

**The Construction of Political Effectiveness-  
Insights from Australian Advocacy Organisations**

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## SYNOPSIS

This paper outlines one aspect of my doctoral studies into why two nonprofit organisations, *Liberals for Forests* and *Timber Communities Australia*, are still struggling over the logging of native forests 30 years after the conflict initially erupted in Australia. This research project aims to gain an understanding of how such Australian advocacy organisations are constructed as politically 'effective' by internal and external stakeholders within the Western Australian<sup>1</sup> forest policy network. The research utilises two theoretical approaches - New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilisation Theory. It does so within a meta-approach of organisational effectiveness. In particular, this paper reports on the usefulness of a theoretical approach from the political science perspective - Schumaker's political effectiveness of organisations.

This paper clearly shows that the effectiveness of these social advocacy organisations is "socially constructed" with little agreement between the internal or external stakeholders on the policy impact (or political effectiveness) of the two social movement organisations (SMOs) being studied. The results of this research have broader practical implications for all types of nonprofit organisations, not just advocacy ones.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Australia is the largest of Australia's six states.

# **The Construction of Political Effectiveness- Insights from Australian Advocacy Organisations**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Struggling as an activist in peace and environment organisations in the 1980s, I often reflected on how effective we were in achieving our aims. How do we assess or determine which of the tactics and strategies we used achieved the desired impact? My interest in nonprofit organisations (NPOs)<sup>1</sup> and their effectiveness grew from these years of working for social change in various Australian advocacy organisations<sup>2</sup> (ie that sub-sector of nonprofit organisations demanding changes in or by government) that were part of broader social movements.<sup>3</sup> The importance of studying social movements in an Australian setting is suggested by Marsh. He states that in Australia “every major addition to the political agenda in the past decade was originally championed by an issue movement...” (1989: 230). Similarly, Considine (1998: 9) identified the importance of researching environment policy-making in an Australian State government context, as he found that this policy area was the only one where a clear majority of the new policy proposals were sponsored by non-government organisations and not other policy stakeholders, such as the business organisations.

This paper will discuss one aspect of my doctoral studies, which is the reason why two Western Australian (WA) NPOs on opposite sides of the logging conflict, continue to contest the issue after a period of 30 years of conflict<sup>4</sup> (Mills, 1986: 229). Implicit in this research focus is a recognition that other major Australian environmental debates were concluded within a much shorter period.<sup>5</sup> Why hasn't the native forest debate been resolved before now? Surely, if either of these two organisations had been 'effective' in their operations then their policy proposals would have 'triumphed' over those of their 'countermovement' (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996: 1628).

While Thompson and Tracy (1995) have provided a brief historical outline to the forest debate in WA, there has been little research undertaken into this conflict over forest policy in WA and the various bases for the differing organisational values and policy positions taken by these organisations that hold opposite views. Personal and organisational values are key research focuses and it would seem that both sides to the debate profess a keen love for the forest and its various biological systems. The depth of feeling shown by both sides probably reflects the central, but changing, importance of Nature in the ideology of Western societies since the late seventeenth century (Jeans, 1983: 170).

This research project aims to gain an understanding of how such Australian advocacy organisations are constructed as 'effective' by internal or external stakeholders<sup>6</sup>. My broader doctoral research utilises two main theoretical approaches- New Social Movement Theory (Inglehart, 1977; Maheu (ed), 1995; Melucci, 1980) and Resource Mobilisation Theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1976;

McCarthy & Wolfson 1996). It does so within the broad approach of organisational effectiveness. In particular, this paper reports on the usefulness of a theoretical approach from political science, Schumaker's (1975) model of the political effectiveness of organisations. Before we consider the results of the construction of the effectiveness of the organisations studied, I will briefly describe these key theoretical approaches.

## **Advocacy Organisations and the Australian Nonprofit Sector**

In his seminal work, Rudolf Heberle (1951: 6) stressed that the main criterion of a social movement was that it aimed to bring about 'fundamental changes in the social order'. Individual advocacy organisations that are part of important social movements range from those that seek revolutionary change to those that may not have such dramatic goals as suggested by Heberle (eg an organisation campaigning for women's refuges as part of the broader women's movement).

The definition of an advocacy organisation used in this research is an amended version of Craig Jenkin's (1987: 297) widely cited definition:

*An advocacy organisation is one that attempts to influence the social and political decisions of an institutional elite<sup>7</sup>, the outcomes of which benefit a broader range of society than just its own members.*

The key factor here for advocacy nonprofits is that any benefits they gain benefit far more people than just their immediate members and supporters. Clear examples of such wider benefits achieved by environmental organisations would be 'public goods' such as cleaner air and less polluted water ways. Less-clear direct benefits would be those achieved by other types of social movements, such as those achieved by the second wave of women's movements operating in most western countries since the 1960s. (Freeman, 1978)

### **The Australian Nonprofit Sector**

Australian advocacy organisations are part of a broader nonprofit sector that ranges from small voluntary groups to large hospitals and universities, from sports clubs to unions and political parties. Lyons estimates that in 1991 there were about 110,000 NPOs in Australia (1992: 79). The vast scope of the Australian nonprofit sector can be indicated by the fact that during the period 1995/96 Lyons and Hocking estimated that NPOs spent between Aus\$27-43 billion<sup>2</sup> (1998: 1). This expenditure is similar to the combined expenditure spent by Australia's two largest State governments (Victoria and NSW) that govern over 11 million people.

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<sup>2</sup> 1Aus\$=0.60USD in January 2003.

Lyons (2001: 81) indicates that about 47,000 people are employed in the Australian “interest group” (or what I call advocacy organisations) sub-sector alone and these organisations spent about Aus\$3 billion during 1995/96. Many of these groups are small and rely on volunteers to operate. Lyons and Hocking (4) estimate that Australians over the age of 15 volunteered approximately 20 million hours to these advocacy organisations. This is equivalent to about one-tenth of the Australian public volunteering one hour per month, just to interest or advocacy groups.

Despite all of this activity by Australians aimed at changing important aspects of Australia’s political and social landscape, there has been no research undertaken as to the effectiveness of these advocacy organisations. A similar research ‘gap’ was identified earlier by Freeman (1978: 4) in her study of the US feminist movement and she comments, “The study of social movements and that of public policy are two fields that have heretofore been treated primarily as distinct and unrelated areas in the scholarly literature”. My study hopes to draw these two separate fields together, but to do so we must further explore the concept of ‘effectiveness’.

## **Effectiveness of Nonprofits**

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

(Goodman & Pennings (eds), 1981: 106)

What makes this question of effectiveness of social advocacy organisations so interesting (and so frustrating for researchers) is that the for-profit sector (or business sector) has a number of agreed methodologies for determining the efficiency and effectiveness of individual businesses. Companies listed on a stock exchange have an immediate, and very public, shorthand indication as to how the market and individual investors believe they are performing as an organisation. The price which investors are willing to invest in a particular company provides its Board and Management with immediate feedback on how effective they are perceived to be by critical stakeholders.

For some service-type NPOs that are in sectors that have for-profit counterparts (eg hospitals) there are effectiveness indicators which are used in both sectors that are reasonably easy to calculate across both sectors (ie bed usage rates) (Chabotar, 1989: 189). However, for advocacy organisations the question of organisational and management effectiveness is very difficult to assess as their main goal is to assist in change to an important societal value or policy. Even if their goal is achieved (ie the abolition of slavery) it may be difficult to link the particular actions and strategies of an individual

advocacy organisation with any subsequent policy shift. In regard to advocacy organisations, Gamson (1990: 248) warns “there is no more ticklish issue in studying social protest than deciding what constitutes success”.

Many of the past and present theories of organisations speak to and of effectiveness- the central (and contested) dimension of this research project. To propose a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of specific social advocacy organisations, it is helpful to quickly describe how the understanding of ‘effectiveness’ has changed over the past five decades within the management and sociological disciplines.

### **Goal-attainment Approach**

Thorndike (1949) was one of the earliest authors to note a general trend among organisational researchers to measure effectiveness, especially in terms of the attainment of some ultimate criterion or goal. Barnard (1938) carefully distinguished effectiveness from efficiency and proposed one of the earliest and most general definitions of organisational effectiveness as “the ability of an organisation to bring about some objective state of affairs.” Campbell (1977: 49) refines this definition slightly further by defining organisational effectiveness as “the degree to which the task objectives (or goals) judged to be ‘ends’ should be accomplished, given the prevailing conditions in which the organisation must work.” Price (1968: 3) on the other hand states bluntly “...effectiveness is defined as the degree of goal-achievement.”

While goal attainment was the major measure of effectiveness in these early studies, later writers posed questions in regard to ‘whose goals’? This question reflects the evidence gathered between 1950-1970 on research into organisational effectiveness and goal attainment. This research found that within organisations there was a lack of agreement as to what were the organisation’s *actual* goals. Robbins (1990: 49) posed the question as to whether studies should focus on the organisation’s officially stated goals, or use the actual or operative goals, or the informal goals uncovered by research among the organisation’s staff. Hannan and Freeman (1977: 959) tried to resolve this complexity of ‘whose goals’ by skirting around the issue and arguing that *survival* is the organisation’s most critical goal. Weick (1981: 194) suggests a closely related concept to Hannan and Freeman’s by posing the issue of *adaptability* (to the external environment) as the critical organisational goal.

These are very important theoretical questions for evaluating the work of advocacy organisations. All advocacy organisations have stated goals but within the political environment and historical period in which they work they may actually be trying to achieve some other short or medium-term goal. For example, the National Roads and Motoring Association in NSW is a NPO that was established about 100 years ago to provide motoring assistance to its members, but it has recently

been advocating environmental programs to clean up the air in Sydney ([www.nrma.com.au](http://www.nrma.com.au)). Some advocacy organisations may have what could be termed ‘impossible goals’ (eg preventing global warming or achieving global nuclear disarmament) that would make the evaluation of their effectiveness very difficult if it was solely based on analysing their goal attainment over the short or medium term<sup>8</sup>

### **Systems Approach**

In response to the difficulty of clearly defining effectiveness in terms of goal achievement, or a single unique output criterion, Webb (1974: 665) then proposed an alternate organisational effectiveness model based on defining an organisation as an open system. Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum proposed this model as early as 1957 (535), but it was not taken up by other researchers until later when the goal-attainment model was shown to be of limited theoretical usefulness. They believed that measuring single univariate measures was inconsistent with the broad meaning attached to the construct of effectiveness in the research literature.

Another early convert to this new approach was Etzioni (1960: 257) who also criticised the then-prevailing goal-centred approach. His systems view emphasises that factors that will increase the long-term success of an organisation are those such as its ability to acquire resources, maintain itself as an on-going organism as well as the successful attainment of its goals. Organisations are seen as sub-units of the enveloping business or policy environment and need to draw essential resources from this environment to survive and prosper. This approach is also known in the nonprofit (or third) sector as the ‘resource mobilisation’ theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1976: 1212).

### **Effectiveness as a Social Construct**

The latest insight in ‘the grail-like search for a unified framework’<sup>9</sup> was provided by Connolly *et al.* (1980: 212) who argue that the answer to the question of how well an organisation is performing is inevitably contingent on **who one is asking**. They propose that effectiveness is a multi-constituency social construction and that the goal and system approaches are only partial insights, and hence of limited usefulness, into organisational effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>

Robbins (1990: 62) identifies a more recent refinement of this approach as the ‘strategic constituencies model’. These are the constituencies or stakeholders in the organisation’s environment that are critical to its survival. For an advocacy organisation, these constituencies could be seen as the political ‘elite’ within their chosen sphere of activity. This social construct approach was extended by Zammuto’s proposal (1984: 613) that there are multiple constituency models of effectiveness with both direct and indirect constituencies that need to be considered. In this research project, the direct or strategic external constituencies of advocacy organisations within the political environment in which

they operate would seem to be members of that policy network (Marsh, 1998: 21) that includes, as well as the SMOs, the media, academics, bureaucrats, politicians and the business sector<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, it is important to understand the insight provided by Melucci (1989: 206) that, while advocacy organisations are engaged politically with the 'elite' and powerful bureaucracies, they are also creating new cultural values within the general population. This additional 'private life' of advocacy organisations and their supporters could lead to differing views of effectiveness of an organisation by members of the elite and general members of society who may have adopted these new values. The importance of new public values, in an Australian context, is reinforced by Kellow and Moon (1993:226) who argue that new public values (eg forests should be preserved rather than logged) pose special problems in policy terms because they may not be characteristic of existing mainstream political values.

### **Political 'Effectiveness'**

The work of Schumaker (1975: 494) is helpful in laying out a proposed approach to studying **how** an advocacy organisation could be assessed for its policy success (or in our terms- effectiveness as a social construct) at the macro political environment in which it operates. He argues that this policy-making success can be defined in terms of the political system's responsiveness to an advocacy organisation in terms of five incremental stages:

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

Level one of Schumaker's model provides the NPO with basic access to the government process while level five sees the government implementing their proposed policies or programs. These new proposed policies or programs are seen as having a positive impact on the issue for which the NPO is campaigning. Schumaker's model is not a linear one, ie NPOs don't need to start at level 1 before proceeding to higher levels. If the impact of the NPO's campaign is great enough, then the government may proceed immediately to level 4 or 5 and implement the organisation's policy proposal. Schumaker's model is a way of categorising the government's response to the advocacy campaign of a particular NPO or SMO at a particular time.

In a particular policy setting using a similar framework to Schumaker's, Nelson (1984: 22) undertook a study of how child abuse issues developed as policy issues at both a state and national level in the US. She argued that, to assist in understanding the abstract process of policy agenda setting, the policy process could be conceptualised in a slightly different way as "issue *recognition*, issue *adoption*, setting *priorities* and issue *maintenance*." The important difference between her framework and Schumaker's is the lack of distinction in her framework in measuring the social impact of any new policy. On the other hand, Kingdon (1984: 115) placed most importance on Schumaker's stage 1, the identification by government that an 'issue' was a 'problem' and needed to be addressed in policy terms by the government.

## Policy Networks

It is important to understand that the two chosen advocacy organisations are important 'counter movement' stakeholders that operate in a policy network. US research (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1980: 130) on policy networks involving nonprofit organisations reinforces a constructionist approach and the importance of a case study approach to the problem: "... a good deal of energy must be directed not only toward measuring actual [policy] impacts but also **those perceived and desired**"

The original political elite approach (Mills, 1956) has now 'fallen' due to a lack of verifiable case studies. The political science study of political influence is now phased in terms of 'policy actors' and 'policy institutions' being part of a '**policy system**' (Considine, 1994: 9) or a '**policy network**' (D. Marsh, 1998: 6; Smith, 1993: 7). Marsh (p21) says that the use of policy networks as a means of conceptualising the relationship between state and social movements "is now pervasive in the European and North American political science literature". The identification of key stakeholders in the WA forest policy network and obtaining their views on the effectiveness of the two chosen countermovements organisations is the key methodology used in this research.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The broader doctoral research is based on three sets of data. The first is a three-year (1998-2000) media analysis of the local daily newspaper of record, *The West Australian*, and the national daily *The Australian*. This period was chosen as it encompassed the period from just before the Regional Forest Agreement was released by the Court Liberal/National Party Coalition Government and the election of the Gallop Labor Government in February 2001. Both pro and anti-logging groups were unhappy with the Court Government's attempts at taking a middle road in its approach to native forest logging policy. In contrast, the ALP promised to stop logging in 99% of old-growth native forests if elected. It was subsequently unexpectedly elected and swiftly moved to stop logging of old growth native forests (Stevens, 2001: 1).

The second input was a study of historical material reaching back to the commencement of logging in WA in 1840, including the analysis of three Royal Commissions (1903; 1922; 1955) that have been held into logging and forestry issues in WA since the original Swan River colony was founded in 1829. Finally, 30 interviews were conducted with a range of internal and external stakeholders of two organisations- *The Liberals for Forests* (LFF) (who were campaigning for the cessation of logging in native forests in WA) and the *Timber Communities Australia* (TCA) (who represent the interests of the WA forest industries and their member organisations). These two organisations are 'countermovements' or NPOs with diametrically opposite views as to how the native forests in WA should be managed.

The interviews were conducted with policy network members identified from the newspaper analysis and a focus group of university Environment Studies students. The interview questions were a mix of open-ended and closed questions. Schumaker's framework was described to the interviewees who were then asked to rate the political effectiveness of the two organisations being studied. The results of this phase of the doctoral research are discussed below.

## RESEARCH SETTING

The area containing the native forests in the south-west of WA is banded by the 1000 mm rainfall line in the west and the 250mm line to the east- approximately a line running from Perth to Albany (see map below) (Green, 1984: 1). This area of higher rainfall is only a very small proportion of the State. The Darling Range (just 700m in height) forms the spine of the area and serves as a watershed, with nearly 20 small rivers running to the coast. The total population in WA is about 1.2 million people with most residing in the capital city of Perth and its surrounding suburbs (ABS, 1998). Approximately 19,000 people live in the south-west region containing the majority of the remaining

native forests, especially the old-growth karri and yellow tingle trees. This is roughly the area bounded by the coast and a line between Albany and Busselton (see map below). (ABS, 1996)

**Map of WA**



In exploring the various reasons for the lengthy duration of the conflict over the use of WA's native forests, and the bitterness of the debate, the Routleys (1973: 5) have suggested that it lies in the small size of the native forests in WA, and Australia generally. Table 1 below confirms the small coverage of forests in Australia, compared to other large countries, about the time the political debate over logging of native forests commenced in WA in the early 1970s. Table 2 shows that the forest areas in most of the listed countries has reduced by the mid-1990s. Although Australia's situation seems to have improved due to a change in the definition of what is a 'forest' by the Government, it is still significantly lower than the other selected countries. This view as to why native forests had become an important public issue over such a long period in Australia was reinforced by a high profile WA environmentalist in her interview for my research:

*And because forests occupy such a small part of the area of Western Australia, 1% of the area of Western Australia, um...only South Australia is worse off, the national average is 5%, ...maybe forests in Western Australia are more important to Western Australians, because there are so little of them.*

**Table 1- A Summary of Forest Areas in Selected Countries (1971)**

Region	Area of Forest (mill. ha)	Total Area (mill. ha)	% Forest Area
<b>Australia</b>	35	768	<b>5</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	518	846	<b>57</b>
<b>Canada</b>	443	997	<b>44</b>
<b>China</b>	77	956	<b>9</b>
<b>India</b>	62	329	<b>22</b>
<b>USA</b>	308	980	<b>33</b>

(Source: FAO, 1971)

**Table 2- A Summary of Forested Areas in Selected Countries (1990s)**

Region	Area of Forest (mill. ha)	Total Area (mill. ha)	% Forest Area
<b>Australia<sup>1</sup></b>	44	768	<b>5.7</b>
<b>Brazil<sup>2</sup></b>	565	846	<b>67</b>
<b>Canada<sup>3,12</sup></b>	244	997	<b>24</b>
<b>India<sup>4</sup></b>	52	329	<b>16</b>
<b>USA<sup>5</sup></b>	217	980	<b>22</b>

(Sources: 1,3 & 5- ECE/FAO 2000 62; 2 & 4- FAO 1994 217)

**Figure 1- Changes in WA Jarrah timber distribution between 1829-2000**



(Source: Rundle, 1979: 224)

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The interview question in relation to the stakeholder evaluation of the two organisations using Schumaker's framework produced three clear results. Firstly, all interviewees found the framework easy to understand and helpful as a way of suggesting the effectiveness of the two groups being studied. One outcome of this research is that the Schumaker model seemed a more useful framework for evaluating individual policy *proposals*, rather than trying to evaluate the organisation's efforts as a *whole*. This insight is exemplified by an example provided by a TCA staff member:

*I mean we did have a little success last week, for example, we put just over a particular local issue... we put to the Government that the town of Pemberton is likely to be a casualty after the year 2003 with the karri cut back, was... after 18 months nothing had happened with the promised plan for Pemberton ...it was not forthcoming, we put a 4-point action plan to the Premier. Well, on that particular instance we are at level 5, but overall....*

The second finding was that it was very difficult to get a rating or response for the political effectiveness of the TCA and LFF from the politicians who were interviewed. They talked around the question rather than directly giving their view of the level of political influence for each group. This response was common across all political parties and would suggest that they aren't willing to give any considered response as to what they think are successful tactics or the most effective organisations. It may be that they want to downplay the policy role of social advocacy or interest groups external to the parliamentary process.<sup>13</sup>

The following brief excerpts from the interviews give a feeling for this evasiveness:

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

Interviewer: To both groups?

*Liberal Cabinet Minister: To both, right, but whether it be by meetings, by letters, phone calls, right, ready access. Two, I appreciated their preparing and giving full information.*

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

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

*is by no means finished and that is the reason why I am running on another term because I want to at least be here until the new forest management plans in 2004 when we finally get out of those contracts.*

Finally, the results from these interviews using Schumaker's framework confirm the approach of Connolly *et al.* that an organisation's effectiveness is constructed differently by different stakeholders in the policy network. Generally, interviewees from an organisation downplayed the impact on the policy process by their own organisation but enlarged the impact of their opposition group. However, even within the same organisation there were different response levels suggested for their own organisation. I have provided below some small sections from the interviews that confirm this observation.

#### Comments on their own organisation

**LFF supporter:** *Certainly if you are looking at the influence that we had on government policy, while access [level 1] certainly wasn't a problem anything past putting the forests on the policy agenda I'm afraid didn't appear too successful. What, why that was the case? I don't know. I think we faced an extraordinarily stubborn and out of touch government. But they were extremely unwilling to place our concerns on their policy agenda but more accurately what they did was place our concerns on their PR agenda. And so while they didn't actually move in terms of government policy ...they had, the moves were negligible, our, and if I can sort of put it back to how you actually measure our effectiveness, the fact that the government just in the year 2000 spent over half a million dollars on public relations purely on the forest issue I think gives us some comfort that we were reasonably successful. I think if we had received no response from the government then we weren't being effective.*

**LFF board member:** *Um (long pause) well having... whether we just take ah Liberals for Forests as by itself or whether you include all the other green groups having forced the change in the RFA, um I'd say somewhere between [level] 3 and 4 -policy and output in terms of ah the government took into account the concerns of the people um, not enough obviously for everybody's liking, but nevertheless having a key to change it would have to be in that level.*

**LFF worker:** *Well ...yes, we have had access [level 1], full stop. One, I guess yes it was on the agenda they made those minor changes, to the RFA and minor changes to policy so I guess there was a little bit it went to in some measures it went to number 5, initially<sup>14</sup>, but since then nothing.*

**TCA supporter:** *Well yeah, Timber Communities of Australia would have to be at level 1, now you say a willingness of government to hear an organisation's*

*concerns, I mean - if I is the timber industry they have heard their concerns alright, plenty of times but they haven't done anything other than offer some compensation which has never ever become a reality anyway.*

**TCA supporter:** *So from our perspective I suppose the, in terms of, we have had, we even struggle to get access responsiveness [level 1]. The agenda, I suppose we are reactive in a way is that the issue is already on the agenda and certainly we have been sort of down on line one really...*

**TCA worker:** *I know, but it is difficult for me to say, I don't ... we are not at 5 overall, 'output responsiveness' .... well we are certainly at [level] 2, we have got agenda responsiveness - to adopt the organisation's concerns - well, you know, I'd put us at about 2 and a half, to be honest with you.*

Comments on the opposition organisation or countermovement:

**LFF supporter:** *Well because they work hand in glove with industry and ministries working hand in glove with Michael Chaney (Wesfarmers Pty Ltd) and Dennis Cullity (Sotico Pty Ltd), they work in concert so that it is all coordinated, or that is the way it certainly appears. ...I mean they have got the ear of government...at the highest level.*

**LFF supporter:** *I think they went right through to impact responsiveness [level 5].*

**LFF worker:** *Oh, well they have had access, certainly been on the agenda, the government have listened to them, and I guess where we are now, the fact that they are still logging means that they're still have an impact. [level 5]*

**TCA supporter:** *Oh yeah, the only thing is that I wouldn't be prepared to say publicly what I know is going on behind the scenes, but you would have to say that they [LFF/Greens] have won every round and that at this stage the government is listening totally to them ... it has been admitted to us by some senior government ministers that they acted before they understood. They didn't understand. They have now spent a lot more time in the forest - a lot more time studying what the foresters are actually doing, and they said, we acted rather quickly.*

**TCA supporter:** *...and well the Liberals for Forests are right up to number five within a few months.*

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

*Senior union official:* [long pause] ... I reckon they are both at 2, both at 2, I don't think either of them has won resoundingly the higher level of responsiveness.

*Businessman:* I'd say about [level] three [for TCA] and the conservationists [LFF] about [level] four.

*Businesswoman:* Well, they have [both] probably gotten up to about level 4 - output responsiveness - or where the Government is willing enough to implement an organisation's concerns - they have actually - whether it was a willingness or not, they have implemented or they have been aware that they need to implement an organisation's concerns because they have made some changes.

*Newspaper journalist:* It is difficult to judge, I mean in some respects I think the impact responsiveness [level 5]... it is at a stalemate position. I think they are fairly equally matched, the forest debate is a tricky one, if I can maybe suggest another angle what I'm trying to say, .... the issue of land clearing, big issue, huge issue, it should be immediately acted on because of the way our environmental bodies work, it isn't.

*Radio journalist:* So in answer to your question in terms of TCA... I don't think the government adopted their concerns, I think it was more like they had placed their concerns on their policy agenda, so it would probably come down to 2.

**Interviewer:** And it sounds like what you are saying is that with the Green groups, if they haven't been able to have any response from either side [level 1]?

*Radio journalist:* No, no yeah no, you can get that from X [green activist], I mean she was locked out of Labor decision making at various times, and was regarded as a massive problem.

**Interviewer:** Is that because they thought that she didn't represent community interest, or the AWU had more power?

*Radio journalist:* Yeah, that it [logging of native forests] was a Greenies issue, and not a widespread community issue,.....

## CONCLUSION

The results reported above on the usefulness of the framework put forward by Schumaker confirm the approach of Connolly *et al* - that there is no one common construct of the organisational or political effectiveness of social advocacy organisations. As Drucker (1997: 97) has highlighted in his differentiation of efficiency and effectiveness “efficiency is doing the thing right and effectiveness is doing the right thing.” In our research setting, stakeholders had different views of what was the right ‘thing’ to be done by the LFF and the TCA. This is probably due to each stakeholder only having a partial view of the total operations of each organisation and their advocacy activities.

The Schumaker framework has proven to be a useful one for exploring the impact on the policy process of the two organisations being studied. The Schumaker framework would be even more useful if it was used to analyse the impact of particular organisational policy proposals rather in this case where it was used for stakeholders to give an overall impression of an organisation’s effectiveness over a number of years.

These two outcomes of this research have a wider applicability to NPOs than just advocacy organisations. For service nonprofits, for example, the understanding that NPOs operate in a network of stakeholders who may have different ways of evaluating their effectiveness is critical for the success of its strategic and business planning. One way to operationalise this information would be to:

- identify those organisations seen as critical external stakeholders to the NPO.
- identify the key staff member of this external stakeholder.
- identify the measures used by this staff member in evaluating the NPO’s effectiveness.

An important factor arising from this research was the problem of stakeholders trying to identify an influence order (or causality) in the effectiveness or impact of the organisation’s policy proposals being studied. That is, what activities of a SMO caused the government to react (or to resist action) in certain ways. Another difficulty raised by interviewees is one that follows the suggestion of Banks (1972: 17) that the efforts of advocacy organisations may be historically specific. This is similar to an earlier suggestion from Heberle (1951: 118) that these groups are driven by the ‘problem of political generations’. These authors would argue that the construction of effectiveness of a particular organisation would differ over time and with the values of the enveloping popular and political cultures and values of that time. To try and further explore this change in perception of effectiveness would require a longitudinal study rather than the cross-sectional one as used in this project.<sup>15</sup> A far harder issue to try and operationalise into this research using Schumaker’s rational framework of policy development is the premise of Marcus (1991: 196) that “human endeavours may well be governed more by emotional processes than by rational or cognitive processes”. Certainly, this was

one factor identified by a number of the interviewees when they generally discussed the native forest logging issue and their perceptions of organisational effectiveness.

Finally, the development of the modern environment movement in Australia since the 1970s has paralleled that of the US and Western European movements in their focus on the logging of old growth forests and the new public values implicit in suggested alternative uses of these resources, such as eco-tourism. (Papadakis, 1993: 2) The results of this research into the social construction of effectiveness should be of interest to Australian and overseas advocacy organisations campaigning not only on forest issues, but on other major environmental issues as well. A key message to these social advocacy organisations is that they need to find ways to structure their tactics and public messages in different ways for different key stakeholders in their particular policy network.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ALP - Australian Labor Party  
Greens - The Greens (Australia)  
LFF - Liberals for the Forests  
RFA - Regional Forest Agreement  
TCA - Timber Communities Australia

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit organisations are allowed to make surpluses, but the key distinction between them and public companies is that any surpluses are not allowed to be distributed to their members or staff. (Lyons, 2001: 5).

<sup>2</sup> US and European literature use the term social movement organisation (SMO) in the same sense as I use advocacy organisation .

<sup>3</sup> As an example, the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) is a NPO and part of the broader Australian women's movement.

<sup>4</sup> The debate over the logging and woodchipping of native forests in Australia has been traced by Dargavel (1995) to the seminal publication in 1973 by the Routleys of *The Fight for the Forests*.

<sup>5</sup> In most other recent Australian environment campaigns (eg opposition to whaling, the damming of the Franklin River (Tasmania), mining on Fraser Island (Queensland), mining in Kakadu National Park) the issue was resolved over a period of usually 5-10 years by government implementing some form of negotiated consensus outcome and the conflict over policy then cooled. For examples of particular Australian environmental campaigns see Drew Hutton and Sue Connors (1999) *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*.

<sup>6</sup> The proposed approach is similar to that taken by Gamson (1990: 36) in his study of 53 US advocacy organisations . In his study, the 'perception' of success was coded for responses from 4 different views: historians, the advocacy organisation itself, its antagonist organisation and the advocacy organisation's level of satisfaction with its success

<sup>7</sup> The classic sociological study on this topic is: C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (1956) while in an Australian context Higley *et al* identified media owners, financial institutions and trade unions as important strategic constituencies or 'elite' (John Higley *et al.* (eds) *Elites in Australia*, 1979: 224).

<sup>8</sup> Gamson's study followed his 53 organisations over the incredible time period of 1800- 1945.

<sup>9</sup> Goodman and Pennings, *op. cit.*, p 163.

<sup>10</sup> Terry Connolly *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p 214.

<sup>11</sup> It is possible that these external stakeholders may have a collection of other *ad hoc* measures that they have internalized over time. Drucker utilizes such a list of process-type measures when he

names the Salvation Army as “by far the most effective [nonprofit] organisation in the US.” His principal criteria are: clarity of mission, innovative ability, clear definition of results and willingness to measure performance.

<sup>12</sup> Canada’s forest resources have been dramatically reduced since the 1970s figures due to the actual measurement of remote forest resources in Canadian provinces that had previously only been estimated. (ECE/FAO, 2000: 62)

<sup>13</sup>The evasiveness may also have been due to worries about the confidentiality of their comments. The Liberal politician refused to sign the standard university ethics clearance before the interview and only agreed to complete it at the conclusion of the interview.

<sup>14</sup> This refers to the Court Government’s backdown on its original RFA proposal within 12 weeks of releasing it.

<sup>15</sup>Tilly (1963: 62) undertook a historical comparison of various aspects of the French counter-revolutionary district of Southern Ajou (Cholet) and the most revolutionary district (Saumur) as a way of examining the counter-revolution in the Vendee in the French Revolution period from 1793 to 1799.