles on LEB WR with 47 articles (474 paragraphs) over the three years. The much smaller Longreach Leader however had 27 articles (332 paragraphs) which shows the importance of this issue for CWQ residents and ABC articles totalled 26 (227 paragraphs). ABC articles are short as they are transcripts of news items aired on radio and are approximately two to three minute pieces so this figure does not give an indication of importance to the public.

Articles were either wholly focussed on LEB WR or partially and only relevant paragraphs were counted. An example is QCL 11 *AgForce update: Comment: Green background to grassroots talks* an opinion piece by the AgForce President. Four of 16 paragraphs were about Wild Rivers. Sometimes it was difficult to extract Wild Rivers from other content. For example, in QCL opinion pieces where the author criticised the government on a number of fronts included Wild Rivers. An example is QCL 17 *AgForce update: Wild rivers: comment: Security of water key to ag's future*. There were some one paragraph pieces on the AgForce page that, while small in size often had headings that caught the eye and showed the concern AgForce (and its members) had for the policy. For example, QCL 4 *Wild Rivers in*

*Spotlight* and QCL 16 *Sustainable Development could drown in Wild Rivers* again highlighting the issue as one of importance.

During 2011 there was more coverage on the LEB WR in both the QCL and Longreach Leader. This may have resulted from the formal government consultation coming to an end and the rivers being declared in December 2011 (Queensland Government December 2011). Formal consultation for the Georgina and Diamantina rivers occurred a lot more quickly starting on 26 August 2011 as much of the work regarding fitting the policy to the Lake Eyre Basin was covered in the Cooper Creek and Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP) consultation process. There was however some criticism of the government for the short (formal) consultation period for the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers. Early consultation and information forums were held in CWQ for all three rivers after the election in 2009 and all three rivers were declared on 16 December 2011. In the second half of 2011 there was a lot of speculation in the media about the upcoming Queensland state election (held 24 March 2012). The Labor government was voted out of office in a landslide victory to the Coalition under Campbell Newman. Some of the QCL coverage reflects this.

The positioning of articles in both newspapers also shows that Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin was a seriously regarded issue with 35 articles in the first fifth of the QCL (over the three years) and 14 in the first quarter of the Longreach Leader.

## **Sources**

Ewart and Massey (2005) define sources as 'any named individual to whom a reporter attributed news-story information' (Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 101). They examined sources in their research because:

The intersections between journalism and democracy are explored ... [through the] analysis of the "voices" through which the news is "told" by specific segments of the Australian print media ... [They] argue that evidence of the extent to which a newspaper fulfils its roles to democracy and society is partially found in the range of sources quoted in the news stories it publishes, and in the prominence and dominance it gives to various types of sources in those stories. (Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 94)

Elite sources are discussed later in the chapter.

Sources and Location	Longreach Leader	QCL	ABC radio internet articles
<b>Sources:</b>	<b>Total no. of sources:</b> 65	<b>Total no. of sources:</b> 64	<b>Total no. of sources:</b> 39
<b>Location of Sources:</b>	<b>Western Qld</b> <sup>8 9</sup> : 44 (1 Govt)	<b>Western Qld:</b> 17 (2 Govt)	<b>Western Qld:</b> 12 (1 Govt)
	<b>Other rural / remote:</b> 2	<b>Other rural / remote:</b> 15	<b>Other rural / remote:</b> 4
	<b>Urban</b> (including Brisbane and Canberra): 19 (14 of these Govt <sup>10</sup> )	<b>Urban</b> (including Brisbane and Canberra): 32 (22 of these Govt)	<b>Urban</b> (including Brisbane and Canberra): 22 (17 of these Govt)

**Table 6.2 Sources and Location – remoteness**

In order to consider whether remoteness impacted on people’s ability to influence policy this media analysis examines where the sources that dominated the media on LEB WR were located. In the QCL and ABC urban sources dominated those from Western Queensland. In the Longreach Leader however the voices of locals (44) predominated urban (19 and 14 of these were government sources). This is fairly usual for local papers as there is a:

... tendency of regional newspapers and their readers to focus on the local by using the frame of community. In other words, regional newspapers take on the appearance of being connected to their communities by focussing on community as a news theme. (Gregory and Hutchins in Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 116)

So it is unsurprising that urban sources who may have driven the policy at least initially did not dominate in this local media outlet.

Government spokespersons were the major urban sources. This is to be expected as LEB WR was a government led policy with extended consultation times and two formal consultation processes. During the study period 2009 – 2011 there were three different Ministers leading the portfolio that included Wild Rivers. Following Lukes’ conceptualisation

<sup>8</sup> I widened this category to Western Queensland rather than just Central Western Queensland because the Lake Eyre Basin river catchments also fall into the South West and North West regions.

<sup>9</sup> Includes all who reside in Western Queensland including Western Queensland based MPs. No Western Queensland based public servants were sources.

<sup>10</sup> Government MPs and public servants. This does not include local government.

of power, dominant groups use a range of mechanisms to further their interests including sometimes securing the willing compliance of those marginalised. There is always the opportunity for resistance. Government spokespersons are an *elite source* and this is discussed below.

The voices of remote electorate politicians were largely missing in the media revealing a lack of power to shape the interpretation of this issue to the public. This may be due to them not being the allocated spokesperson on this topic though the issue was potentially affecting their region or that their views were not sought or run. It is likely to be due to urban Ministers (or shadow Ministers) having more power in the government hierarchy to shape citizens' understanding of the policy through media statements. Antony Green (2001) discusses the difficulties the National Party has in getting their issues prioritised in the coalition with the (largely urban) Liberal party.

ABC internet articles had 39 sources and only 12 resided in Western Queensland probably reflecting the selection process done by ABC managerial staff based outside CWQ as to which articles are placed on the ABC website. Urban spokespersons were the largest category of sources with 22 quoted from urban areas. Many of the 17 government sources were elected government Ministers, for example Stephen Robertson the Queensland Government Minister responsible at the time for Wild Rivers or urban based public servants. Remote voices were *subjugated* in this outlet though what was actually aired would almost certainly have included more remote citizen sources.

All but one of the government sources, a Member of Parliament (MP) from Mt Isa whose region extended into the Central West, were based outside Western Queensland supporting comments from interviewees about government not trusting or using CWQ based staff where the rivers are located. This also possibly reflects the lack of status in the government hierarchy of CWQ based staff or MPs to make media statements on important policy topics like Wild Rivers.

Government traditionally has employed people around the state ... where there are people who really do know what's going on who have a very good conversation and relationship with their communities who are ignored in the processes that occur elsewhere in that department. They spent millions on keeping these people out there doing a good job ... They've got ability to feedback into the system but often the system doesn't provide conduits for that.  
[Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

As mentioned above the local paper had many more sources speaking (65) as is usual for local newspapers. Forty-four sources were based in Western Queensland with 19 urban (14 of the latter were from the Government sector) and two only from rural / remote locations other than Western Queensland (Wilcannia and Cairns). A few articles had no sources at all and contained information about upcoming consultations or meetings on Wild Rivers.

While the QCL purports to have a wider readership than just those involved in agriculture and agriculture is still the main sector in CWQ, QCL represented this policy debate as one mainly relating to agriculture (and relating to property rights) reflecting their readers' interests. Considering the far greater number of articles in total it is noteworthy that there were so few sources per article. This is probably due to a number of factors: a wider variety of type of article – opinion, news, letters to the editor, AgForce news snippets and other items on the AgForce page as opposed to mainly news articles in the Longreach Leader.

Many articles, especially getting closer to the 2012 election, were very critical of the Labor government for example *River laws drive Western Queensland locals wild* (8 December 2011) and *Labor's tricky treat: another wild power grab* (15 December 2011). QCL generally ran either neutral or anti Wild Rivers policy articles. There were a couple of exceptions to this.

QCL quoted 13 sources based in Western Queensland including one MP based in South West Queensland, 20 from the wider rural area (for example the Vice President of AgForce then was based in Emerald Queensland) and 29 from urban sources. While these articles are either fully or partially focussed on the LEB WR debate the wider selection of sources probably reflects the wider readership across the state. AgForce had a stated position of being opposed to the policy and AgForce content in the QCL reflects this.

Remote sources were not dominated by urban in the Longreach Leader or the QCL thereby giving remote citizens a voice on this issue.

### **Gender of sources**

This LEB WR case study examines who had influence in shaping policy. I therefore examine whether male or female sources are more prevalent in the selected media. Gender hierarchies are manifest in a number of ways in media representations including in the newsrooms themselves where female journalists work in male dominated newsrooms and are often relegated to lower level positions and experience a range of discriminatory experiences from male counterparts (North 2012). Therefore article editing and selection of sources may depend more on male preferences. Media outlets will usually seek out heads of

organisations for comment on policy issues anyway or they are referred to *leaders* within the organisation because of the organisation's own media policy. In CWQ most heads of representative organisations are white Caucasian males.

Against the usual trend is the research study conducted by Ewart and Cokley (2007).

The Barcoo Independent not only used significant numbers of women as news sources, but those women were portrayed as important providers of information, as informed and as willing to inform others. They were depicted as valued members of the community who were making a contribution to community life. Frequently, women whose voices were heard in the Barcoo Independent were placed in positions whereby they spoke not only for themselves, but for the broader community. (Ewart & Cokley 2007, p. 163)

This was not what occurred in this LEB WR policy case study. Male sources significantly dominated female sources. Drawing on Lukes' conceptualisation of power, women were dominated in this power mechanism. That is, men of influence used the media (a *mechanism of power*) to frame the policy in a way that presented dominant views in order to shape opinion. Women were largely compliant in this as it is usually heads of organisations or influential people who speak publically on policy in the media and in CWQ this is usually men not women.

	Longreach Leader	QCL	ABC radio
<b>Gender</b> of sources	Female: 17 Male: 47	Female: 4 Male: 50	Female: 11 Male: 28
<b>Gender</b> of editors	Female	Male	Unknown (several)
<b>Gender</b> of authors where known	Female: 5 Male: 0	M: 25 F: 3	F: 21 <sup>11</sup> M: 3

**Table 6.3 Gender and media analysis**

There were many more male than female sources in all three media outlets with one outlet having 50 male to four female sources. This is noteworthy especially considering that two of the three state Ministers during the case study time period were female (Vicki Darling and Kate Jones) as well as the Premier (Anna Bligh) and government spokespersons made up the majority of urban sources.

<sup>11</sup> There was several ABC radio articles with two by-lines listed.

The extraordinary predominance of men speaking on this policy issue in the media occurs for a number of reasons, not least being the normalisation of masculine hegemony (Connell 2009). Men hold most of the leadership positions in CWQ. For example, during the three year time period there was only one female Mayor (and one female Shire CEO) and six male Mayors (and CEOs) in CWQ. Similarly sector representatives attending the RAPAD stakeholder forums held in 2009 included 12 females to 25 males (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2009), in 2010 eight females including a working administration officer to 21 males (Remote Area Planning and Development Board March 2010). The LEBWRAP had four female members to 10 males though this changed when additional members were placed on the LEBWRAP. However the ratio of males to females stayed roughly the same. The gender composition of the LEBWRAP occurred for the same reasons – men hold more of the positions at the top of their organisations, for example Mayor, Chair and so on and attendees were representatives from stakeholder organisations (usually the Chair / Mayor or nominee). Invitations to participate were sent to heads of organisations and the organisation decides who is most appropriate to attend / represent them.

Media will source opinions from representatives of peak bodies (for example AgForce) and local bodies such as local government, regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies and other NRM committees. Elite sources are discussed below.

Agriculture was a dominant sector and shaped the way Wild Rivers was perceived in the media. Agricultural industry bodies are historically male dominated at leadership level (Alston & Wilkinson 1998; Pini 2002a). In 2009 – 2011 AgForce had males in the positions of state President, Vice President, Longreach branch President and the Wild Rivers executive nominee on the LEBWRAP who attended the RAPAD forums. However the regional manager was female and some female members were active in AgForce committees developing their position on (against) Wild Rivers in CWQ. Power in agriculture and in agricultural regions such as CWQ is linked to land ownership. Ownership of agricultural land is largely still handed down to sons (Alston 1995; Bryant & Pini 2009; Sachs 1996; Shortall 1999) through patrilineal inheritance thereby ensuring that males continue to inherit land. Women, for example daughters-in-law (Pini 2007), though usually supporting the family enterprise with on and off farm work are sometimes included in land ownership but can be excluded from the most important decisions involved in farming enterprises – for example when to exit farming. This is replicated to some extent in the wider community.

Following Lukes' views on power suggests that it is white men who are constructing our understanding of the way we view Wild Rivers. Men dominated the media on this topic because of their prevalence in the civic leadership landscape in CWQ and because of the

power and control that emerges from ownership of the resources to be affected. There appears to be a largely unquestioned acceptance of the dominant masculine view.

### **Gender of authors**

While QCL had many more listed male authors 25:3 (with a male editor) the other two media outlets were dominated by female authors (with a female editor at the Longreach Leader and the others at ABC radio unknown / varied). QCL ran articles that included: opinion (sometimes with no byline), letters, news and AgForce information / articles and opinions.

The ABC radio transcripts selected for the ABC website, and which included by-lines, had 21 female authors to three males.

Because journalists tend to seek out *elite* sources for stories like Wild Rivers (to get a local reaction to a government policy) and more of the civic leadership positions in CWQ are held by men there are less female sources across all three outlets. It seems likely that male domination of news sources is not linked to authorship and is more about who is an *elite source* in CWQ as even the local paper with a female editor ran stories with less female voices. This suggests a lack of infrastructural support and resourcing for women's organisations and also reinforces a dominant masculine hegemony and male control of land, resources, power and influence.

### **Gender of editors**

For the time period studied (2009 – 2011) there was a male editor at the QCL, a female editor at the Longreach Leader and 4QL (ABC radio) in Western Queensland had a female journalist in charge of news based in Longreach. However other staff based elsewhere edit and decide which articles will go onto the ABC website.

How much the gender of the editor affected selection of articles and / or editing of articles or selection of sources, in the case of media stories on the LEB WR, was not researched in this case study and may have affected choice of sources to some extent.

## Sector of sources

Sector of sources:	Longreach Leader	QCL	ABC radio
	Agriculture: <sup>12</sup> 22 Indigenous: 1 Env. advocacy: 6 NRM groups: 1 Govt: 16 Local Government: 15 Mining: 1  Community: 1 Banking: 1	Ag:22 Indigenous: 2 Env. Adv.: 3 NRM: 0 Government: 24 LG: 9  Church: 1 Business: 1	Ag: 5 Indigenous: 0 Env. Adv: 3 NRM: 0 Govt: 19 LG: 7 Mining: 1  Community: 1 Banking: 1 Health: 1 Science: 1

**Table 6.4 Sector of sources**

Sources are usually quoted in the media as representing one sector although as Lukes recognised power rarely operates in binaries and is much more complex. Lines between sectors are somewhat blurred as many activists in CWQ tend to belong to a number of organisations and sectors. They therefore can have multiple interests in a debate and can sometimes choose which organisation or sector they are representing when speaking to the media. For example, a grazier may be an AgForce member and / or a Local Government Councillor / Mayor and / or an NRM body member. It depends which position (or *hat*) they see as most appropriate when speaking to the media although sometimes organisational media protocols prohibit this. For example, sometimes chairs of quite significant environmental advocacy bodies chose to speak from a *non-elite* position (not as an organisational representative) – for example as a landholder / grazier / community person in order to express particular views. This is fairly common practice and something I did myself when holding a number of leadership positions in various organisations and is sometimes done to avoid conflict of interest. For example, rural women working for state government who are members of community groups may name their voluntary group role when speaking to the media on certain policy issues to avoid conflicts with their work role.

<sup>12</sup> Includes AgForce representatives and individual landholders.

The main sectors / stakeholder groups speaking in the three media outlets on the LEB WR policy included:

Sectors	Additional Comments
Agriculture	Including individual graziers and AgForce representatives and members.
Environmental protection advocacy groups	Including Pew Environment Group, The Wilderness Society and alliances formed that included them eg. Western Rivers Alliance.
NRM bodies	Catchment committees, regional NRM bodies.
State / Federal Government	Staff and elected representatives.
Local Government	Mayors, RAPAD.
Indigenous <sup>13</sup>	Including traditional owners, or clan members, Indigenous organisation representatives and others nominated by main stream organisations eg. Desert Channels Queensland (which has an Indigenous arm).
Mining	
Banking	

**Table 6.5 Main sectors speaking to the media on LEB WR**

This case study shows that state and federal government (MPs and public servants), agriculture (AgForce and others), and local government dominated the three media outlets. The local paper, the Longreach Leader, featured more stories using agricultural sources (22) with state and federal government (16) next and local government (15) being almost equally represented. Environment protection advocacy groups were next with six sources.

In the QCL government (24) and agriculture (22) were dominant sources.

ABC radio internet articles were dominated by government sources (19) with local government (7) next and agriculture (5) also evident. Quite a few articles that were aired but not put on the internet had local sources. These numbers are not necessarily reflective of what was aired and reflect management choices as to what went onto the ABC website.

<sup>13</sup> While Indigenous people are not a sector as such (nor are women) they are key stakeholders in this debate. Usually when Government consults on such policy they seek to consult with a balance of stakeholders that can include: key relevant stakeholder organisations; local government; Indigenous people; and sometimes women.

While environmental protection advocacy groups such as The Wilderness Society and Pew Environment Group drove the LEB WR policy initially they were not active in these media outlets over the three years. This was deliberate and urban based activists may also have chosen to have remote based advocates speak to the media instead:

Who's had the biggest voice? ... the fact that the government adopted this legislation, well adopted this proposal in the first place probably greenies to start with. I think greenies have moved to the background probably deliberately to let others speak. So I've deliberately not done much media so that there's low conflict and that things are fixed behind closed doors. Probably more effective. There hasn't been a lot of media. [Thomas, metro, environmental advocate]

As Lukes recognised in his second face of power, not acting can also be used as an effective mechanism to exert power. That is, it was deemed by the environmental advocacy group representative that there were more effective ways to influence policy at this stage of policy development than through media statements.

Indigenous representatives were also largely absent in the media coverage of Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers in these outlets except for one politically astute Indigenous lobbyist who still got only a very small amount of coverage. This is despite his comment that:

Well, I've kind of been the media spokesperson for the Aboriginal mob out that way, and that's why you've seen me with bloody [national politician] yeah. And from that meeting down there, that's what was sort of endorsed, from that Tibooburra meeting. I continued doing the media stuff, and making sure that I keep in touch with all the rest of the mob out there and let them know what's going on [Tim, WQ, Indigenous].

As with other marginalised groups, Indigenous sector representatives in Western Queensland are not often asked to comment on mainstream policy issues by media, they mostly do not put out media releases and are not as organised politically. Further the organisations they were drawn from are not necessarily lobby groups. CWQ Indigenous residents seem to be consulted rather than have to actively lobby although perhaps some of their lobbying is invisible to an outside observer. One of my CWQ based interviewees works for state government which provides a further level of constraint – a conflict of interest with regard to lobbying though he was actively consulted. One Indigenous interviewee did comment on the usefulness of having an established organisation for government to come to when consulting. The Georgina Diamantina Aboriginal Advisory Group was consulted by government and Indigenous members reported this was useful. They requested separate

consultation by government which occurred as some of their members are reluctant to speak in mainstream processes. They were also included in mainstream processes such as the RAPAD forums and the LEBWRAP.

There are few women's organisations in CWQ that get actively involved in responding to or lobbying on policy. Groups like QRWN do not currently have a group in CWQ making it harder for governments to locate female representatives for rural policy discussions. In the past women in CWQ have formed groups for that reason. An example is the Regional Women's Alliance founded by Betsy Fysh in the 1990s when native title was being debated. However women are part of every other sector involved in the Wild Rivers debate yet continue to be marginalised when it comes to being heard.

There are issues for the Indigenous sector when organising policy responses in that they like any demographic including agriculture have a multitude of voices and perspectives. This can be an issue because quite often for consultation purposes there is only one or two sector representatives invited onto an advisory committee. Those representatives are required to represent all voices from that community. This is a great challenge for Indigenous representatives and indicates a particular naivety on the part of government and others.

A lot of people think that all black fellas think one way. No, we're all individuals and we've all got our own experiences ... think differently. And there's this thing that happens within Indigenous people too, because we all say, "We're all family. We're all in this together and we all want to stick together." Well, the only thing that we have in common, as Indigenous people right across this country, is historical context ... That's the thing that brings us all together, but we're so different in every other aspect. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

Groups like Desert Channels Queensland sometimes nominate Indigenous members to represent them on mainstream NRM policy issue forums. This adds to the overall Indigenous perspective of decision making groups and is useful for diversifying input into policymaking.

Stakeholder group representatives may choose to influence in other ways as well, for example forming relationships and participating in mainstream and Indigenous processes rather than trying to influence through mainstream media. Though one politically astute lobbyist from this sector did do media interviews and was picked up by some outlets. For example QCL 40 *Aborigines say wild rivers will secure west*.

The mining sector which had a major interest in the potential constraints of Wild Rivers policy was also a very small presence in the media coverage on this topic. An interviewee

from that sector said that while they often chose to have a representative on the regional advisory groups often he would not say much. Their company was able to access the Minister fairly regularly and they would seek to influence the Minister directly. Presumably they did not think speaking via the media was the best way to influence this policy issue.

At the end of the day we're big enough that while the protection board, groups, and all those can have their lobby with the ministers but the truth is so can [his mining company name] and big industry at the end of the day. The mining industry will make its submissions and do its lobbying through its normal processes. [Robert, metro, mining]

Thus while there is a lot of faith that regional based Ministerial advisory groups will influence policy some very significant lobbying occurs outside and is invisible to those regionally based. Further while female and Indigenous sources were not well used as spokespersons by the media outlets on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy they were not completely powerless. This was evident when key female and Indigenous activists had some influence on the policy and the process for deliberation.

## Gender and Sectors

Gender and sectors	Number interviewed	Primary or large % income drawn from agriculture	Primary role with regard to wild rivers <sup>14</sup>
Females	9	6	Agriculture – 1 Env. Advocacy – 1 Local Govt. – 2 NRM – 4 State Govt. – 1
Males	17	6	Agriculture – 1 Env. Adv – 2 Indigenous – 2 Local govt. – 5 State / Fed Govt – 4 NRM – 2 Mining – 1

**Table 5.6 Gender and Sectors**

While it might be expected that agriculture dominated discussions on the LEB WR policy and 12 out of 26 interviewees did draw an income from agriculture, the interests of agriculture were dissipated somewhat when those people represented other sectors or organisational interests, for example local government, NRM or environmental advocacy groups. The majority of female interviewees (6) drew their primary income from agriculture but only one paid worker was noted as representing that sector on Wild Rivers. It was difficult at times to separate interviewee's roles and decide which one was their primary role with regard to Wild Rivers except for when people were nominated as attending the RAPAD forums, for example as a sector or organisational representative. Lukes' understanding of power suggests that it is too simplistic to see power in terms of binaries (A has power over B) - the interests of representatives were more complex. For example, some women had roles in local government, worked in agriculture and also were members of NRM bodies all of which had an interest in Wild Rivers. Similarly an Indigenous interviewee was an NRM body representative and so on. Therefore the sectoral interests of individuals were sometimes unclear or complex. However the fact that so many involved in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild

<sup>14</sup> When women interviewees did not represent any organisation or sector on Wild Rivers publically I noted the role they held (from a number) that was most relevant to the Wild Rivers policy development. For example, some had roles in local government, agriculture and NRM all of which sectors had an interest in Wild Rivers.

Rivers deliberations drew an income from agriculture meant the interests of agriculture permeated discussions even when the numbers of official representatives of agricultural bodies at the RAPAD forums and on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel were ostensibly few. Lukes would view this as the agricultural sector, a dominant sector in this policy debate, seeking to provide a dominant truth with regard to the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy thereby attempting to render other interpretations of the policy less known. While other avenues for influence used by other sectors, such as mining and environmental advocacy groups, counteracted this somewhat, agriculture sought to establish their version of reality through the media. Government who had promised the Wild Rivers policy would be considered in the 2009 election was also a sector that was well represented in the media. Strong lobbying by environmental advocacy groups had successfully put Wild Rivers on the government agenda and government now had a role in managing the consultation process.

### **Elite or non-elite sources**

Another factor impacting on who did and did not speak to the media on Wild Rivers is that 'journalists as a group are predisposed towards reporting the news primarily through the voices of such "elite" sources as well-known politicians, civic and business leaders' (Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 100). Under the Ewart and Cokley (2007) content analysis framework, elite sources are 'those with significant power and influence' (Ewart & Massey 2005, p. 102). In my research this included: Government Ministers / Premier and high level public servants; Mayors; Chief Executive Officers of organisations; Organisation Chairs or deputy or nominated spokesperson; and LEBWRAP members. Non-elites included: community members; individual graziers; non-aligned individuals; and lower ranking staff.

Elite: non elite sources	Longreach Leader	QCL	ABC radio
	41: 24	54: 10	37: 2

**Table 6.7** Number of elite and non-elite sources

While elites dominated the media coverage on this topic it could be argued that many of those who fell into the non-elite category also had substantial power to influence. For example, an individual (male) landholder felt sufficiently empowered to write to the editor of QCL to voice his opinions as a landholder (non-elite) – he was also a local government councillor and a LEBWRAP member. As mentioned previously stakeholders can choose to speak to the media using a non-elite role rather than a formal committee position.

Many of the non-elites (and elites) were male landholders. Male property ownership and power are linked through patrilineal inheritance of land (Alston 1995; Bryant & Pini 2009; Kelly, R & Shortall 2002; McGowan 2011; Muenstermann 2011; Price 2010; Sachs 1996; Shortall 1999) hence the ability of some landowners to feel entitled to speak out via the media.

We're a patriarchal society and I think here in Western Queensland, we're the epitome of traditional and conservative, and traditional and conservative has males as leaders and, obviously I don't agree with it ... but I do believe it, a male is seen as a better leader, a male principal in a school is seen as a better principal than a female principal, a male mayor. I think there's just a lot of traditional views, and I'm not saying we're backward or behind, but we subscribe to tradition more strongly than other areas, regions ... Rural Australia has a sense of entitlement, built a bit on the old squattocracy model, built in the fifties when Australia rode on the sheep's back, and we still think we can demand things, and decision makers, whether we're talking corporates, whether we're talking government, will listen and that is not the case. [Nicole, WQ, agriculture]

While Ewart and Massey (2005) found that regional newspapers as a group used a higher percentage of non-elite sources, my research does not support this for the LEB WR media coverage because of the nature of the news topic – controversial and political.

### **Headlines, content and tone**

A list of headlines (and content) of all collected articles gives some indication of whether articles were largely neutral, against or pro Wild Rivers or a mix. (See Appendices 5, 6 and 7

for lists of article headlines from the three media sources). Largely QCL articles were negative about Wild Rivers. AgForce had a stated position of being opposed to Wild Rivers and AgForce has a regular page in the QCL where news, meeting notices and opinion is placed so a considerable amount of the content collected from the QCL came from AgForce. Even benign meeting notices about Wild Rivers on the AgForce pages give some sense of the importance of this issue. An example is *Wild Rivers in spotlight* (30 June 2009).

Coverage on this topic increased over the three years and headlines became more negative especially in 2011 just prior to the Queensland state election. In 2009 headlines included relatively neutral headings such as *Wild Rivers in spotlight*, *RAPAD work to tame wild rivers* and *Submission looks at Wild Rivers declarations*. However by the second half of 2011 headlines were far more negative. For example, *River laws drives WQ locals wild*, *Wild Critics call for referendum* and *Green vote grabs flows with Wild Rivers*. There was one exception to the negative coverage of Wild Rivers in 2011 with *Aborigines **say** wild rivers will secure west* [my bolding] and this headline against others openly opposed sets up the Indigenous sector as an opponent of the agricultural sector which was largely against Wild Rivers with a few notable exceptions. The choice of the term *Aborigines* rather than traditional owner or elder is disrespectful and confers less authority to the spokesperson.

Opinion pieces were becoming openly negative towards the Labor government by the end of 2011 with headlines such as *Deaf to complaint: QLD govt snubs AgForce* and *Labor's tricky treat: another wild power grab*.

The only other openly positive piece on Wild Rivers was a Letter to the Editor by a Western Queensland grazier who is a member of the environmental advocacy group, The Western Rivers Alliance, formed to lobby for Wild Rivers in 2011: *Wild rivers laws help channel country* (15 September, 2011).

The Longreach Leader had a more balanced mix of headlines and articles on Wild Rivers. Some neutral and some negative, depending on local reaction. Their coverage included headlines such as: *Graziers, greenies to protect rivers from mining pollution* (March 6, 2009) in the early stages of the debate, *Blackall graziers air Wild Rivers concerns at the community cabinet in Barcaldine* (November 13, 2009), *Finding common ground on Wild Rivers* May 7, 2010 and *Winners and Losers with Wild Rivers declaration* (December 16, 2011). As the Leader used more sources than any other outlet per article and more Western Queensland sources, perhaps they had a better coverage of the mix of views from a range of sectors – reflecting their readership.

ABC radio website transcripts also showed a mix of views on the Wild Rivers debate. Examples are *Wilderness Society wants long-term river protection regime* (16 March 2009), *Graziers worried about Wild Rivers laws* (13 January 2010) and *Funds to help fight Wild Rivers pests* (22 December 2011).

## **The importance of discourse**

Following Lukes' understanding of power, dominant groups can control the interpretation and understanding of a policy such as the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy by controlling the means through which it is communicated. That is, how it is spoken about and even thought about. Those with power project their experience and culturally shaped versions of reality as the normative view. This can render other competing views less visible, stereotypical, thereby 'marking them as other' (Lukes 2005, p.120).

Those sectors concerned with the economic impacts of the Wild Rivers policy on their businesses used economic rationalist, or neoliberal, discourse to argue their positions. In this case study evidence of three discourses was found which shows the ability of dominant sectors to influence knowledge and the way people speak and think about it. They are: a green discourse influenced by green advocates; a neoliberal production type discourse emanating from (male-dominated) industry and supported by government; and a *government speak* type emanating largely from the public service.

## **Dominant discourses**

Of particular significance in the coverage by ABC radio and the QCL was the frequent use of the word *controversial* with regard to Wild Rivers. While there were mixed views on Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin, leaders in CWQ had largely cooperated to work together and with government to find common ground and to see where compromise might be possible given the range of views. Media coverage tends to focus on the voices of dissent rather than those who agree – a usual approach by media to create readership interest and supposedly generate sales. Thus Wild Rivers even in the Lake Eyre Basin was framed as controversial. The local paper did not use the descriptor *controversial* as often.

Another language mechanism of note is the use of the contested term *sustainable* and *sustainable agriculture* and *sustainable development* in all three discourses often with very different meanings to various sectors using the terms. Others have noted the contested use of this term (Aslin & Lockie 2013; Hermans et al. 2010; Higgins & Lockie 2002). The sectors of agriculture, environmental advocacy groups and government equally spoke positively of

*sustainable* agriculture or development. What this means to the agricultural sector as opposed to green advocacy groups differs somewhat. Presumably the term is a direct result of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) policy which has dominated thinking at international and national levels since the Rio Summit in 1992. Dovers (2013) noted in an article on the history of Australian environmental policy that environmental policy in Australia has broadened from *environmentalism* to *sustainable development* and discourse along with it.

I looked for different types of discourse in my coding of interviews with activists trying to influence policy on Wild Rivers. I found three notable discourses and looked for examples of these in the media content analysis as well. They were a *green* discourse, a *pro-production* or neoliberal type discourse and a *government speak* discourse. The latter was sometimes neoliberal as well but not always, given that Wild Rivers policy is about protecting rivers / conservation and restricting, at least to some extent, production. Others have noted a discourse surrounding environmental policy that is science based (ecological) in similar studies (Foxwell - Norton 2006) but this did not emerge as a major category in my research as I looked at the experience of regional activists and the media content regional activists and others were producing.

Discourse is important because, as Lukes notes, the way we come to think about and view things becomes framed by the words we use to discuss them and these are generated by the powerful. The term *wild rivers* is a good example. The three Lake Eyre Basin rivers were called *wild* originally by green advocacy groups who had a long-term policy campaign to seek their protection. This construct or representation is a clever one as it is catchy – who doesn't love the sound / thrill of a wild river? It captures the imagination while reinforcing the importance of protectionist values without stating them. Even those opposed to protection used the term *wild rivers* during the deliberations, sometimes scathingly. Agriculture on the other hand failed to frame the rivers from their point of reference – the usefulness of the rivers for production (even if sustainably) though sector representatives did discuss sustainable agriculture. Since Wild Rivers policy has been revoked for the Lake Eyre Basin (after my case study period) the discourse surrounding these rivers has deliberately been changed from protectionist, conservation oriented *Wild Rivers* to the more neutral *Western Rivers*.

Being a *production versus the environment* policy issue and supported by a long-term campaign by the green advocacy group, TWS, it is perhaps inevitable that there was a *green* discourse around media coverage on Wild Rivers policy. Wild Rivers should not be presented in terms of binaries – save the environment versus mine (or use) the environment

– as there were many shades of views in between conservation views and pro-development and pro-irrigation. Nonetheless it is probably true to say that many of the regional activists interviewed were not on the far green end of the spectrum although many had a view somewhere in the middle. Everyone wanted the rivers protected as noted at the first RAPAD forum but many also want to see regional growth and a prosperous agricultural sector. Some were open to small scale irrigation and some were not. Most in agriculture and environmental groups wanted to see mining further regulated. Local government were less enthusiastic about inhibiting mining too much because of the potential economic benefits for their shire.

Green discourse framed the debate in terms of a *threat* from mining and from irrigators. A public battle over irrigation on Cooper Creek happened in the area almost twenty years ago with much media coverage at the time, for example in the Sydney Morning Herald – *Cooper Creek cotton project too risky* (Hogarth 1996). Protectionists, some of whom were prominent local graziers, protested loudly and the proposed major cotton irrigation project for the area did not go ahead. The descriptor *protection* was used widely when discussing the Wild Rivers policy. Protection in green discourse is about protecting the rivers or water flow but protection in the pro-production discourse is about livelihoods (profit) and regional town survival or growth.

Other examples of green discourse that framed the way people discussed and thought about Wild Rivers included the following: *Preserving natural values*. This is a term commonly used in NRM and green circles that is not well understood or used outside – meaning protecting nature at its most basic level. The descriptor *Protecting [or preserving] natural values*, while not widely used beyond these sectors (although *green* government departments employ the term) was used in media coverage of Wild Rivers. The Wild Rivers declaration proposal for Cooper Creek describes Wild Rivers in terms of preserving natural values including in the Minister's Forward (Queensland Government 2010b). Five natural values (to be protected) are specified in this document. Whether this can be called green discourse or government speak or a mix of both I am unable to determine but this term was used quite frequently in the media coverage.

The term *pristine* or *near pristine* originates from green discourse and was also used in the Wild Rivers deliberations and in media coverage. This was contentious as the rivers were chosen for protection as they are regarded as still being largely intact. However there was quite a lot of comment in my interviews about whether the rivers really are still pristine given that there is long-term agricultural fencing and stock use as well as weirs for town water usage off the Lake Eyre Basin rivers. Further, if current and historic use had kept the rivers

*pristine* why did they need protection? However the word *pristine* in media interviews was used fairly regularly in media coverage on wild rivers and it appears in the Wild Rivers policy documents as well.

Another term from green discourse of note that probably originated from green advocacy groups and also used by government is *world heritage listing*. This was a major concern of the agricultural sector that green groups were pushing Wild Rivers as a first step in order to obtain World Heritage listing over the rivers thereby banning all water extraction from the rivers for agricultural use. TWS made a statement in the media saying that while they were pursuing Wild Rivers, they would not seek world heritage listing unless local communities wanted it (Longreach Leader, *No world heritage listing for Lake Eyre*, August 6 2010). Environmentalists, conservationists and environmental scientists are key stakeholders promulgating green discourse.

Neoliberalism:

... is a political theory of economic practices that propose that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong property rights, free markets and free trade. (Harvey 2007, p. 2)

Neoliberalism has infiltrated our language and frames and confines our understanding and thinking of certain practices to an economic rationalist, transactional way of seeing the world<sup>15</sup>. The debate on Wild Rivers, as covered by the three media outlets chosen for this study, was framed in a pro-production, neoliberal discourse. This emerged also from interviews and became evident in the language used in all three media outlets. The QCL which has a large audience amongst primary producers, adopted this discourse more frequently.

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<sup>15</sup> See *Neoliberalism has hijacked our vocabulary* in The Guardian (Massey, D 11 June 2013).

Examples of words commonly used in the pro-production (neoliberal) discourse to describe the wider terrain of Wild Rivers policy includes the following: *property rights; property values; economic multiplier of jobs in agriculture; viability of communities* (economic); *code of practice; sustainable practices / development; productivity; fodder harvesting; growth; and economic development* to name a few. Concepts that either directly or indirectly imply that economic values outweigh non-economic values, for example environmental or social values.

*Pest management* is another example where feral pigs for example, are seen as pests harming grazing enterprises (impacting on profit) by the pro-production sector as opposed to being seen as animals that require protection by the animal liberation sector. Graziers, irrigationists, governments and mining company personnel were key proponents of the pro-production / neoliberal discourse.

Government speak is the third discourse that emerged from interviewees' words and experiences supporting Lukes' view that dominant sectors will influence discourse. Government can be considered as a sector that had a considerable interest in the development of this policy as it had been lobbied to support it prior to the state election.

Books like Don Watson's 'Death Sentence: The decay of public language' (2004) provide us with current (and sometimes amusing) examples in an Australian context of government speak. Language can be exclusive (inclusive for those in the inner circle) and bureaucratic words can create a sense of self-importance for those using them. Government speak can create barriers between governments (or users of those words) and rural / remote citizens who generally dislike jargon and bureaucratic language (Cavaye 2004). Any analysis of policy will uncover words that have emerged from the government or bureaucracy. From the domain of Wild Rivers policy emerged the following new concepts: Special Floodplain Management Areas; High Preservation Areas; Wild Rivers declarations.

Older examples that came up in the media coverage include: *Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation* referred to colloquially as *PMavs*. It has been well noted in other research (Gray & Lawrence 2001; Lockie 2001; Moffatt 2005) as well as this case study that farmers resisted policy on vegetation management including tree clearing for a number of reasons. One of my government interviewees noted that farmers were unimpressed with the community consultation processes conducted by the state government at the time and government officers from that department still detect a distinct lack of trust because of this past history. *PMavs* were regarded with suspicion by many farmers as being government

imposed and this term has a distinct big brother feel to it for some in agriculture. However it is a term that is well understood by farmers in Queensland still today and is commonly used.

Other common terms generated by government managers that have come into common usage and were used in media coverage on Wild Rivers are *submissions, consultation* and some equate the term government consultation with preordained outcomes, *stakeholders, Environmental Impact Statement, delegation, community cabinet, roundtable, inquiry* and *government funding*.

The use of the term Wild Rivers (which originated in green discourse and came into government speak discourse) as an example of government speak discourse fits with my finding from interviews that Wild Rivers policy was perceived by many remote residents as being imposed or *top down*. It was not seen as emerging from the community who reside in the remote area where the rivers are located. What is absent from these dominant versions of reality is an incorporation of the qualitative dimensions of the wild rivers – their cultural and spiritual importance to the people and communities of the inland. The productivist discourse tended to override any alternative conceptualisation, and, in the process, silenced certain voices including women and Indigenous residents. The city-country divide also emerged from my interviews, and language is a barrier that exacerbates this and / or is used as an exclusionary tool to create power imbalance.

## **Photos / pictures**

Photos from the three media outlets have been selected because they reveal aspects about who and how people in remote communities try to influence government policy. Most articles did not have photos or had generic photos, for example the few ABC internet articles with pictures showed channel country landscape (to locate the story) or a local bird or maps of declared and proposed wild rivers in Queensland mainly focussing on the Gulf. QCL had small snapshot photos of the male AgForce spokespersons (usually the President and Vice President), occasionally a snapshot of a Minister and even more rarely of authors with by-lines.

The following are a selection from the photos that accompanied articles. They highlight how remoteness, gender and indigeneity impacts on women and men's ability to influence the Wild Rivers policy. The following examples shed light on the power imbalances evident in this policy debate and who is being 'heard'. They are in order of date.



**Figure 6.1** *Longreach Leader*, 14 May 2009, 'Stakeholders meet to discuss wild rivers' pg. 3

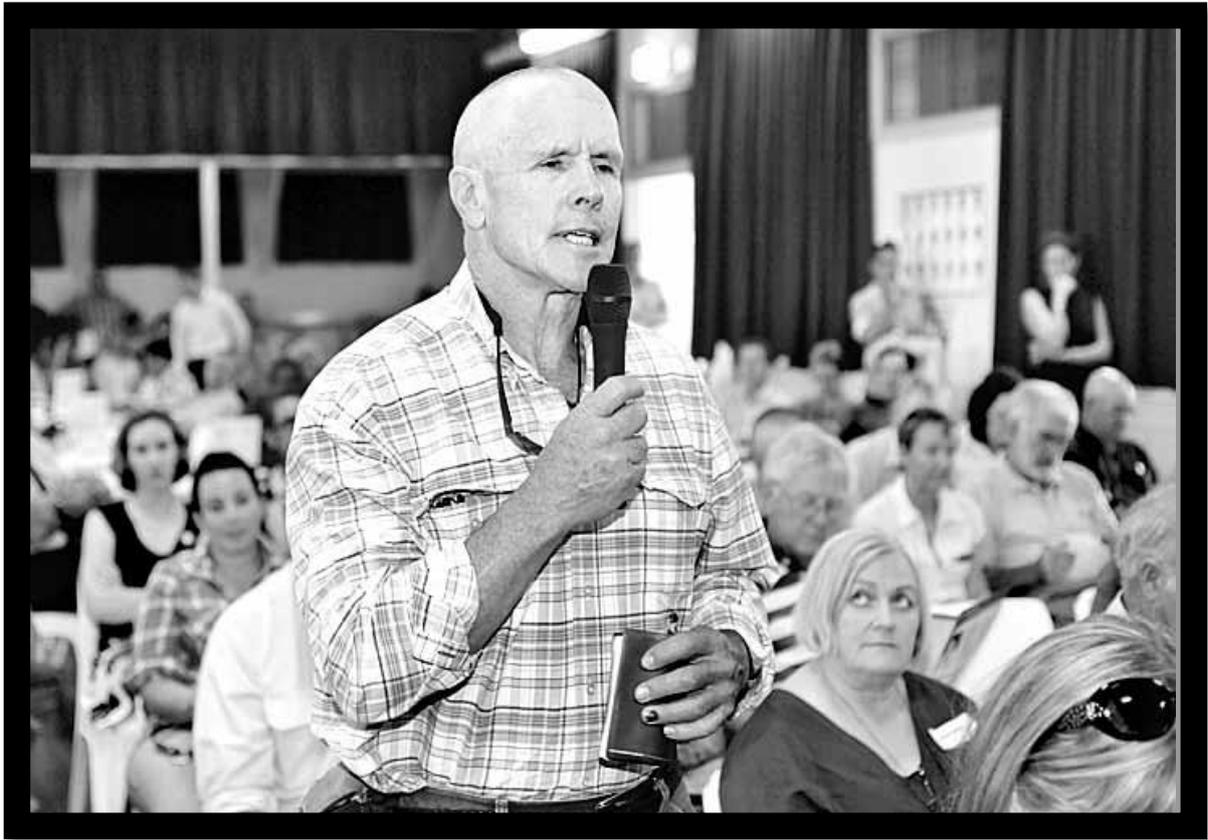
This was a continuation of a front page article entitled *Thomson on "wild" list for new state legislation*.

This photo was taken after the Queensland Government election on 21 March 2009 at the time when Wild Rivers emerged as an election promise for the Lake Eyre Basin. This group includes some of the key urban environmental advocates who lobbied for Wild Rivers along with two graziers from Western Queensland who are also key spokespersons on Wild Rivers for these organisations. The newly appointed local female executive officer is standing centre front of the photo and all three Western Queensland residents are in the front row. A dominant version of reality on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers was provided by the environmental advocacy groups and also by men.



**6.2 Longreach Leader, 31 July, 2009 'Wild Rivers forum finds consensus on a way forward' pg. 9.**

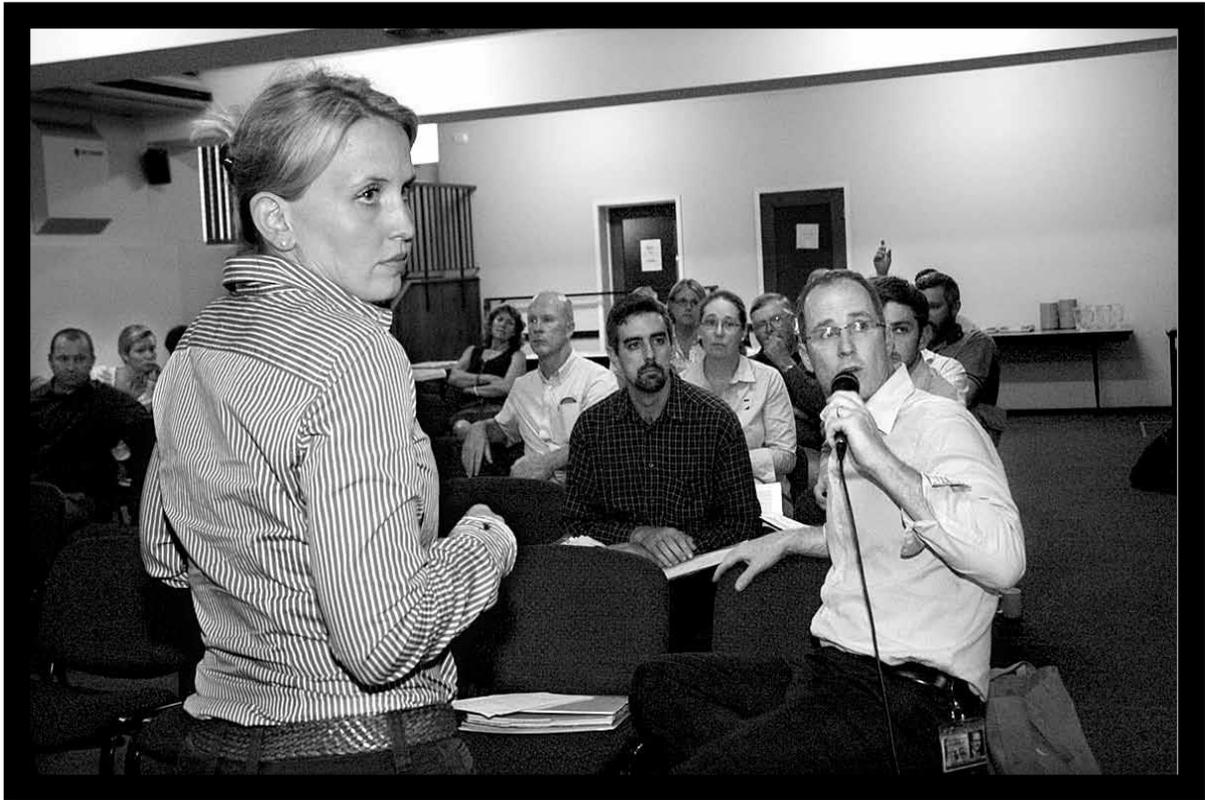
The photo is of some of the representatives including the female facilitator attending the first deliberative Wild Rivers forum in Longreach. This photo indicates the composition of those chosen to represent stakeholder views on the LEB WR policy, though some of the most remote shire representatives had left before the photo was taken due to the long distances to travel home. The forum was regarded as being successful in highlighting common areas, differences and where there was room for compromise by many although not all attendees. There are three key urban attendees from TWS, Pew Environmental Group and the Agforce state Chief Executive Officer but regional sector representatives dominate this forum held in Longreach and hosted by RAPAD. The women seem to be flanked in this photo by the men. The forum was spoken of positively by an urban environmental advocacy group interviewee as *unprecedented* and written up positively by the regional NRM body – Desert Channels Queensland in an article titled *Found: common ground on water* (Honeywill 2009).



**6.3 Longreach Leader, 13 November 2010 'Blackall graziers air Wild Rivers concerns at the Community Cabinet in Barcaldine' pg. 6**

*Caption: Blackall producer xxxx puts a question about the Wild Rivers legislation to Premier Anna Bligh at the Community Cabinet meeting in Barcaldine on November 1.*

This photo was taken at the Barcaldine community cabinet meeting. A local grazier expresses his frustration over Wild Rivers legislation. His wife who is the nominated spokesperson for the delegation group to the Premier on Wild Rivers called the Concerned Producers of the Upper Barcoo, looks on. Having had experience with agripolitics at a national level he used the occasion to make some provocative but media savvy comments against Wild Rivers describing the development of Wild Rivers policy as *'like using a flame thrower to get rid of a flea on a dog'*. A fairly aggressive but amusing and country oriented statement.



**6.4 Longreach Leader, 11 March 2011, 'Wild Rivers come up short of sustainable, Minister is told' pg. 7**

*Caption: Environment and Resource management Minister Kate Jones looks for information from the Wild Rivers coordinators as John Bradley, director general of DERM answers a question at the Cooper Creek Wild Rivers consultation meeting in Longreach last week.*

Urban based Minister Kate Jones was the second Labor Minister to take on the difficult Wild Rivers portfolio under a portfolio reshuffle. This meeting had been called with little notice and many interested members from outside town were not able to attend due to rain and untraversable roads. Attendance was constrained by who could get there given rain in the area and lack of notice. Sectors attending include: Council staff and a (female) Councillor; RAPAD General Manager (female); AgForce manager; some graziers who live close to Longreach who were not stopped by rain; state government staff; and an ABC rural reporter.



6.5 *Queensland Country Life*, 27 May 2010, 'Backlash tipped on green policy' pg. 9

This shows federal Liberal Senator Ron Boswell, in the Barcoo Shire where there is still dissent between residents on Wild Rivers. A map was included with this article titled 'Greensland' which is deliberately provocative suggesting that Queensland had become captured by green interests.

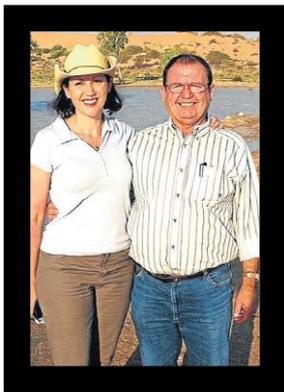


6.6 *Queensland Country Life*, 19 May 2011, 'Wild Rivers idealistic' pg. 3

The church was not one of the regional stakeholders involved in regional deliberations on Wild Rivers policy however this former grazier, now a pastor and a former Family First candidate, decided to speak against the policy and Family First Senator Steve Fielding's decision to withdraw his support for Coalition legislation that:

Would have scuttled the state's wild rivers law ... Wild Rivers is just typical of the idealistic views you get from young people who have not got the facts and who have never made a living from the land. These are misguided concepts not based on scientific fact. They are learned at uni by students from teachers who don't know themselves what they are teaching. (Queensland Country Life, 19 May 2011, 'Wild Rivers idealistic')

Truth based on science is regarded as uncontestable and as not coming from universities. This sets up a stereotypical binary of farmers being opposed to Wild Rivers and green groups being for, when in reality there were a mix of views in between being completely for or completely against.



**6.7 Queensland Country Life, 20 October 2011 'Qld government snubs AgForce' pg. 6.**

*Caption: Minister Vicky Darling met up with local mayor Robbie Dare at Simpson Desert National Park.*

Vicky Darling was the third Labor Minister during the three year period of my study to handle the Wild Rivers portfolio. She came to this portfolio towards the end of my study period and was accused in the media of avoiding AgForce by travelling out west to meet remote Western Queensland Mayors including Diamantina Shire (incorporating Birdsville and Bedourie). Like most politicians going to rural electorates she has donned the compulsory Akubra hat for the trip and is shown in a very unministerial like photo with the local Mayor. This though does demonstrate an effort on behalf of government to work with the people face to face as well as providing a good media opportunity.



**6.8 Queensland Country Life, 27 October 2011 'Aborigines say wild rivers will secure west' pg. 11 (author Cameron Thompson).**

This was the only article in all three media outlets that dedicated its content to an Indigenous perspective, on Wild Rivers however the title seems to question the Indigenous perspective. The activist pictured is a traditional elder for the Mithika people based in the Lake Eyre Basin and a member of the LEBWRAP. Using Lukes' notion of power, Indigenous activists have less power to shape thinking and less access to the media and other resources that are more easily accessed by the powerful.

## **Conclusion**

In order to understand how activists influence government policy, a study of relevant media provides significant insights. Media is monitored closely by those organisations including government with the resourcing to pay for media monitoring services because they are aware that it is important to analyse who is speaking through the media and what is being said. A content analysis of three media outlets: ABC radio transcripts online; the Longreach Leader; and the QCL which are accessed by regional activists, has shown that women and Indigenous people were largely not commenting on LEB WR policy in the media. This is due to media seeking out elite sources for comment on contentious political issues and elite sources in CWQ are largely white Caucasian males. Also organisations that send out media releases tend to have males as their nominated leader. Other sectors such as mining and environment advocacy groups largely refrained from making statements in the media, preferring to use other methods to influence policy.

Coupled with information from in-depth interviews this media analysis proved useful to consider activist tactics to influence policy as well as providing food for thought as to why well-resourced groups such as mining and environmental advocacy groups did little media

on a topic they had a vested interest in. While women and Indigenous people did not speak to media much on Wild Rivers policy because of barriers, including lack of resourcing and lack of status in the community, mining and conservation advocacy groups refrained from media comment for more tactical reasons. It is evident from this analysis that power was not vested in the hands of one dominant organisation or institution. It shifted over time. Even the relatively powerless had power at times and a belief in the shifting of power may enable those groups or sectors to capitalise on these opportunities. What this analysis reveals is that men controlled the debate in these media outlets and a productivist conceptualisation of the wild rivers also dominated the media. This conceptualisation was not always consistent as conservation perspectives in particular were also very prevalent in discursive constructions of wild rivers even though that sectors representatives were rarely used as news sources in these media outlets.

I look now at policy processes and analyse interviews with those trying to influence policy on the shifting nature of power in the LEB WR policy development.

## Chapter Seven: The policy process

In order to comprehend how people in remote areas can influence government policy an understanding of the policy process and political imperatives surrounding policy is necessary. This chapter discusses the perceptions of the activists interviewed on influencing policy from remote Central Western Queensland (CWQ). All interviewees had at least some opportunity to influence the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy. I have deliberately quoted from the interviews quite heavily as the perspective of remote based activists (and those working with them) is not well heard outside remote Australia.

### Public policy and the policy process

Public policy is not easily defined even by experts in the field and according to the *Australian Policy Handbook* it still remains an ambiguous concept (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). Despite this it is a term that is frequently used by those in and outside government and can be said to include: 'an authoritative statement by a government about its intentions ... relying on hypotheses about cause and effect and structured around objectives' (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 5). It involves decision making, is structured and political (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; Maddison & Denniss 2009). Further it is 'a political agreement on a course of action (or inaction) designed to resolve or mitigate problems on the political agenda' (Fischer 1995 in Maddison & Denniss 2009, p. 3).

If defining public policy is no easy task then it is not surprising that complex processes used to develop policy are not well understood by those outside government either. The steps included in models such as the one outlined in *The Australian Policy Handbook* (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 37) and reproduced in Chapter Two, do not occur in a linear fashion and the reality is far messier.

Who controls these steps, when and how they occur is of great interest to those trying to influence policy, though largely hidden to the majority of citizens. Even for many working in government this complex process is not well understood as the policy process is managed by specialists within government departments as well as upper management.

Obviously not all policy issues are the subject of consultation and who influences the development of policy before it does go out to the public for consideration (if it does) is critical. Maddison and Denniss (2009) list the following as people who *do* policy: politicians; advisers; public servants; central agencies and line departments; academics; think tanks;

interest groups; and policy workers. Obviously there are many actors involved beyond those whom the policy will actually impact. Where does this leave citizens trying to influence policy who live in remote communities such as CWQ?

### **Wild Rivers policy**

The history of the development of the Wild Rivers policy in the Lake Eyre Basin is outlined in detail in Chapter Two. It was driven by the (largely) urban green advocacy group, The Wilderness Society (TWS), a body that feared that governments were not doing enough to protect these largely undamaged rivers from overuse. Declining water flow in rivers causing ecological imbalances has been a significant issue in other major river systems in Australia – the Murray Darling Basin being the most notable. Healthy rivers were identified by the Federal Government for *protection* and included the three Lake Eyre Basin rivers. In the Lake Eyre Basin coal seam gas mining and irrigation are noted as potential threats (The Wilderness Society 2011). Local community members and conservationists had previously protested loudly against a proposed large scale cotton irrigation project on Cooper Creek in the 1990s. That battle was won by conservationists and local graziers and no major irrigation on the Cooper occurs currently. Some sleeper licences still existed during the case study period. However a change of government can mean water planning legislation can be changed or revisited.

The idea is still contentious and there has been recent media coverage when the LEB WR policy was in the process of being repealed by the new Coalition government. See for example 7.30 report, 1 August 2013 and Landline, 10 August 2013 on opposing views for and against irrigation off Cooper Creek in the sparsely populated Barcoo Shire. For example, the Barcoo Shire Council Community Plan 2012–2022 (Barcoo Shire Council 2012) includes the option for *small scale irrigation* in its Economic Action Plan.

During the case study period from 2009 – 2011 the Queensland Government, despite stewarding the Wild Rivers legislation through Parliament (managed by the Department of Environment and Resource Management) through its Department of Primary Industries, was also proposing irrigation as a prospect for the Flinders River just north of the Lake Eyre Basin and not deterring coal seam gas exploration in CWQ. If Wild Rivers was largely driven by conservationists / urban environmental advocacy groups and the government was stewarding conservation policy as well as supporting mining and irrigation development at the same time, how did people in CWQ view Wild Rivers?

Policy is always political and Wild Rivers was developed in a political climate. It was first introduced into Queensland by the Labor party in 2005 and was at that time supported by the Liberals, although the National Party abstained from supporting it through Parliament (The Wilderness Society 2011). Since then it has become a Labor versus Coalition policy debate with Tony Abbott, then leader of the Federal Coalition very publicly denouncing the policy and seeking a private member's bill to try to quash it during the case study period. Currently Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin under the Newman Coalition government in Queensland was finally repealed in August 2014. New legislation is in place for alternate management of what are now termed the Western Rivers with a bigger focus on sustainable development. The Gregory electorate in CWQ is a long held conservative seat. Therefore the Labor party when developing the legislation on the LEB WR policy did not have a lot to lose if the western electorates did not like the policy – the majority of CWQ citizens were not going to vote for them anyway.

Several of my interviewees<sup>16</sup> spoke of how politics plays a role in policy:

There's nowhere to hide and government are seeing us as soft targets for the whole environmental debate and people are feeling really, really pressured by the outside world ... Even if they do lose one seat out in the west, it doesn't matter to them so that from a political point of view it was a win-win all over the place for them because they didn't mind that they upset us because we have no voting power whatsoever. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

One interviewee predicted the following well prior to the change of state government at the 2012 state election:

I have a strong feeling that the Liberal National party will probably get rid of the Wild Rivers Act. That then will present a whole new challenge for the people who spent a whole heap of time and energy coming up and making this agreement around Wild Rivers. In some ways a lot of it, and a lot of the people that have been involved in the Western Wild Rivers declaration will feel like they've been duded because they've put a whole heap of time and energy into developing it, and this government's come along and ripped the thing up. And I think it will happen, so I don't hold too much hope for it if that change of government happens. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous].

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<sup>16</sup> I use the term interviewee rather than (research) participant so as not to confuse the reader with participation in various forums, consultation, and so on.

Since the end date of my case study in December 2011 a landslide defeat saw a change of government in Queensland in 2012 and soon afterwards notice was given that Wild Rivers would be repealed. At this stage a diverse group of stakeholders in CWQ sent a letter to the new Minister, asking him not to completely revoke the whole policy as much work had been done to reach a compromise that suited many. A new advisory committee was formed to advise the new Liberal National Party (LNP) Minister comprised of most of the previous Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP) but excluding the former TWS representative.

The proposed new Western Rivers policy released in January 2014 has shown the change of government has resulted in a change in discourse from the more conservation-oriented *Wild Rivers* to the more neutral *Western Rivers*. The views of others, especially the environmental advocacy groups, now appear to have become *subjugated*.

The term economic sustainable development is more to the forefront now than the conservation oriented thrust of the former Wild Rivers policy and water trading to allow for small scale irrigation (without increasing the volume of water able to be taken from the system) is now permissible. Under the new policy open cut mining is banned in the channel country but petroleum and gas development in the *Channel Country Protection Area* is allowed subject to site-specific assessment and mandatory conditions. Reaction to the new policy is still evolving though former interviewees report that the conservation advocacy groups are unhappy with the new policy for a number of reasons.

### **Wild Rivers Policy 2009 – 2011 – who wanted a say?**

Unsurprisingly there were a wide range of reactions to the Labor government's proposed Wild Rivers declaration over Cooper Creek and the other Lake Eyre Basin rivers. The sectors most impacted, who wanted to influence the policy, involved themselves in consultation. The RAPAD stakeholder forums included representatives from agriculture (grazing and potential irrigationists), Indigenous groups, mining, green advocacy groups, local government and Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups (for example catchment committees and regional NRM bodies). Key government staff who had influence over the Wild Rivers policy process were also involved.

An interesting phenomenon observed in remote area lobbying is that almost all sector representatives wear a number of *hats* or participate in a number of representative roles. For

example a person might be representing an NRM group (in a Wild Rivers forum) but their income comes from grazing (agriculture) and they may also be a local government Councillor. As mentioned previously the mix of roles made it difficult sometimes to discern which of their interests were to the forefront. A strategic selection of which *hat* to wear is sometimes used when making statements to the media as noted in Chapter Five.

While the nominated rivers in question begin in Western Queensland (and flow beyond into remote areas in other states), some (not all) of the key stakeholders consulted on Wild Rivers were based in Western Queensland. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) maintains that those who think they have an interest in an issue should be engaged in public discussions on policy (Twyford et al. 2006) rather than just the obvious candidates – inclusion rather than exclusion. For example, *urban* green advocacy representatives were included as interested stakeholders in *remote* area deliberations on Wild Rivers as they had an interest and had driven the policy initially. A CWQ based *local* was the representative for AgForce (the state industry body for cattle and sheep grazing), for Wild Rivers committees and meetings. AgForce have a head office in Brisbane and at times the CEO, President or Vice President (all reside outside Western Queensland) commented on Wild Rivers in the media. Some traditional elders for the country around the rivers are based outside Western Queensland also but were appropriately included in the policy discussions.

Seventy-three per cent of the activists I interviewed were based in Western Queensland. Some stakeholders are more personally affected by the policy, for example landowners with High Preservation Areas (HPA) on their grazing properties, but others are interested for other reasons and should and were included in discussions at the time. When people from one geographic area in Western Queensland commented that they had been excluded from the advisory group they were included based on this principle of inclusivity. Not all representatives were remote based and some organised, well-resourced groups had urban and remote representatives attending the LEB WR deliberative forums such as environmental advocacy groups and AgForce.

## **Reaction to Wild Rivers**

There were a wide range of reactions to the Wild Rivers policy as it was originally presented. There were some key individuals, described as *green* graziers, who had been working with largely urban green advocacy groups to lobby for the declaration of the LEB WR and they were also involved in local protection groups as well. They were prominent in TV footage

and other media coverage when the Western Rivers Alliance, an alliance formed between The Australian Floodplain Association, TWS, the Cooper Creek Protection Group and Pew Environment Group (Australia), was launched outside Parliament House in Brisbane just prior to the Queensland Government election in 2009. One interviewee spoke of the legislation as *enabling* and critical to protect the rivers for future generations despite any constraints such legislation potentially might bring to his own and others grazing businesses. One interviewee from the environmental advocacy sector said:

It protects the rivers from being compromised. That and to maintain their ecological integrity into the future. So for me that's wonderful. I make my living from the river. I need it to ... I don't want it stuffed. [Sam, CWQ, environmental advocacy]

At the other end of the scale were those who were keen to keep their options open with regard to *small scale* irrigation (though another commented that there is no such thing as small scale irrigation) who were vehemently against Wild Rivers.

[For] a lot of people up our end of the catchment is a lot of worry of what the future is going to hold because a lot of us believe up there it could be the precursor or another way to get World Heritage on it. And I think they're talking about World Heritage for Cape York now. We had World Heritage put on us about 25 years ago I think it was, 20 years ago and we managed to defuse that and they are coming at it from a different angle again ... Pick us off one by one! [Lenny, WQ, Local Govt]

This interviewee vehemently opposed to the Wild Rivers policy shows *resistance* to the policy, feeling under siege by government (*pick us off one by one*). He sees the (Labor) government as continually trying to erode his property rights. The fear of World Heritage listing was responded to by TWS who said they would not advocate for this if the community did not want it. (See Appendix 4, Media article LL15 *No World Heritage for Lake Eyre*). The Queensland Government noted in the Cooper Creek consultation report that they were not seeking to nominate the Lake Eyre Basin for World Heritage listing (Queensland Government December 2011) though this was not made clear in the early stages of stakeholder deliberations.

This was not a dichotomous debate and there were a range of activists with views somewhere between those lobbying for the policy and those vehemently opposed. Even those on the ends of the spectrum may have shifted opinion on some aspects of the policy

and some were open to compromise as is expected in deliberative forums. A list of the sectors with an interest in the LEB WR policy is listed above and also in Chapter Six.

While some stakeholders felt the policy was *no big deal* most interviewees felt that the policy was imposed on them. Two Mayors took a pragmatic view that while they may not want it (Wild Rivers as it was originally proposed) they were going to get it and it was in their interests to try and influence it as best they could to shape it to fit the Lake Eyre Basin. Thus those holding a more productivist view could see the value in shaping the way others viewed this debate.. While some sectors did dominate at times no one is completely without power as there is always the opportunity to resist policy or practise activism.

Are you going to fight something you can't fight or do you take the decision to work with what you've got in front of you and get the best possible outcome for the people that you represent. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Again I said from the beginning that to oppose it really was not an option ... They really had us really cornered. So rather than have a confrontation and a, everyone get upset about it, we developed this consensus consultative process. [David, CWQ, Local Govt]

Our strategic direction was always to not overtly oppose it. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

Many also felt that the policy was unclear as it had not yet been shaped for the Lake Eyre Basin and maps were not available indicating which areas would be affected until mid-way through the consultation period. Government staff on the other hand were wanting feedback from locals before they delineated HPAs and other protected areas on maps.

The media reported people's reactions to the policy, especially adverse reactions and this may have influenced or at least supported the community's views. There was a lot of negative media coverage on Wild Rivers policy development in the Gulf, involving prominent people such as Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson and this alerted people in CWQ that this could be an issue for them to be concerned about.

An early concern expressed by stakeholders was that the Wild Rivers policy developed for the Gulf needed shaping to suit the very different channel country and different demographic of CWQ. There were other concerns expressed by local government and the agricultural sector about possible restrictions on development including: quarrying for road building; town weirs; building in-stream dams; and other perceived potential agricultural restrictions. Agricultural representatives were largely against the policy. AgForce the state body for the

grazing industries opposed Wild Rivers as they saw it as restrictive. However some graziers involved as representatives on, for example NRM groups and local government, were more open to shaping it.

Proving that government or the green advocacy groups did not have all the power and other sectors none, the RAPAD took the proactive step in July 2009 to bring together key stakeholder representatives to find common ground and discuss differences before going to government with their requests. RAPAD is largely funded by local government and had an interest in the development of Wild Rivers policy as did other sectors. The first forum was held prior to most of the public government consultations in the region and deliberately included key government personnel. Despite reservations from some stakeholders including government, there was a considerable amount of common ground. For example, everyone agreed they wanted the rivers protected – the concern was about how that objective was enacted. Where there were concerns / differences of opinion this was noted. This approach was applauded in a media article by Desert Channels Queensland called *Common sense the winner at Wild Rivers forum* (Desert Channels Queensland 2009). Some also expressed concern about mining and whether Wild Rivers could be used to better regulate mining. Most saw this as a positive especially as there had been a *toxic spill* into the Georgina River early in 2010. There were no mining representatives at the regional RAPAD forums although a representative had been invited.

## **Understanding the Policy**

Interviewees said they largely accessed their information from government sources (for example the departmental website, fact sheets and policy documents) or from representative bodies such as AgForce, the agripolitical body for grazing in Queensland. AgForce sought advice from members to formulate their own policy on Wild Rivers and also put out via media their reaction to the policy. Information on Wild Rivers was also sourced via the RAPAD especially once it became the secretariat for the LEBWRAP and from the media. Most interviewees said they had read the policy or parts of it and many said they did not struggle with it although many relied on interpretations of the policy through the media and / or their own organisations. Better resourced groups paid for media monitoring services and / or had their own policy staff to interpret the details.

### **Interviewer:**

So in terms of understanding it, it's not so difficult?

**Interviewee:**

I think it is for the lay person, yes. I actually don't think the world truly understands what it really, really is all about. There's a handful of people who might but I think the bulk of the people, and rightly so, probably never looked at the proposed legislation and really don't understand it totally.

[Nicole, WQ, agriculture]

The Wild Rivers legislation was entwined with 13 other pieces of legislation and was difficult to separate. For example, some types of dams were prohibited under other acts already but some people criticised Wild Rivers for constraining the building of dams. This made it difficult for the lay person to understand what it would prohibit or allow especially initially before facts sheets were developed by government staff. Government staff themselves have their own difficulties when writing policy that is understandable and practical. One government interviewee explained:

We do the broader words that go around what we're trying to achieve and how the policy could work and then that goes to draft. There's a team called the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel, a bunch of lawyers essentially and they put together the legislation. They translate the policy into legislation ... and they'll often read our policy, right and draft legislation and send it back to us and that's when we can say oh that's not what our intent was or those sorts of things. So it's, you're trying to I guess formulate policy which can then be understood by people as well. So that aspect of, in policy well it's easier for us to understand what we're trying to do. A lay person on the street may not understand that but we have to be able to, I guess 'up' that into more complex legislation for the lawyers to understand. [Yuri, metro State Govt]

Therefore unsurprisingly language written by urban based bureaucrats in the policy documents (for those that read the full documents) was regarded as being complex and off-putting. Government did develop fact sheets to provide a quicker, easy to understand overview of Wild Rivers policy (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2009) but the Ministerial advisory committee later recommended these be rewritten in more accessible language and were assisting government to do that. Given that there was controversy around this policy due to earlier negative reactions from Indigenous leaders in the Gulf and that people in Western Queensland largely felt the policy was imposed on them, how well then did government engage and consult the community?

## **What is community engagement?**

The IAP2 definition of community engagement covered in Chapter Two includes involving the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions (Twyford et al. 2006, p. 19). Consultation can be a step in the engagement of communities (or more specifically communities of interest) and is a step in *normal* policy process (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007) though not all proposed policies are put out for public consultation.

As the *Australian Policy Handbook* points out the legitimacy of public policy often relies on discussion between governments with citizens from communities of interest while avoiding 'unreasonable delays, simple vetoing by unrepresentative groups and abrogation of responsibility to vested interests' (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007, p. 97). Power inequities need to be well managed by government and lesser resourced groups need to be brought to the table where possible.

Community engagement and consultation requires the participation of citizens. In remote areas where citizens are geographically remote from centralised governments, have a widely spread population across vast distances and at times difficult weather conditions, this can be challenging. When the Lake Eyre Basin rivers were finally declared at the end of 2011 the Queensland Government reported on its consultation processes which had included the following: information provision (fact sheets, CD, website info); public meetings; stakeholder consultation; submission process; and eventually the establishment of the LEBWRAP (Queensland Government December 2011). Given the fairly extensive process how well did activists feel the Queensland Government engaged the community?

## **Community engagement / consultation on the LEB WR policy – an amended process**

Citizens involved in the LEB WR policy debate were originally critical of the consultation process for various reasons and government responded by improving and extending its process.

It was interesting to see the government actually did learn from what wasn't working and really made an effort to get a good process and participation and they've done a reasonable job of it. And they have really been putting a lot of effort and trying really hard to make it work so it hasn't just been a token, let's go out and tell people what we're going to do. It's actually been getting out here and trying to work through it. [Sam, CWQ, env. advocacy group]

They've copped a scathing criticism from some of their earlier consultation this year. It got fed back from various sources even comments came to me which I passed on and I know Agforce got the same comments they didn't even take notes down. Sorry we're too busy. Well that sort of thing got passed on. I passed that on you know you are wasting your time. You're treating us as fools out here if you think you people can say that. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

[This] was a real challenge for us as Aboriginal people, when it first came through, and that's what I was saying there earlier, we were pretty angry that the government consultations were happening; we were an afterthought. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

For whatever reasons (due presumably to critical feedback and possibly political heat and media attention) the Government amended their processes and many of my interviewees spoke positively about this – the descriptor *extensive* was now used to describe the efforts of government to get around CWQ again (and in some cases more than twice) to consult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there was not a large turn up for second round consultation meetings probably due to the large distances some have to travel to get to central meetings but the effort was made. The establishment of the Ministerial advisory panel was also regarded as a positive and was a RAPAD forum recommendation.

I believe the government is acting in good faith in taking on as best they can the information they are receiving from the region as a whole. [Don, CWQ Local Govt]

My personal impression of how the department's gone about that process is I think they've done a really good job on, they've put a lot of time and effort into first of all finding out how people want to be involved and listening to what they say, then actually putting a lot of resources in. [Leo, CWQ, Govt]

Citizens too were already disenchanted with earlier government consultation on vegetation management and shire amalgamation where some felt they were not heard.

If you look at veg management as a consultative process. At the end of the day the government did what the government wanted to do and ... people have become very suspicious of the government's intent when they consult. Is it lip service or are they truly wanting to be, to seek everyone's point of view and I think that's something the government's going to have to get over a bit. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Government interviewees also acknowledged that past history (poor consultation) makes it difficult for staff from the same department when consulting.

I guess the vegetation management is a classic example that people still bring up, in that the government engaged people to be involved in that process and it was getting, coming to the point where it was actually getting some really effective sort of policy work done and then they [government] just shut it off and did, went their own way so I think people are still quite unforgiving of the government on that one. So we've come in sort of a few years later after that and that's the fear that we're seeing people have so I think it's a key thing for people to influence is if they can try and also look at, also look at each new initiative that comes up as a new thing. Like ... try not to harbour the past. I know it's hard when people have been burned through issues but I guess it's trying to overcome that and maintain people being positive about things. [Yuri, metro, State Govt]

Governments are not the only organisations to engage or consult of course and representative bodies also conducted their own engagement and consultation of members with regard to Wild Rivers policy. How well this occurred no doubt was influenced by resourcing (as is governments) as well as how well democratic processes were adhered to. The most notable of these efforts was the bringing together of all stakeholders by RAPAD to try to find common ground before the government consultations, in order to influence the policy. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

A question that arises about government consultation is when and how soon in the policy cycle should government consult? Some say this should occur earlier in the policy process than usually occurs (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011) and not after policy is relatively set. Some also argue that input from citizens, a lesser heard voice, needs to be respected more. And a big challenge for citizens is should people wait to be consulted or should they be proactive and gather stakeholders themselves in order to lobby government prior to consultation as RAPAD did? If they do engage stakeholders in order to influence policy, when and for what causes is it worth the effort / cost?

### **Barriers to influencing Wild Rivers policy**

Barriers to influencing the Wild Rivers policy from a remote region (Western Queensland) are numerous though not insurmountable. While some groups or individuals may dominate at times there is the opportunity for resistance and for activism depending on opportunity,

status in the community and access to resources. Barriers do need to be recognised as in some cases those consulting can assist citizens to overcome these.

### **Financial barriers**

Firstly there is significant financial cost for remote activists that needs to be re-emphasised (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005; Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012). The cost of travel can be prohibitive even in order to be consulted. For example, I travelled as an interested citizen 240 kilometres to and from a Wild Rivers public consultation meeting in Muttaborra on an all dirt road taking five hours of prime work time and I live in the more closely settled part of our remote region. The cost of time away from businesses or work is rarely calculated, yet significant, even if some representatives, for example Mayors, are paid an allowance and / or have travel costs defrayed. While consultation meetings may be held in *central locations* (such as Muttaborra) this can still mean significant travel for those who do elect to attend.

For some who have been doing voluntary activist work for years the financial and personal costs are starting to wear thin and several long-term male activists spoke of being *burnt out* saying they were weary of the cost on their businesses and family especially when they felt they did not often get wins. One commented that:

xxx really in particular has really come ahead when she came on the [organisation name] and that's what got her ... She came ahead so much she when she got into [other organisation] then and ... unfortunately what is happening is the same as other people. She has taken on too much. She will burn out.

**Interviewer:**

Yes she does do a lot.

**Interviewee:**

I'm just about burnt out myself [Lenny, WQ, Local Govt]

Another commented on the drain on resources for small organisations to continually write or fund submissions for policy issues.

That's probably one of the frustrating things that I've had in my time of trying to influence legislation is the fact that you spend a lot of time on putting together submissions to various government papers and government processes and consultation opportunities where you really feel like you haven't been listened to.

Particularly when a lot of people are saying the same stuff and ... that's not so much aimed at this Wild Rivers process, this is a little bit different because we've got in first. We got in and took it to the government rather than the government bringing it to us and I think that was an important part of this process but particularly federally I'm sick and tired of writing. I've had enough ... They are so focussed on the high population areas they just have lost their charter, responsibility is probably a better word to regional Australia has disappeared.  
[Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Another interviewee spoke emotionally about increasing financial debt and not being able to meet loan repayments. Yet this person still participated actively and had done so for over ten years in mostly unpaid civic activist roles. Three males who had taken on long-term civic leadership roles indicated they were *burnt out* after well over ten years of service to the region. This is supported by other research on remote participation (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009) .

Because of the cost to participants of remote based consultation or activism only the relatively well off or reasonably well recompensed can afford to participate long-term. For example fifty-four per cent of my interviewees' households earned above \$100,000 per year. Anyone working as an employee may have restrictions on regular attendance at consultation meetings unless it fits with their work role. Another restriction of this kind is where employees of state and federal government are constrained if they want to lobby against state policy and this has been noted as constraining some rural women from taking on activist roles (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). State government is a major employer in some remote towns, for example Longreach. Consultation in remote areas costs the government significantly also and there is a limit to government finances available for consultation exercises. These need to be carefully planned and implemented and Information Technology used creatively and responsibly where feasible.

### **Geographic and other barriers**

While governments are considered by governmentality theorists to be governing self-regulating citizens at a distance (Rose, O'Malley & Valverde 2006) this concept is extended in the case of remote areas. Factors that constrain travel for consultation and engagement exercises in CWQ include: small populations spread out over vast distances; poor roads in places or roads that are untraversable in wet weather; weather conditions that can stop travel including fires and floods as well as lack of mobile phone access.

I think, in this region, the first barrier is the tyranny of distance, the second barrier is that there probably are some people out there that would be good participants but if, for want of a better term, a husband and wife show [running a business, for example, a grazing enterprise], then the truth is they actually can't afford to be away from home as much as you need to and my observation is one or two people that probably spend a fair bit of time at meetings, there's risk that their real livelihood business suffers a bit because of their participation. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Remote based activists report being busy and struggling to juggle all their commitments. Competing priorities such as managing their farms which requires someone to be on the farm seven days a week, was also a barrier to participation in activism or even consultation. Often it is women who stay home to maintain the property and / or manage staff while the men take on the activist / representative roles. Those involved in local government also juggle heavy (largely unpaid) workloads.

Out here you'd have ten and it'd be the same people that are on the Council, that are on the rodeo association, that are running the Lions club that are ... it's the same people and the pressure on the leaders in western areas in particular is enormous and I think it's really compounded in the last ten or fifteen years. [Isobel, CWQ, NRM]

Other voluntary roles also compete for people's time as one of my interviewees pointed out.

Yes, I'm still a director. It was basically the time required to do the job properly, meaning being in Canberra, there was just this huge tension of the logistics of me being in Canberra, both travel wise, cost wise and time wise, with what the role truly required. It really is a full-time job, it's not a volunteer thing. I think if someone, which I think has got issues in itself, a person who has family, a career and lives remotely, I don't think can really step up to these volunteer jobs and do it justice [Nicole, WQ, agriculture].

I would have got to the other two, but basically I was fighting fires one time, and the last one last weekend, I had already booked. I had a meeting in Brisbane so ... [Tony, WQ, agriculture]

## **Lack of understanding of remote areas**

A barrier that interviewees spoke of was that urban based governments and other urban based people do not understand remote areas. This finding is reiterated by others (Barr 2009) who discuss how distanced from farming practices many Australians are becoming thereby lacking understanding and sympathy.

I think mainly because they just genuinely don't have an understanding of how we live out here and how things operate always so yeah ... There's nowhere to hide and government are seeing us as soft targets for the whole environmental debate and people are feeling really, really pressured by the outside world. They're feeling maligned, really maligned and I believe innocent of charges that have been laid on them especially with the live export thing has just been horrible. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

Out here people often feel they are not well understood by outsiders as the remote community way of life and thinking is a bit different to urban. [memo on Nancy, CWQ, Local Govt]

Think it was a sad ploy to get the people down south, who don't live up here, to get their votes. Queen St mob. Brisbane mob, south east corner mob, whatever you want to call them. It was a cheap way of buying their votes because oh really we've got to look after the rivers. They don't know what's happening out here. They are not even interested in what's happening out here. 90% of them are down there. [Lenny, WQ, Local Govt]

Because like you probably know yourself you know over the years people always say to you west of the [great dividing] range, no one listens sort of thing. They don't want to know you ... All the south east corner yeah so people have that perception they don't care about us. [Doug, CWQ, Indigenous]

Though like most binaries this one, the city-country divide, can be viewed as a continuum of some complexity (Sprague 2005) as some remote based participants in this debate felt isolated from decision making in Longreach, the largest town in CWQ, and felt that their perspective was not being included. Town and country residents were also divided when it came to participating in this policy discussion.

### **Interviewer:**

So when you're saying townspeople you're saying I think that they don't see it as being relevant to them or they're not interested?

**Interviewee:**

That it's more a cockies [graziers] business ... Like it or not we still have the world of you know townies and cockies and that's how people live their lives ... There's only a very small number of people from town who go out and work with landholders. There's less and less of them. There's less shearers nowadays by a long way so less townies who are shearers who are going out there to work with the landholders. Now there's a few contractors and weed sprayers and fencers and transport people but in many ways towns are ... landholders are people who drop mud in the main street. You know when there's been a bit of rain. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

**Not in my back yard (NIMBY)**

The city-country divide is linked with the Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) (Chambers 2003; Kane & Bishop 2002) syndrome as outlined by one interviewee. Deliberative processes are regarded as assisting to overcome NIMBY type arguments (Chambers 2003).

It's in really good nick and I think as a world we've got to accept that for humans to be here there's got to be some impacts. You can't avoid it and for people in urban Australia to say that we should just lock things up. It's a big call while they're still knocking down big tracts of land around, making suburbs and things so you know having a green view when it's not in their back yard. I think we need to balance, temper that a little bit so we don't end up with an unsupported view or an uneducated view of what's green and what's acceptable and what's necessary. (Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

I even find myself getting the shits with someone from south east Queensland telling us ... you know how we can sort of live out here. I don't tell them they are not allowed to clear trees for a new development on the Gold Coast. But they don't have a problem with influencing how we live our life out here. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

Perceptions of rural / remote lives by urban people and vice versa are sometimes fraught with misunderstanding, thereby not setting a great basis for dialogue and mutual understanding for policy development. For example:

I know I get told all the time this government just wants to get them off their land. They don't like graziers that's what they tell me. I don't think the government, well personally, I don't think the government does want them off the land but that's their perception. [Adele, CWQ, agriculture]

The rest of the country would sort of look at Queensland and thought ah you know if it moves shoot it, if it's growing cut it down, if it's dead paint it sort of thing. [Leo, CWQ, Govt]

They have a perception, particularly with natural resource and environment policy that we dream it up in a room with the Greens. [Yuri, Metro, Govt]

### Interests and stakes (and NIMBY)

It is useful here to identify as much as possible the interests and stakes of the main stakeholders involved in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy development. Under Lukes framing of power where people may not always seek to further their own interests he asks 'what they would want or prefer if they were able to make a choice' (Lukes, 2005 p.38). He argues that dominated people or sectors may sometimes be a product of a system that works against them. So what interests were at stake in this debate and did any sector just concede to dominant views on what was important, that is not pursuing their own best interests? The table below identifies some of the obvious main interests. These were ascertained from the RAPAD Wild Rivers forums meeting notes as well as other available documents plus the interviews.

Main Stakeholder sectors trying to influence LEB WR policy	Interests and stakes
<p><b>Agriculture</b></p> <p>AgForce represents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family owned farms</li> </ul>	<p>Protect the river flow (for stock and homestead use)</p> <p>Stop potential constraints on agricultural production e.g. access to water, thinning of vegetation/fodder harvesting, development in riverine areas. Wanted clarification on blade ploughing and existing PMAVs.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• larger corporate farms which did their own lobbying outside AgForce directly to the Minister thus their interests are not known)</li> <li>• individual graziers interested in small scale irrigation</li> </ul> <p>(documented in RAPAD forum notes plus a RAPAD/AgForce submission to state government)</p>	<p>Did not want regulation on rivers - preferred management plans.</p> <p>No further allocations of water sought though some pro-irrigationists wanted to keep the option of small scale irrigation open.</p> <p>Wanted recognition of previous good stewardship of land</p> <p>Seeking funding package</p>
<p><b>Environmental Advocacy Groups</b></p> <p>Including The Wilderness Society, Pew Environment, The Western Rivers Alliance (input into RAPAD forums and submission to</p>	<p>Protect the rivers from over use</p> <p>Protect the rivers from the detrimental impacts of mining such as toxic spills into river systems and some agricultural activities such as irrigation which may cause ecological damage.</p>

Federal Government)	
<p><b>Indigenous people</b></p> <p>Including traditional elders, the Aboriginal Advisory Group and indigenous reps on other NRM groups</p>	<p>Protect the river flows</p> <p>Retain access to water and hunting and fishing rights. Protect sacred sites. Protect the rivers from mining.</p>
<p><b>Local Government</b></p> <p>Including shires councils and RAPAD</p>	<p>Continued use of sand and gravel for road building.</p> <p>Continued access to water for town use</p> <p>Right to construct or raise weirs.</p>
<p><b>Mining</b></p> <p>The detail of the interests of mining was difficult to determine as there was no mining representative at the Wild Rivers forums and little media coverage. Only one interview was conducted with a stakeholder from this sector.</p>	<p>To continue with mining activities near the Wild Rivers and to not be restricted by WR policy with regard to future mining opportunities.</p>

<p><b>Natural Resource Management</b></p> <p>Including Desert Channels Queensland and catchment committees.</p>	<p>To be a conduit for information about Wild Rivers and what it may mean for land managers. Desert Channels Queensland remained neutral on Wild Rivers though representatives supported the concept of protecting the river flows.</p>
<p><b>Women</b></p>	<p>Supported the views of the various sectors they represented including: agriculture, local government, Indigenous groups or NRM bodies. Agricultural women had an interest in environmental protection but also in economic viability of agriculture.</p>

**Table 7.1 Interests and stakes of key stakeholders**

NIMBY is relevant to interests and stakes as quite a few locals did not think that those who lived outside the region should have as much say on policy that did not impact on them as directly as it did those who lived in the Wild Rivers footprint. Some people who lived in the region felt their income may suffer (sometimes incorrectly) under the changes that would result from the Wild Rivers policy while other locals were passionate about protecting the rivers from environmental damage caused by over use of water. All proponents professed to agree that the rivers needed to be protected but views on how that should happen and to what level varied markedly. It is also necessary to understand that when much of this debate occurred the policy was still fluid, that is the details of the final policy were still yet to be decided.

### **Governmental barriers**

Governmental barriers to remote citizens influencing policy include the frequent turnover of key governmental staff. Rural / remote people prefer to develop longer term relationships with a government staff person to enhance mutual understanding and policy development. This supports the findings of other research in the Lake Eyre Basin (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009). The structure of government (sometimes referred to as the *government*

*maze*) is confusing to an outsider as has been documented in other research (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). Lack of access to decision makers can hinder influence and distance from decision making centres does not enhance this access though well-resourced groups are perceived to have better access (for example mining, green advocacy groups). Short time frames for consultation meetings was an issue a few times during the case study. Allowing enough time for input from people in remote communities is critical.

How the hell can we get input back into it? The timelines are always too tight. They are designed for people who are paid to do a job and on a, what is the word I am after, they are sitting in front of a desk all the time just doing that. [Lenny, WQ, Local Govt]

One of my bug bears is that despite the fact that there is a legislative standard, and a statutory instruments act, which binds the state to a minimum consultation process, that we continually put consultation processes into legislation; they are essentially based around consulting with people in the city. As a result, in many instances, we would use that as demonstration that we met the requirements of the Act, and therefore have done appropriate consultation. For instance, if we were consulting with people in the gulf or channel country or wherever, those consultation processes need to be capable of being amended so that we meet their needs. So, when we were doing some consultation with the Gulf fishermen, and by the time we had gone out to them, they hadn't even received the paperwork because we tried to communicate with them during the wet season. [Frank, metro, Govt]

This interviewee went on to say consultation for LEB WR was not done in this way.

Other barriers mentioned included:

- a poor process for the first round of consultation meetings – staff who could not answer questions put to them relating to Wild Rivers and no formal recording of people's responses / concerns
- a Ministerial public meeting held with little notice when there was rain in the area that constrained attendance
- lack of mapping data early in the consultation phase – one reason for this was that Government wanted to hear from locals as to any issues before it was locked in and the channel country is hard to map as the channels vary so much depending on the season

- government information was poorly worded and not well understood thus choices for information dissemination, for example CDs and poorly worded fact sheets were mediums not meeting its target audience's preference for obtaining information
- no requirements for gender balance with regard to input therefore the deliberations included largely male activists.

Submissions provide another avenue for people to have input into government policy. Well-resourced organisations for example mining and green advocacy groups are more able to make use of this avenue. RAPAD and AgForce also submitted a joint submission. But as several others pointed out, writing submissions takes time and effort and Councils for example frequently have to write submissions on any number of policy issues. It takes a large amount of resources to produce these especially when local government proponents are not sure that submissions really have much influence anyway.

## **Cultural barriers**

Indigenous communities deliberate in culturally appropriate ways that differ from the non-Indigenous way of doing business. Some prefer to take more time in order to be respectful. This can occur when there are a number of different language groups that need to be consulted in order to get approval from traditional elders before the Indigenous parent body representatives can proceed with mainstream processes. This was an issue at one point in a group agreement through RAPAD following the second forum. A communique to the Minister was prepared with sign off from all stakeholders by a certain date. Indigenous representatives found it difficult to meet those timelines although others within their community did what they could to meet the deadline.

I know with the Lake Eyre Basin ones, getting the indigenous perspective has been, like we all know, history told it – if it went pear shaped up in The Cape it was over traditional owner engagement in the Wild Rivers process. So we knew here in Western Queensland, we had to have our traditional owners with their input fairly and squarely into that forum, and I believe huge efforts were made behind the scenes by many, many individuals who saw that that happened, however, did it really happen? I think if we're skating on thin ice in any way, it might be with traditional owner input, but I think a part of that is the logistics too, with bringing 14 language groups together from the Central West, and once again you get the ones that bubble to the surface naturally because of their profile or because of the positions they're in, and then [there are] representatives of other groups whom we may not have really heard from yet. [Nicole, WQ, agriculture]

To sit there, to talk to them, I just can't rock in and say, 'Here I am' you know. Yes, and I have to ask permission. 'Can I sit and speak?' Yeah. So for a white man just to rock up and just say, 'Blah, blah, blah, blah' they would go, they clam up [Heather, WQ, Indigenous].

In order to achieve democratic legitimacy by including the important subjugated knowledges of Indigenous people, respect must be paid to cultural differences and adequate time allowed for their processes to occur.

### **Attitudinal barriers**

While no one is completely powerless there are a range of attitudinal barriers which prevent remote citizens from influencing policy. They include opposing government because of a past history of poor consultation. An example is the significant distrust relating to poor vegetation management consultation and / or where governmental decisions that emerged after consultation were not what remote citizens wanted, a good example being shire amalgamations. Opposing government as a default position (especially Labor governments in a conservative seat or vice versa) is a barrier that was noted by interviewees. Negativity in general towards politics and being critical of and lacking trust in government were noted in this study which concurs with other studies on remote and policy (Carson 2005; Cavaye 2002; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Head, B, W. 2007; Kelly, D 2005; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005, 2007). Lukes' conception of power recognises the powerlessness felt by the dominated even though, at times, some willingly and unconsciously comply with the decisions of dominant stakeholders.

The electorate is conservative politically and some felt that conservatism or traditionalism holds the region back.

People out here collude to keep things the same, we don't like change. [Nicole, WQ, agriculture]

Another said:

It's a very aged population, that it's a very traditional population that have been brought up where they were represented by people like them and they are no longer. All those things, there is all that socio-historical cultural stuff. [Narelle, CWQ, NRM]

It has been extremely threatening to landholders and community members because it's new. [Isobel, CWQ, NRM]

## **Political barriers**

Politics itself can be an enabler or a barrier depending on whether the policy one is lobbying for is politically expedient or fits with the government's political platform. Several also expressed fear that despite all the work involving education of citizens and of government, the compromises and negotiation achieved by the range of stakeholders to get to a point where most could accept the legislation, a change of government could and did mean that the policy was discarded. Others also noted that there are comparatively few voters in the region with therefore very little voting power.

## **Representation**

In terms of influencing policy, issues connected with representation were noted. While a collective voice is useful to encourage government to take a lobbying position seriously, how well representatives communicated up and down within their own organisations to develop their own policies was something some of my interviewees mentioned. How do large groups representing members with disparate views form policy that really reflects the majority of members' views without allowing the powerful to dominate?

Mayors by their nature have got to represent the whole communities so when they come with something it's let just say it's not a watered down version but it's slightly ... OK Longreach might have a large grazing sector but there is also a range of other people. So you might come with an industry perspective that's also got to be married up with a range of perspectives. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

[Name of agripolitical organisation] covers the whole state so we have to have a policy on Wild Rivers that covers the Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria rivers and the Lake Eyre Basin rivers and they're totally, totally different systems. And so it's very difficult for [agripolitical organisation] to put a single policy across all those stretches of the state and this has taken quite a bit of work on [their] part to keep consistency amongst that whole problem with it and the other issue [is] that our big corporate members which occupy something like 90% of the land area affected by the Georgina Diamantina declaration are very ambivalent about Wild Rivers ... There is only one corporate that I am aware of that's really come forward and said no. [Noel, CWQ, agriculture]

But you have to have one representative. You cannot have 30 odd people making decisions, it needs to be thinned down, pared back to key decision makers. So it's a tricky, tricky one. [Nicole,WQ, agriculture].

Self-interest versus community interest and having a big picture view rather than a micro one also impacted on this aspect of having a collective voice.

## **Gender barriers**

As was evident in the media analysis, women were less involved in the LEB WR policy deliberations for a number of reasons. It is evident that women face significant barriers to influencing policy in CWQ. There are various reasons why women did not participate in this policy debate and they include the domination of the civic leadership landscape in CWQ by men, the normalisation of a dominant masculine hegemony and the way representatives at stakeholder forums were selected. Often the representative selected is someone who is seen to be the most knowledgeable or willing and able to attend and often this is a male. CWQ is still an agricultural region and historically dominated by men who own most of the resources. Women have less power than other family members while working on and / or off farm and thereby supporting the family farm. Men are most often spokespersons on agricultural issues; dominate leadership positions in agripolitical organisations and other related organisations within the region because of their ownership and control of productive resources, including the land. It is not only in CWQ that rural women are not well supported by men (and sometimes by women either) to take on and retain leadership positions as noted in other studies (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006; Sheridan & Haslam McKernzie 2009; The Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc. 2007).

Indigenous people, (8.3 per cent of the population in Central Western Queensland) too, were less influential in influencing policy despite the Labor government making an effort to engage them in mainstream processes. For example, on the LEBWRAP there were two Indigenous members (male and female) and government conducted Indigenous group consultation separately as requested with their groups. However the intersectionality of location, gender and race makes it even harder for Indigenous women to influence policy that impacts on them.

Nonetheless there were a number of key women and Indigenous people who influenced the LEB WR deliberations. One woman was instrumental in approaching RAPAD to hold the

stakeholder forums and was a key participant in shaping the process and contributing to all the forums.

## **Governmental enablers**

Given that urban based government staff working at a considerable distance from Central Western Queensland are the key actors in developing, researching, writing and consulting on policy how did government enable remote based citizens participation in deliberations on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy? Enablers to influence in this case study included: government listening and responding to negative feedback on the first round of consultation and revamping and extending it, government listening and responding to requests from the RAPAD forums and Ministerial advisory committee – quite a few requests were implemented and the policy amended. Responding to Indigenous requests for consultation in and outside mainstream processes was useful according to Indigenous representatives. Holding community cabinet in CWQ also enabled people and individuals to address the Premier and Minister in person in their own region – as some local delegates felt they got action on the issues relating to Wild Rivers policy they put forward. Government representatives from the department managing Wild Rivers, though initially nervous, participated actively in the RAPAD forums (though they left after presenting at the first forum, they stayed for the entire second forum and took and answered questions at the second). Government also conducted one on one consultation (when requested) even visiting people's properties to discuss specific issues. In order to achieve democratic legitimacy from deliberative LEBWRAP discussions, the state government provided reimbursement for travel costs for the Ministerial advisory committee members. While this in no way compensated business owners for their loss of time to their business it did aid those who could not have attended without this support.

The government responded positively to the agency shown by RAPAD to hold stakeholder forums and once trust was built and relationships developed there was less division between government and remote stakeholders. Activists in CWQ were working well with Brisbane based departmental managers, building trust and talking between meetings as were those who were usually opponents – for example green advocacy group representatives with agricultural body representatives. Government staff also co-hosted information meetings at AgForce's<sup>17</sup> instigation and while not positively received in some centres, at least they showed a willingness to travel to CWQ and discuss the policy in public and its possible

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<sup>17</sup> AgForce is Queensland's peak industry body for the sheep, beef and grain industries.

implications. Government's use of talkback radio to answer questions on Wild Rivers was well received by those who listened and activists from both sides of the debate spoke positively about ABC radio coverage of the deliberations on Wild Rivers.

Most importantly other enablers in this process came from the community themselves when a councillor from a remote shire approached RAPAD to facilitate a process to bring all interested stakeholders together to find common ground and discuss issues with regard to Wild Rivers. As Herbert-Cheshire (2003, p. 468) points out there has been 'insufficient attention [paid] to the agency of rural people and the various ways in which they too are able to act at a distance [from government] to reshape the discourses and practices of government'.

This case study shows that government staff require training and skill development in community consultation. People in remote areas also require training and support on how to work with and influence government. Training in negotiation skills undertaken by RAPAD Mayors and Councillors, seems useful in this regard.

## **Discourse**

Postmodernists say that language is a site where power is mediated through discourse (Alston & Bowles 2003). It can exclude or include based on who has the power to shape language. The language of Wild Rivers policy therefore can be subjected to analysis for those looking at power. Bacchi (2009) proposes the use of a framework to analyse public policy by looking at the implicit *problematization* of a policy. She says:

Most government policies do not officially declare that there is a problem that the policy will address and remedy. Rather this is implicit in the whole notion of policy – by their nature policies will make changes, implying that something needs to change. (Bacchi 2009, p. ix)

Using Bacchi's six step framework to analyse Wild Rivers policy draws attention not only to the problematisation of the issue but assumptions and presuppositions, silences, how and where it has been produced, disseminated and defended.

In the case of LEB WR, the policy proposed to establish a:

Regulatory framework for the preservation of natural values of the Cooper Creek Basin, including the designation of a HPA and special floodplain management area to manage developments in areas adjacent to the wild river and other major

tributaries. (Department of Environment and Resource Management December 2010, p. 1)

The *problem* is a precautionary one – to protect a healthy river and its environment from over use of water before it occurs (though these words are not used in the policy documents – a *silence* as Bacchi would have it) as has occurred in the Murray Darling Basin with visible, disastrous effects. So the problem is potential future overuse of water and the resulting detrimental impacts on the environment. How this would be potentially managed is restricting through legislation certain activities that use or contaminate water, for example building dams, mining, irrigation, weir building and quarrying.

The policy states that 'The Cooper Creek Basin is the largest catchment in the Lake Eyre Basin, one of the world's last arid river systems without significant water development' (Department of Environment and Resource Management December 2010, p. 1). A *production versus environment* debate (as many conservation policy debates are), words used to describe the policy in government documents include terms such as natural values, preservation, hydrologic processes, geomorphic processes, water quality, riparian function and wildlife corridor function (terms not well used or understood outside NRM circles).

Discourses of significance to my research question that were located in the discussions on Wild Rivers policy by activists and government (and also the media analysis as outlined earlier) included: a green discourse; a pro production / neoliberal discourse; and a government speak discourse. As previously mentioned the policy itself was driven originally by green advocacy groups and the term *wild rivers* which came into fairly general use at the time of the policy consultations is a clever descriptor for a river as it suggests something untamed, natural and beautiful and thereby hinting at a need for protection without the need to mention preservation or conservation. Under Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) frameworks declining natural resources such as water should be protected or preserved to be available for future use.

Green discourse is somewhat used by insiders who are conversant with such terms / concepts as *natural values* and are aware of and care about ecological impacts of river water use. When a discourse is used more widely than by the original instigators of that discourse (in this case green groups) Lukes would suggest that this reveals a power to influence what we are saying about something and how we think about it (and not other issues) beyond the one context. Terms / concepts that were widely used in the interviews with activists included: long-term sustainability; looking after the land; not pristine; protecting

the rivers (others from the mining sector saw this as *locking up* the rivers); and protecting the Great Artesian Basin.

Protecting the rivers was a term repeatedly used in the deliberations.

But the great irony of all this is that no one's disputing the need to keep the Lake Eyre Basin sustainable. No one's disputing the necessity to protect the river systems. I think it's only the absolute pro-irrigationists that would see large scale irrigation as being good for this region. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

As time went on, a neoliberal / pro-production discourse was also discernable in deliberations on Wild Rivers as it was to some extent a *production vs environment* debate though this binary does not show the complexities of these views nor the other positions between those two stances. They were not mutually exclusive.

But common sense argument is and it's not all, the thing I guess I think I learned you can't argue economics, you've got to, the important thing is to get the social heart strings, is the one that gets government. It's easy to dismiss your contribution to the economy, your, why we should be giving this because you produce that. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

And

How long can Longreach continue to carry the small towns and communities that surround it, especially now that it's an amalgamated council, and this is not just Longreach. How long can these small little communities of 100, 400 people continue to be propped up by governments at all levels, and at what point, or who has the authority to say, "I'm sorry but running a whatever public facility, the hall or the footy ground facility, the showgrounds, the pool or whatever, it costs a fortune for governments to maintain the buildings, to pay insurance, to run them, to whatever." At what point, who has the authority to say how long can we continue to prop them up. Now, having said that, I come from a rural patch but, "By God, these communities play a vitally important part and how dare anyone ...?" and this is the traditional view we have in Western Queensland. How dare anyone question the viability of a Windorah, a Yaraka, a (inaudible), name any little town, and that gets at me too, I feel disloyal even verbalising this. [Nicole, CWQ, agriculture]

Finally government language can be a barrier for rural / remote citizens. Activists try to learn this discourse and attempt to speak it when trying to influence similar to the way many politicians wear an akubra hat when visiting a rural electorate. Bureaucratized language is

still prevalent in policy discussions and can be off-putting for remote citizens who (mostly) do not speak, think or write this way.

So we've got things like Special Floodplain Management Zone was specifically developed to suit these rivers out here but ... but yeah it's hard to get your head around it fully because it's all written in legalese. [Sam, CWQ, environmental advocacy]

And

It really is a very convoluted document. There has been attempts made to try and bring them back into a more understandable format but the codes in particular, which are the devil in the detail, I mean the proposals themselves are very broad in their objectives. They're really like motherhood statements that really don't give you much idea at all of the operational issues around the legislation but the codes do. That's where the detail is and that is the document that is almost impossible to decipher. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

This impacts on writing submissions as outlined by one interviewee from a remote shire:

A lot of the discussion papers are written at a very high level and to do it properly you really need to engage a wordsmith that knows their subject. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Government also struggled with writing it so all can understand.

Some of the older generation of landholders as well and this is not disrespect it's, they grew up on the land and some only went to Grade 6 or 7 and they automatically went off and worked on the property so I guess some of the education levels aren't as high for some of the stakeholders. There are, they struggle when they're dealing with complex policy. Do our best to put into simple language but then it is still difficult for people to understand so I think you find some of the younger generation tend to understand things a bit easier than the older generation and so I guess that's one gap that we do have in struggling with this. [Yuri, Metro, Govt]

The Wild Rivers policy deliberations abounded with government created terms such as High Preservation Area, Special Floodplain Management Area, Wild Rivers codes and Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation (referred to colloquially as PMavs). Such words confer authority to concepts and the dominant stakeholder who created them and got others using

the terms more widely. As previously mentioned citizens involved in the Ministerial advisory committee provided some early advice about the need to reword fact sheets for the lay person.

## **Conclusion**

The policy development process is complex and there are definite barriers for remote people trying to influence it. However there are also factors that enabled activists in the Lake Eyre Basin to shape policy to better fit their region as well as in some instances for example, extra benefits – funding for pest management. While government plays a major role in policy development government did not get it all their way and they were encouraged to and did listen to regional stakeholders. The policy was amended based on consultation with stakeholders and the regional advisory committee. No one party got everything they wanted but some compromises were agreed to as per usual deliberative democratic processes that the majority agreed to. However some stakeholders had more power than others in these processes.

Barriers to influence for remote activists included:

- Financial - cost of being consulted or of lobbying for remote citizens (travel, submission writing), burn out of volunteer activists, being employed by government constrains lobbying on government policy and government costs to consult in remote areas.
- Geographic – poor roads, vast distances, weather conditions such as wet season, fire heat, flooding, lack of mobile phone access, juggling heavy workloads and lack of people to replace them at work, competing priorities
- Lack of understanding of remote areas – city-country divide,
- Not In My Back Yard – NIMBY is a barrier to influence not only for remote people as there is a lot more to be lost or gained through influencing policy.
- Governmental barriers – turnover of government staff, structure of government a maze, lack of access to decision makers (exacerbated by distance), short time frames for consultation, poor consultation processes, lack of data for the remote area for example maps, poor wording of government information, no gender balance required
- Cultural barriers – cultural differences need to be respected which may mean that consultation takes longer
- Attitudinal barriers – anti-government attitudes, negativity and lacking trust, dislike of

change (conservatism)

- Political barriers – political alignment of groups with political parties can be a positive or a negative to influence, short term of election cycles can mean change of policy after a lot of volunteer work to develop policy, few voters means less voting power geographically.
- Representation issues – the difficulty in obtaining a united and democratic single voice for an organisation with multiple views, communication up and down in an organisation from consultative processes.
- Gender barriers.

Despite all the barriers to remote citizen influence government did not have it all their own way and there were times when remote activists prevailed.

The next chapter analyses what power imbalances appeared in the Wild Rivers deliberations and how these were managed.

## Chapter Eight: Power and Wild Rivers

There is no homogenous block of powerless citizens. Civil society is a rich array of groups with widely divergent interests, values, aspirations, viewpoints, resources and levels of organisation. This is just as true of the corporate sector and even of the government sector, which is characterised by multiple agencies, levels of government, departmental portfolios, political allegiances and so on. (Aslin & Lockie 2013, p. 3).

I would say that some groups are obviously more powerful than others. Some are more readily listened to than others, and the policy makers and the government, doesn't matter what persuasion they are, will listen to some groups over others. [Edwina, CWQ, NRM].

How power relations worked in the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Wild Rivers (WR) policy development for geographically remote activists is explored in this chapter. Using Lukes' structuralist conceptualisation of power over, where dominant people or organisations are able to somehow secure the willing compliance of the marginalised, I explore whether remote based citizens had any influence on the development of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy. I examine which sectors had influence or did not and why.

Power inequities are the norm in any human encounter and in any policy debate. In a liberal democratic society it is expected that citizens will have input on policy that impacts on them and that power inequities will be managed by governments at least to some extent. But how well does this occur? In the case of remote based citizens trying to influence centralised urban governments how does power impact on their ability to influence policy? Remote based citizens are not a homogenous group either so how do power inequities play out within that demographic?

Better resourced groups do have more opportunity to try to influence government in a number of ways but this does not always equate to success though it often aids it. On the other hand, the disempowered and apathetic may not have a desire to influence government policy (Aslin & Lockie 2013; Bishop & Davis 2002; Carson 2005; Maddison & Partridge 2007) which works against their real interests, corresponding with Lukes understanding of power where the powerful obtain the compliance of those dominated. A lack of trust in public institutions disables participation in civic deliberations (Bishop & Davis 2002). Some individuals and groups have a vested interest in maintaining power inequities so they can push their interests over competing interests. Governments and other bodies such as the

Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) can sit as facilitators of these debates but do they have vested interests also? For those considering how to influence policy in a remote area an understanding of power is essential.

### **What is power?**

Power, a much defined concept in contemporary society, suggests coercion to the lay person but actually means something far less alarming in the academic world (Clegg & Haugaard 2009). I look to Lukes concepts of power as well as theorists on gender and power to understand what happened in the LEB WR policy development.

As outlined in Chapter Three, Lukes is interested in power-over, or domination, agenda setting and how dominant interests secure the willing compliance of the dominated. He is concerned with people's interests and suggests that the dominated do not always act in their own best interests because their choices have been constrained by the dominant. He suggests that this is not always visible even to those conceding to the interests of greater powers. Gender theorists too are concerned with power over as well as power to or power with. Where there is power there is also the opportunity for resistance and for agency or activism.

Aslin and Lockie (2013) see power manifesting in a complex manner in natural resource management (NRM) decision making as follows:

Power can take many forms. It can be concentrated and hierarchical but it can also be dispersed and democratic. It can be contested and it can be shared. If power is understood as capacity to act, it is more productive to think of this capacity as the dynamic outcome of relationships between groups than as something which some groups hold while others do not. Thus we find in environmental and natural resource management that we do, at times deal with acute social cleavages and power differentials ... oft times however we do not. We deal rather with more complex situations in which no one actor – whether from civil society, industry or the state – has the capacity to control resource access and outcomes: situations in which any actor's capacity to secure their preferred outcomes depends on their ability to persuade other actors that these outcomes are also in their best interest. (Aslin & Lockie 2013, p. 3)

In this chapter I look at the complex interaction between remote based citizens themselves (and other stakeholders) and also between citizens and government in trying to influence Wild Rivers policy.

## Who is influencing the LEB WR debate and why?

In considering who was wanting to influence this policy I examined the perceptions of people involved in the deliberations on the policy. The sectors invited by RAPAD to their Wild Rivers forums in 2009 and 2010 are listed in Chapter Seven. When the state government, as a RAPAD forum recommendation, established the Ministerial advisory committee, the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP) representatives from these sectors were included. There was criticism later from stakeholders from one geographic area with regard to a gap on the committee in terms of geographic representation and also because it was deemed culturally appropriate to have a male *and* female Indigenous representative on the committee, the Minister approved extra members to overcome this.

Other sectors beyond those identified by RAPAD and government who were quoted in the media included the banking sector – Rabobank had commented in the media that Wild Rivers could impact on property values, and the church – one pastor in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) an ex-grazier, spoke against Wild Rivers. See Chapter Six for a full list of sectors who spoke in the media about Wild Rivers.

Which sectors were dominant in this case study given that activism, or agency, and resistance can assist the marginalised to influence policy? Some will still be relatively marginalised, though not completely powerless. An example of very visible power shifts connected with political allegiances occurred after the change of government in 2012. The LEB WR policy developed during my case study period was then repealed so those who were formerly driving the policy now lacked the power they had previously. As this policy had been initially driven by green urban groups and discourses emerging from that sector were widely used during deliberations, it can be said that green advocacy groups were a dominant sector during the case study period and that this subsequently shifted with the change in government. The agricultural sector, while mostly opposing the policy, nonetheless dominated the media on this policy. As the biggest sector economically in CWQ there were more people drawing an income from agriculture than any other sector involved in the LEB WR deliberations. However while some of these people represented other sectors, for example local government, green advocacy or NRM groups, the interests of agriculture infiltrated the deliberations. How successful this sector was at shifting power is revealed to some extent by the concessions that were made to agriculture during the policy consultation period and prior at community cabinet meetings.

I think it (my input) will make a difference because already there have been some differences ... I'd say and we've already got some of the issues put to bed in that what do they call it, the Water and other Legislation Amendment Act which was good and some of the other issues we think they're very sensible issues. They're good issues. We're not asking for anything way out at all and we feel very strongly that they should go forward too but whether the politics in the end will allow that remains to be seen. So yeah we'll see. [Noel, CWQ, agriculture]

Local government having funded the RAPAD forums and deliberately taking a non-confrontational approach with government, were also instrumental in influencing the policy. As one interviewee from that sector put it their approach was to:

Go forward to the government first and say well these are the sort of things we're worried about and these are the sort of things we can live with, these are the sort of things we can't live with. And we immediately got some consensus out of that with access to particularly in-stream weirs for town water supplies, quarrying of gravel. You know some of the things that we'd asked for we actually got straight away which you know if we'd taken the hard nose approach and opposed the legislation entirely we would have been fighting the legislation, not the issues within the legislation and we had no chance of influencing whether we had or not had wild rivers. That was a given. It was a promise, an election promise and the government had to carry that through. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Mining sector representatives, while deliberately quiet in regional deliberations and also in the media, are regarded as being a dominant sector in this debate. It was perceived by interviewees that mining was not constrained as much as some hoped it would be by Wild Rivers legislation. Green groups identified unconstrained mining as a threat and a reason for wild rivers in the first place. Mining sector representatives did not want to see the rivers *locked up*.

There are definite constraints to living remotely and influencing government policy though some barriers can be and are overcome to an extent. The knowledge of women and Indigenous citizens interests were subjugated to dominant stakeholder interests which meant that they had less influence and less opportunity to influence this policy debate though there were some instances where individuals within those sectors did have some influence.

## How did these sectors have influence?

Certain conditions aid influence and I discuss the perceptions of the activists, citizens and government staff interviewed who were involved in the LEB WR policy deliberations.

Resourcing is critical when citizens are trying to influence governments who are based at least 1300 kilometres away<sup>18</sup> from centralised governments. While this seems self-evident it needs to be emphasised. The costs for remote based organisations are significant as outlined in Chapter Seven. This means that remote based organisations of necessity choose which *fight*s they really want to take on given that many felt that face to face time with a Minister and staff is vital. The better resourced groups in this case study had offices in cities with dedicated policy staff and in the case of mining, public relations experts, lawyers and community liaison staff.

Better resourced groups can afford useful activist tools such as media monitoring services which allow them to keep abreast of what is being said in public by stakeholders and plan responses. I did not examine the wealth of the stakeholder organisations involved but expect that, for example, shires with a small rate base in a remote area would not be as financially well-resourced as some of the other stakeholders involved in this case study. Similarly Indigenous groups seem to operate with limited funding for their organisations and maintain modest office space within CWQ. The unfunded / low budget individual or group can influence but without resources and infrastructure it is a lot harder for them to influence, especially from a remote area.

Working collaboratively with others, forming alliances (formal and informal) and having a collective voice was critical during the LEB WR discussions. This is especially important in remote regions with low population. The forming of groups to lobby government regionally is a strategy that many have used to get governments' attention for years, sometimes successfully (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). In this case study there was a number of successful alliances including the Western Rivers Alliance (a formal alliance between the Australian Floodplain Association, Pew Environment, Cooper Creek Protection Group, and The Wilderness Society (TWS) which lobbied the Queensland state government to nominate the Lake Eyre Basin rivers for wild rivers *protection* just prior to the 2009 election. The Labor government responded by promising to nominate the Lake Eyre Basin rivers should they be returned to government. After the Labor government led by Premier Anna Bligh was returned in 2009 this election promise was carried out.

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<sup>18</sup> The approximate distance between Longreach and Brisbane.

We had lots of discussions and we formed this group this rivers alliance ... through Pew and TWS [The Wilderness Society]. They have meetings with the senior people on both sides of politics all the time. They are always meeting with them so. There's a very close connection with them. They are down in Brisbane and they meet all the time and ... but yeah that's how that media sort of tipped it over the line for now. To get it going when it did. [Sam, CWQ, environmental advocacy]

RAPAD is the regional organisation of councils with a focus on economic development representing the seven shires in CWQ. While not forming formal alliances, RAPAD was instrumental in bringing together all of the stakeholders prior to official government consultation to find common ground, areas where compromise might be possible and areas where there was disagreement – a collective voice. The results of the forum were sent to the Queensland Government to influence the still to be finalised policy. This forum process was repeated in 2010 after issues with the policy continued to be discussed and some informal negotiation was happening between stakeholders between meetings. A formal communiqué from the forum was sent to Government and the media. Wild Rivers government managers also attended the forum and answered questions. A joint submission by RAPAD and AgForce was also submitted. This approach of bringing stakeholders together prior to government consultation can be regarded as an attempt to bring *power* - to the people.

Timing too is critical for those lobbying government. In the case of the LEB WR, timing was critical when the Western Rivers Alliance lobbied the Queensland Government just prior to the election. As a government keen to be re-elected again they were no doubt made aware of the media event held to launch the alliance in front of Parliament House in Brisbane just weeks before the election. The timing of RAPAD's first stakeholder forum, held early before official regional government consultation, was important.

Clearly lobbyists come into their own prior to the election or prior to people deciding policy that goes into an election ... This one [LEB WR policy] was decided just basically minutes before the election. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Interviewees maintained that having access to decision makers is important and for those in remote areas not always easy. This includes access to key governmental staff as well as the relevant Minister. Those organisations with offices in Brisbane and / or the resources to pay for flights to Brisbane are advantaged in this aspect though some groups are still perceived to have better access than others.

In isolation I could see that as saying, 'They're getting undue influence' but then again I know government processes are robust enough that that's not the reality here. There is a broader reality and that is, I can ring Brisbane today and our advisor will go and see [name], the minister's advisor, go and have tea and coffee with him tomorrow afternoon and put our position if we want to do it. And we do, do it. So I think all parties do. [Robert, metro, mining]

Government staff were keen to point out that access was a democratic right and everyone has access. Nonetheless cost constrains access.

**Interviewee:**

A group like AgForce will have probably a better opportunity to meet and to talk and to [pause] possibly have that conversation where they might be trying to negotiate a different outcome. So they will have a better opportunity to do that, AgForce, than say one landholder who doesn't agree with AgForce's position.

**Interviewer:**

And the resources sector would be another wouldn't it? They would have frequent meetings, I would presume, with the minister?

**Interviewee:**

It's surprising, it's not frequent, but they do have that access to have the meetings as well, yeah. I mean everybody has an opportunity to come down and talk to the minister, it's everybody's right. [Travis, metro, Govt]

There was a perception that green advocacy groups had better access than others to the government on this issue as they had successfully got Wild Rivers onto the government agenda in the first place. There were several visits to CWQ by Ministers during the three year period of this case study. Each of the three Ministers who had portfolio responsibilities that included Wild Rivers during the case study time period of 2009 – 2011 visited the region and one female Minister visited the more remote shires in CWQ rather than more accessible Longreach.

I think that's what stood out to me the most, it was how inclusive it was, and how well – even the minister went out and visited, and how the government actually took on board what was being said. I've never been involved in a program that's involved such a comprehensive consultation process and a consultation report to feed back to people. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Being active as lobbyists and participating in consultation processes can aid influence. People skills and building relationships is critical when negotiating on policy as noted below.

I think the best is where people engage early in a process, where they are genuinely wanting to negotiate an outcome, not just throw the baby out with the bath water, where they're able to use good interpersonal skills to put across their point. I think they're the people that get in the door, that are able to sit down and rationally say, express how things will affect their constituency and offer solutions. [Elise, metro, Govt]

The other thing is and its often ignored but relationships and relationship building and network build is absolutely crucial in these processes and a really good example of if you get a little group to go and see a Minister unless they've formed a relationship with the senior policy people within the government department and unless they've actually had this discussion with those people who will be writing the brief for the Minister. Unless it's all sorted out before they go there and except on very rare occasions, you're wasting your time. So you've actually got to network and develop these relationships and work with the policy people so you and the policy people are going to the Minister with the same message. Because if you don't do that you're shot usually. [Sam, CWQ, env. adv.]

This shows that government did not entirely dominate the deliberations in terms of power relations. Relationships are of necessity interdependent. One needs the other to survive and activists strive to work with governments where possible in order to influence policy and shift the operations of power. Sometimes when this is not possible protest action results. There were, however, voices excluded in this subtle power dynamic. Nonetheless the process of altering the dominant environmental construction of the policy indicates some ability to influence policy established by dominant stakeholders through agency or activism. .

After the RAPAD forums good working relationships were formed between stakeholders and government and between stakeholders that had previously viewed each other with distrust – for example agriculture and green advocacy groups. Representatives reported talking privately to negotiate between forums on issues of mutual interest relating to Wild Rivers. This had not occurred at this level before as several noted to me privately. As one participant put it:

I think with our industry [agriculture] that it needs to be a lot closer working relationship and partnership and networking all those things with the conservation sector. We go crook about bloody greenies etcetera etcetera, but what have we done to bring them out and learn what makes them tick and show them what

makes us tick and see how it comes together. Happens in small very small way but there is HUGE potential there and its really, really important because if you can get the conservation groups and the pastoral industry together going to government it's a fairly strong block but we're not doing that we just, most people in the bush are just isolating themselves from the greenie lunatic fringe which ... there is a greenie lunatic fringe ... and there's a pastoral lunatic fringe as well [both laugh] and there's a lot of people in the middle of the road. [Sam, CWQ, env. ad.]

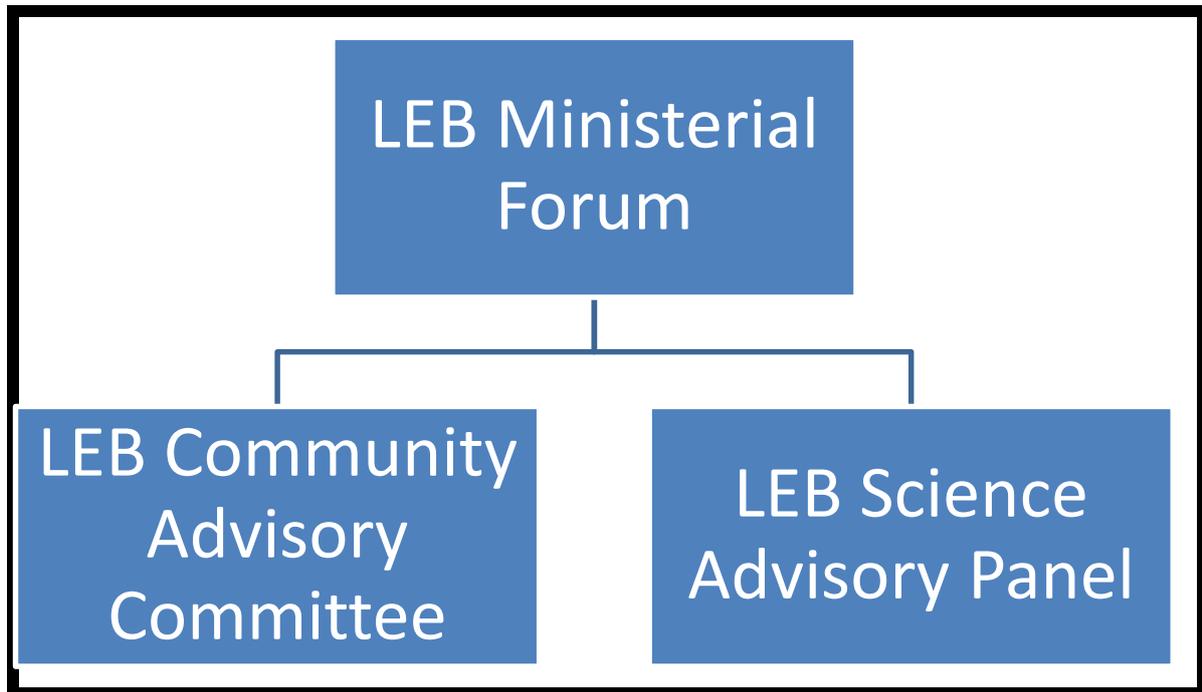
Because we've been able to continue that relationship through because we had the forums first and we've basically got the people from the forums on the LEBWRAP we are now to such a position of trust and goodwill that we have very frank discussions at the LEBWRAP meetings. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

Green advocacy group representatives also were actively liaising with Indigenous groups in order to advocate for the mutual benefits that Wild Rivers policy could bring. Both groups wanted to see the rivers protected while also maintaining indigenous access to water and so on.

You know in actual fact the work that I do with indigenous representatives is to try and promote their rights and interests and enhance them through this process. Now that might be getting them access to water for economic development and we're seeing that happen. So I've been very involved in that and exploring whether there can be provision of ranger positions to deal with weeds and ferals for indigenous folk, and perhaps non indigenous folk as well. As part of this process [Thomas, metro, env. adv.].

Working with government rather than protesting against government was regarded as important in this LEB WR debate. Shire amalgamation had fairly recently been fought vigorously. RAPAD had taken the unusual and costly step of employing a professional lobbyist from Canberra to assist them. Protest marches and other lobbying occurred but eight shires within CWQ were still amalgamated and four of the most remote were not. Local government mostly tried to keep the Wild Rivers policy development deliberations as apolitical as possible and avoided aligning themselves with outspoken political opponents of the policy. For example, most (but not all) deliberately did not engage with Senator Ron Boswell from the Federal opposition on Wild Rivers, during the course of the deliberations. While the policy was being handled by state government there was some cross over with the federal jurisdiction (the LEB advisory committees for example are managed federally) and

hence the Federal Government opposition were involved in speaking against the state policy in the media.



**Figure 8.1 Federal Government Lake Eyre Basin committees**

In 2014, the Ministerial Forum included the Australian Government Minister or Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment (Chair), the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, the South Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation and the Northern Territory Minister for Land Resource Management. Some citizens from CWQ were on the Community Advisory Committee and could potentially influence policy that way. Others not on these federal government committees needed to influence the state government who managed the policy consultation on Wild Rivers and implementation of it.

A non-confrontational apolitical approach was the preferred method in the LEB possibly due to the highly politicised issues that had occurred in the Gulf over Wild Rivers.

I think people are more pragmatic nowadays. We've seen a lot of fights over the years in this town. Fights against vegetation management, fights over rangelands strategies, fights over the Cooper Creek water and it's usually been some of these fights ... if it's the all or nothing approach, take no prisoners ... [that gets] no prizes sometimes. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Other factors that were key to influence include becoming well-informed on the policy and wider landscape and informing others. An example is the Western Rivers Alliance, an organisation that paid a consultant (a respected local woman) to inform people in Western Queensland about the policy in the early days of the LEB WR listing. This was initiated as there was a lot of fear and concern expressed about what the policy would inhibit or ban. Flyvbjerg (1998) would interpret this as the powerful defining reality. The agricultural sector discursively positioned Wild Rivers as a threat and it was fairly widely spoken of in this way in CWQ. Social learning is an expected outcome of deliberation (Dryzek, J.S. 2007) also so those who participated in the RAPAD and LEBWRAP deliberative forums also presumably went away better informed about the policy than previously.

Influencing via the media is a method that activists use to persuade governments as well as others. Some of the key players in this debate, for example mining, deliberately made very little media comment in this case study. A green advocacy representative did little media on Wild Rivers so as to aid relationship building between his group and the Lake Eyre Basin residents. This was explored earlier in Chapter Six.

The ability to negotiate and compromise is critical in this and any citizen policy discussion as is highlighted in Deliberative Democratic Theory (DDT). How successful the LEB WR forums were in terms of power imbalances and democratic outcomes will be discussed in Chapter Ten. If the outcomes (the newly shaped policy agreed to at the various deliberative forums) continued beyond a change of government then the deliberative forums could be said to be reasonably successful despite power imbalances between sectors. If this did not occur clearly some sectors were just complying to dominant interests and biding their time till a change of government occurred under which they may have more power to influence policy.

Under DDT deliberators need to be open to new information and the arguments of others so that agreements can be made where possible (Chambers 2003). No one party is going to *get* everything they desire on a policy including the green advocacy groups that drove the take-up of the Wild Rivers policy by the Queensland Government. Thus negotiating skills are important.

So I would see my role as a negotiator understanding people's rights and interests and trying to protect them where possible ... Uh and the way to negotiate is to understand people's rights and interests and try and align them as much as possible. I think that is what the RAPAD process really did. It allowed everyone to understand everyone else's rights and interests and through that communiqué on 31 May 2010 we signed, we ticked off where all our interests aligned. [Thomas, metro, env. adv]

RAPAD saw the value of negotiation skills in their work on Wild Rivers and later brought high level negotiation skills training out to Longreach for their Mayors and CEOs. This approach has a focus on identifying stakeholder's rights and interests and working to maximise these for all (*power with* rather than *power over*). However negotiation behind the scenes or between meetings was sometimes seen as manipulation (*power over*).

Some who had influence in this case study in CWQ were regarded as showing leadership and proactivity. Examples are the Mayors who publically stated at the initial RAPAD stakeholder forum that there was little point in fighting or just reacting to the policy (for those who did not want it) and that the best way forward was to work together to influence the detail of the policy. This was especially true given that in the early stages of the first RAPAD Wild Rivers forum all stakeholders agreed they wanted the rivers protected. This action by the Mayors also showed a degree of pragmatism based on experience. It could also be viewed using Lukes' conceptualisation of power as a willing compliance to dominant interests. Flyvbjerg would suggest that despite peaceful cooperation, power imbalances still prevail and the powerful shape rationality around the LEB WR policy.

Leadership was also evident when a skilled green advocacy representative offered useful suggestions for the forum process before the RAPAD meetings were held. Similarly the Councillor who approached RAPAD to hold the forums at the outset (another example of *power with*) showed leadership and innovation in suggesting a forum be held to find common ground and discuss differences on this contentious policy in Central Western Queensland.

I think that it's worth noting our decision to get involved was instigated by a Council that is dead against it and it's also interesting to note that the Councillors who prompted it were [agripolitical organisation] members [agripolitical organisation was opposed to Wild Rivers]. So I think there's an irony there that even to me there's ... not an irony ... it just it shows leadership that you just can't belt your head against a brick wall. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

And if there is skilled and brave leadership to stand up and say folks this is the way that we should go when you're in a room with 50 or 60 people who say no lets reject it. Seeing one of the Mayors in that room and say folks we've got a choice here. You can stand here and say it's not happening or get involved, get organised and shape it. To have the courage to do that is admirable. And for people to shut and listen and do it is pretty incredible. [Thomas, metro, env. adv.]

How can we shape and mould this to make this work for you, your business, your community? And then I guess there was a groundswell of movement where ... two very wise Queensland, Central West mayors who went in and said, 'We

mightn't want this legislation, we mightn't agree with it but it's going to come down. We're going to get it so how do we make this work for us kind of thing?  
[Nicole, WQ, agriculture]

Power was disguised and diffused somewhat by the fairly normal practice in remote areas of activists wearing a number of *hats*. In remote areas where there is a small pool of activists people often hold several community or sectoral roles – different '*hats*' they wear. At the RAPAD stakeholder forums and on the LEBWRAP people were selected from certain sectors to represent those sectors. As previously mentioned there is a crossover in interests as the largest proportion of stakeholders while representing a range of sectors actually worked in agriculture. The interests of agriculture permeated the deliberations held in the region even when representatives acted in other roles. However the regional deliberations were only part of the wider landscape of consultation and lobbying done on the LEB WR, some of which was unseen in CWQ and conducted directly with the Minister and staff. At times activists from the green advocacy sector chose to speak to the media as a community representative or in their business role rather than use their green advocacy group label. As pointed out previously it is not unusual for people to choose which *hat* to wear for which occasion and this is done for strategic reasons and sometimes to avoid conflict of interest.

The regional mining representative spoke of the number of interests his organisation had that aids their influence. The mining company he works for owns significant cattle grazing land in Central Australia allowing them to be members of agripolitical organisations in Queensland and South Australia.

Because we own some cattle stations ourselves, I'm technically, because the other part of my job, apart from looking after landholders, I look after the sub-lessees to our land. We own five cattle stations in the Cooper Creek area, so we're actually one of the biggest landholders.

**Interviewer:**

I didn't know that. That's interesting.

**Interviewee:**

No. I never play that, I never play that ... We own three in South Australia [names cattle stations] and in those cases, those three are still leased back to the people we originally bought it off, or elements of them ... And they're all cattle, but we don't run the cattle on those, we sub-lease them to run the cattle, but I'm the sort of go-to for that. So there's a bit of an interest back through that, so that means I get to legitimately be a member of AgForce and South Australia Farmer's

Federation so I get access to all of them because I'm on their distribution systems. [Robert, metro, mining]

While most key stakeholders participated actively in the regional deliberations the mining representative used his participation in regional processes more to inform others and to pick up strategic intelligence.

From a petroleum or resource sector [perspective], while I will state a different view if they raise something that I think is potentially wrong or not ideal, but we don't see LEBWRAP as a forum for us to go in boots and all and upset relationships and try and do it through that forum, but if I reported, one of my roles [laughs] is to report back and say, I think there's a strong issue around such and such, we need to consider that in our submission, or ... for our industry, the reality is we probably have our most influence outside of those processes. In other words, our direct meetings with them [government] clarifying our industry's specifics, but being at these, to some extent helps me understand and talk to our people about what is the view of others and why. [Robert, metro, mining]

Indigenous representatives also spoke of seeking separate meetings with government due to the lack of confidence of some of their people in mainstream stakeholder meetings.

I've been around these things before but some [Indigenous representatives] can be intimidated and sit there and not have much input. [Doug, CWQ, Indigenous]

The agripolitical body reported that their corporate members (owners of large cattle stations) were not getting involved in the regional deliberations and were going directly to the Minister on their own behalf.

So look we're only one lobbying for members. Members lobby in their own right. The corporates may well be doing their own thing so we can only respond to our members that come forward and say what they want and we can only do our best for them. [Noel, CWQ, ag.]

Influencing process can ultimately aid influence. Stakeholders proactively seeking to shape inclusive processes to lead to desired outcomes paves the way for negotiation to occur in regional deliberations. Green advocacy groups, local government and Indigenous representatives all managed to do this in various ways.

Discourse that frames policy as saving the world from a *threat* puts some lobbyists in a position of having the moral high ground. Creating a common enemy can also be useful.

Mining almost became that common enemy in the LEB WR deliberations despite some local governments being quite open to potential economic opportunities that may result from increased mining activity in CWQ.

I'm extremely concerned as are a lot of other observers and researchers about the rapid increase in mining across Queensland but specifically across the Lake Eyre Basin and [inaudible] uncontrolled, that mining will have a profound effect on those rivers. And they remain in good condition now. We need to keep them in good condition. [Thomas, metro, env.adv.]

An anti-mining and anti-coal seam gas (CSG) sentiment was noticeable in deliberations on the LEB WR policy. CSG was particularly sensitive as exploration had only started recently in the Central West and it was expected to coexist on agricultural land with agricultural enterprises and lifestyles.

It's interesting we've got [agripolitical body] of which I'm a member and on one hand it wants to ban all coal seam gas mining out here and on the other hand it's totally opposed to wild rivers which is the only instrument we have that'll slow it down a bit. [Sam CWQ, env..adv.]

An interviewee vehemently opposed to Wild Rivers legislation noted the dilemma:

**Interviewee:**

They shouldn't be using wild rivers as a way to stop CSG or mining ... but what I do want to see is a hold back to make sure the science is right.

**Interviewer:**

So are you talking about putting regulation around it?

**Interviewee:**

Put a moratorium on it.

**Interviewer:**

Oh, OK.

**Interviewee:**

Any more drilling or mining – make sure it's sustainable. I'm very worried about what's going to happen to the GAB [Great Artesian Basin]. [Lenny, WQ, ag.]

So while he did not want Wild Rivers policy to be legislated as he felt it constrained agriculture he did not think Wild Rivers constrained mining enough. He saw Wild Rivers policy as restricting some agricultural activities including small scale irrigation in the future.

The most burning issue is the impact of mining in our region which you know is, the state cheer them on through every gulley up every hill and dale of this landscape. You know there's not many red flags waved in their direction. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Effective lobbyists use the political process as much as possible to further their cause. Politics can work in a group's favour. Some groups are more politically aligned with certain governments and that aids influence. For example the Labor government was keen to be re-elected again and introducing green policy to *protect* rivers was bound to encourage more votes beyond their heartland voters.

In Brisbane that's for the state election ... and we tried to get both parties to embrace it and they didn't. (Interviewer: OK) One, the Labor party did embrace it and Anna Bligh [Queensland Premier] declared it as part of a platform for the election and she won and that's when it got going for out here ... and it's not about, well it IS about politics and it's not about specific parties ... it's about trying to make sure that these rivers are protected [Sam, CWQ, env.adv.].

Remote area activists too can use remoteness to their advantage and this may aid influence.

I think we have the advantage in many ways in Western Queensland ... some of the most disadvantaged places both in terms of services and the people getting recognition, are some of the areas that are non-sexy areas – just a bit off where the urban areas are – but they are not, neither sexy like downtown Brisbane or the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast or out at iconic Longreach. Ah yeah there's a lot of forgotten areas in between where unfortunately people don't get heard but um. I remember when [former Prime Minister] was trying to make some miles with native title he insisted, he was very insistent even though it was pissing down rain at the time he would only speak on the steps of the Hall of Fame. He wouldn't come to the Longreach town hall because that was just a nothing place. So we have some brand, we have a place. We can attract politicians to be in a place where they're seen to be Australian or seen to be talking to the people who matter. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Being solutions focussed (rather than issue focussed) is useful in lobbying government (and in deliberative forums (Dryzek, J.S. 2007) to act on recommendations. The skills and experience of government staff and / or the education of stakeholders in general is important to aid influence. However those organisations which are well resourced can pay for these skills.

Obviously we get the document and truth is, I'm a bit lazy so I don't overly read it, I wait for our lawyer and our environmental advisors to send me a summary of it, then I read the summary and then I go back and read the bit ... and probably that has a distinct focus on how does it impact us rather than the landholders.

[Robert, metro, mining]

Local knowledge needs to be taken seriously by governments so community information can be fully considered in the policy development phase. This may include the knowledge of those who work in agriculture, Indigenous people, women and so on. The voices of women and Indigenous people largely could be considered marginalised.

Strength of views and passion can enable or disable influence. Because of the barriers to remote influence a degree of passion and conviction is required or people will disassociate themselves from activist efforts. Passion is required to keep remote based activists lobbying, sometimes for years, when they appear to get few *wins*.

Finally how much weight the remote regional deliberations had with the Minister as opposed to one on one direct lobbying of government (with the Minister or staff), submissions and so on is unknown beyond taking into account what concessions were granted on Wild Rivers when declared in December 2011. In theory at least the Minister would feel some impetus to take the Ministerial advisory committee recommendations seriously having agreed to set one up. However advice can be ignored and not all LEBWRAP stakeholders agreed on every aspect. It largely seemed that Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin was a given (an election promise). It was just a matter of the detail of the policy and influencing the detail, which could significantly benefit the sectors involved.

### **Marginalised voices – Who and Why?**

It is too simplistic to contend that any organisation/s held power consistently throughout the course of the three years of the case study. Power was not held by any one organisation or group throughout the deliberations in this case study as power shifted. It was perceived that green advocacy groups and mining dominated but there were other powerful players in the debate including agriculture and local government. A consideration of which sectors were

marginalised is discussed below examining specifically remoteness, gender and indigeneity as potential sites of marginalisation. Sites of powerlessness can also shift and are not static.

### **Remoteness: Did urban interests dominate remote?**

To some extent urban interests did dominate remote as the LEB WR policy was largely driven by urban green groups. However there were a few key residents of CWQ who were active in these organisations. Mining is big business and the office of the company involved in the LEB WR deliberations was interstate (South Australia). This meant that the mining representative on the regional committees was not always able to attend meetings and they did their serious lobbying outside the LEBWRAP – directly with the Minister and staff. His attendance at regional meetings seemed to be aimed more at educating stakeholders about mining constraints and for public relations and intelligence gathering.

When I first spoke to residents and activists in CWQ about my PhD topic – whether people in remote areas could influence government policy examining the LEB WR policy development – local cynics half-jokingly responded by saying: *That's an easy one to answer – they can't.* Yet if that is true why do remote based activists continue to engage in activism at considerable expense and often for years? Despite the barriers, this case study shows that remote activists do influence policy and while rarely obtaining everything desired even small concessions on policy can make a significant difference to communities and citizens. It is a fairly standard procedure too for petitioners to request more than is wanted while presuming what they will receive from government will be more moderate. So sometimes requests are made that are unlikely to be actioned and those putting these requests forward are aware of this but ask in the hope they may be granted. There are conditions that aid influence as outlined above.

Some urban based activists – mining and green advocacy groups – did seem to be relatively well resourced to lobby for their interests. Green groups lobbied strategically as part of a long-term campaign (The Wilderness Society 2011), were highly organised and timed their public launch with the Western Rivers Alliance well. This was carefully managed to occur just before the election and as a result they obtained a promise from the Premier that if re-elected the Lake Eyre Basin rivers would be nominated for Wild Rivers declaration. The green advocacy groups also had strong support from some key local graziers who were publicly active in speaking for Wild Rivers. Once the regional deliberations were occurring they employed staff 'bankrolled by Pew' [Sam, CWQ, env. ad.] to educate locals (presenting their dominant view) as to what Wild Rivers was about (though the full detail of the policy

was yet to be decided for the LEB). As one local activist pointed out regional activists could learn a lot from the lobbying tactics from other sectors who were influencing policy (instead of mistrusting them and resenting their success).

Agripolitical organisations also maintain a Brisbane office in part at least to ease access to government staff and Ministers. However once the deliberations started in CWQ, agriculture and local government obtained quite a few concessions on activities they were concerned would be banned under Wild Rivers. It was argued that mining was not being restricted enough by Wild Rivers legislation and mining seemed to be the common enemy that most regional deliberators hoped to see restricted. The lobbying for mining was largely not conducted in the regional arena or in the media so I was unable to assess how that lobbying took place beyond interviewing the sole representative on the regional advisory committee.

Concepts such as the city-country divide, uninformed perceptions and lack of understanding of rural / remote by urban and remote citizen attitudes including negativity and apathy came up during my interviews with regard to an understanding of whether remote citizens were marginalised in this policy debate. However none of those factors fully explain any marginalisation of remote citizens. Neither is lack of voting power though that certainly has an impact as some said:

I mean the critical thing is we're political insignificant out here in terms of which way the election's going to go. [Noel, CWQ, ag.]

Really anything that comes our way is pretty much tokenism from government they, all the big money the big votes everything is in the, on the coastal fringe and as our commodities and beef industry all agricultural industries I guess struggle economically we become less and less relevant to the bigger picture. Yeah. So I feel extremely disempowered as far as how can we have influence yeah ...

People, honestly they just feel and they are right, that their vote is irrelevant. We all go and vote but it's irrelevant and even if we got all of the seats in the west to be on the one side, either side of the major parties, doesn't matter wouldn't make any difference to the whole scheme of things and sitting in the parliament there's very few people who live and breathe our issues. How do they even influence debate in the parliament in Brisbane? How do they make people in Brisbane understand what our issues are? There are very few of them and they're just sitting there with very little influence and that's a real problem. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

Certainly those who were involved in the consultation and deliberations at RAPAD stakeholder forums and on the Ministerial advisory committee must have felt they had some

ability to influence the policy or participation would not have been so committed. Quite a few activists from a range of sectors who were central to the various forums told me during their interview that they felt they had had influence over the policy already and could tell me why. The model used by RAPAD for the stakeholder forums was intended for use again for other policy issues impacting on CWQ – for example impacts of coal seam gas exploration on the region.

In the media analysis, as discussed in Chapter Six, urban voices outnumbered those from Western Queensland in the Queensland Country Life and ABC radio. Some of the content that included Western Queensland voices was not saved onto the ABC website perhaps reflecting urban editor choices. In the Longreach Leader however the voices of locals predominated over urban voices.

No one sector got everything they desired in the LEB WR policy and even the urban based sector representatives (environmental advocacy group and mining) had to compromise on some aspects of the policy as it was deliberated. However green advocacy groups and mining could be said to have had a fair degree of power during my case study taking into consideration the points made above. Now the LEB WR policy has been repealed in 2014 while one of these sectors has definitely declined in power politically (green advocacy groups) the other (mining) still seems to have retained some power under the new government and the new policy.

## **Gender differences**

There were far fewer women participating in the key forums such as the RAPAD stakeholder forums and the Ministerial advisory committee as discussed in Chapter Six. At the RAPAD stakeholder forum held in 2009 there were 12 women participating compared to 25 men (Remote Area Planning and Development Board 2009). In 2010 there were even less women with eight women attending (including an administration officer) as opposed to 21 men (Remote Area Planning and Development Board March 2010). The LEBWRAP had four women to 10 men though this number changed when additional members were placed on the LEBWRAP, the ratio of males to females staying roughly the same. As I sought to interview activists who had been involved in the policy discussions or had some opportunity to influence of necessity more of my interviewees were men (17 men to eight women).

Despite the noticeable difference in participation quite a few of my interviewees did not see gender barriers and some were uncomfortable with questions as to whether there were differences with regard to male and female participation. The comments from various

participants in this research indicate a particularly dominant gender blindness and a disregard for gender equality.

It's my observation it's those women who want to participate [who do]. I don't see any women out here who are shrinking violets ... [I have not] seen a meeting dominated by men because the women were told to stay home. So I don't see any real barriers apart from the normal just sheer geography. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

There's been women involved, there's been men involved. It really hasn't been an issue and I think that both sides of gender have had strong input into this process. (David, CWQ, Local Govt)

Some who did see the gender imbalance in numbers noted that the women who did participate had strong input.

If you take LEBWRAP as it is now, no it probably hasn't got a gender balance in that context but it is interesting that certainly two or three of the women are not daunted by the men. You know who they are, you probably know them as well as I do. So they're not daunted and I think that's probably more important than pure gender balance, I think. [Robert, mining, male]

In terms of Lake Eyre Basin though, and excluding aboriginal people, I would say that on the LEBWRAP for instance, that both women and men were just as involved in the consultation and putting forward their view and participated strongly across the board. [Elise, metro, Govt]

However a government interviewee also said they looked at gender balance when setting up advisory committees and thought they'd achieved it on the LEBWRAP (which at one count had four females and 10 males and this ratio of female to male stayed roughly the same when members were added).

While there were women that often would come with their husbands to [public consultation] forums, or were councillors or were nominated, and government does do something where when we ask for nominees, we advise them that we're looking for gender balance, and ask them to put forward more than one name to ensure that we achieve it. So, we had a good mix in the LEBWRAP. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Some CWQ based female interviewees did not think there were barriers for women participating in policy discussions despite gender differences in participation at times.

I am very privileged to sit in a lot of different meetings within the area that have ... I'll be the only younger female there. There'll be a lot of older men I guess and maybe a couple of other women maybe if we're lucky. The majority of well all of the CEO's in the Central West area are male bar one. All of the Mayors in the Central Western area are male but one (laughs) and so that's not necessarily because no one wanted that role it was just the way it worked out when elections came. In saying that, like I said, I get to go to a lot of meetings they've never made me feel like I shouldn't say anything. They've always allowed, they've always indulged me [laughing] when I do say things and yeah I haven't come across that at all. [Adele, CWQ, ag.]

Those who did see gender barriers thought it was an *age and stage* thing as other studies have also found (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). Highly structured and gender differentiated task allocation dominate such areas. Rural and remote women do not tend to participate in policy discussions in their 20s and 30s in CWQ because they are viewed as being almost totally responsible for raising children. Further, some are also required to teach their children via distance education and / or are working on or off farm. Some explained this as women playing different roles in society and therefore having less participation in policy discussions was to be expected. Very few queried the gendered hierarchies that dominate in remote areas nor challenged the dominance of power and influence over policy by men.

I think it's a case of women probably they have less time than men because they have the domestic challenges. They have the motherhood thing and they have the housekeeping thing and they have the bookkeeping thing all of these duties that they have just in general in life men don't, are free of those. (Laughs) So they're much, they have less time and I think they are forced to choose between their commitment to their family and their commitment to another cause and most of them make the family choice. I think when they get to, possibly to my age, when the kids have grown up they then may have a higher involvement in community things. (Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

One who did see gender barriers explained it thus.

I believe the culture within our current decision making processes is very strongly white male dominated. So, if you don't think and be like them, you kind of get pushed out or you kind of choose to opt out. So, I believe that a lot of our women, and I believe this about a lot of Aboriginal people as well, anybody that's different to that has got to kind of conform to that kind of behaviour and that kind of decision making process, in order to be accepted. That's my belief. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

Some of the responses to my question about whether there were barriers to female participation were framed in language that did not recognise women's participation to the family agricultural enterprise or to related policy discussions such as Wild Rivers.

For general issues of whether you have or have not Wild Rivers, people can voice their opinion and that really is opinion and the submission was inviting things that might be wrong how it may affect you for example if someone had 80% of **his** country in a High Preservation Area and found that restrictive to **his** economic development and that sort of thing, was invited to put that in. Now whether **he** gets any concession or not would depend on that individual interaction. [Noel, CWQ, ag.]

Some women activists had experienced significant challenges to their attempts to move beyond assigned gender hierarchies:

Very few women are involved. It doesn't matter whether it's local, state or federal politics, I think, and women come in for a lot of criticism from men. It doesn't matter if it's the shape of their head or the shape of their rear end or whatever, they pick on that, whereas they're not an oil painting either and no one says, 'Err,' but you can hear it. [laughs] [Nancy, CWQ, Local Govt]

Many were blind to gender power imbalances despite obvious disparities in who holds the formal leadership positions in CWQ and who participated in the key Wild Rivers forums. This occurs despite women often being better formally educated. Those women who do get involved have quite a bit of influence in policy discussions. Other studies have noted similar issues for women's participation despite women's ability to improve outcomes (Maddison & Partridge 2007; McGowan 2011) and note cultural barriers and lack of support for women to attend (including for example lack of childcare). One interviewee described it thus:

We're a patriarchal society and I think here in Western Queensland, we're the epitome of traditional and conservative, and traditional and conservative has males as leaders and, obviously I don't agree with it ... a male is seen as a better leader, a male principal in a school is seen as a better principal than a female principal, a male mayor. I think there's just a lot of traditional views, and I'm not saying we're backward or behind, but we subscribe to tradition more strongly than other areas regions.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think there are other things as well holding women back, or do you just think it's that cultural thing?

**Interviewee:**

I think when you live in a society that has a patriarchal view of itself, women then slot into their positions, and I use the classic example of the female who comes in from outside with a very well established career, a very intelligent, over smart, capable, marries what I'll call a local, inverted commas, and then in 10 years time they're probably slotted into this very traditional role, yet they themselves are not that person, but it's what I think the society you're living in expects of you, it's how you then conform in virtue of that. The opposite of that is those who don't totally conform are maybe the ones who are no longer here. They've uprooted the fourth generation person, sold the property and gone, much to the disgust of local residents. So I think we do it to ourselves willingly but it's also the large expectations of a very conservative community group. [Nicole, WQ, ag.]

The dominant masculine hegemony narrows the pool of potential influencers and excludes many men. Some men do not get involved in policy discussions due to a range of reasons including busyness, lack of interest and not having the confidence to engage in policy discussions. Many males working in agriculture are socially isolated and less engaged in public activism because of the need to speak in public.

### **Why does gender matter anyway when looking at marginalisation?**

Gender imbalance and whether it matters is an issue that is being discussed heatedly in many arenas and is still very controversial even at the highest leadership levels in our country.<sup>19</sup> There has been much criticism of the lack of women in Australia's current Federal cabinet.

Nonetheless some men did see that limiting women's participation did not always make for the most successful outcomes.

I think that men have always been seen as being the decision makers and that's backed up by a lot of women. They'll say oh well he makes the decisions. I don't necessarily think that's right but I think traditionally that has been the case. The ratio of politicians, male to female, the ratio of Councillors, male to female, the

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<sup>19</sup> A good example concerns the recent public criticism of the gender based harassment of Julia Gillard, Australia's first female Prime Minister.

ratio of CEO of companies it all backs up that traditionally it's been a male dominated, decision making has been dominated by males which in my thinking probably gives us not as good outcomes, as we could get. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

This supports other research that found that women's framing of NRM issues was more holistic than men's and therefore useful to decision making processes (Ross & McCartney 2005).

### **Were Indigenous people marginalised?**

Indigenous people are noted as one of the *hard to reach* sectors for community engagement (Walsh & Sarkissian 2001). Special guides have been written for use by Queensland Government staff when consulting Indigenous communities. Indigenous people have a view shaped by culture on natural resources because of their *connection to country* and therefore need to be included in policy discussions relating to land. The interests of the Indigenous people involved in the LEB WR policy development are documented in Chapter Seven.

There were mixed responses from Indigenous interviewees as to whether they felt included in this debate but it is clear the state government did make extra efforts to consult Indigenous groups separately. Other more resourced groups were also organising meetings one on one with government decision makers also outside the regional group processes.

Sometimes when they are in you know in a group of white people they're [aboriginal people] very quiet. They don't say much and then sometimes they can be intimidated by you know some other people in the room and they won't say nothing. They'll just sit there, absorb it all and do their own thinking.

**Interviewer:**

Yes I have seen that.

**Interviewee:**

Whereas if you go to a group of their own people, they are quite open. They'll sit there and they feel comfortable and they'll speak up like groups I have been in. We suggested that to them in [government department] and they did that [organised meetings with just indigenous people]. So I thought that was, they got a lot of good stuff from us. [Doug, CWQ, Indigenous]

TWS representative recognised that Indigenous people could be marginalised and made efforts to support their participation. Given the issues in the Gulf between green groups and Indigenous people over Wild Rivers, it is likely that this was to educate and influence thinking on Wild Rivers as well as to enable strong working relationships and alliances.

Government managers noted that they were aware of some of the challenges with regard to Indigenous participation:

With Aboriginal communities, it's quite different. The men will feel more free to speak at consultation, and you need to make time to set aside with women to ask what their views might be, because of just the way that they view the business differently, and although it's not related to the Lake Eyre Basin, we've just established indigenous reference groups in the Cape, where the communities themselves nominate who can speak for country. Our challenge is for the women who do have authority to speak for country on certain matters to be nominated, so we're working through that. [Elise, metro, Govt]

While Indigenous participation in the LEB WR policy deliberations improved during the time period of this study initially some felt excluded.

How I first found out about it, Chris, was I received a call from people who were working for The Wilderness Society; before that the only knowledge I had of it was probably going on in the papers and what Noel Pearson was talking about and his support for it, when it first came through up in The Cape. So I didn't know anything was going to be happening out in our country until I got a phone call from this organisation, The Wilderness Society, to just ask me what I thought of it, and how it sat with traditional owners out in the West. I said, "Well, I've got no idea because this is the first time I've heard about it." I was just a little bit cranky when that happened because I felt like we were being "done to", as Aboriginal people, again ... and that annoyed me. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

This was rectified later. However as one of the Indigenous interviewees, an organised activist, noted he knew which processes to use to get a response from government and government did respond.

[This] was a real challenge for us as Aboriginal people, when it first came through, and that's what I was saying there earlier, we were pretty angry that the government consultations were happening; we were an afterthought. So I sent through an email and a letter through to the government officers, and told them fairly straight about what we were feeling and how we might be able to fix it up. And, to their credit, they've – I believe, and what I've experienced

has been some fairly good, really good, consultations with them, talking with us and listening with us. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

Indigenous interviewees largely talked positively about participation in the LEB WR processes.

I've contributed to numerous, numerous emails, and every interaction I've had with the people on LEBWRAP has been very, very positive. Being able to sit at the table with that kind of diversity is a really nice thing to do; the way that people contribute and are valued within that group, I was really impressed with. So the mining companies representative; the points of view that they put forward were respectfully acknowledged and taken on board, and not to say that all our opinions were taken to the point where we were going to do some action around them, discussions around them, some of the stuff that we put through didn't get a run either, but they were valued because they were listened to, and, that's all you can ask for, I believe. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

Indigenous representatives also saw the funding of Indigenous wild rangers, the inclusion of Aboriginal voices in the LEBWRAP and water access for Indigenous people for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers as proof that their participation had made a difference. Though one expressed concerns about the concessions they had won if there was to be a change of government (which there was later in 2012). He also spoke of issues with representing the diversity of views within their own sector. This is something other sectors struggle with as well.

It's a strange bloody thing. A lot of people think that all black fellas think one way. No, we're all individuals and we've all got our own experiences [and] think differently. And there's this thing that happens within indigenous people too, because we all say, "We're all family. We're all in this together and we all want to stick together". Well, the only thing that we have in common, as indigenous people right across this country, is historical context that we've been through. [laughs] Historical ... Historical bloody experiences that we've had; that's the thing that brings us all together, but we're so different in every other aspect ... And we keep trying to think that we're all in this together, but in the end, we're not, and we're telling non-Aboriginal people that too, and so they've got nothing else to go on either, you know, so we're kind of making a rod for our own back. Yeah, so Pearson and his alignment with the Liberals, especially with Mr Abbott is really strong, and I support Noel in what he wants to do up there because I respect him speaking on behalf of his people and his country, and that's what I've been arguing all the time. [Tim, WQ, Indigenous]

The intersectionality of race, gender and other factors including location (remote) has been commented on by feminist scholars before with regard to marginalisation of influence (Allen 2009; Alston 2009; Bryant & Pini 2009; Edmonds-Cady 2011; Hancock 2007; Kerner 2010; McCall 2005; Purkayastha 2012; Shields 2008; Walby, Armstrong & Strid 2012). Indigenous women are likely to be the most marginalised within policy discussions. While I attended some forums and knew more about the mainstream deliberations and I was not present at the Indigenous only consultation meetings with government, I suspect this to be true. As pointed out previously government staff were aware of this and were working to consult Indigenous women separately to men. Local Indigenous leaders in CWQ also tend to be male though there are some strong Indigenous female voices at other government consultation processes (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011).

Largely indigenous men and women were both striving for access to water and protection of the rivers while keeping options open for potential indigenous economic opportunities. There were some differences in the specific interests of male and female indigenous interviewees which is no different to any other group with mixed stakeholders as pointed out by my interviewee above. Largely they concurred and while answering to and representing different groups they sought similar things from the Wild Rivers policy. They met with some success when funding for Indigenous Wild River rangers was announced towards the end of the policy development and their access to water was not restricted.

### **Other marginalised voices in the LEB WR deliberations**

Other sectors that were regarded as having less say in the LEB WR deliberations included townspeople. A few interviewees pointed out that NRM issues in Central Western Queensland are perceived to be about land and therefore in remote areas those in agriculture are or should be more involved. This is not the case in urban or coastal communities where many townspeople participate in NRM committees and debates.

Young people / youth were seen to be missing from deliberations and this is indisputable as there were few young people involved in any of the main forums and I suspect at the consultation meetings. This is probably due to a number of factors including that many young people are outside the region attending school or University or working. The young are noted to be apathetic about political or policy discussions unless it directly impacts on them or uses technology that interests them such as social media (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2010). One study has noted new methods of participation (Marsh & Vromen 2012) for citizens including what is termed *clicktivism* utilised by groups such as Get Up where people

can like or sign up for a cause on, for example, Facebook. This may well suit young people's preferences for political participation. Cultural barriers to inclusion (white middle aged men seem to dominate) and duties connected with early careers and / or young parenthood are also probably exclusionary factors for the young.

The aged and low socioeconomic demographic are noted as *hard to reach* (Brackertz & Meredyth 2008) sectors and were also mentioned by a few as not being evident in the LEB WR policy deliberations.

## **Politics and power**

As previously stated policy is always created in a political environment and Wild Rivers was no different. Labor and the Greens supported Wild Rivers with the Coalition opposed. Some stakeholders seemed to feel more aligned to certain governments though I did not explore the politics of this except to note the preferred apolitical approach of RAPAD. Smart lobbyists will always attempt to work with all sides of politics if they can get traction.

After my research period ended in December 2011 a new conservative government was elected in Queensland and was keen to remove the Wild Rivers declaration in the Lake Eyre Basin. A group of interested sector representatives including local government, science, agriculture, green groups, regional NRM body, Indigenous and key large grazing enterprises from CWQ wrote to the new Minister in September 2012 asking that what had been achieved through regional group processes to date be considered before eliminating the Wild Rivers policy as it stood at the end of 2011 (see Appendix 8).

Through the skilful direction of the peak body representing the seven central western local shires, the RAPAD (Remote Area Planning and Development) Board convened a roundtable of genuine stakeholders to map out preferences in managing this region's resources. To their great credit they reached a consensus on how to provide permanent protection to the [listed] threats. The communiqué that came from this roundtable process is attached.

We understand that you are considering repealing the declarations that sit under the Wild Rivers Act in declared areas, we would urge you to retain and reform them in western Queensland. [Letter to the Minister September 2012]

The LEB WR policy was revoked in August 2014 and a new Western Rivers policy replaces it. Information on the new Queensland Government Western Rivers policy shows some key differences.

On 31 July 2013, the Minister announced the following core principles of the alternative strategies with further detail to be released at a later date:

- There will be no additional water released for irrigation from these systems – this means no cotton can or will be grown on Cooper Creek.
- Open-cut mining will not be allowed to occur in the Channel Country.
- Oil and gas development will be strictly controlled by stringent conditions under the Environmental Protection Act 1994.
- A Channel Country protection area will be mapped and will protect a greater area of riverine channels and floodplains than the current wild river declarations.

### **Alternative strategies**

With these core principles in place, the Queensland Government has developed a balanced approach to the management of these western rivers systems that protects important environmental values, supports existing industries and provides opportunities for future, sustainable economic growth.

The alternative strategies for Queensland's western rivers are to:

- provide for water trading in the Cooper Creek catchment to allow for small-scale irrigation opportunities without increasing the volume of water able to be taken from the system
- provide for the establishment of a Channel Country Protection Area
- prevent open-cut mining in the Channel Country Protection Area
- with the exception of low-risk activities subject to existing eligibility criteria and standard conditions, ensure petroleum and gas development in the Channel Country Protection Area is subject to site-specific assessment and mandatory conditions
- apply mandatory conditions to resource activity approvals to preserve beneficial flooding (e.g. ensure linear infrastructure does not interfere with overland flows)
- ensure that weed and pest management remains a priority for natural resource management bodies in the Lake Eyre Basin. (Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources and Mines 2014)

Reaction is still occurring to the new look water policy though conservation groups are reported to have grave concerns.

## **The power of government**

Government plays a key role in policy development and deciding what is on the policy agenda (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). In some instances it is part of their policy platform or they are lobbied to do this (as in the case of Wild Rivers) and in other cases those in government advising Ministers will pick up on issues before they come to a head. Government staff also manage consultation processes and advise the Minister on final decisions. While some maintain that urban centralised governments have delegated some authority to the regions, others maintain that governments are in fact enhancing their capacity to govern through top down control of new arrangements with a range of non-governmental actors (Bell & Hindmoor 2009).

Power however is not held by one institution, in this case government, with other stakeholders having none when there is the opportunity for agency or activism. The LEB WR policy processes and citizen deliberations did reveal governmental control of processes throughout. However the proactivity of RAPAD in running forums to find common ground and seeking to involve government and send them what regional deliberators had agreed on, did enable remote citizens to have influence over the final shape of the policy.

Governmental power has its limits also with regard to resources and even the relatively powerless can occasionally make enough public fuss over an issue to turn processes around. An example of this was when citizens in CWQ strongly criticised the government's initial consultation processes and government responded to that by improving and rerunning their consultation meetings (at considerable expense) across CWQ.

Government does have to deal with an *inherent mistrust* by citizens which does make consultation and selling a new policy difficult as one government manager said.

There is a range of barriers, some of which are the way that government tends to technically release different things in a process consistent with the law, but more than that, there is a cultural barrier where, particularly in more remote regional communities, there is an inherent mistrust of government, and when we deal with individuals, they are generally happy with the outcome on the ground, but collectively, it's an opportunity to bring up other favourite bad feelings about things that have occurred in the past. Often, we're not just trying to roll out a policy, but trying to deal with a whole range of misunderstanding, existing

concern about particular things, and more than that, about having any kind of interference in the way that people have often lived on those properties with their families since 1860, and why there would be a need for regulation when they've done it so well already. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Government staff also expressed concern about power inequalities with regard to well-resourced lobbyists. One Government manager made a key point about the issues surrounding policy development due to power inequities.

But it's interesting in our society as it exists now, more and more it's the lobbyists and the more powerful individual interests that get the spotlight and seem to convey what the perspective on the issue is. I find that really concerning, because you don't necessarily end up with the results that people want; you end up with the result that ensures that interest is preserved. It's very concerning [Elise, metro, Govt]

While some would see government as maintaining control over the government consultation processes around the LEB WR, one skilled activist from a green advocacy group felt that the panel members on the advisory committee had considerable power to influence the Minister.

I had this discussion with [name, CWQ Mayor] before it even came along and [RAPAD chair] was that we must ensure that the spirit and the drive and the independence of that RAPAD process persisted and endured. And it has. Because I think the people that you've got on that panel (names one female and two male panel members) ... There is no way on earth they are going to be herded by anyone else (both laugh). And to be honest me as well, you know I am just not going to have it. So we drive that process and we tell them what we want. And we send quite pointy messages back to the Minister particularly on mining. [Thomas, metro, env. adv.]

Governments are often regarded as being risk averse in general (Harris, P 2014) and the public service has been noted for gatekeeping when it comes to policy shaping in that they prefer to use their own policy *experts* than seek and use community or other non-governmental advice (Maddison & Denniss 2009). When they do work with citizens to formulate policy, governments are more likely to obtain better acceptance of policy that has had citizen input. This is a principle underpinning Deliberative Democracy.

They don't like to relinquish the control over it I think. That sounds a bit pejorative but I think it's also they want to be assured it's done well. I don't think there's a manipulative motivation there among the officers who are running those things. A

bunch of people appointed in [environment department] guys who have to contact people, can they come to a meeting, they run the meetings and I presume presentations. By and large I think that people – they want objective feedback but the reluctance to do something different in the department maybe to say appoint a [independent] researcher for three or four months and find out what everyone thinks ... the department might not be keen to do that because they might. They are really risk averse about credibility and accuracy. [Leo, CWQ, Govt]

One Mayor saw the Department of Environment and Resource Management (as it was called during the case study period) as having more power than other stakeholders in this debate.

**Interviewer:**

So, from where you're sitting and what you've seen, do you see any stakeholders as having more influence than others in this particular policy discussion, and if so who and why?

**Interviewee:**

I think the Department's got a lot. I mean they're the main one, aren't they?  
[laugh] They've got all the say' [Nancy, CWQ, Local Govt]

Public servants do have a 'form of delegated power that allows them to substantially influence the selection and construction of policy problems and to propose solutions to those problems' (Maddison & Denniss 2009, p. 133). When urban public servant policy experts provide advice on issues in remote communities to shape policy their lack of knowledge of those communities can be an issue and it makes it increasingly important for governments to work with geographically remote citizens to develop policy. The processes the state government used to develop the LEB WR policy did include extensive consultation and use of remote citizens' input. This model is to be applauded and is recommended for all such remote policy though the cost of such exercises is not inconsiderable.

Aside from costs of consultation for government which are significant in a remote area politics itself can interfere with good processes. Government staff have to carry out what the Minister (an elected representative) wants and at times will bear the brunt of some of those decisions. There are power hierarchies within government that impact on how well regional citizens are heard and many of my CWQ based interviewees could cite examples where they felt unheard or where a government consultation process was abandoned and decisions made ignoring the work of the committees. Vegetation management was an

example several mentioned (including government staff) who admitted there had been a flawed process used to develop policy that had adverse impacts on later consultation efforts.

## **Barriers to power**

In this case study having power equated to influencing government policy. The barriers to influencing policy were covered in depth in Chapter Seven.

## **Conclusion**

Power fluctuated throughout the three years of the case study and no one organisation dominated completely nor was any one sector totally oppressed. There were times during the course of the LEB WR policy development when those who are sometimes marginalised, that is remote citizens, Indigenous people and women had power. Those considered to have had influence over the development of the LEB WR policy included environmental advocacy groups who got the policy onto the government agenda and mining which did not become much more restricted under the new policy. Agriculture and local government also gained concessions that allowed them to continue with some requested business activities. Both sectors but especially agriculture was dominant in the media. Sectors with productivist interests such as agriculture, mining and to a lesser extent local government discursively shaped Wild Rivers as a threat that may constrain business activities. These sectors felt they had a lot to lose if the LEB WR policy went ahead as originally written (for Cape York) but in the end they sought amendments to the policy to fit their needs, some of which were granted. Certain factors aided influence in this case study and these are noted.

While not completely powerless women overall had far less influence over the policy development. Indigenous people due to inclusive government processes had reasonable opportunity for input and gained some concessions for their people. Remote citizens through the efforts of RAPAD influenced policy by using an innovative and timely process to bring together stakeholders to deliberate on policy, find common ground and discuss differences before going to government with what they sought in the policy.

Government itself has a degree of power in shaping policy as it manages the policy process and the Minister, with advice from senior staff and publics, makes the final decision on what will be included and what will not be included. Politics can also interfere with a solid consultative process when there is a change of government as was seen after the end of this case study period when the LEB WR policy was revoked.

## Chapter Nine: Activism and Governance

To influence the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy from remote Central Western Queensland (CWQ) some citizens in this case study displayed activist characteristics.

Literature on rural decline often examines citizen resistance (Alston 2009; Bryant & Pini 2009; Cheshire 2006; Dibden & Cocklin 2007; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Gray & Sinclair 2005; Herbert-Cheshire 2003; Higgins 2004; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005) to imposed policy. Resistance was displayed in this case study as well, more often by those with less influence over the construction of the debate. However a more proactive activism was practised by those with power and influence. While those citizens did not necessarily term themselves activists they demonstrated aspects of activist behaviour. I explore below how this occurred and how effective this was. I also examine what role the state government took in the Wild Rivers policy development and how effective this was in facilitating remote policy development.

All people interviewed had some opportunity to influence the policy and most were engaged with the various processes available to enable this. Some actively worked to set up the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) stakeholder forum processes (and other processes to influence government) that allowed regional perspectives to be heard and for those sector representatives to deliberate, negotiate and compromise as per normative deliberative democratic processes. Deliberation is understood as debate and discussion that aids the development of well-informed opinions. Participants are willing to revise their views after discussion with other stakeholders. Deliberative groups do not have to achieve consensus and it is expected that deliberators will argue for their own interests. Legitimacy of outcomes is important in deliberation (Chambers 2003, p. 309).

There is however a large difference in relation to who is effectively participating and some practiced activism in a strategic manner. I argue that others can learn from remote region strategic activist practice whether conducted by activists with views diametrically opposed to our own or not. Those wanting to influence policy should ask the following question – what does a particular group or activist do (despite my disinclination towards their views) that allows them to influence policy so effectively and what can I learn from this for my own practice?

There has been little attention paid to remote community activism and this is one of the key reasons I chose this case study for my PhD research. One of the few to examine the agency

of rural citizens with regard to influencing policy decisions is Herbert-Cheshire (2003) who used a Foucauldian lens in her research. She notes the lack of focus on what she terms agency and what I term activism. As she says:

To conclude from this that the state “has power” while rural people “have none” is not merely unhelpful, but inconsistent with a Foucauldian problematic of power, which rejects the idea of power as a resource to be owned, shared or lost.  
(Herbert-Cheshire 2003, p. 463)

The Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy development is a good example of remote region activism, which had some reasonable outcomes by the end of the case study period in December 2011, despite major differences of opinion. Remote based activists can and do learn from their own experiences but there is also an opportunity to dissect and learn from others’ activist practice as well as from activist theory.

### **Remote region activism**

Remote based activists can be regarded as using both power over mechanisms and power with or to when working collectively and because governments do not solely hold power, an opportunity exists to influence policy. In the case of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR), activism led to regional based deliberations with input directly to the Minister which did influence the discursive construction of the Wild Rivers issue and the consequent shaping of the policy. Of course there are significant barriers to remote region activism and these have been explored previously in Chapter Seven. As I have noted previously I witnessed, during my 30 years of residence in CWQ, many citizens spending vast amounts of time and money trying to influence government policy that impacts on their lives. Some of the organisations or individuals attempting to influence policy relevant to remote communities are not remote based. For example, in this case study some urban green advocacy groups (with some remote based members) and a mining company had representatives based in metropolitan areas that travelled to CWQ to participate in regional deliberations. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (Twyford et al. 2006) recommends that all interested stakeholders should be included in policy discussions. After the end date of my research (2009 – 2011) The Wilderness Society (TWS) complained in the media about being excluded from the newly re-formed advisory committee on Wild Rivers (which became Western Rivers) under the new coalition government. This was despite locals (not green advocacy group representatives) recommending that TWS needed to be included as they

had been previously on the LEBWRAP. This exclusion eroded the inclusive and collaborative approach to policy development that had been developing.

Also of note for remote based activism is that Central Western Queensland is still an agricultural region and those who own land and the resources of agriculture have some influence because of this. Agriculture is the main employer with 27.5 per cent of people in the region working in agriculture (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013). Those working in agriculture in Central Western Queensland have to manage the unpredictable *boom and bust* cycles of nature. This includes long periods of drought which brings with it much social, emotional, environmental and economic angst for those working on the land and in related businesses (Alston & Kent 2006; Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology 2010; Barr 2009; Berry et al. June 2009; Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008; Gray & Lawrence 2001). Others have noted that at times people feel under siege from nature, from governments, from change and globalisation (Gray & Lawrence 2001). Feeling disempowered and lacking optimism prove to be major constraints for those considering participating in any civic activity let alone in activism. I suspect this negativity underpins the tendency of some involved in agriculture at times to resist, be agreeable to or ignore politics in general, rather than to actively seek to influence policy – so much energy is poured into managing the issues that come with the terrain of living and working in agriculture in a remote area. The issues for agriculture have been well documented by others (Alston 1995; Barr 2009; Coldwell 2010; Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Lockie 2001; McGowan 2011; Pini 2007; Poiner 1990; Price & Evans 2006; Shortall 1999). Despite this there are citizens who overcome the very evident barriers to determinedly seek to influence policy for their sector and some of these are from the agricultural sector<sup>20</sup>.

### **Who were the activists and why**

As identified through attendance at regional LEB WR forums (this includes government consultation meetings and the RAPAD forums), participation in the LEBWRAP and through media coverage, the main activists in this policy development discussion came from: agriculture; green advocacy groups; regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups (such as the regional NRM body and catchment committees); mining; Indigenous groups; and local government. These sectors were impacted by the policy and representatives from

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<sup>20</sup> 12 out of 26 activists I interviewed worked in or drew an income from agriculture. Four of the 26 were urban based government staff.

those sectors wanted to influence, change or facilitate it. Women were members of all sector groups but not as visible as men in policy discussions as discussed in previous chapters. The interests of these sectors is documented in Chapter 7.

## **Remoteness and activism**

There are very evident barriers for activists in remote areas relating to geographic remoteness. For example, the Queensland Government Wild Rivers departmental Managers were based in Brisbane, approximately 1400 kilometres from Longreach, which is the largest town in CWQ and where many regional government meetings tend to be held. Even within the region of CWQ vast distances create significant costs for those who need to travel to other centres to influence policy. For example, the distance by road from Bedourie in Diamantina Shire to Longreach is approximately 720 kilometres, estimated to take over nine hours driving time and only possible if the dirt roads between the two are open. Flying in light aircraft is also an option but costly as well. Just getting to centralised meetings creates significant costs for activists and their organisations.

The terrain and weather conditions can also create impediments to travel including rain causing dirt roads to become untraversable, fires and lack of detailed mapping.

An ageing population and a small pool of activists has resulted in some remote based activists feeling the strain of long-term commitment to try to influence policy. Several long-term activists spoke to me of being '*burnt out*'. However there could be more active encouragement of skilled women, Indigenous people and other marginalised groups such as youth to take on leadership roles which would ease this problem.

Like activists elsewhere people have competing priorities which in a remote area can be exacerbated by distance. For example, business managers have to find someone to manage their business in their absence and their activist commitments may find them absent for days on end to travel to, and attend meetings. Some interviewees did mention that their businesses were suffering because of their mostly unpaid voluntary commitments as activists. Activism in and from a remote area brings significant costs for those participating and cost is a constraint to activism.<sup>21</sup>

Lack of understanding of remote lifestyles is another barrier for remote based activists. It is very easy for governments and others to dismiss negativity towards new policy by rural /

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<sup>21</sup> The largest majority of the activists I interviewed – 29.2 per cent – earned between \$150,000 and \$199,999 a year.

remote citizens as a Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) reaction. As more than 85 per cent of the Australian population lives within 50 kilometres of the coastline (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012) there is little understanding or empathy for rural / remote issues or the lifestyle (Barr 2009).

Geographic remoteness also exacerbates the following governmental barriers to activists trying to influence policy as previously outlined in Chapter Six. Barriers include the turnover of key governmental staff – rural / remote people try to develop relationships with key government staff to enhance mutual understanding and policy development. Being a long distance from centralised governments, remote activists work hard to establish these relationships and constant turnover of staff does not aid relationship and trust building. The structure of government, sometimes referred to as a maze, is confusing to an outsider as has been documented by others (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011) and governmental language is a barrier for those at a distance living in a different culture. Lack of access to decision makers can hinder influence and distance from decision making centres does not enhance this access. Resource rich groups are perceived to have better access, for example mining and green advocacy groups. Timing of consultation and governments allowing enough time for input from people in remote communities is critical.

One positive aspect of remoteness is being able to use iconic locations to interest governments in your cause.

I think we have the advantage in many ways western Queensland is well advantaged .... I remember when [former Prime Minister] was trying to make some miles with native title he insisted ... he would only speak on the steps of the [Australian Stockman's] Hall of Fame. He wouldn't come to the Longreach town hall because that was just a nothing place. So we have some brand, we have a place. We can attract politicians to be in a place where they're seen to be Australian or seen to be talking to the people who matter. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

### **Remoteness, gender and activism**

Throughout the course of my research it became very clear that women were involved in significantly smaller numbers than men in the higher level regional discussion forums, for example the RAPAD forums and the LEBWRAP and as spokespersons in the media (see Chapter Five). Yet quite a few thought there were no barriers for women to participation or activism. The reasons for the predominance of men in the policy deliberations has previously

been discussed. The gender balance of the urban green advocacy groups is unknown though local and other representatives from that sector were also male.

As CWQ diversifies with industries such as tourism and mining increasing, this may impact on the status of women in the region. Despite the historical and cultural barriers in CWQ there were women activists involved in the LEB WR policy deliberations. One was critical to the deliberations as it was she who proactively sought to approach RAPAD to hold the successful stakeholder forums to find common ground and air differences. This led to the establishment of the advisory forums of which she was a key part. Other women, too, while not usually in the highest organisational roles, do have some influence and they participated actively in the regional policy deliberations as well. However the unequal gender relations that dominate remote areas were evident in this work. Influence largely remains an uncontested male domain.

### **Remoteness, indigeneity and activism**

While there is a much smaller percentage of Indigenous people in CWQ of approximately 8.3 per cent of the population (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013) compared to Cape York where Indigenous spokespersons were the primary sector speaking on Wild Rivers to the media, there were key Indigenous activists involved in the LEB WR deliberations. While not all lived in CWQ, all were representing Indigenous people historically located in the Lake Eyre Basin and one was a representative of a NRM group. While initially one interviewee felt excluded initially from the LEB WR discussions once he became involved he and others felt the government had done a reasonable job in including the Indigenous perspective. TWS also actively sought to aid Indigenous participation whether for altruistic reasons or as potential allies is unknown. Sometimes this seemed a little patriarchal but did ultimately aid Indigenous participation and activism.

My proposal to [names Indigenous activist] is this is a critical, critical opportunity for aboriginal folk in the Lake Eyre Basin to be very pointy in what they want to happen on their country and I put up a range of subjects which I think it's appropriate they debate and see if they can come to a common resolution on a whole range of things: mining, protection of rivers, Indigenous access to water for economic purposes, rangers, effective negotiation rather than consultation, negotiation. I just say to [names Indigenous activist] don't be consulted. Demand to be negotiated with. There's a whole range of things that I've put up to both [community based federal government staff and Indigenous activist] saying do not miss this opportunity to send a loud message to government on how you

want your country protected / managed. [Thomas, metro, environmental advocacy]

With regard to activism rather than mere participation all three Indigenous interviewees (two males, one female) have had long-term commitment to activism on behalf of their people in numerous policy and community forums. However the intersectionality of remoteness, gender and indigeneity means that Indigenous women tend to be less involved in policy discussions. However there is some evidence to show that Indigenous women are having input at other forums (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). This aspect was beyond the scope of this project and requires further exploration.

## **Activism that works**

### **Regional coordination – The role for regional bodies**

A key feature of the activism shown during the LEB WR deliberations was the leadership role the Regional Organisation of Councils, the RAPAD Board took during the deliberations. RAPAD (some Mayors and the General Manager) played a key role in pulling together impacted and interested stakeholders very soon after the proposed declaration was announced and prior to official regional government consultation. By doing this, RAPAD enabled a collective voice to go forward to government and they designed the process to do this.

And that's what we really wanted to guard against at RAPAD level was to get in front of the wave I suppose and try and look at it objectively and subjectively as to how we could possibly get a good outcome for all the stakeholders but at the same time give that level of protection [to the rivers] that was needed ... I think by RAPAD taking this proactive approach it's taken the consultative process away from the government to an extent and put it in the stakeholder's hands. So they're driving the agenda even though the consultative group, the LEBWRAP group has been endorsed by the Minister. The Minister is comfortable with the process so you know that's a long way different than you know maybe one of the agripolitical groups whilst they are involved in this process but if they had have taken it alone it would be this juxtaposition [us against them] as there always is. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

The RAPAD forums were proposed by a Councillor from one of the more remote shires in CWQ and exceeded expectations (Honeywill 2009) in terms of finding common ground and starting a discussion on where compromise might be possible as well as where it was not.

Attendees were keen to follow-up on this process and a second forum was held in 2010 to further the work. As trust was built the state government was more actively involved the second time. A communiqué from the forum with recommendations was sent to the Minister and the media including where there were disagreements. A positive response to the forum recommendations was the Ministerial advisory committee being established.

It was useful as well for government to have RAPAD play a stewardship role with the advisory committee as RAPAD has established credibility in the region and elsewhere and are independent of government though government funding (for the LEBWRAP secretariat role) always brings some constraints. Lukes' conceptualisation of power suggested that where power mechanisms are most powerful is when they transfer beyond one context. Key RAPAD leaders felt that the model used in the LEB WR forums was so successful it could be used for getting input on other contentious issues in the region where there were diverse opinions and policy to influence. Therefore a well organised regional body with credibility and established relationships can play a pivotal role in such policy deliberations. It was important that RAPAD moved early, prior to official government consultation and that they worked with the full range of stakeholders as well as government as policy was developed.

I quite honestly think that this process should be held up there as being a really you know good way of doing business with government ... to be proactive rather than reactive ... RAPAD's strength is in that you've got seven elected people [Mayors] that speak for their communities. They are democratically elected. They cover a vast part of this Basin, 19 communities, 12,000 square kilometres of Queensland. It's not an insignificant amount of representation and I think if you've got a group like RAPAD that is seen to be, to have integrity, it seems to do what it says it's going to do and it's got its governance in place. I think any government would be silly not to engage with it. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Following Lukes' conceptualisation of power what RAPAD attempted to do was to enable remote based activists to influence policy by bringing together stakeholders under their auspices to deliberate on policy. RAPAD had its own interests to pursue as well (see Table 7.1 in Chapter Seven on interests and stakes of stakeholders) however representatives realised that forces more dominant may prevail if they worked alone to lobby and sought to establish a more collective approach despite differences of opinion and power imbalances to influence the policy. Taking the proactive step to initiate discussions put them in a good position to manage the process and was well received by government and others thus adding to their power within group power relations.

Strategic leadership of key regional organisations can change with turnover of leadership positions and key staff such as the General Manager are extremely important for how well such an organisation functions.

xxx as a General Manager who has put in place that bit that's important – the governance and the fair dealing and the integrity along with the personal attributes of all the Mayors that sit around the table I think that's really important and probably a bit off the subject but we're seeing that time and time again that if you go, if I turn up in Canberra or Brisbane it's pretty easy to say oh that's good [his name] see you later. But if one of us is representing RAPAD we're starting to hear oh you're part of that RAPAD group aren't you? So they know who you are. So that just says to me that the government is watching. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

Regional organisations like RAPAD have to walk a fine line between complying with a dominant stakeholder; that is government, in order to influence policy while occasionally receiving government funding for projects. It is not in RAPAD's interest to be constrained by government or to be perceived as being constrained by government. Originally when RAPAD started as an organisation it was granted operational funding by state government but as this declined over the years RAPAD took the step to become independently funded by its seven shires – a step at least some of the RAPAD Mayors see as useful as it makes them independent of the governments they wish to influence. RAPAD however does have government funding for specific projects it coordinates, for example the rural financial counsellors in Western Queensland. Like most regional organisations it regularly seeks other funding opportunities to resource its activities.

### **What else enables remote based activism?**

The key elements enabling activism that occurred in the LEB WR case study are covered in Chapter Eight in the section titled "How did these sectors have influence?" They are reiterated briefly here. Beyond having a regional organisation to coordinate a collective voice, proactivity is key in moving citizens from mere participation to energetic, strategic activism. Similarly strategic leadership is also important and was demonstrated by various leaders from a number of sectors in this debate. The ability to form good respectful working relationships as well as having good networks was said to be useful in this case study.

The following attributes also aid remote based activism: access to decision makers including the ability (or access) to make face to face representations; meeting in public where all views can be heard and recorded and government responses can be documented; the timing of

activist efforts; stakeholders strategically wearing different *hats*; and the ability to negotiate and compromise.

Being a good activist requires many skills and is complex. Groups such as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre established in Australia in 1982 promote advocacy in order to achieve a 'fair, just and democratic society by empowering citizens, consumers and communities to take strategic action on public interest issues' (Duffy 2003). This is now also recognised by Universities such as Southern Cross University who offer a Public Interest Advocacy course (Ricketts 2012). While remote based activists have not had the benefit of such courses RAPAD funded negotiation training for their member shires (usually offered to others as well where possible) in recognition that negotiation was an important skill in policy development and elsewhere.

The more skilful activists in the LEB WR case were mostly well-educated in a formal sense though this was not always the case. Some of the most skilful had Graduate or Masters degrees but some equally skilled were without tertiary education. They were well prepared (and / or had organisational support to be well researched and prepared), had experience in working with and lobbying government and within their own organisation, had great communication skills and usually good people skills.

So, I think for me, if you can get a couple of groups together and lobby the key people; what I found was the network I've developed while doing this, so through my life, have been really beneficial in getting this Wild Rivers thing to where it is now, and I've always been taught, in fact my old dad used to make sure I knew this one, don't treat anybody badly because you're going to need them one day.

[Tim, WQ Indigenous]

In order to build relationships to influence policy the following components were regarded as important: having dialogue – speaking between and at meetings including and possibly especially to former opponent group representatives. Forming alliances and working together, trust and some healthy cynicism is required as well as pragmatism and a sense of humour. A few mentioned the importance of chatting after meetings over a few drinks which may be something that reinforces male power and influence.

Activists must have knowledge of government and an understanding of how to work with the politics of the day as all policy development is political and election cycles are short. RAPAD personnel were very keen to be apolitical (by not aligning themselves as they could have to National Party parliamentarians who were agitating against Wild Rivers in CWQ). But politics

can also dismantle a good collaborative process and / or can be used to further certain positions.

Wild Rivers had been very controversial in Cape York and received a lot of adverse media coverage. Because of this as well as the more cooperative approach from CWQ, the government seemed open to listening to citizens in CWQ who wanted to work with them to develop this policy. RAPAD used this opportunity.

In this case study, cooperation as opposed to protest was the greatly preferred approach. Perhaps this was because of previous lack of perceived results from protests against government policy for example, relating to the contentious shire amalgamations. Despite this there was a discourse surrounding the LEB WR regional policy deliberations that framed activism as a battle or fight.

Yes with wild rivers you know we've certainly lost the war um well we haven't really actually ... we're winning battles all along the way with concessions and changes to legislation ... Now you could have argued that should have happened several years ago before we had the shit fight [both laugh at word choice] at [WQ town name]. And that's exactly what I said to them. We don't want the same shit fight out here ... It's a cliché they have won the war and he's prepared to concede on a whole range of battles ... So I think we punch above our weight out here. On the whole. [Don, CWQ Local Govt]

Well any women on any committee I've been on if you go to any sort of [agripolitical organisation] meeting there is just less of them I don't know. They battle well above their numbers. [Adele, CWQ, agriculture]

So I immediately, as is my way wanted to [both laugh] gather the troops!  
[Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

If I chose to, I would just have to batter and batter and batter and batter until they did want to shut me up and they did something. I have achieved that in different things though. [Narelle, CWQ, NRM]

Others have noted the use of battle / war metaphors with regard to masculine cultures such as agriculture and agripolitics (Liepins 2000). Female activists in this case study, working within a largely masculine culture, also unsurprisingly frame policy debates as war and use language that describes activism as fighting or a battle using quite masculine language. Perhaps the arena of activism can be seen at least in CWQ as largely a male domain and to be active in that arena women adopt male language and to some extent methods, despite

the non-confrontational approach taken by RAPAD with the LEB WR. In this case discourse did not fit with activist methods used – non-confrontation and deliberately building relationships with government staff.

Other discursive interpretations of reality that emerged from the LEB WR policy deliberations and fit with the *fighting / battle* discourse was a *winners and losers* discourse. Perhaps this related to me asking interviewees whether they felt like they were getting any *wins*. The *winner / loser* binary (Higgins & Lockie 2001; Kane & Bishop 2002) is fairly typical of debates on policy and ignores the partial gains or compromises managed by some groups (Herbert-Cheshire 2003).

Based on whether groups got what they sought from the new LEB WR policy a compromise was seen by some as a win and what was seen as a win can alternatively be seen as a compromise by others. Given the interests of agriculture (and probably mining) which largely wanted the policy removed, representatives no doubt felt the concessions they gained in the Wild Rivers policy during the case study period were only partial wins or compromises and as soon as there was a change of government they successfully sought to over-turn Wild Rivers legislation. Green advocacy groups who got the policy on the agenda and were agreeable to many amendments no doubt felt they had had a win in getting Wild Rivers extended to the Lake Eyre Basin and fought to make mining the common enemy that could be better managed through Wild Rivers policy.

Discourse can be an excluder for those outside the shaping of a particular discourse and is inclusive for users of that language which is why many people adopt certain phrases – to feel or to be seen to be part of the group or group's culture. Discourse also frames the way we speak and think about things and thus influencing discourse is key to influencing governments and other stakeholders.

Giving feedback to government on their approach once relationships were built proved useful and the Queensland Government re-ran their consultation meetings in Western Queensland after receiving some strong critical feedback on the flaws in their first efforts. To their credit state government staff responded by improving and extending their process perhaps in part because Wild Rivers was represented as a contentious issue in the media just prior to a difficult election for the incumbent Labor party.

Access to information for all activists is important and comes at a cost for those remote. This was especially important early on as the policy was intertwined with 13 other pieces of legislation and many found the proposed Wild Rivers policy confusing and complex. It was

not clear to remote citizens either how finalised the policy draft for the Lake Eyre Basin was, and so initial concerns were about some of the detail.

A crucial behind the scenes piece of proactive activism occurred when a very experienced activist from outside CWQ approached RAPAD when they were developing the process for the stakeholder forums with suggestions as to what could be achieved at these and how. However after advice was given, the urban activist then left the process development up to the RAPAD group who felt full ownership of the process that was developed a result. To the credit of management within RAPAD they were open to this external, unsought advice and used it where useful. An example was the use of a *communiqué* to go to government and media after the second forum.

### **What the media analysis showed**

Did those voices dominating the media on LEB WR, whose aim was to use the media to sway public and government thinking and therefore policy, have any success? As someone who worked as a Communications Manager for a state government department and has a Master of Public Relations degree I am well aware of how government departments monitor media to identify and manage issues and respond to criticisms.

Chapter Six discusses in detail whose voices were heard (which sectors, gender and location) and why. Agriculture and government were the sectors most covered by the media. State government regularly uses the media to explain and defend policy, occasionally clearing up *misunderstandings* perhaps as policy became more concrete. An example was to allay fears that Wild Rivers policy was leading to World Heritage Listing. Agricultural representatives were speaking against the Wild Rivers policy in the media despite participating in non-confrontational processes in CWQ to shape the policy. The state agricultural peak body had a stated position of being opposed to Wild Rivers and while regional agripolitical activists were strategic and cooperative within the RAPAD processes, those speaking to the media were less restrained and became openly critical of the Labor government as the 2012 election drew closer. Did they have any success? Agricultural bodies certainly gained concessions within the policy. However that sector would have preferred the policy to be abolished completely.

In August 2014 the Coalition government in Queensland finally revoked what used to be called the Wild Rivers policy (now called the Western Rivers) to allow small scale irrigation and water trading of the few existing sleeper licences and are vigorously defending this against criticism from green advocates. However other legislation bans in-stream dams, and

according to the new Minister it would be impossible to conduct significant irrigation without dams (Minister Andrew Cripps 27 September, 2013). Interviewees from the agricultural sector said they did gain some of the concessions they were seeking under the Labor party Wild Rivers policy – for example, continued use of blade ploughing and pre-existing Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation (PMAVs) were recognised. They also influenced the new Western Rivers policy. AgForce representatives are writing in support of the current reframed policy and broad scale irrigation has still not been supported – nor was it ever sought. Only *small scale* irrigation was sought and this is allowed under the new policy. Green advocates argue however that there is no such thing as small scale irrigation.

### **Who the activists saw as successful lobbyists and why**

There was a range of responses to this question including some who named their own sector representatives as being skilful lobbyists. I conducted interviews before the policy was fully developed and regional deliberations were mid process. Some saw mining's wealth as being a major enabling factor possibly overestimating that sector's influence:

If you look at the big resource companies they're just using their sheer power and money to try and force government to do what they want to do and run a 20 million dollar ad [campaign] against them if they don't. [Sam, CWQ, env.adv]

Given that most of the mining sector's lobbying was conducted outside CWQ not many of my interviewees commented beyond saying that they thought the sector's massive wealth would enable mining to get government's attention.

Many mentioned agricultural sector representatives as being effective lobbyists however not everyone thought the sector's approach was strong. Political allegiances also proved to be a factor in these assessments of lobbying ability.

They're effective but because they're, because it's a Labor government and the Labor government is pushing wild rivers they are probably not getting the outcomes they want. But they are effective lobbyists because they got a big multi-talented, multi-pronged organisation and I sometimes think they could do their lobbying better but that's neither here nor there. Sometimes they shoot themselves in the foot a bit. [Sam, CWQ, env. adv.]

Several noted the traditional agripolitical approach was one of *belting* government but the CWQ based sector representative was noted as being skilful by quite a few interviewees for his approach during the LEB WR deliberations. Several also mentioned as exemplary a

former state AgForce President, Peter Kenny, now deceased who changed the way the state agripolitical organisation worked with government adopting a much more conciliatory, cooperative approach to try to influence policy, than previously. He was also highly regarded nationally and went on to lead a major national drought task force looking at social and other impacts of drought (Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel 2008).

The Councillor who proposed holding the RAPAD forums was mentioned by many as being effective due to her tenacity in standing her ground and for her good communications skills but not many recognised that she initially suggested the RAPAD forums. The urban environmental advocacy representative was also recognised as a skilled and experienced activist even by those in opposing sectors. He had experience at international policy forums and he and another activist from the Indigenous sector had worked for the state government at middle management level. This facilitates an understanding of how to influence government representatives. Local government Mayors and RAPAD were also commended for their role and one Indigenous activist was mentioned as having strong credibility.

Most of the men and women interviewed unsurprisingly saw white males as being the most effective though a few did mention the female Councillor above. This is to be expected as the policy forums were dominated by white males. Others have noted this tendency to see males as the only effective leaders in rural settings (McGowan 2011; Pini 2002a; The Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc. May 2007).

Many viewed the environmental advocacy groups as effective because they got conservation oriented Wild Rivers policy onto the government agenda in the first place.

Any political party in power would need to have their finger right on the pulse of the environmentalists because they have such huge lobbying power. Right or wrong. They have it and they have well-funded, well oiled, well organised propaganda machines that can bring a government down and that's the difference between them and us. It's money. It's not the ideals or what's right or wrong. It's money and that's what they have, environmentalists groups, particularly now they're worldwide. They have massive organisations behind them and government's very aware of that. So they're very wary of them and they keep their enemies close. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

I'd certainly see the Wilderness Society and the Western Rivers Alliance as powerful lobbyists, maybe not necessarily totally effective lobbyists but they are certainly influencing government. No doubt about that because I think they're saying a lot about what government are proposing so it's a bit unknown as to how

effective they are because they are in there on the same line as the government wanting to give the rivers protection – which is good. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt]

## **Outcomes activists sought and what they achieved**

The outcomes activists were seeking from their participation in the LEB WR policy deliberations were similar in some ways. Most wanted a general acceptance of the policy by citizens. However to get to that point for all stakeholders would be difficult as ultimately different stakeholders wanted different things from the policy.

I conducted the interviews before the outcomes were known so responses are speculative. Some interviewees may have spoken more positively about agricultural gains because of my background as a landholder in a CWQ grazing enterprise. Most said they wanted practical legislation that worked for the community as well as protecting the rivers but the way that might look varied and how to get that agreement is moot. Government agreed that that was what they wanted – practical workable legislation that the community supported.

A good outcome would be where government has taken notice of all sides and listened to the issues that all the different groups have. You can't accommodate the lot but just to be a bit more flexible and realise that most people living on the river, or are using it or living in this area are doing the right thing so don't make it too prescriptive. Not too prescriptive, and a good outcome would be that mining is controlled, mining, instead of just ignoring it or making out it's okay, that it has some control over it, but that all groups are listened to. [Edwina, CWQ, NRM]

A good outcome would be that we formalise our future stewardship of the Lake Eyre Basin without any extra financial or administrative burden on all stakeholders and furthermore maintain strong guidelines for large scale mining and irrigation and noting that at the moment that there is impending exploration for coal seam gas, so the government ... reading between the lines, will permit underground mining in a High Preservation Area. [David, CWQ, Local Govt]

Indigenous representatives said a good outcome from policy deliberations would be:

... the stuff that we wanted you know, being included. The stuff that we put on the table like the rangers and access to water and all that. Rights that aboriginal people had and like cultural stuff and ... and also restriction on mining you know like in [High Preservation] areas [Doug, CWQ, Indigenous].

I would like to see our rivers protected, right? For future generations. I've said that before. I would like to have equal rights on the river with water for everybody, Indigenous, cattlemen; we should be entitled to be having water as much as any pastoralists do, and have Rangers to protect these river ways, and the country, not only the rivers, but to protect the country [Heather, CWQ, Indigenous].

The final iteration of Wild Rivers policy during the case study period maintained Indigenous access to water and new Indigenous ranger positions were created for the Lake Eyre Basin thereby largely meeting Indigenous representatives' expectations.

The mining representative was concerned about impediments from Wild Rivers legislation expressing neoliberal views with regard to putting potential business gains above protecting the environment. He saw protection as *locking up* the rivers. Some local governments in CWQ would concur with this view at least partially.

Of itself I'm not sure that Wild Rivers is genuinely needed but if the general thrust is that it is then if it achieves those outcomes and it delivers a result that manages, preserves but doesn't what I call, protect and lock up, in other words people can still go about their enterprise, business, their opportunities. The country can't afford it, we can't afford to unnecessarily lock things up. [Robert, metro, mining]

Others alluded that a good outcome from the legislation would be the community supporting the legislation, not feeling it was imposed and a problem for them.

A good outcome would be that the community itself, the ground, the grass roots people believed in and wanted wild rivers because it had evolved into such legislation that was workable, sensible, practical, living, breathing and had the best outcomes for the rivers because that is what people want ... So that would be the best outcome, would be if the people on the ground agreed with and drove the wild rivers legislation. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

I do not think this interviewee thought this likely or that it occurred by the end of policy development. She later said:

They think they can write up all this legislation and that's going to make it everything good for everybody and they have very high ideals but very little realism. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

Environmental advocacy representatives wanted to see protection of the rivers ensured but also pragmatically wider benefits for residents. This may have been prompted by my role as a local landholder as this was known to the interviewee below. Some members of the Western Rivers Alliance were CWQ graziers who had an interest in protecting the rivers first and foremost but also had grazing businesses to run. Funding for pest management was announced by the state government just before the Wild Rivers policy was passed at the end of 2011.

I'm hoping we end up with three rivers declared under the wild rivers act in a manner that protects the rivers from mining but also equally provides opportunities for provision of resources to control weeds and ferals for landholders. Possibly give landholders beneficial lease arrangements recognising that they're actually managing country not only for their own satisfaction but for the broader community. [Thomas, metro, env.adv.]

Beneficial lease arrangements were not realised although they would be viewed by many as useful. Some *were* hoping for good environmental outcomes and others for good policy outcomes.

Agricultural lobbyists wanted:

... to make sure that it's something that does NOT impede agricultural industry [Noel, CWQ, agriculture].

At the end of 2011 the three Lake Eyre Basin rivers were declared wild by the Queensland Labor government and some restrictions were placed on mining in a zone around High Preservation Areas and on any potential future irrigation projects. Many agricultural lobbyists were still loudly decrying the policy in the media, though some moderate individual landholders within CWQ felt they had reached a point of compromise through deliberations and wrote a letter to the new Premier Campbell Newman in 2012 asking him to maintain protection of the rivers. As one government interviewee said:

... it would be near impossible to have universal acceptance of a policy. [Frank, metro, Govt]

Government staff said, as did activists residing in CWQ, that a good outcome would be:

... that it was well understood and embraced by the people that have to use it. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Other government staff commented that:

I think a good outcome would be that a declaration was made that didn't result in perverse outcomes, so that in most cases people would be able to continue to run their sustainable businesses, particularly grazing and sheep and that sort of stuff successfully and be able to adapt as required without too much interference from the new regulations and at the same time, the more intensive industries and activities were prohibited or managed so that they weren't going to be causing a risk to the natural values of the Lake Eyre Basin system. So we wouldn't have large scale mining too close to the water course. We wouldn't see stream re-alignments which have fairly significant impacts on water quality and sediment movement. Those sort of things. But at the same time we wouldn't see a farmer who wants to adapt from what he does now to something that's probably going to have better environmental outcomes and better economic outcomes, finding that it's too hard because of the regulations. [Travis, metro, Govt]

As he said previously it would almost be impossible to get universal acceptance of any policy.

It is difficult for governments to create conservation policy that recognises and respects existing and future businesses on the one hand while restricting activities that are likely to damage waterways or extract major quantities of water from the system. As in the LEB WR policy deliberations there are stakeholders who did not want Wild Rivers policy to be passed at all, some who completely embraced it and had instigated it as well as a range of views in between. It is the perennial environment versus economic policy tension (Aslin & Lockie 2013) and probably the maximum that can be achieved is a policy based on deliberative compromises after input from all stakeholders. Not all interests will be served equally even then as evidenced by the policy being discarded when the next government was elected. Even in a (non-random selection) deliberative environment power imbalances will prevail however policy development is more democratically managed in that environment than if remote area stakeholders lobby individually and invisibly from each other. When collective action occurs negotiation to compromise is possible. No one stakeholder got all their interests served in the LEB WR policy development. Even the green advocacy groups hoped to see mining more constrained than it was under this policy.

## **What the remote activists said they learned from the Wild River lobbying process**

Those who were actively involved in trying to influence the LEB WR policy said they had learned from their experience in the LEB WR policy deliberations as is expected in deliberative forums (Dryzek, J.S. 2007) and as a few mentioned, from this and other policy forums. Key learnings were to do with being proactive and getting in before government consulted which is not always possible. Bringing together stakeholders to find common ground and discussing differences was deemed to be useful. A key point was about networks and how to influence other stakeholder opinions. One said he had learned:

... when to shut up or when to make a noise and who to talk to and but I really think it is not only once again, not only having these organisations but it's also about creating networks and getting to know a whole range of people and seeing other people's point of view and trying to understand why they make the decisions they're making and questioning why you're making the decisions you're making and really do some critical thinking about what the big picture is because all these things should be about getting good outcomes. [Sam, CWQ, env. adv.]

One Indigenous representative said he thought it was really important to get the Minister and key staff out to the region to speak with them face to face. This is not always possible given the demands on ministers' time but the three ministers during the three years of the research study period did each visit the region at least once. The higher the decision making level of attending staff the more positively it was viewed.

A representative from what used to be colloquially referred to as the *agropolitical* sector said he had learned:

You've got to have a fairly long-term view of it and hang in there (both laugh) and that you're not going to win everything. [Noel, CWQ, ag.]

I had noted in memos that this interviewee, who was quite well known to me, seemed to have really learned from his recent experience as did others in trying to influence this (and no doubt other) government policy.

While he used to be quite adversarial in opinion at least against government and often has had a rant about government policy particularly Labor Governments in the past, he has I think grown in his [organisation name] role. He said during the interview in passing that he used to think they should go harder against government but now realises they [organisation] need to work with government in

order to influence it. He has learned that the adversarial approach will only get you so far. [Interview memo, Noel, CWQ, ag.]

One of the key female activists felt that the Wild Rivers policy for the Lake Eyre Basin was made *on the run* and the department was at least initially struggling to understand how to modify the Wild Rivers policy for Cape York to fit the very different terrain in the Lake Eyre Basin. The decision to nominate the Lake Eyre Basin rivers for Wild Rivers policy was only made a few weeks before the 2009 election. Thus when the government was re-elected staff had to implement this without a lot of time to prepare. Due to this there was a very real opportunity for CWQ activists to try to influence the policy as it was developing.

We have a huge opportunity now to influence policy. To influence particularly it may be a little bit unique in this situation because as I mentioned before the departmental people were just so confused. They were really concerned about how they were going to get this thing done in any sort of form whatsoever. They were confused. They were looking for direction. I think there was a bit of a unique situation here for real consultation because the department itself was a bit lost for direction. So I could see that in them so I thought well here's an opportunity they're not really, not really strong in their footing. Here's an opportunity for us to really engage because of that lack of surety from the department ... I think it's for that reason because the department had been thrown this thing. A political football had been tossed to them and they sort of grabbed it and thought now what do we do with it. They'd also been given a short time frame because the Premier had said in this term we'll do this. So yeah I think we were given perhaps more credibility or more opportunity for consultation because they really had no idea what they were doing. [Yvonne, CWQ, NRM]

Another long-term experienced activist commented that providing solutions for any issues with the draft policy was important (and at least one government interviewee mentioned this also).

I've got a view that you should try and make it easy for government to make a decision. Help them make it. Make it easier for them to do what they want to do. At the same time you could get what you need. So the easier you can make it for government to make a decision I think the more engaging they'll be. The more happy they will be to deal with an organisation, taking consideration of what I said earlier its integrity and its governance and true representation. It's [RAPAD] not a minority, one issue group. It's across a lot of particularly social and economic and environmental charters. Local government really does fit in those three veins. It

balances all of those triple bottom line sort of aspects of governance and it's the level that's closest to the people. [Eric, CWQ, Local Govt].

Another interviewee mentioned courage and pragmatism as being important. He felt remote based activists could influence if there was skilled leadership to stand up against the majority at times and encourage people to be pragmatic in saying we are getting this policy our best position is to try and influence it – not just resist it.

One saw influence as connected to power and suggested people join powerful groups in order to influence.

If you are part of a powerful lobby group and you've got access, for want of a better word, to the ear of ministers and people in government and policy makers, you can make a difference, but you have to be part of a fairly powerful group.  
[Edwina, CWQ, NRM]

Government interviewees also agreed with what some of the activists said. They agreed that the RAPAD approach was *a very powerful tool*. One metropolitan based interviewee who had regularly been out in CWQ mentioned the importance of being treated as

... human beings and it makes it easier for us to take the message back to the decision makers. It's very difficult as I said, if people just get red faced and are just complaining about everything, it's very hard for us to take that message back if it's not a coherent argument. Also the other thing I found, and I think I realised this but it was very powerful to see this too, is that a community offering solutions is also very positive too. I think people in positions of the premier or ministers really appreciate when people offer solutions rather than problems. [Travis, metro, Govt]

Another key manager said that they valued the opportunity to visit people's properties to look at practical issues related to applying the policy. She said:

I think that's what stood out to me the most, it was how inclusive it was, and how well – even the minister went out and visited, and how the government actually took on board what was being said. I've never been involved in a program that's involved such a comprehensive consultation process and a consultation report to feed back to people. [Elise, metro, Govt]

She also said the RAPAD process had value because it was initiated by citizens and it was one way communities could participate more effectively. However that initiative of RAPAD comes at a financial cost that communities and their regional bodies cannot always afford and governments also need to be proactive about engaging well.

Whereas some activists saw government as being confused about the policy initially one government interviewee said not locking the policy in early was beneficial for the following reasons:

A key learning for me was to engage early in the process so and don't have preconceived ideas so we just sort of identified that things would need to be different. I guess we left it sort of open for people to tell us what they thought needed to be looked at. I think that was probably the better way of engaging with people because then that gave us things to work on rather than us trying to guess what it was or dictate what we think it needs to be. So I think that from my perspective that was a really good learning from an engagement point of view that actually government can sort of be quiet in the first instance and let people tell us what they think first before we then go down the path of developing all the policy background so I think that was quite a good move so I suppose we sort of, government tends to say this is the policy we've got, what do you think? Rather than we want to develop a policy tell us what you think? [Yuri, metro, Govt]

How often government staff have or make the time to listen and respond to community stakeholders when developing policy is another matter. Presumably when issues are made hot through media outcry and citizen reaction, governments pay more attention!

## **Governance**

It is important also to look at how government operated during the LEB WR policy development in terms of learnings for remote based activists AND governments working with them. What did the state government do that worked in this case (from the perspective of remote activists) and what could they improve on? It was also significant that the relevant seats in CWQ are long held National party seats and the LEB WR policy was actioned by a Labor government that had been in power since 1998 and was seeking re-election.

### **Governance practice that was successful**

A key focus of this research is to inform governments about what works well for remote based citizens when policy is being developed. Those interviewed for this case study gave

government staff credit for listening and responding to feedback. After criticism of their initial consultation efforts in CWQ the state government re-ran and improved their consultation meeting processes. This is covered in Chapter Seven.

Having the three different Ministers each visit the region over the three years at least once was regarded as important as activists wanted that face to face access with decision makers especially out in their region. How the Minister actually engages with citizens while on a visit is also important. Some held private meetings with stakeholders involved in the RAPAD forums (fairly well into the process), another attended a LEBWRAP dinner (there had been rumours of her attending the meeting) and engaged with LEBWRAP members individually. One brave Minister and her Director General attended a *town hall style* public meeting in Longreach with not a lot of notice and during a wet period and fielded questions in the middle of the government consultation period. While a town hall style meeting highlights issues and allows outcry, whether it provides good policy solutions is debatable though it may inform government to some extent of the issues concerning attendees. However some citizens and government staff think that public forums are important for a range of reasons. I am sure some disaffected citizens enjoy seeing government staff under pressure as well as enjoying a bit of public mudslinging as government staff try to respond publicly to criticisms and questions sometimes under difficult circumstances. Government staff (and others) mentioned at least one Wild Rivers information forum in CWQ where government staff received some heated public criticism.

Other citizen activists took the opportunity to engage with the Minister and staff before and after meetings as well. Government staff also thought town hall style meetings were important as government needs to be seen to be consulting on matters of importance. Town hall meetings are usually covered by the media. Of course a Ministerial visit is only ever a small part of a much wider consultation and engagement process. However the number of Ministerial visits to CWQ did show how seriously the state government was taking the LEB WR debate and perhaps because citizens involved in the RAPAD process had been so cooperative and proactive they felt more comfortable to visit the region so regularly. It is relatively rare to have Ministers visit a remote region so frequently on one policy issue given the demands on their time.

The community cabinet meeting held in Barcaldine was regarded as being useful as it gave locals an opportunity to hear government speak and to speak with a Minister and / or the Premier and provide information about their concerns. Even some fairly hardened activists said they had got concessions built into the policy from speaking directly to the Premier at the community cabinet in Barcaldine. Others reiterate the benefits of community cabinet

meetings held in the regions (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007; McCann 2012; Queensland Rural Women Network 2011).

While a written submission process allows people with education and writing skills to have input and / or for those better resourced groups to pay for skilled writers to develop their submissions, not many said that they felt they got great benefits from writing them. Writing a submission can be an onerous and costly task for financially strapped remote Councils and other bodies with limited resourcing.

Obviously government would also prefer that citizens work with them rather than protest or raise issues via the media but if citizens are not getting the response they want they may resort to protest and protest does not always get the results citizens want either. Citizens in CWQ said they would resort to protest as a last resort and did on shire amalgamation but thought the more cooperative processes used in the LEB WR policy development were more effective for this situation.

A point was made by one interviewee that centralised government departments do not use their regional staff enough for information or to lead consultation or engagement processes. That may be because some departments have few regionally based staff in these days of public service cut backs and / or regional staff do not have the skills required for such tasks. However one community based former government employee noted a lack of trust by urban government in their expertise. Local knowledge is critical (whether from citizens or regionally based government staff) (Maddison & Denniss 2009) and both avenues should be sought, taken seriously and utilised. Using Lukes' conceptualisation of power, the knowledge of regional based staff may be regarded as subjugated to urban based staff in policy development. Local staff have established relationships and an understanding of local issues and potential responses to policy. Other research has shown that there are concerns about using local staff in NRM deliberative forums as they face a conflict between their job and loyalty to their local community (Craig & Vanclay 2005).

Well government traditionally has employed people around the state and I can only, I tend to look at the DPI [Department of Primary Industries], the National Parks and the Natural Resource Management field but I'm sure it applies to mining, to health, it applies to education where there is people who really do know what's going on who have a very good conversation and relationship with their communities who are ignored in the processes that occur elsewhere in that department. They spend millions on keeping these people out there doing a good job. These people aren't just working for their communities and working for

government. They've got ability to feedback into the system but often the system doesn't provide conduits for that. [Ethan, CWQ, NRM]

Other research also (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011) highlighted the practice of regional activists keeping the local departmental Regional Manager informed if they were lobbying that department or Minister. This is because the department's head office in Brisbane regularly contact the Regional Managers for background on regional issues.

While government representatives felt they needed to inform remote based citizens on the Wild Rivers policy and on constraints, remote based citizens also felt there was a need to educate government on how policy works *on the ground* in CWQ. Deliberative forums provide a conduit for educating both sectors as occurred in the LEB WR deliberative forums leading to better policy outcomes and opportunities for compromise (Gutman & Thompson 2004; Head, B, W. 2007; Thompson 2008) although government does tend to retain control of the deliberation processes and their aftermath.

Quite a few commented that governments need to provide financial support to consult remote citizens otherwise lesser resourced groups cannot participate given that costs to participate in deliberative processes in CWQ are costly for many. In the case of the LEBWRAP the state government did cover fuel and accommodation costs but did not recompense business owners for time lost out of businesses.

Most saw the value of flexible consensus style processes as can occur in normative deliberative forums where differences were noted and where the Minister was given that information. That is consensus is an aim where possible, but when it was not possible, differences were noted and the information sent to the Minister. However some had concerns about government staff interpretation of the meeting minutes. Participants did have the chance to edit meeting minutes post meeting. This process was managed by RAPAD. No doubt government staff also relayed their version of events to the Minister. But as trust built between the community and the government staff most were fairly satisfied with the process.

Remote based activists agreed on the usefulness of the Ministerial advisory committee as minutes were sent to the Minister and key government staff attended and participated in each meeting. Who gets a seat at the table is always difficult as there will always be some excluded. In this case citizens in one geographic area felt excluded and complained and got an extra seat on the LEBWRAP. It is those who do not complain or do not get heard or do

not even see the exclusion that are marginalised. In this case women were marginalised but the aged and youth were also marginalised.

### **What government staff said worked with regard to remote consultation**

Government staff mentioned that it was important for people to see where they had influenced the policy and used mapping as an example.

Particularly with any changes to the map for example that might occur we will be communicating those with those people so they can see that they actually did make a difference in the process. [Yuri, metro, Govt]

Government staff held information / consultative sessions where a big part of their aim was to inform people about the draft policy even though some of the detail was yet to be decided.

And I think the value of the forums ... [is that] that by senior officers actually sitting down at the forums, bringing experts along, across vegetation management, coal seam gas, lease land – Delbessie Agreements, we call them – across a range of issues, that when they raised stuff, we said, 'Actually, what you're talking about there is this, let's have a chat about this,' and they walked away informed. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Some citizens felt some staff were not well-informed, lacked expertise and could not answer questions people asked. But no doubt the fairly extensive information sessions held by the government staff did inform stakeholders to some extent not only about Wild Rivers but other areas that the Department has responsibility for.

Government also saw the value of face to face consultation in the region.

It's really hard with policy development; you kind of come up against three things: ignorance, apathy and individual self-interest a lot of the time, so people who don't know, people who don't care, or people that are pushing their own particular interests, and sometimes it's very hard to work through those. And the only way you can do that is to actually meet with real people and learn how it does affect what they're doing. It's very time consuming to do it that way, but not nearly as time consuming as fighting it later. [Elise, metro, Govt]

Being solutions focussed, regional coordination, sorting out common ground and differences and sending that information to government did assist in the LEB WR policy development. Having a collective voice and / or having a critical mass saying the same thing is also

regarded by government as being important.

There is a saying in governments that when you get one letter, you think somebody might be upset, when you get 10, you go, "There might be an issue here" and when you get 100, you go, "Hey, we had better get out there and ask them what's going on". And it's about participation. [Elise, metro, Govt]

## **Alternative processes**

Largely the LEB WR policy development by government and remote citizens worked fairly well despite the conservative voting patterns of CWQ and a Labor government in power. However are there alternative processes governments could use to aid remote area policy development? Activist and government interviewees had some interesting suggestions.

The use of technology to overcome distance was spoken of by a few including Skype and other technological methods. Others too see government as moving more into eDemocracy type processes in the future and examples from the United Kingdom including online moderated chat sites to discuss policy with citizens for a limited time period were spoken of positively by Queensland Government staff in the Policy to Possibility research project. (Queensland Rural Women Network 2011). While overcoming the tyranny of distance, cost and access to reasonable quality internet to enable this is still an issue in some remote areas. Some citizens are not Information Technology savvy which would create barriers. However used in tandem with other methods this kind of process could be quite exciting for remote communities if well designed and managed and committed to by government.

Others suggested research as a consultation and engagement tool equating to evidence based policy. One suggested engaging local people to conduct environmental testing, for example school children for river quality testing. Other research has examined citizen participation in government work in the US and highlighted the benefits of such an approach (Cavaye 1996).

Another interviewee suggested that skilled researchers could be used to conduct research to assess views and / or to train locals to do some surveying as his department had done in one instance.

The process they used for that [project] was not to send a whole bunch of researchers out to run meetings but to train a whole lot of community members to do that and they could do it by having, by conducting phone links and conversations with their neighbours and staff and that was good because the first

step they actually manage to inform a team of people really really well about the project. [Leo, CWQ, Govt]

Research in the Lake Eyre Basin has already successfully been conducted using this method (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009) and could be used by governments for other research. By contrast, others have found out that governments can criticise or constrain qualitative research if the research findings are deemed to be unpalatable (Porter & Shortall 2009).

Holding focus groups with a cross-section of marginalised and other citizens regularly during policy development was suggested as an alternative approach.

If you went into a parallel process of you know 12 months focus group work ... fed them information and agreed that they would participate fully I think you'd get a slightly different version on wild rivers opposition out here and that's what I am trying to suggest with CSG [coal seam gas] at the moment. [Don, CWQ, Local Govt]

The same interviewee wanted to see more in-depth discussions held in the region to look at the bigger picture that the (Wild Rivers) policy fitted into. While it could be said the CWQ regional plan (Queensland Government 2009) provided this opportunity some citizens were critical of how inclusive that government led process had been - calling it *bureaucratic*.

One other suggestion was to engage a known regional person to work with government as an ambassador or champion to engage locals (to provide input on policy to government) as has been attempted in the past with regionally based climate change and Year of the Outback champions. Another interviewer mentioned being an ambassador for government as an Indigenous person when government was consulting their community.

## **Conclusion**

This case study research has two foci – to consider what activists can do to influence policy and what governments can do to aid remote citizen participation in policy development. In this chapter I examine activism and what worked in the LEB WR policy development for activists and then what worked for government. Alternative processes for engaging citizens in policy development were briefly considered.

## Chapter Ten: In conclusion

### Background

Citizens have an expectation that it is their democratic right to have input into policy that impacts on them, beyond merely voting (Aslin & Lockie 2013; Carson 2005; Carson & Hart 2007; Chambers 2003; Dryzek, J.S. 2007; Head, B, W. 2007; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Thompson 2008). This case study was selected for research because there are obvious geographic and other barriers for citizens in remote areas to influence government policy (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012), yet many remotely based citizens and organisations spend significant amounts of time and money trying to do this. While there is much in literature on rural decline and resistance to policy in academic literature (Alston 2009; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Gray & Sinclair 2005; Herbert-Cheshire 2003; Measham, Richards, Robinson et al.2009), there is very little examining the activism of citizens in geographically remote regions.

As a long-term resident of Central Western Queensland (CWQ) I witnessed an early and proactive approach by the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD), a Regional Organisation of Councils, to mobilise stakeholders in order to influence the Wild Rivers policy prior to official government consultation. My aim was to ascertain how effective this and other deliberative forums were, which sectors dominated the policymaking process, which were marginalised and whether such approaches are useful for citizens in remote areas trying to influence policy. Potential sites of marginalisation examined included geographic remoteness, gender and indigeneity.

Wild Rivers was framed as a production versus the environment binary (Aslin & Lockie 2013). The debate focussed on whether to protect the rivers or to further utilise them for intensive agriculture and mining. However such debates are never simple dichotomies as stakeholders have a range of views across a spectrum and as they engage in deliberative forums, participants are expected to revise their preferences (Chambers 2003). The processes through which preferences are revised are important. Whether an agreed on policy will last through a change of government gives an indication of the strength of the democratic process. In this case the amended LEB WR policy that was ratified by government during the case study period did not last when there was a change of government. However in favour of the processes in this case study a wide range of stakeholders from productivist and non-productivist organisations wrote in support of the amended policy when the government changed. All the same the policy was discarded.

This research shows that activists can work within deliberative processes to develop policy despite concerns that the two should be separate (Hendriks 2011; Young 2003) especially when they work together to influence government. Nonetheless challenges arise for some organisational representatives attempting to reshape the construction of policies after the usual debate and new information presented in deliberative forums (Hendriks 2011). This is because it is expected that organisational representatives will remain true to members' wishes and their organisations' policy platform (if they have one) and sometimes organisational approval is required to support new positions on policy. This can be difficult to manage in a deliberative environment.

As farmers have had to become more efficient under neoliberal economic policy and processes of globalisation (Gray & Lawrence 2001), they have had to work their land harder to maintain profit. The question arises as to what rights farmers have on leasehold and freehold land when the public is demanding greater environmental accountability. Sustainable use of land and water mean very different things to the different sectors involved in the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers (LEB WR) policy debate.

The mining sector is booming and major new mining enterprises are coming into regions such as CWQ at a rapid rate, changing the demographics of such regions. Because of these intrusions and moves to intensify production, river and artesian basin water is increasingly under threat. Debates are held nationally and internationally about how water should be used – Australia's Murray Darling Basin is one example of fraught and complex consultation and deliberation about water use. Many users of land and water are aware of environmental impacts and many do aim to manage these. Graziers are the environmental stewards for 55 per cent of Australia's land mass and many are actively undertaking natural resource management (State of the Environment Committee 2011). Meeting our future water needs is a critical issue for this century. Yet how well are the competing interests of agriculture and community environmental consciousness coexisting?

In this thesis I consider how women and men in remote areas can influence government policy using the LEB WR policy development from 2009 – 2011 as a case study to examine processes of consultation and activism. In doing so I examine issues of power and influence. I focus specifically on remote communities where the issues that impact rural communities are exacerbated due to distance from decision making centres and low population spread across vast geographic areas. Unlike other research on citizen engagement, participation or consultation which usually tends to focus on what government has done or could do, my focus is on what the people can do - or power with and power to.

While those trying to influence policy in remote areas do not necessarily refer to themselves as activists or even lobbyists, many of those trying to influence policy are practising activist tactics. I deliberately use the term activism to highlight active influence as opposed to mere resistance though there was evidence of resistance as well. I deliberately chose a case study where stakeholders took a largely conciliatory approach to influencing policy rather than one that used protest as a form of activism. Though protest as a form of activism can be effective, it is the exception rather than the rule for remote activists as it is perceived that too many relationships between activists and governments can be destroyed through protest actions. Shire amalgamation was one notable example where CWQ local governments fought using a variety of methods including employing a professional lobbyist and holding citizen protest marches. While the four most remote shires in CWQ remain as stand-alone councils, the other eight shires were amalgamated. Whether the protest against amalgamation was successful or not is still being debated although those in amalgamated shires think not.

### **Research question**

This research case study addresses the following research questions.

What influence do women and men in Central Western Queensland have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources? The Wild Rivers policy development and consultation process for the Lake Eyre Basin rivers (i.e. Georgina, Diamantina Rivers and Cooper Creek) from 2009 – 2011 is used as a case study.

### **Subsidiary questions**

- a) How did this issue get on the policy agenda in the first place? That is, why this issue and why this way? What becomes a policy priority and why and who has the power to shape this?
- b) Are there learnings for people (in remote areas) and government from the Lake Eyre Basin wild rivers policy development and citizen led lobbying process?
- c) What are the barriers to participation in policy development – who has been included and excluded – why and how?
- d) What processes are currently being used by government (to consult and develop policy) as well as by those lobbying government to influence policy?

- e) How successful are these and what other processes / strategies could be used to aid participation by remote citizens in shaping policy?

## **Methodology**

A critical theory approach with sensitivity to gender was used and methods included semi-structured interviews with 25 activists who had some opportunity to influence the policy and a media content analysis. The content analysis was conducted using an amended framework originally developed by Ewart and Cokely (2007). This framework had previously been used to examine gender in a remote community newspaper. Three media outlets accessed by activists during the LEB WR policy development process were selected. They were the Longreach Leader, ABC radio (the transcripts put on the ABC website were used) and the Queensland Country Life newspaper. Reflexive memos were written after each interview especially scrutinising any impact on the interview by me as an *insider* interviewer. These were discussed with supervisors and colleagues to ensure trustworthiness. I used an iterative grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2011; Strauss & Glaser 1967) to data collection and analysis. NVivo was used to code interviews and interview memos (Bazley 2010; Richards 2005).

## **Theoretical lenses**

Because this research examined power several theoretical lenses were chosen. Lukes' (2005) radical theories of power examines how and why dominant groups can secure the willing compliance of those they dominate. Lukes conceptualisation of power-over or dominance considers whether the dominated act in their own best interests and, if not, why not?. I also utilise other theorists of power and gender including Amy Allen (Allen 2009, 2013) and Judith Butler (1997) as well as rural feminist theorists who link power with land ownership and patrilineal inheritance (Alston 1995, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Alston & Wilkinson 1998; Shortall 1999, 2002, 2008). I consider the intersectionality of gender, rurality and indigeneity (Bryant & Pini 2009, 2011). Theories of Deliberative Democracy (Carson 2008a; Carson & Hart 2007; Chambers 2003; Dryzek, J.S. 2007; Gutman & Thompson 2004; Thompson 2008) provide a useful lens from which to examine the deliberative processes that shaped the LEB WR policy. Finally I use the lens of Ecological Sustainable Development to frame this research.

## Key findings

Environmental advocacy groups were powerful in using green discourse to establish the 'problem' of Wild Rivers – that is the need to conserve the Lake Eyre Basin rivers. When the issue emerged, Queensland had a Labor government and one that was receptive to environmental conservation. Once the issue was established as a high priority, pro-productivists including agriculture and local government representatives mobilised to address the issue. The intervention of RAPAD to facilitate local dialogue facilitated the input of various stakeholders (power-with). Other sectors including Natural Resource Management groups and Indigenous groups were included in regional deliberations under the stewardship of RAPAD. These sectors worked with the two powerful influencers, the green lobby and the state government that was facing a difficult looming election held early in 2012. The RAPAD process gave the remote sectors the capacity and opportunity to have their views considered. Other sectors, in particular mining, also lobbied outside the RAPAD processes. This had the effect of massaging the two competing discursive constructions together (state government and green group fostering environmental priorities with pro-productivists and other remote interests concerned with local economic and social issues). With the then government's loss of the state election, (and after the case study research was completed) a new proposal with a much greater emphasis on production was adopted. The Wild Rivers legislation, as it was at the end of 2011, ceased to exist in the Lake Eyre Basin indicating the power of the new government to impose its position regardless of local processes.

Unsurprisingly there are complex answers to the main research question regarding what influence do women and men in CWQ have on government policy relating to the conservation of natural resources. This study supports the finding of others (Fitzhardinge 2012; Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005; Stafford Smith 2008b) that citizens (in this case activists) in remote areas do struggle to influence centralised governments as they shape policy, largely because of cost and distance. However some methods used by activists in this case study worked well for *translating policy* (Herbert-Cheshire 2003) into a more palatable form or getting policy onto the government agenda in the first place. At the end of 2011 many of the sector stakeholders who had deliberated on the policy accepted the compromised policy position they had reached. This is why, when the policy was overturned by the new Queensland Government in 2012, a cross section of stakeholders including major landholders, environmental advocacy representatives, Indigenous representatives and local government wrote to the new Premier asking him to retain at least some of the policy (Appendix 8).

Women were marginalised in this process and have limited access to positions where they can influence policy for a number of reasons explored below. So too were Indigenous people to some extent. No single stakeholder sector was completely marginalised and potentially dominant sectors such as mining, environmental advocacy groups and state government had varying levels of influence. A much more complex arrangement of power actually occurred. If activists work together to come to a compromise with regard to their differences prior to consultation and without government interference while being inclusive of government this can be very powerful for those trying to influence policy.

A range of successful techniques were used by remote community activists to influence policy and they included: forming alliances and collaboration with more resourced urban based groups with similar interests; bringing together all stakeholders to deliberate to reach a position on the policy that all can agree to and taking it to government; being inclusive of key government staff and Ministers; negotiation and communication during and between meetings; the use of deliberative principles in meetings to educate stakeholders on aspects of the policy and to make decisions on policy; access to decision makers; building of trust or at least communication between stakeholders with opposing views and using the media to influence. Less successful mechanisms included managing the established dominant power relations which resulted in the marginalisation of women and indigenous people to influencing policy in deliberative forums and via the media.

Socio-economic issues for rural and remote communities discussed in Chapter Two and viewed through this research project largely remain as issues or are exacerbated. Globalisation is still impacting on agricultural businesses; trade reform internationally is still not a level playing field; changing urban tastes brings benefits and disadvantages for primary producers; the distance between urban and rural/remote is still large; climate change is exacerbating droughts which are felt keenly in remote regions; labour shortages are still prevalent in rural areas; rural and remote regions are still having to compete with each other for funding and remote regions still have to fight to get the attention of governments on policy that impacts on them. Mining still seems a dominant sector politically even despite current downturns in iron ore prices. Women and Indigenous people still struggle to be heard in rural/remote policy arenas though improved consultation processes can assist with this. Despite this the collaboration on the LEB WR policy instigated by RAPAD was a positive move amidst the continuing difficulties for people in remote communities.

Key findings from this case study that address each sub-question are covered below.

**a) How did this issue get on the policy agenda in the first place? That is, why this issue and why this way? What becomes a policy priority and why and who has the power to shape this?**

Following Lukes' conceptualisation of power as agenda setting, well-resourced groups with substantial lobbying power are likely to shape the agenda that other stakeholders then have to react to. In this case study it was the environmental advocacy groups, with a core membership base largely outside remote Australia, which were able to very effectively establish Wild Rivers as a high priority policy issue by conducting an organised long-term campaign. This constrained the ability of other sectors to get their issues on the government agenda. It also put them in a position of having to react to what had been placed on the government agenda – in this case the Wild Rivers policy for the Lake Eyre Basin.

Strategic actions by environmental advocacy groups included developing alliances with other environmental organisations to form the Western Rivers Alliance, and using significant remote based grazier activists as spokespersons. Policy is indeed political (Althaus, Bridgeman & Davis 2007). The Labor government faced a difficult election in 2009 and was open to lobbying by green advocacy groups to extend Wild Rivers policy to the Lake Eyre Basin. Timing of lobbying just prior to the election proved to be effective as was the use of a media event – an organic BBQ held outside Parliament House in Brisbane with Western Queensland graziers advocating on television news for the policy.

A public battle over irrigation on Cooper Creek had already been fought and won by locals and others in the 1990s (Hogarth 1996) and the potential for increased irrigation is a sensitive issue in this area still. So too is the potential for detrimental environmental impacts from mining after a recent toxic spill into the Georgina River system (Williams 2010). Hence there was some support amongst local people for environmental actions to protect their pristine rivers.

**b) Are there learnings for people in remote areas and government from the Lake Eyre Basin wild rivers policy development and citizen led lobbying process?**

A key learning found useful by interviewees was the *unprecedented* early intervention of RAPAD to gather stakeholders prior to government consultation in order to find common ground on Wild Rivers policy and discuss differences. This move, while initially nervously viewed by government staff and others, was supported and eventually applauded. Trust was built between stakeholders as well as between remote activists, urban activists and state

government staff. In this environment the policy was reshaped to suit the Lake Eyre Basin, taking account of differences of opinion. While there will always be some who wish the policy would disappear or deliver more – a policy that has been worked on and agreed to by stakeholders in a deliberative environment appears the best democratic outcome possible. This is especially so as there was unanimous agreement at the RAPAD forums that participants wanted the rivers protected. Nonetheless the contentious issue remains that marginalised voices remained marginalised.

The use of alliances and collaboration with sector representatives that are not usual allies, proved beneficial. Negotiation skills and principles were evident during some of the LEB WR policy development and these skills can be further enhanced as such an approach negates a win / lose dichotomy. RAPAD went on to bring training in negotiation skills to CWQ.

**c) What are the barriers to participation in policy development – who has been included and excluded – why and how?**

Firstly, as other studies have found, there is a significant financial cost for activists and / or citizens in remote areas to participate in central government or regional led deliberation on policy (Measham, Richards, Larson, et al. 2009; Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009; Moffatt 2005). Distances to travel even for regional based forums can be large and to meet outside the region is prohibitive. Thus policy *battles* are prioritised and larger membership organisations which have city based offices have easier access to government staff and Ministers.

Several of the male activists confessed to *burn out*. All had been actively involved in leadership positions and activism for well over a decade and experience is quite critical when trying to influence governments on policy. With a small pool of activists in CWQ there is little turnover of key activists, and thus leading to activist fatigue in some quarters. Exposing the structural inequalities that lead to women being marginalised in remote area representative bodies is important. More inclusive methods to mentor marginalised citizens into civic leadership positions including women and Indigenous people could assist to address some of these issues.

Some stakeholders still struggle to be included in mainstream deliberative forums – women were outnumbered in deliberative forums and had a very small voice in media coverage. This is largely due to the tendency of media and those setting up cross-sector advisory committees to seek out those with civic leadership / representative positions – areas where women continue to be marginalised by structural inequalities. In CWQ leadership and

decision making positions are still predominantly held by men. However influence / power can be manifested in other ways and it was a skilled woman with experience in local government and natural resource management who had the foresight to approach RAPAD initially to hold the Wild Rivers forums in order to seek common ground from the wide range of stakeholders. This proved to be a useful tool to find common ground on such a divisive topic and was positively viewed by most participants.

Indigenous representatives, while initially feeling excluded during the early stages of the LEB WR nomination, felt they were reasonably well included later in government consultation exercises. State government staff met requests to meet separately with Indigenous groups as well as including Indigenous representatives, both men and women for cultural reasons, on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP). Indigenous representatives also wanted the rivers protected with Indigenous access assured. However Indigenous spokespersons were largely excluded in media coverage of LEB WR.

Unlike lesser resourced sectors the wealthy mining sector employ their own skilled community liaison officers, negotiators, lawyers and lobbyists and appear to have good access to the Minister. This sector largely do their lobbying outside the remote region where the mining occurs and outside the ministerial advisory panel, the LEBWRAP. While the mining company had a community liaison person represent them on the LEBWRAP, he reported that their main lobbying was done outside the region by specialists. As well, they are able to extend their influence via other avenues. The mining company representative interviewed spoke of the significant amount of cattle farming land in Central Australia his company owned. This legitimately allowed them to be members of the peak agripolitical organisations in two states, giving them access to that sector's policy positions and decision making processes. This is of note given the tension between the mining sector and farmers as coal seam gas exploration wells have only recently come into CWQ to coexist uneasily on agricultural land (Market Facts QLD 2011).

There were issues with regard to representativeness that most sectors have to manage. It is difficult for large organisations to develop their own policy positions on such policies as Wild Rivers. For example agricultural industry bodies struggle to reconcile the needs of corporate members with smaller family farming enterprises. To overcome this a small committee of interested and skilled graziers was formed to assist that body to develop their own position. While such a process is useful, the establishment of such groups may be stymied by group selectors seeking out graziers with views similar to their own (opposed to the legislation) rather than including a genuine cross section of opinions. As others have noted the culture of

agripolitical organisations is generally not conducive to women participating, see for example (Alston 2003b), although women were included in these groups.

Indigenous groups also struggled with representation especially when all sector stakeholders were required to sign off on a communiqué to the Minister which also went to the media in a set time frame. There were 13 different language groups required to approve the communiqué before the parent Indigenous body could then support the RAPAD group's communiqué. This was developed during the second RAPAD Wild Rivers forum in 2010 and it highlighted the elements of the policy that sector representative groups agreed on and those aspects they did not. All other stakeholder groups met the imposed time frame. Leaders from the Indigenous community, in order to support the process, gave potential approval before their own internal deliberations had been completed. Time frames imposed by non-Indigenous organisations on their deliberative processes without an understanding of, or sympathy for, cultural differences are an important factor in the marginalisation of Indigenous groups.

**d) What processes are currently being used by government to consult and develop policy as well as by those lobbying government to influence policy? And how successful were these?**

Government used traditional methods to consult and develop policy including: information meetings in towns across CWQ; attending and participating in the two RAPAD led Wild Rivers forums; establishing a Ministerial advisory committee which directly influenced the policy; one on one consultation with stakeholders; separate meetings with Indigenous groups as requested; and consideration of written submissions. After receiving feedback on the flawed consultation process in the first round of consultations on Cooper Creek, the state government re-ran consultation meetings across CWQ making it one of the most extensive consultation efforts ever. However whether many remote based citizens would participate again in such forums given the distances involved is debatable. The trust developed between state government officials and activists through the RAPAD forums and the LEBWRAP, despite differences of opinion on whether the policy was needed or not, aided policy development.

The process started by the RAPAD forums (power with) eventually resulted in some erosion of historical enmity between sectors that traditionally do not work together well. Sectors worked together cooperatively to come to a compromise position on this policy that would suit the majority. Of note was the relationship building and negotiation between representatives from environmental advocacy groups with representatives from agriculture,

local government and Indigenous people. Relationships were also built between deliberative forums which enabled compromises to be reached. Stakeholders in remote communities may have an advantage in that they often have cooperative, positive relationships already in place due to low population, widespread communities and a need to work together to pool resources. It was not difficult for a regional body to co-opt that way of working to bring interested stakeholders together to deliberate cooperatively on policy. Stakeholders had a wide range of views ranging from those at one end of the spectrum who were supportive of irrigation and mining in the Lake Eyre Basin system to those who wanted to ban irrigation and restrict mining in environmentally sensitive areas.

**e) What other processes / strategies could be used to aid participation by remote citizens in shaping policy?**

Beyond those used during the case study period some stakeholders advocated the greater use of remote based government employees for government consultation and engagement processes which would require building trust to overcome a city-country divide between city and regional based staff. This is a perceived power imbalance that could be rectified. The use of community people to assist with government or other community based research was suggested as was the use of eDemocracy type platforms to enhance government consultation and engagement.

### **Implications of findings**

Given the findings from this case study, it is critical that regional bodies such as the Remote Area Planning and Development (RAPAD) board be recognised for the leadership role they play in policy as well as regional development and be funded and supported in this work. While there are benefits from being seen to be independent of state or federal government, lack of funding for remote based activists is a significant barrier to participation.

Training in activism, negotiation and how government works is useful for those trying to influence policy. It would be helpful for government and non-government bodies to fund such training as RAPAD supported negotiation skills training for participating Mayors and staff.

It is critical for governments to consult early and well on such policy – supporting and funding proactive moves by regional bodies to facilitate independent deliberations on policy. Centralised government could improve outcomes by tapping into regionally based staff with skills to manage community engagement and consultation exercises.

Leaders in CWQ would do well to address structural disadvantages and to mentor skilled women and Indigenous people for representative positions to broaden the base of such positions and in order to overcome activist fatigue. Governments must be more actively inclusive of women on representative committees and continue to be culturally sensitive to Indigenous participation. Governments need to respect and utilise local knowledge and need to employ and use staff with the skills to manage remote community engagement well including using remote based staff.

It would facilitate engagement if those trying to influence policy from remote areas saw themselves as activists rather than fighting (resisting) yet another imposed policy. A change in discourse (speaking and thinking of themselves as activists) may bring recognition that there is a skill set required to achieve good policy outcomes for remote communities. Some of my interviewees used strategic activist skills and techniques to try to shape policy. These efforts need to be further dissected in order to improve practice.

### **Limitations of research**

A limitation of this research was that I had very limited access to some sectors, in particular mining. I was also limited to some extent by the small pool of possible activists / citizens trying to influence the LEB WR policy. Some of these I was seeking to interview for paid consultancy projects at the same time. For example, I conducted two, two-hour interviews with one male interviewee within the same week for different projects. As Chair of a regional body he is a very busy person and accommodated me by doing these at night after checking bores on his property. His interview for this research project was the longest, lending support to the old adage – if you want something done ask a busy person. Despite this limitation only one person I approached was unable to do an interview during the time period requested.

Not being Indigenous limited my understanding of cultural differences and constrained a deeper exploration of Indigenous participation and activism.

There were limitations in using the ABC radio news website search tool and in using transcripts, as not all articles aired on radio were placed on the website. Thus articles selected for the website reflected the editor's preferences rather than what was actually aired.

## Recommendations for future research

The following were beyond the scope of this research project and are recommended for future research. The following are not in priority order.

- a) More support for insider research to be conducted in rural / remote areas. Monash University / GLASS have been exemplary in supporting this research.
- b) Further research on Indigenous activism and issues in working with mainstream political processes and regional deliberative processes.
- c) Further research on structural disadvantages experienced by women in remote areas.
- d) Examining how rural women can be supported to play a greater role in policy deliberations given the disparity in numbers of women to men on decision making bodies in rural and remote areas.
- e) Further research on rural / remote activism.
- f) Research on how the mining sector influences government policy.
- g) Further assessment of the value and role of proactive regional development bodies and the role in facilitating useful deliberative policy discussions – how leadership and other factors impact on this and how to manage the tension between government funding and lobbying government independently.
- h) Examining the impact of citizen and activist education and training on influencing policy.
- i) Intensive discourse analysis of rural / remote activist's efforts trying to influence policy in order to bridge city-country divides.
- j) Undertaking eDemocracy trials looking at benefits and limits for rural / remote citizens and activists.
- k) Further research on deliberative democratic processes and how well they work for remote citizens.

## **After Wild Rivers – 2012 and beyond**

Since the end of my case study in 2011, when the Lake Eyre Basin rivers were declared wild by the then Labor government in December 2011, a landslide election defeat resulted in a change of government in Queensland in 2012. Wild Rivers for the Lake Eyre Basin was eventually repealed in 2014. Upon the election of the new government a diverse group of stakeholders in CWQ requested that the new Minister not completely revoke the whole policy as much work had been done to reach a compromise position that suited many. A new advisory committee was formed to advise the new Liberal National Party Minister comprising of most of the previous LEBWRAP but excluded the former The Wilderness Society representative.

The new Western Rivers policy, passed in August 2014, demonstrates that the change of government has resulted in a change in discourse from the more conservation oriented *Wild Rivers* to a perhaps more neutral *Western Rivers*. The contested term, sustainable economic development, is more to the forefront now than the conservation oriented thrust of the former Wild Rivers policy though no further irrigation is to occur and open cut mining is banned in the channel country. Reaction to the new policy is still emerging although former interviewees have suggested that some sectors, for example the conservation advocacy groups, are unhappy with the new direction taken.

As one of my interviewees ironically put it recently, the issue of activist / citizen fatigue remains large for remote based activists:

Given political cycle reality when (not if) the current government gets beaten again and we more than likely have a Labor / splash of green government it will be interesting to see if Wild Rivers gets reinstated ... and we'll go through all the past discussions over and over again ... Can't wait!

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Demographic profile of the Lake Eyre Basin and Central Western Queensland

### Demographics of the Lake Eyre Basin and Central Western Queensland

This case study considers the citizen and government led processes for the nomination and subsequent declaration of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers as *wild rivers*: namely the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers as well as Cooper Creek. The Lake Eyre Basin has some unique characteristics making it of interest to conservationists.

### The Lake Eyre Basin

The three internally draining rivers begin in Queensland but flow beyond the borders of Queensland into Lake Eyre in South Australia and are part of the wider Lake Eyre Basin pictured below. The Lake Eyre Basin sits across four states (a small part of NSW, Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland) the majority of the rivers and the Lake Eyre Basin itself is in Western Queensland



**The Lake Eyre Basin. Map courtesy of Desert Channels Queensland**

The Lake Eyre Basin is a large region incorporating arid, semi-arid and desert terrain. Geographically the Lake Eyre Basin covers an area of 1.2 million square kilometres, almost one sixth of Australia’s landmass and is among the world’s largest internally draining river systems. It is considered to be one of the world’s last unregulated wild river systems (Commonwealth of Australia, State of Queensland & State of New South Wales 2000). The vegetation of the Basin reflects the patterns of arid and semi-arid regions that rely on variable water flows. As a consequence the Basin is an area of high conservation significance which is why the Georgina, Diamantina and Cooper Creek rivers have been nominated for *wild rivers* declaration. The Basin is also home to many rare and endangered species of plants and animals.

The Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement was signed by Ministers of the Australian, Queensland and South Australian governments in October 2000, and has been enacted in the Australian, Queensland and South Australian Parliaments. The Northern Territory signed in 2004 (Commonwealth of Australia, State of Queensland & State of New South Wales 2000). The Lake Eyre Basin Agreement applies to: the Cooper Creek system (including the Thomson and Barcoo Rivers); the Georgina and Diamantina River systems

within Queensland and South Australia, ending at Lake Eyre; and the Northern Territory portion of the Basin. It covers the:

Sustainable management of the water and related natural resources associated with cross-border river systems in the Lake Eyre Basin to avoid downstream impacts on associated environmental, economic and social values.  
(Commonwealth of Australia, State of Queensland & State of New South Wales 2000)

Committees made up of technical experts (Scientific Advisory Panel) and community representatives including Indigenous representatives (Community Advisory Panel) work with and report to the Federal government on issues relating to the Lake Eyre Basin.

### **Central Western Queensland (CWQ)**

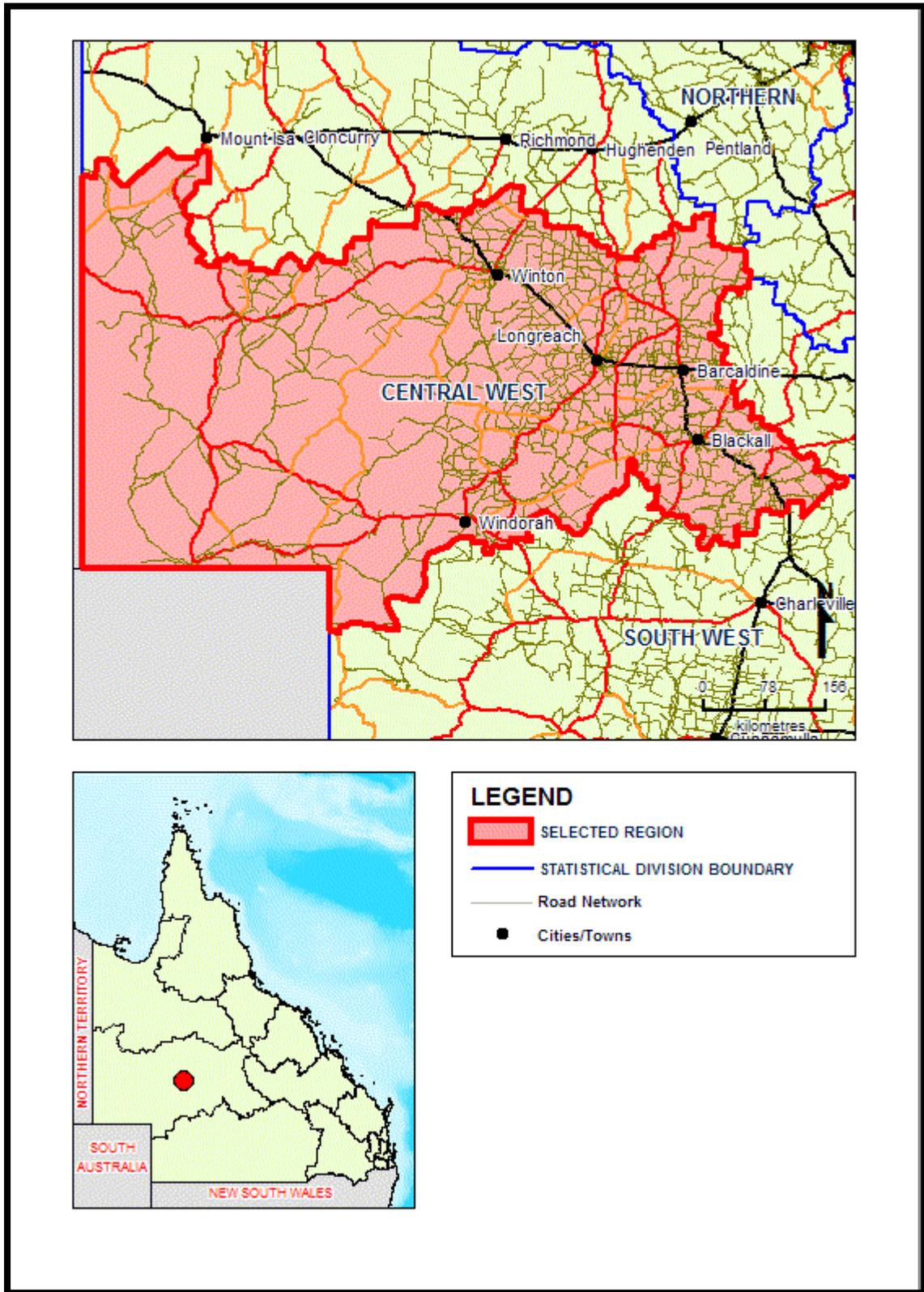
The region's population decline has been associated in part with the shift from sheep to cattle production thereby requiring less labour on grazing properties. Also relevant is the consolidation of grazing properties and a reduction in the number of family owned farms. Export oriented businesses employing caretakers and contract workers are becoming more prevalent (Brown & Bellamy 2010). At the same time there has also been pressure for the conservation of natural resources within the central west and Lake Eyre Basin during the 'unrelenting decline' in the agricultural sectors terms of trade (Australian Government Productivity Commission 2005, p. xv1). Drought plus perceived lack of government support, commodity price fluctuations beyond local control and due sometimes to government intervention (for example when the live cattle market to Indonesia was frozen in Indonesia affecting north-western cattle producers) plus the increasing age of farmers has disempowered those affected.

Since the opening of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach, by HRH Queen Elizabeth in 1988 tourism has increased visibly in the central west and is regarded as a significant industry with development potential for the region. Improved roads and other transport infrastructure such as light aircraft increasingly allow people to venture into the more remote parts of the region (Queensland Government 2009).

Like many regions in Australia Central Western Queensland is a plethora of overlapping, differing (and confusing) jurisdictions of various governments and other agencies. There is a 'heterogeneous range of 21 regional bodies, programs, committees and community-based groups that is regarded as constituting regional governance in Central Western Queensland'

(Brown & Bellamy 2010, p. 11). This case study research is focussed on the former statistical division used by both the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Queensland Government Statistician's Office called Central Western Queensland (CWQ), now termed a regional planning area.

CWQ has a small population of 12,405 spread across a vast geographic area of 396,650.0 square kilometres (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013). Only 1004 of the population or 8.3 per cent are Indigenous (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013). The map below shows the Central West region including some of the major towns within it. Not shown are: the far western towns of Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia nor the more easterly small towns of Tambo, Aramac and Alpha. Longreach is the largest town in the region with a population of 4288 (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013).



2.2 Central Western Queensland (Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2010, p. 3)

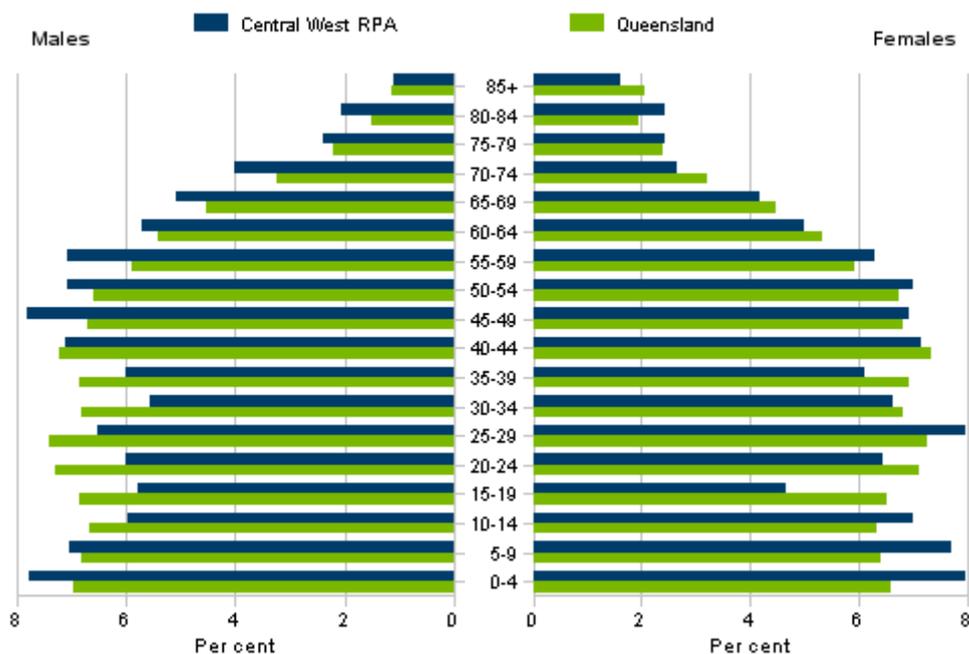
There are seven shires in CWQ and average daily temperatures range from 16.2 C to 31 C (Queensland Government 2009) although temperatures can go as high as 47 degrees. On average the region receives 328 mm of rain each year. Queensland government statistics are used as the ABS has now stopped using CWQ as an area for regional statistics. The much wider outback region now used by Federal government (incorporating most of North West, Central West and South West Queensland) does not always reflect the demographics of CWQ.

The region is expected to experience slow population growth of about 0.5% in the next five years and -.6% over the next ten. In the Central West Statistical Division there are more people aged 45 and above than the Queensland average fitting with descriptors of rural and remote communities as ageing.

	Age 0–14		15–24		25–44		45–64		65+	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Central West	2,688	21.7	1,419	11.4	3,284	26.5	3,279	26.4	1,735	14.0
Queensland	907,035	19.9	633,335	13.9	1,289,071	28.2	1,127,456	24.7	608,632	13.3

**2.3 Estimated resident population by age, Central West Regional Planning Area (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013)**

Some agricultural regions are becoming more masculinised (Barr 2009; Pini 2007) and there is slight evidence of this in CWQ in the age bracket from 45 – 70. However there are more women in other age brackets currently in CWQ.



**2.4 Estimated resident population by age and sex, Central West and Queensland, 30 June 2012**

Source: ABS 3235.0, *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2012* and Queensland Treasury and Trade estimates

Regarded as a remote area, the region’s landscape is classified as semi-arid to arid (Queensland Government 2009).

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), a measure of the social and economic conditions of geographic areas across Australia, reveal relative disadvantage in CWQ. Twenty-eight per cent of the usual resident population in CWQ were in the most disadvantaged quintile (the Queensland average is 20 per cent) and 5.3 per cent of the population were in the least disadvantaged quintile (the Queensland average is 20 per cent) (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013).

The Central West underwent shire amalgamation in March 2008 and seven shires now exist (there were 11 previously): Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall-Tambo Shire Council, Boulia Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Longreach Regional Council and Winton Shire Council. The shires (in part) fund the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD), the regional economic development agency for CWQ, which advocates on their behalf on a range of issues and project manages regional projects.

There are relatively low unemployment levels in CWQ with the unemployment rate for the Central West at 3.9 per cent (Queensland average is 6 per cent). Agriculture, Forestry and

Fishing is still by far the largest employer in the region, with 1732 people or 27.5 per cent of the region employed in the agricultural sector and the second highest sector (with 693 or 11 per cent) of people, public administration and safety. Mining within the region currently employs only 104 or 1.7 per cent of people in CWQ however there are quite a number of people residing in CWQ who travel outside the region, for example to Emerald, seeking higher paid work in the mines. Sheep meat and wool as well as beef cattle are the main agricultural industries within the region (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013).

The beef industry in Australia is the highest performing commodity with 43,763 farms in Australia producing beef cattle and a national herd of 26.6 million head. Eleven million, four hundred thousand of these cattle are in Queensland. The Australian beef industry (including live cattle) contributes 17 per cent to total Australian farm exports (National Farmers Federation 2012). Wool and sheep meat are also produced in CWQ. The gross value of Australian wool is \$1.9 billion and in Queensland \$87.2 million (National Farmers Federation 2012). These are still the predominant industries in CWQ with virtually no irrigated crops, and a small fledgling goat industry.

Other industries identified in the Central West Regional Plan as having significant employment and growth potential include: clean energy from geothermal energy, solar voltaic and solar thermal production, carbon farming, organic agriculture, ecotourism, Indigenous tourism, macropod and wild game harvesting, cottage industries and niche marketing and mineral, coal, gas and shale oil resources (Queensland Government 2009).

A major future development for the central west includes the potential new big coal mining operations being built and planned for the Galilee Basin area (eastern part of the Central Western region – largely in the Barcaldine Regional shire area) which is expected to bring significant social and economic change (Queensland Government 2009, p. 48) in terms of employment and possibly improved infrastructure. However the issues connected with '*fly in fly out*' workers (Alston 2009; Queensland Government 2009), plus the difficulties in sourcing and retaining labour within the region may mean the employment benefits for the region could be marginal. Environmental concerns were highlighted in the media after a toxic spill of waste material leaked into local water courses during the *wet season* from Lady Annie Mine (near Mount Isa). This occurred early in 2010 and alerted people to the potential detrimental effects of unregulated mining (Williams 2010) in Western Queensland. The Central West Regional Plan recommends thorough community consultation so benefits of mining for the local area can be maximised (Queensland Government 2009, p. 49).

There continues to be a high percentage of people undertaking voluntary work in CWQ with 3,033 persons or 32.2 per cent doing voluntary work as opposed to 645,543 persons (or 18.7 per cent) in Queensland overall (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013). Education levels especially at University level are much lower when compared with the rest of the state and this is typical for rural and remote areas (Alston 2009). There are 3991 people (or 43.5 per cent) aged 15 years and above with a highest level of schooling of Year 11 or 12. This is quite significantly below the Queensland statistic of 1,836,995 people (or 55.3 per cent) attaining Year 11 or 12 as the highest level of schooling (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013). A level of formal education can enable citizens to participate in such activist activities as submission writing, understanding and responding to complex policy papers, strategising on lobbying approaches, deliberating and putting forth positions on policy and so on. A lack of formal education would exclude some from participating in policy development.

The following highlight this aspect even more as there are 4141 people (or 44 per cent) with a non-school qualification in CWQ which is lower than the estimates for Queensland with 1,875,323 persons (or 54.2 per cent) (see Figure 2.6 below). In Central West regional planning area there were 861 people or 9.1 per cent with a bachelor's degree or higher, well lower than estimates for Queensland at 15.9 per cent of people or 548,894 people with a bachelor's degree. The figures for 'lower' qualifications were closer to the Queensland average with 539 people or 5.7 per cent with an advanced diploma or diploma as against 260,778 people and 7.5 per cent in Queensland. Even closer to the Queensland average were people with a certificate. In CWQ there were 1801 people 19.1 per cent of the population with a certificate and in Queensland 686,993 or 19.9 per cent (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013).

	Level of education						Persons with a qualification <sup>(c)</sup>		Total persons
	Bachelor degree or higher <sup>(a)</sup>		Advanced diploma or diploma		Certificate <sup>(b)</sup>				
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Central West	861	9.1	539	5.7	1,801	19.1	4141	44.0	9420
Queensland	548,894	15.9	260,778	7.5	686,993	19.9	1,875,323	54.2	3,456,875

(a) Includes bachelor degree, graduate diploma, graduate certificate and postgraduate degree.

(b) Includes Certificate, I, II, III and IV and Certificates not further defined responses.

(c) Includes 'inadequately described' and 'not stated' level of education responses.

**2.6. Non-school qualifications by level of education, Central West and Queensland, 2011 (Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013)**

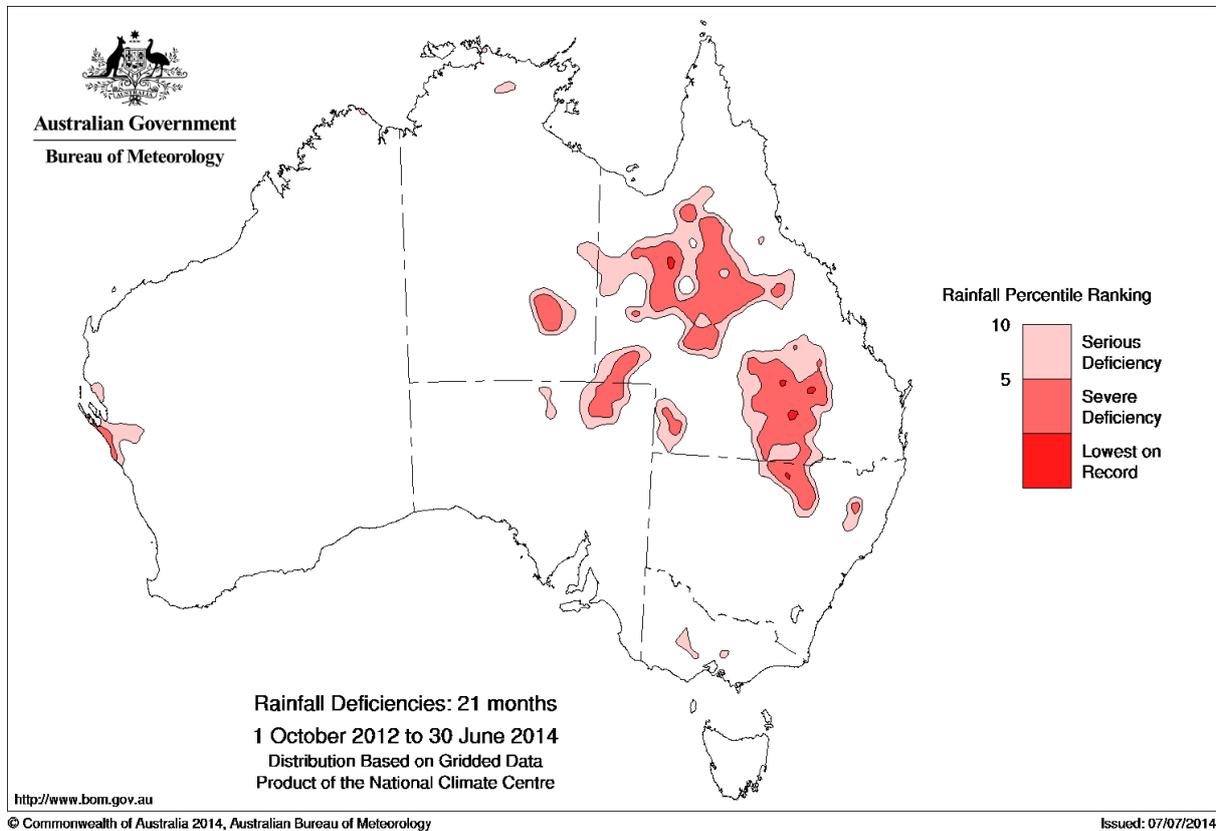
## Drought

The central west experienced long-term and severe drought in the first decade of 2000 (and is again currently in 2014), referred to by many as the *millennium drought* which directly impacted significantly on its key industries of agriculture and other town based businesses. Drought also impacted on students' ability to access education which further exacerbates the already evident trend of lower levels of education in the region as compared to the Queensland average (Alston & Kent 2006).

An inquiry into drought including the social impacts of drought was conducted by the Commonwealth Government in 2008 and new policy formed based on its recommendations. The 'It's About People: Changing Perspective: A Report to the Government by an Expert Social Panel on Dryness: Report to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry' noted the distress caused by drought and the need for government support that met priority needs.

Most of CWQ is again experiencing severe drought after two to three good seasons in 2010–2012. Drought causes financial hardship for those involved in agriculture or connected with it. This impacts on people's ability to participate in activism or even community consultation

in central locations. At the time of writing almost all of CWQ has experienced serious to severe deficiency in rainfall as the map below indicates.



## 2.7 Rainfall deficiencies 1 October 2012 to 30 June 2014

Climate change predictions for the Central West (Queensland Government 2010a) suggest the likelihood of more droughts and possible changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events. Projections for the region include a decline in rainfall with increasing temperature and evaporation. Temperature projections 'for inaction on climate change' (Queensland Government 2010a, p. 9) suggest a temperature increase well outside the range of temperatures experienced over the last 50 years. This will put further pressure on agricultural businesses in the region.

## Regional Bodies

Some regional organisations play a key role in facilitating policy development. The RAPAD, a Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) funded by local government and opportunistic project funding, plays a proactive role in advocating, planning and managing regional initiatives. RAPAD, like other regional organisations, is constrained by funding and

impermanence of resources. Its legitimacy is also constrained by the perception of other levels of government that it is primarily a local government body (Brown & Bellamy 2010, p. 21). RAPAD is recognised as a good example of shire collaboration to provide services that would not otherwise be available in local towns.

For instance, there are not many councils in Australia that provide the postal services (as in Barcoo and Ilfracombe); offer banking facilities (Blackall, Boulia, Tambo and Winton); a café (as in Boulia, Isisford and Winton); undertaker services (Barcoo, Blackall, Boulia, Ilfracombe and Tambo); real estate agency activities (Diamantina); operate general stores (Ilfracombe and Isisford); provide freight services (Isisford); or operate the local newspaper (Blackall)' (Walker, Porter & Marsh September 2012, pp. 21-2).

RAPAD plays a critical role in regional service provision and in facilitating regional input into policy development. In addition, of relevance to this study, RAPAD provided secretariat services for the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers Advisory Panel (LEBWRAP).

Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) is the regional Natural Resources Management (NRM) body for a wider region which extends beyond CWQ. It recently suffered the impacts of impermanent and limited funding and had to cut a significant number of staff in 2009. It is also limited by being largely government funded even though legally it is a quasi non-government organisation (quango). Though there have been recent attempts to develop a commercial arm DCQ is perceived to be an appendage of government even though it prides itself on its independent status and has occasionally spoken out against government policy (Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009).

The sheer size of the region, low population base and variable access to resources and distance from decision making centres in capital cities is an issue for citizens trying to shape policy to suit them (Stafford Smith 2008b). The difficulties faced by remote regions of Australia is 'characterised by lack of resources and the spatial scale of ... challenges' (Measham, Richards, Robinson, et al. 2009, p. 6).

## **Representative Democracy in CWQ**

Both the geographically vast federal electorate of Maranoa and the state government electorate of Gregory (which have different boundaries and extend beyond CWQ) which incorporates the main towns in CWQ have been held long-term by the National Party (now part of the Liberal National Party (LNP)) – Maranoa since 1990 and Gregory since 1989. The

National Party, formerly the Country Party, has declined in influence for various reasons (Green 2001). This is discussed in more depth in the second section of Chapter Two.

Wild Rivers was a policy introduced by the Labor government in Queensland and regional deliberations on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy were held in Longreach. This seat (Gregory) was held by the (then) opposition, LNP member Vaughan Johnson, which may have inclined some LNP voters / stakeholders against this Labor policy politically. Both National Party members were previously Ministers in their Governments and shadow Ministers but both, during the case study period, and as older members of their parties were demoted to lesser positions and lack influence within their own parties. Maranoa was identified as the *most right leaning seat* in Australia during the recent Federal election in 2013 using the new political analysis tool promoted by the ABC called Election Compass (ABC News 4 September 2013). As elected representatives of vast geographically remote seats decline in influence, deliberative democracy or direct democracy (discussed later) provides another channel to influence policy for geographically remote citizens.

## Appendix 2: Ethics approval for this research project

 **MONASH University**  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Research Office

**Human Ethics Certificate of Approval**

**Date:** 6 October 2010

**Project Number:** CF10/2115 - 2010001172

**Project Title:** What influence do people in remote communities have on government policy?

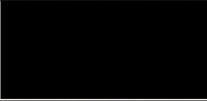
**Chief Investigator:** Professor Margaret Alston

**Approved:** From: 6 October 2010 To: 6 October 2015

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**Terms of approval**

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Ben Canny  
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mrs Christene Susanne Capel

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## **Appendix 3: Interview Questions for semi-structured interviews**

### **Interview Questions**

#### ***Understanding of policy***

Tell me about Wild Rivers policy?

1. What is your understanding of the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy? What does it mean for you?
2. Are there barriers to understanding the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy?
3. Where did you get your information on the detail of Wild Rivers policy from? (prompt: written and aural – What sources? Where do you seek such information? Why those sources?)

#### ***Participation***

What was your involvement?

1. What has been your involvement / participation in the various Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers policy discussions (prompts: consultation, lobbying, writing submissions)?
2. How did this go? Why (barriers, wins?)
3. Do you know how the Wild Rivers declarations got onto the government agenda in the first place? How were they able to bring this about? At what point did others get involved?

Were you heard why / why not?

4. Do you think your participation (eg. on RAPAD forums or Ministerial advisory committee) has (or will) made a difference to the final policy? How do you know / why?
5. Do you see any stakeholders as having more influence than others in the policy discussions / processes? If so who and why?
6. Do you think men and women participate differently in policy discussions? Why? What are the differences if any? (barriers / gender)

7. Are there any barriers to participation for women in CWQ? Are there any for men in CWQ?) What would improve women and men's participation in CWQ?
8. What do you expect will be the outcome of your participation?

### ***Democratic Processes for citizens***

How could it be improved?

1. (more broadly) How can citizens in remote areas influence policy?
2. What are the best processes government can use to ensure all stakeholders have input / get heard in policy discussions?
3. How should government and lobbyists (eg. RAPAD when pulling stakeholders together for the Wild Rivers forums) manage any power inequities? (i.e. some groups or individuals have more resources eg. \$ to lobby or even to get to meetings)
4. Considering the government Wild Rivers consultation processes – were they the best processes that could be used to get fair and inclusive input from citizens? Why or why not? (What could be used if not?)
5. Is there any group or sector from the community you see as having less say / input into policy and why? How could this be improved? What is holding this back?
6. Were citizens involved from the outset of the policy design and development process? (How? Why / why not?)
7. What would a good outcome from the Wild Rivers policy discussions look like to you and why?
8. If anything what did you learn out of the Wild Rivers processes you have been involved in about how people in remote areas can influence policy?

What would you do?

## **Lobbying**

1. Who do you see as effective lobbyists in this policy discussion and why? What tools do they use? What advantages do they have (if any)? Why do they have influence and others not?
2. What does a good lobbying process look like? How well do groups and individuals lobby government from out here?

Is there anything else that is important with regard to your and others' participation in the Wild Rivers policy discussions that I need to know about and have not asked?

## Appendix 4: Media Content analysis coding sheet

**Article Number:**

**Title:**

**Date:**

**Page number:**

**Length of article (number of pars): or length of relevant bits:**

**Wholly or partially about Wild Rivers (W/P): W**

Name	Location of source	Gender	Indigeneity(	Sector	Speaker where mentioned or quoted mention par block no. In 5s)	Total no. speaking role mention / article	Full quotes - no. of pars	Tone: For against in between other	Elite or non elite	Article Type:

Types of discourse	Words used
Green	
Production / Neoliberal	
Government speak	

**Picture:**

**Other comments on content:**

## Appendix 5: Longreach Leader articles on Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers 2009 – 2011

LONGREACH LEADER			
Article no.	Page	Article Title (articles culled are highlighted in red)	Edition / Date
LL1	1	"Graziers, greenies to protect rivers from mining pollution"	March 6, 2009
LL2	7	"Graziers, greenies want better protection from mine spills" (cont. from Page 1)	March 6, 2009
	19	Advertisement "Australian Floodplains Association"	March 6, 2009
	10	"Grazing land contamination leads to new look at mining rules" no mention of WR or LEB BUT is relevant in the lead up to WR as shows concern for mining spills.....	March 27, 2009
LL3	1	"Thomson on wild rivers list for new legislation"	May 14, 2009
LL4	3	"Stakeholders meet to discuss wild rivers" cont Page 1	May 14, 2009
LL5	3	"Call to protect Lake Eyre Basin"	June 5, 2009
LL6	9	"Wild Rivers Forum finds Consensus on a way forward"	July 31, 2009
LL7	4	"W Rivers called wild" (AgForce meeting notice with this heading) as news article	Sept 11, 2009
LL8	6	"Wild Rivers information"	Oct 2, 2009
	3	"State cabinet comes to Barcaldine and Longreach" no mention WR or LEB but Premier talks about usefulness of community cabinet	Oct 16, 2009
	1	"Go on, ask the question, at community cabinet" no mention WR or LEB	Oct 30, 2009
	1	"Residents raise their concern when cabinet came to town" no mention of LEBWR BUT is on the second page and I know there was lobbying on WR	Nov 6, 2009
LL9	3	"Residents on their feet to query Ministers" (mentions wild rivers)	Nov 06, 2009
LL10	6	"Blackall graziers air Wild Rivers concerns at the community cabinet in Barcaldine"	Nov 13, 2009
LL11	7	"AgForce members cautious about new Wild Rivers plan"	April 9, 2010
LL12	7	Western Queensland councils against Wild Rivers laws"	April 9, 2010
LL13	7	"Finding common ground on Wild Rivers" Sally Cripps	May 7, 2010
LL14	5	"Wild rivers, minds, stock routes top concerns at WQLGA conference in Boulia"	May 13, 2010
LL 15	8	"AgForce goes west to talk issues facing graziers"(only a mention as one of the issues)	July 16, 2010
LL15	5	"No world heritage listing for Lake Eyre"	Aug 6, 2010

	6	"Sleeper licences not laid to rest" (no mention of WR but does mention the rapid meeting without using the word Wild Rivers) but has issues related to WR.	Oct 22, 2010
LL16	6	"Draft water plan for Cooper Creek released"(no mention WR or LEB but related issues and similar lobbyists	Oct 22, 2010
LL16	6	" State government considers Wild Rivers for Lake Eyre"	Oct 29, 2010
	8	"Irrigators facing the chop under Cooper Creek water plan"(no mention LEB WR but related issues and WR mentioned at end as related)	Oct 29, 2010
LL17	1	"Blackall rivers part of Cooper Creek Wild Rivers"	Dec 17, 2010
LL18	5	"Council to oppose Wild Rivers for Cooper Creek"	Jan 28, 2011
LL19	3	"Be consulted on Cooper Creek Wild Rivers Plan"	Feb 18, 2011
LL20	9	"Stakeholder advisory panel for Lake Eyre basin Wild Rivers a welcome move"	Feb 25, 2011
LL21	1	"Alarm and dismay over Wild Rivers consultation"	Mar 11, 2011
LL22	7	Cont. from Page 1 "Frustration at Wild Rivers talks"	Mar 11, 2011
LL23	7	"Wild Rivers dams come up short of sustainable, Minister told"	Mar 11, 2011
LL24	5	"Extension for Wild Rivers consultation"	Mar 18, 2011
LL25	8	"Prudent to ask about wild rivers impact: Rabobank"	Mar 25, 2011
LL26	3	"Common ground unites western Queensland Councils"	April 21, 2011
LL27	8	Water and mining issues in Wild Rivers talks"	July 22, 2011
LL28	1	"Growing regional Queensland is Newman's promise"(Campbell Newman pre-election visit mentions LEB WR)	July 29, 2011
LL29	7	"Environment Minister tours Lake Eyre's Wild Rivers"	Oct 21, 2011
LL30	7	"Winners and Losers with Wild Rivers declaration"	Dec 16, 2011

**Appendix 6: Queensland Country Life articles on Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers  
2009 – 2011**

			Queensland Country Life	
Article Code	Author if named	Page	Article Title	Edition / Date
			<b>2009</b>	
QCL1	James Nason	3	<i>News: 'SWQ Wild Rivers caution'</i>	26 Mar, 2009
QCL2		12	<i>AgForce update: News brief: 'Delegates meet at Boulia'</i>	9 Apr, 2009
QCL3	Suzannah Baker	11	<i>'Pearson joins Bush's green laws battle' (not specific re where and Property Rights Australia agreeing)</i>	2 Jul, 2009
QCL4		14	<i>AgForce update: In the news: 'Wild Rivers in spotlight' (about AgForce attendance at the RAPAD Wild Rivers forums)</i>	30 Jul, 2009
QCL5	Ian Burnett AgForce vice-president (07) 3236 3100	19	<i>AgForce update: Conservation areas: Comment 'Wild Rivers issues 'run rapids''</i>	5 Nov, 2009
QCL6		16	<i>AgForce update: In the news: 'Submission looks at Wild Rivers declarations'</i>	17 Dec, 2009
QCL7		20	<i>News: 'AgForce, RAPAD work to tame wild rivers'</i>	17 Dec, 2009
			<b>2010</b>	
QCL8	Ashley Walmsley	3	<i>'Why Abbott opposes green Wild Rivers laws' (main focus NORTH Queensland but comments from Bruce Scott on LEB WR)</i>	14 Jan, 2010
QCL9		12	<i>Opinion: 'Wild rivers nothing but a green pipedream'(on Letters page)</i>	14 Jan, 2010
QCL10		14	<i>AgForce update: News: 'Lake Eyre Discussion'</i>	1 Apr, 2010
QCL 11	John Cotter AgForce President	15	<i>AgForce update: Comment: Green background to grassroots talks'</i>	1 Apr, 2010
QCL12	Mark Phelps Editor	9	<i>News: 'Backlash tipped on green policy'</i>	27 May, 2010
QCL13		7	<i>News: 'Bid to have say on river's course'</i>	3 Jun, 2010
QCL14		26	<i>AgForce Update: AgForce briefs: 'Wild Rivers submission' first sentence continued page 27</i>	10 Jun, 2010

		27	+ <i>AgForce briefs: continued from page 26</i>	
QCL15	John Cotter AgForce President	17	<i>'Dig a bit deeper before you vote' (Wild rivers mentioned)</i>	12 Aug, 2010
QCL16		20	<i>AgForce update: AgForce Briefs: 'Sustainable development could drown in wild rivers'</i>	7 Oct, 2010
QCL17	Ian Burnett AgForce Vice President	21	<i>AgForce update: Wild rivers: comment: 'Security of water key to ag's future'</i>	7 Oct, 2010
QCL18	Melissa Martin in Rockhampton (07) 4927 9422	5	<i>News: New legislation: 'Lake Eyre Basin in Wild River's sight's'</i>	4 Nov, 2010
QCL19		21	<i>AgForce update: Environment: News Briefing: 'Wild Rivers creates Lake Eyre Basin uncertainty'</i>	4 Nov, 2010
QCL20	Ian Hayllor, chairman, Basin Sustainability Alliance.	22	<i>Letter: 'GAB waits for protection'</i>	11 Nov, 2010
QCL21	Chris Robson, acting Deputy Director General, DERM.	19	<i>Letter (in reply to Ian Hayllor's letter last week): 'Impact on bores properly managed'</i>	18 Nov, 2010
QCL22	Ian Burnett, AgForce Vice President		<i>'Strangling agriculture in red tape'</i>	2 Dec, 2010
QCL23		20	<i>AgForce Update: AgForce briefs: 'WOLA Bill passes Parliament'</i>	9 Dec, 2010
QCL24	Stephen Robertson, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.	24	<i>Letter: 'Environment at heart of politics'</i>	9 Dec, 2010
QCL25		9	<i>News: Green zone: 'Wild Rivers: treading water'</i>	16 Dec, 2010
QCL26		15	<i>'Wild River plan extends blanket of uncertainty'</i>	23 Dec, 2010
			<b>2011</b>	
QCL27		15	<i>AgForce Update: News briefing: 'Coopers Creek wild river'</i>	6 Jan, 2011
QCL28		5	<i>'Cooper Basin Date Extended'</i>	17 Mar, 2011

QCL29	Cameron Thompson	3	<i>Wild Rivers lollipops for greens</i>	5 May, 2011
QCL30		16	<i>Opinion: 'Western QLD is Bligh's new green lollipop'</i>	5 May, 2011
QCL31	Kate Jones, Minister for Environment and Resource Management.	22	<i>Letters: : 'Wild stories don't serve anyone'</i>	12 May, 2011
QCL32	Stuart McKenzie Eromanga Lanowner	22	<i>Letters: 'Congratulations for report on debacle'</i>	12 May, 2011
QCL33		3	<i>News: Wild Rivers: 'Western front in battle for green vote'</i>	19 May, 2011
QCL34		3	<i>News: Wild Rivers: 'Wild Rivers idealistic'</i>	19 May, 2011
QCL35		19	<i>News: property issues: 'CSG top of PRA agenda' (WR mentioned in passing)</i>	9 Jun, 2011
QCL36	Cameron Thompson in Brisbane	5	<i>News: 'Cropland law undermines QLD's allure'</i>	11 Aug, 2011
QCL37	Angus Emmott, board member, Australian Floodplain Association, Noonbah, Longreach.	14	<i>Letters: 'Wild rivers laws help channel country'</i>	15 Sep, 2011
QCL38		5	<i>News: AgForce conference: 'Wild Rivers "no", farming "yes" in Newman policy'</i>	22 Sep, 2011
QCL39	Cameron Thompson	6  107	<i>Special report: Deaf to complaint: 'QLD govt snubs AgForce'</i>  <i>And second page</i>  <i>From page 6 'Minister snubs AgForce'</i>	20 Oct, 2011
QCL40	Cameron Thompson	11	<i>'Aborigines say wild rivers will secure west'</i>	27 Oct, 2011
QCL41	Cameron Thompson	11	<i>'River laws drives WQ locals wild'</i>	8 Dec, 2011
QCL42	Cameron Thompson	7	<i>'Wild Critics call for referendum'</i>	15 Dec, 2011
QCL43		13	<i>AgForce update: 'Green vote grabs flows with Wild Rivers'</i>	15 Dec, 2011

QCL44	Brent Finlay	13	<i>AgForce update: Comment: 'Gearing for poll'</i>	15 Dec, 2011
QCL45		16	<i>Opinion: 'Labor's tricky treat: another wild power grab'</i> 'In Queensland, Labor's polldancing slide to the bottom has it unelectable. This government has just three months to live.'	15 Dec, 2011
QCL46	Brent Finlay AgForce President	16	<i>Letter to the editor: 'Cynical politics rules wild rivers'</i> Farmers are the greatest supporters of sustainable river and land management; in fact our livelihoods depend on it. What we don't support is the unnecessary layer of regulation the Wild Rivers Act has imposed over us. It is irrefutable that these rivers are in pristine condition because graziers and traditional owners have taken such good care of their country.	15 Dec, 2011
QCL47		25	<i>Annual 2011: Ag disasters pepper 2011'</i> (review of the year – WR mentioned towards the end.	29 Dec, 2011

**Appendix 7: ABC radio transcripts on the ABC web site on Lake Eyre Basin  
Wild Rivers 2009 – 2011**

Article code	Journalist if named	Article Title	Date
<b>2009</b>			
ABC1		Wilderness Society wants long-term river protection regime <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-03-16/wilderness-society-wants-long-term-river/1620484">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-03-16/wilderness-society-wants-long-term-river/1620484</a>	16 Mar, 2009
ABC2		Landholders fear wild rivers uncertainty <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-04-09/landholders-fear-wild-rivers-uncertainty/1646252">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-04-09/landholders-fear-wild-rivers-uncertainty/1646252</a>	9 Apr, 2009
ABC3		Cooper Creek water licence fears <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-22/cooper-creek-water-licence-fears/1438460">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-22/cooper-creek-water-licence-fears/1438460</a>	23 Sep, 2009
ABC4	Kirsty Nancarrow	Protect Lake Eyre river system: scientist <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-29/protect-lake-eyre-river-system-scientist/1446348">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-29/protect-lake-eyre-river-system-scientist/1446348</a>	29 Sep, 2009
ABC5		Different rules' for western wild rivers declarations <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-10-19/different-rules-for-western-wild-rivers/1108048">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-10-19/different-rules-for-western-wild-rivers/1108048</a>	19 Oct, 2009
<b>2010</b>			
ABC 6	Stephanie Smail	Graziers worried about Wild Rivers laws <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-01-13/graziers-worried-about-wild-rivers-laws/1207156">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-01-13/graziers-worried-about-wild-rivers-laws/1207156</a>	13 Jan, 2010
ABC7	Ken Orr	Senate to probe Wild Rivers laws <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-03-16/senate-to-probe-wild-rivers-laws/365634">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-03-16/senate-to-probe-wild-rivers-laws/365634</a>	16 Mar, 2010
ABC8	Chrissy Arthur	"Wild Rivers restrictions proposed for Lake Eyre Basin" <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-03-25/wild-rivers-restrictions-proposed-for-lake-eyre/379482">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-03-25/wild-rivers-restrictions-proposed-for-lake-eyre/379482</a>	25 Mar, 2010
ABC9	Stephanie Fitzpatrick and Ken Orr	Boswell questions mine report release <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-04-21/boswell-questions-mine-report-release/404250">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-04-21/boswell-questions-mine-report-release/404250</a>	21 Apr, 2010

ABC10	Chrissy Arthur	Wild River declarations may face delay <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-05-04/wild-river-declarations-may-face-delay/421698">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-05-04/wild-river-declarations-may-face-delay/421698</a>	4 May, 2010
ABC11	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Outback mayors to air Wild River worries <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-05-06/outback-mayors-to-air-wild-river-worries/423802">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-05-06/outback-mayors-to-air-wild-river-worries/423802</a>	6 May, 2010
ABC12	Chrissy Arthur	Lobby group calls for Wild Rivers financial support <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-02/lobby-group-calls-for-wild-rivers-financial-support/850396">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-02/lobby-group-calls-for-wild-rivers-financial-support/850396</a>	3 Jun, 2010
		Senate overrides Wild Rivers laws <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-22/senate-overrides-wild-rivers-laws/877366">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-22/senate-overrides-wild-rivers-laws/877366</a>	22 Jun, 2010
ABC13	Chrissy Arthur	Wild Rivers declaration for Cooper Creek raises concerns <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-20/wild-rivers-declaration-for-cooper-creek-raises/2304894">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-20/wild-rivers-declaration-for-cooper-creek-raises/2304894</a> (includes audio from The World Today)	20 Oct, 2010
ABC14		Legislation aims to protect Lake Eyre Basin <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-27/legislation-aims-to-protect-lake-eyre-basin/2313380">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-27/legislation-aims-to-protect-lake-eyre-basin/2313380</a>	27 Oct, 2010
ABC15	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Call for Abbott to consult widely over Wild River laws <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-28/call-for-abbott-to-consult-widely-over-wild-river/2314186">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-28/call-for-abbott-to-consult-widely-over-wild-river/2314186</a>	28 Oct, 2010
	<b>Emma Pollard, Melinda Howells and Chris O'Brien</b>	Parliament approves new water laws <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-11-26/parliament-approves-new-water-laws/2352196">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-11-26/parliament-approves-new-water-laws/2352196</a>	26 Nov, 2010
ABC16	Chrissy Arthur	Qld Government plans Cooper Creek as 'Wild River' <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-14/qld-government-plans-cooper-creek-as-wild-river/2373406">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-14/qld-government-plans-cooper-creek-as-wild-river/2373406</a>	14 December 2010
ABC17	Amy Phillips and Chrissy Arthur	Wild Rivers consultation steps up <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-21/wild-rivers-consultation-steps-up/2381388">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-21/wild-rivers-consultation-steps-up/2381388</a>	21 Dec, 2010
		<b>2011</b>	
ABC18	Chrissy Arthur	Wild Rivers panel seeks more consultation time <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-02-23/wild-rivers-panel-seeks-more-consultation-time/1953906">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-02-23/wild-rivers-panel-seeks-more-consultation-time/1953906</a>	23 Feb, 2011

ABC19	Chrissy Arthur and Amy Phillips	Longer Wild Rivers consultation period mooted <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-04/longer-wild-rivers-consultation-period-mooted/1966098">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-04/longer-wild-rivers-consultation-period-mooted/1966098</a>	4 Mar, 2011
ABC20	Chrissy Arthur	AgForce backs extended Wild Rivers consultation <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-10/agforce-backs-extended-wild-rivers-consultation/2662114">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-10/agforce-backs-extended-wild-rivers-consultation/2662114</a>	10 Mar, 2011
ABC21	Chrissy Arthur and Amy Phillips	Agri-bank defends Wild Rivers questions <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-18/agri-bank-defends-wild-rivers-questions/2652598">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-18/agri-bank-defends-wild-rivers-questions/2652598</a>	18 Mar, 2011
ABC22	Chrissy Arthur and Sam Burgess	Boswell questions mine report release <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-04-21/boswell-questions-mine-report-release/404250">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-04-21/boswell-questions-mine-report-release/404250</a>	22 Mar, 2011
ABC22	Chrissy Arthur and Sam Burgess	CSG push sparks call for basin protection <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-22/csg-push-sparks-call-for-basin-protection/2647162">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-03-22/csg-push-sparks-call-for-basin-protection/2647162</a>	22 Mar, 2011
ABC23		More Wild River declarations loom <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-04-18/more-wild-river-declarations-loom/2611116">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-04-18/more-wild-river-declarations-loom/2611116</a>	18 Apr, 2011
ABC24		"Graziers briefed on Wild Rivers" <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-10-20/graziers-briefed-on-wild-rivers/3580760">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-10-20/graziers-briefed-on-wild-rivers/3580760</a>	20 Oct, 2011
ABC25		Wild Rivers mining protection a 'great lie' <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-12-12/wild-rivers-mining-protection-a-great-lie/3725872">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-12-12/wild-rivers-mining-protection-a-great-lie/3725872</a>	12 Dec, 2011
ABC26	Chrissy Arthur	Funds to help fight Wild Rivers pests <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-12-22/funds-to-help-fight-wild-rivers-pests/3743678">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-12-22/funds-to-help-fight-wild-rivers-pests/3743678</a>	22 Dec, 2011

26 articles in total after culling

## Appendix 8: Letter to the Minister from a concerned group about repealing Wild Rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin

Premier Campbell Newman  
PO Box 15185  
City East  
Queensland 4002

Wednesday, 26 September 2012

Dear Premier

We the undersigned would like to express our views on the existing and future management of the land and waters of western Queensland's Channel Country. Queensland's Channel Country is important culturally, socially, economically and environmentally to local communities, the State and Nation. Strong protection under legislation is vital to protecting these values. We would like to propose a solution that would have widespread support and resolve the current uncertainty.

As traditional owners, landholders, scientists and administrators of the Channel Country, we have a deep love and connection to this special part of Australia and understand its uniqueness, resilience and its fragility to exploitation. Spectacular floods in recent years have made their way down to Lake Eyre, stimulating an explosion of natural wonder which has triggered a tourism boom. Following these floods and rains it is internationally recognised as the best natural, native pasture for grazing to be found anywhere. It has always sustained premium beef, mutton, lamb and wool growing grazing businesses. And in recent years has developed very successful organic enterprises based on these traditional industries whose products are recognised and valued globally.

Historically, proposals for cotton irrigation united this community and the nation into a vigorous defence of the special nature of this land and its river systems. Our communities saw the degradation and exploitation of other Australian river systems and resolved defend our vision for and the integrity of this part of Queensland.

We are now confronted with an unprecedented wave of coal, mineral, petroleum, deep well gas and coal seam gas projects. We have seen the impact on landholders in the Surat Basin from the behaviour of some unscrupulous or uncaring resource companies. With the expansion of the CSG industry, further planned resources exploration and the proposed significant open cut coal mining projects in the Galilee Basin, we feel that we need the tools to make sure these experiences are not repeated again in our region and basin.

The Lady Annie mine spill in January & February 2009 was watched by our community with deep anxiety. This was the first major pollution incident in the entire Lake Eyre Basin. It was caused by an absence of adequate regulation. This single incident threatened very large and valuable beef enterprises over many thousands of square kilometres. This experience justifies our contention that special legislation is needed to protect this special place.

We would like to stress that the inland draining Lake Eyre Basin rivers - the Channel Country - have no capacity for "flushing" toxins/chemicals like coastal rivers in high rainfall areas. If there is a mine spill in the Channel Country the consequences would be catastrophic and irreversible. This risk is unacceptable.

Through the skilful direction of the peak body representing the seven central western local shires, the RAPAD (Remote Area Planning and Development) Board convened a

roundtable of genuine stakeholders to map out preferences in managing this region's resources. To their great credit they reached a consensus on how to provide permanent protection to the above threats. The communiqué that came from this roundtable process is attached.

We understand that you are considering repealing the declarations that sit under the Wild Rivers Act in declared areas, we would urge you to retain and reform them in western Queensland. Reform in our view would be to remove "Wild River" regulations on vegetation management, town growth, instream stock dams, road construction, quarrying activities etc. This would halve red tape, increase productivity and decrease delivery costs. What would remain are the strong controls on mining projects and large scale irrigation proposals. Reform along these lines is legislatively simple, efficient, cost effective and specifically reflects the wishes of a community that has driven its own roundtable consultation over the last three years.

We respectfully request and urge that you show an element of caution when making the decision to just remove all protection from these last free-flowing Queensland and Australian waterways.

Premier, as you are aware with your long experience in public administration – that the loudest voices are not necessarily speaking for the majority of residents or stakeholders. Our signatories urge you to continue the rigorous consultation process the RAPAD group of councils instigated when Labor announced their intention to declare these river systems as wild rivers under the Wild Rivers Act.

This region urged the previous Government to put in place a more rigorous and long-lasting form of protections over these unique and unregulated rivers and over the interests of the current stakeholders who have invested in and made their home this region.

We did not agree with including these catchments in the same legislation as was imposed in the Gulf and Cape York. The Channel Country rivers are totally different river systems unique in global terms and needed different and more distinctive legislation that met the needs of all interest groups and the environment.

We consider following this path of reform reflects the explicit wishes of local government graziers, traditional owners and conservationists. We are certain that following this path much needed reform would be met with applause in central western Queensland and the wider Queensland community.

Yours sincerely,