People, power and the state:

Performativity and the Traveston Crossing Dam

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I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land in which the study was conducted.
Abstract

This dissertation uses a case study of the recently proposed dam on the Mary River at Traveston Crossing in South-East Queensland to consider how individuals can become empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere. The theoretical framework chosen to guide the analysis is an adaptation of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity (1997) that I refer to as political performativity. I also draw on social movement theory and media theory to examine how the processes of performativity help explain the practices involved in the public sphere actions taken to stop the Queensland Government’s proposed dam. The case study demonstrates that the initial speech acts of the state government’s announcement, and the way in which these were carried out, impacted on the life worlds of people involved. The protesters’ actions were not only symbolic of their struggle but also part of the creation of an alternative life world vastly different to that imposed upon them through the various speech acts of the Queensland Government. Lessons for the future include the development of more conscious strategies for activists in public sphere actions. Potential research resulting from this study includes a closer examination of the relationship between speech acts, emotions and public sphere action. The usefulness of political performativity in understanding emotions, public sphere action and power may better be served through participatory research methodologies. Further research directions are outlined.
This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: ________________________________

Date: ___________
Acknowledgments

The completion of my research project was made possible by the support of many people.

I feel indebted to the participants who gave to my project. They offered their time without question during incredibly stressful periods in their lives. I may not have presented all the stories of participants in this thesis, but all their stories form the basis of my conclusions. I thank them for their contribution. I hope I have given their stories the justice they deserve.

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Introduction

No cause is left but the most ancient of all, the one, in fact, that from the beginning of our history has determined the very existence of politics, the cause of freedom versus tyranny.

– Hannah Arendt

1.1 Citizens, the Mary River and a problematic public sphere

This study is about the people who will decide the fate of an Australian river. The Queensland Government is planning to build a dam on the Mary River and there is widespread opposition to the proposal. In this study, I tell the story of how a community, marginalised from political and planning decision-making processes, has sought to gain public support through various public sphere actions in order to halt the proposed mega-dam at Traveston Crossing on the Mary River in southern Queensland. My research interest explores how marginalised people can resist the proposed actions of government through enlisting power through public sphere processes. In this study, I have used the proposed dam on the Mary River as a case study through which to apply the theory of performativity to explore how the protest action developed over time. This approach accounts for individual action whilst acknowledging the social forces constraining that very action. The initial proposal for the Traveston Crossing Dam would see nearly 1000 properties resumed, large tracts of agricultural land inundated and the habitat of threatened river-dwelling species such as the lungfish destroyed. The announcement was effectively a decision to proceed with the project – it was not a decision to proceed with studies to determine its feasibility. This has played a major part in the politics of the dam, and resistance to the idea based in local,
regional, state and international communities. A map of the region is presented below. It shows the dam site in relation to the township of Gympie and also the proximity to the coastal communities of the Sunshine Coast.

![Figure 1. The locality of the Traveston Crossing Dam (Source: Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water)](image)

The map indicates the size of the proposed dam, which is comparable to the area of Sydney Harbour. The yellow and pink shading indicates the inundation zone of the dam. The local township of Kandanga, the Bruce Highway and the farming communities along the river would be impacted by the proposal. This dam would be placed in the middle reaches of the Mary River.
The predominant way people have resisted the proposal is through public sphere engagement. This tactic was the primary opportunity left open to affected residents and other concerned people after the initial decision to dam the river was made by the Queensland Government in early 2006. The people of the Mary River Valley faced many challenges at the beginning of the campaign to stop the dam. They still do. In late 2008, the Queensland Government announced that the dam construction date would be delayed pending more environmental assessment work. However, this was seen by many as a political manoeuvre to limit the public sphere presence of the issue during a state election in March 2009. Irrespective of the real motive for the delay in the project, it has been noted in the press (Dunelvy & Gray, 2009) and on online protesters’ forums that the public sphere efforts of the people resisting the dam appear to have influenced the political decisions that led to the delay.

There are many recent changes to society that have helped the people resisting the dam. These changes affect the function of the public sphere as a site for social change, which in turn affects government policy. The first element that works in favour of the Save the Mary River cause is a relatively high but stable proportion of people concerned about environmental issues in Australia (Pakulski & Tranter, 2004). This concern peaked in 1990 but has remained relatively high compared with other public concerns in Australia. The second influential societal change is the introduction and further development of information communication technologies (ICT). This has brought huge benefits to the networking capacity of protesters as well as enabling far greater public sphere communication (Chadwick, 2003; Ester & Vinken, 2003; Scalmer, 2002; Meikle, 2002). Government has also embraced the new technologies in terms of a greater possibility of inclusion of the public in government activity. This has been facilitated by an increased public perception that ordinary citizens play a more central role in public participation and deliberation, particularly in environmental policy-making within liberal democratic governments (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992; Dobson & Bell,
2006; Dryzek, 2002; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). The Queensland Government, through its website, has acknowledged this greater involvement in the decision-making process as a central feature of its governance strategies.

On the flip side, there are increasing problems facing protesters in Australia. The routinisation of environmental concerns after 1990 has had an impact on people’s attitudes and motivation towards acting on environmental issues (Pakulski & Tranter, 2004). The tasks of caring for the environment have been taken over by governments and their agencies. An increase in the number of issues and, more importantly, a change in the types of concerns that demand public attention have impacted on public participation in environmental issues. Global trends in recent time have dominated the environment agenda. These have the tendency to make individuals feel ambivalent, disempowered or depressed about their role in the change process (Carter, 2007). The decline in membership of environmental interest groups also means that the power of these entities is questioned in political processes (Doyle, 2000). This is further undermined by the wane in government financial and other support (Hamilton & Maddison, 2007; Whelan, 2005). With falling environmental group membership and decreasing funding support from government, championing and challenging environmental issues have both become increasingly problematic.

There is another local issue confronting the Mary River activists. Both major political parties are committed to economic growth that is underpinned by population growth in South-East Queensland. The outcome of this policy is that major infrastructure needs to be planned and built to accommodate the new arrivals. As a result of the large-scale changes in land use, many of the existing residents need to be compensated for the land needed for infrastructure. This includes water supply infrastructure. There are a large number of people affected in the growth management of South-East Queensland
but residents resisting these developments do so in piecemeal ways. There is little coordination across issues to mount a general campaign against negative side-effects of growth. The piecemeal approach to resistance is linked to how compensation is provided for affected residents. The Australian Constitution only allows for compensation of loss for property value when the state resumes land for such purposes. The right of resumption of property is relevant to the Save the Mary River case study because this power was used to motivate residents to leave their property before formal approval was given for the dam. As will be shown in the thesis, the people resisting the proposal have felt the full power of the state in terms of the government’s property acquisition policy in the dam footprint.

Governments do not operate in isolation from corporations. Although the evidence is difficult to unravel, a number of residents in the Mary River region believe the links between big business and the government are a motive for constructing the dam. The power of large corporations in Australia to influence government decision-making on environmental matters through political donations has been a vexed issue since this practice expanded from the early 1970s (Tham, 2004; Bender, 2005). This, in tandem with the rise of neo-liberalism at the same time, has produced many changes in society that have created a problematic playing field for environmental activists. For example, the rise of right-wing think tanks as a counter movement to left-wing environmental movements has helped to shift the political landscape to the right in Australia and has ‘destabilised’ the dominance of the environmental movement in making gains during the years leading up to the late 1980s (Cahill, 2004).

The growing trend in Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPS) has changed the way activists speak out about environmental issues (Pring & Canan, 1996; Walters, 2003). Although laws were amended in Australia in 2005 to protect outspoken members of the public from being sued by corporations, the threat of
defamation writs is still being used strategically to silence dissent (Ogle, 2005; Queensland Environmental Defenders Office [EDO] 2008; Frew, 2005). The ongoing SLAPPs case by Gunns Limited against environmentalists is a stark reminder of the problems facing those who speak out against corporations in Australia. The environmentalists who are being sued are members of the Wilderness Society and private individuals. At the time of writing, there were a number of environmentalists who had settled out of court prior to the final case being heard (Williams, 2009). Gunns Limited is still suing seven of the original 20 individuals involved in the first writ. The damages claim totalled three million dollars for nine actions arising out of the campaign to protect Tasmania’s old-growth forests.

From a media perspective, an increase in the purported public engagement in government is more than matched by the rise in government public relations activity that effectively controls agenda-setting of media discourses (Davies 2008; Burton, 2008). Media production and control continue to be a source of issues for many environmentalist campaigns. The regular omissions in news coverage of discussion of issues linked to power and inequality tend either to be explained away as ‘market forces’ that prioritise what consumers want, or framed as the outcome of a contest between competing elite interests. Owners of mass media are involved in the production of discourses that privilege certain agendas to the exclusion of marginal or competing interests in liberal democrat countries (Davis, 2008). The rise of public relations has also affected corporations and public sphere activism. In order to manage their interests (and share prices), corporations have become adversarial and hostile to the interests of individuals and groups involved in environmental campaigns (Hager, 1999; Burton, 2008). Counter-campaigns have been initiated to quell the opposition to particular environmental activities of corporations.
From a sociological perspective, society has undergone recent changes. The rise of consumer culture, propagated through globalisation and mass communication technologies, has led to a shift from people being conceived of as consumers rather than citizens (Hamilton, 2004; McChesney, 1997, 1999, 2004). The notion that the products we purchase are more an indicator of our identity than other civic aspects of daily life is a change that has implications for environmentalism. One of the impacts of changes to conceptions of identity has been decreased public sphere participation in environmental issues (Barry, 2005; Dobson & Bell, 2006). The shift is related to the decline in social capital in Western societies, expressed as a decrease in citizen participation in informal and formal organisations interested in collective interests (Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Putnam, 1995, 2000). Other changes to the notion of the self referred to above also impact on the ability of environmental groups to further their cause. Recent changes in society have shifted people’s concerns from community and place towards an individualistic outlook on the world. Accompanying this shift is an ontological insecurity brought about by de-traditionalisation of societies and a world-view of global risk beyond the control of individuals (Buaman, 2007; Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1994)

This list is daunting. The sheer height and number of the hurdles that stand in the way of an individual, for example, resisting a proposed dam on the Mary River might seem overwhelming. Piecing together the story of how members of the community have engaged in various public sphere actions in order overcome some of these hurdles is the first aim of this thesis.

The second aim of the study is to focus on the processes through which citizens have attempted to challenge and change the nature of the power relations between themselves and the Queensland Government. To understand this process, I have adopted a theoretical approach that draws on the theory of performativity as proposed
by Butler (1997). In its original form, the approach is a way of explaining how individuals contest the notion of identity imposed upon them by those in power. The process of performativity, as proposed by Butler (1997), is essentially a war of words where the very actions of the words themselves create the things to which they refer. This idea is useful for my study for a number of reasons. First, it accounts for the processes through which individuals and groups are influenced by the creative power of words when used by those in positions of authority. In the context of the Save the Mary River case study, the power of words directly relates to their use by politicians to create the reality of the dam prior to its formal approval. Second, it acknowledges that citizens can, to use Butler’s (1997) term, resignify different meanings to the one imposed by those authorities by enacting a different and opposing world in the public sphere. Important in this action is the reiteration or repetition of the words that oppose the authority’s meanings. Third, Butler’s theory of performativity, in particular the reiteration of opposition, gives hope for individuals to effect change in their world. One of my arguments in this thesis is that reiteration is a process which can grow through collective action. The theory of performativity is not without practical and theoretical problems, however, and these will be discussed later.

In order to apply this theoretical approach to my research problem, I have modified Butler’s conception of performativity. In this study, I have called the modified approach ‘political performativity’. I will outline my reconceptualised notion in more detail in Chapter 2 and explain how I have applied this to my own research process in Chapter 3.

1.2 Research questions

The central research question at the heart of this thesis is: How can individuals be empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere? I have purposely chosen to focus on
citizen action because this may not necessarily be part of collective action. This distinction relates to the notion of performativity in that individuals may take action that is best defined or described by performativity, but which is not considered a collective act. However, these actions may facilitate a further act that can be considered collective. Power is integral in the actions of individuals as well as their collective responses. Hence I use the three subordinate research questions below to help me to explore these relationships.

As already mentioned, I will adopt a theoretical approach which I have termed ‘political performativity’ in the public sphere as the lens through which to examine the reconfiguration of power dynamics between disadvantaged groups and government. The framework will be introduced in this chapter and is more extensively developed in a later chapter. I have purposely defined the central research question in broad terms because of the scale of the phenomenon and the multidisciplinary approach I have adopted.

However, in order to make sense of this broad-based approach, I have identified three sub-questions to help guide the structure of my arguments in the thesis. Each question has a focus on one particular element of my research regime. The questions are as follows.

1. How have public announcements concerning the proposed dam on the Mary River shaped the forms of resistance to the project?
2. How have individual citizens strategically resignified the announcements in order to resist the proposed dam on the Mary River?
3. What is the role of resignification in the collective resistance to the proposed dam on the Mary River?
The first two questions enable a focus on how individuals actively engage in public sphere processes as a reaction to the speech acts of Queensland Government politicians and public officials. The findings of this element of my investigation are outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis. Each of these chapters focuses on a particular aspect of ‘political performativity’ that I will argue was significant in the resistance process. An analysis of the politics involved and the strategic resignification of public announcements has produced particular themes within the broad notion of political performativity, and helps to explain its relevance and usefulness as a theoretical tool.

The third sub-question enables me to explore how and why individual political performativity developed into collective action. This is important because the cultural process of how collective action starts and grows has been under-examined in social movement research (Jasper, 2007). Citizen action may be an individual act or a collective act. But because of the role of collectivity in protest movements, the role individual resignification plays is important to understand in order to determine the contribution of the individual in facilitating collective action. This is the focus of Chapter 7 and emerged through my analysis of individual political performativity, as I have outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

1.3 Setting the scene: The construction and destruction of the case for the dam

The context for this study involves a couple of key elements: first, the politics of water in the face of a drought prior to the election of 2006; and second, the discourse1 of water supply for South-East Queensland that follows on from the politics. One of the

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1 I refer to discourse here from a Foucauldian perspective. Although there are differences between Butler and Foucault on the notion of power Butler leans towards a post-structural perspective. See Butler (2001), Rose (2001) and Mills (2003).
major features of the public sphere contest that occurred after the decision to build the
dam centres on claims over scientific and technical knowledge. Although these aspects
are not the prime focus of this thesis, they are contextually important and are outlined
below. The sheer number of events and actions that took place in the public sphere
surrounding this issue precludes a full description in this section. The key events will be
outlined throughout the findings chapters of the thesis. For a chronological summary of
the political events that occurred, see Appendix A.

The initial announcement to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing near the
township of Gympie, 150 kilometres north of Brisbane, was made on 27 April 2006 by
the then premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie. After his flight across the Mary River,
Beattie held a press conference in Gympie to announce the dam. Also present at that
press conference was the then Minister for Natural Resources and Water, Henry
Palaszczuk, and Cooloola Shire Mayor, Mick Venardos. These people did not set foot
on the dam site and did not directly speak to the communities affected. The Mayor was
the only representative present at the ‘media launch’ of the project.

There were a number of ways the announcement was made public. Television news
crews and other media reporters were present. The stories of the proposed dam were
reported on radio and online newspaper sites as well as by ABC News Online. A
government press release was issued on the day of the Premier’s tour of the Mary
River Valley. Later that evening, broadcasts of the Premier’s announcements were
aired on all television channels locally and in Brisbane. Newspapers reported the event
the next day.

The key aspects of the announcements offered by media releases and press reports
were: the dam would be as a ‘mega dam’; it would be 1.5 times the size of Sydney
Harbour; it was needed for water supply for growth in South-East Queensland; almost
900 properties would be affected; the exact details of who would be affected was not known; residents would be fairly compensated; social and environmental impacts were factored into the decision to dam the river and benefits outweighed costs; the exact location of the dam wall would need to be assessed; and 150,000 mega litres of water would be drawn from the dam each year. The nature of initial announcements was to set the scene as to how information would be forthcoming from the Queensland Government for the duration of the study.

The underlying reasons for the dam were commonly known among residents in the Mary River Valley. An election was looming and the premier needed a large project on which to hang his construction hat to show he was doing something in the face of a growing water crisis. A *Courier-Mail* editorial some months after the dam announcement expressed the opinion that reflected many of the residents’ views in the Mary River Valley:

> Despite its commanding margin, the Beattie Government appeared vulnerable in the wake of three by-election losses since the 2004 election. In addition, it faced mounting administrative and policy problems including ... [among many other public service issues] ... a pending water crisis blamed on poor government planning; and management of South-east Queensland’s population growth ... Thus there appeared to be widespread doubts about the Government’s competence and control over events as well as perceived deterioration in the quality of government services. (Voters Need to See, 2006)

The rationale for the dam, as stated by the Premier, was not accepted by the local people. The dam was touted as a solution to the water crisis. However, the date when existing dams were projected to run out of water was well before the completion date...
for the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. The dam proposal in 2006 was a political construction designed to show the Brisbane population that the government was doing something about the water crisis. And it worked – Premier Peter Beattie was re-elected in 2006. A central problem for protesters evident in the public sphere debates during the election campaign was the ‘commonsense’ conclusion regarding the need for another dam to supply water for South-East Queensland. The state government’s facilitation of the disciplinary power\textsuperscript{2} of the water supply discourse, using neo-liberal ideology, has been a major impediment in overturning the decision to dam the Mary River. The state government used the publicly accepted idea that the only way to solve the water crisis facing South-East Queensland was to build another dam. Based on previous history, this has been the usual approach to solving the water needs of the population. It is still a dominant discourse in water supply solutions. Even in late 2008, the Australian newspaper in an online opinion piece stated: ‘Like most Australian capitals, Brisbane is long overdue for a major new dam, and the Traveston Crossing Dam should proceed as soon as possible.’ The fact that this statement can be made in the face of large changes in water planning, given present scarcity and future climate change, is testimony to the power of the dam discourse. The state government contributed to this through its public relations activities, which promoted the need for the dam at the height of the recent drought. This strategy was one of the main political opportunities for the incumbent Labor government, given the approaching election in late 2006. In tandem with this discourse, it was also important to understand the impact of the centralisation and quasi-privatisation of water utilities on the dam decision. The South-east Queensland Water Strategy (Queensland Water Commission, 2008) outlines a methodology for determining a mix of supply and demand management options to ensure adequate water supplies into the future. This strategy indicates that

\textsuperscript{2} Mentioned here as outlined by Foucault: With disciplinary power, each person disciplines him or herself. The basic goal of disciplinary power is to produce a person who is docile. This is achieved through the idea of the technologies of the self. These are the specific practices by which subjects constitute themselves as subjects within and through systems of power, and which often seem to be either ‘natural’ or imposed from above (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, pp. 134–135).
the need for such large volumes of water in the future suggests it is difficult to make a return from investment from large-scale demand management. Thus, centralising the supply of water in order to make a return on invested infrastructure has been a guiding force in the decision on how to satisfy water needs. The quasi-government-owned water utilities can make returns from their investments in water supply options such as dams by charging consumers. On the other hand, the water supply option of demand management (such as rainwater tanks and stormwater capture systems) tends to be smaller in scale and decentralised. As such, they are not preferred by the utilities because it is more difficult to obtain a return on investment. Additionally, large companies can profit from the construction of large dams. In short, the decentralised nature of demand management and rainwater tanks does not favour big business.

Powerful private and public interests can shape the ways in which discourses around water are produced across the multiple public spheres of South-East Queensland. This idea is based on Fraser’s (1990) notion of overlapping arenas. For example, in Brisbane the need for a secure water supply was high in 2006 and 2007 when dam levels in that region were low. The media in Brisbane supported water supply solutions even if they came at great cost to some communities. In other areas, such as the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, where dam levels were high, the media were less agreeable to the idea of securing water supplies at a high cost to their communities. The relevant point here about power and discourse was that the Courier-Mail was a Queensland-based newspaper and thus overlapped with regional media. It framed the issue as a large collective problem for the region to solve. The Queensland Government’s ‘access’ to Courier-Mail reporters also helped to promote the need for a large-scale solution to the large-scale problem. The self-evident truth of the need to secure the water supply for South-East Queensland through the construction of a large, centralised water supply infrastructure was facilitated by these features of the public sphere.
Brisbane-based media outlets have tended to frame the Mary River issue as a Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) concern. Here I am using the idea of ‘news as frame’ (Gitlin, 2003). The water supply issues raised by the dam on Mary River did not topple the dominant discourse on water supply. This is despite a federal Senate inquiry into the alternative water supply options for South-East Queensland. The stories that tend to be given to the consumers of mainstream media in Brisbane – as in other places – are those that fit within accepted news frames of ‘commonsense’ solutions to the problem.

Despite the prevalence of a dominant discourse, there have been opportunities for other voices to emerge during the course of the debate. The Senate Inquiry into Alternative Water Supplies for South-East Queensland was initiated to place public sphere pressure on the Queensland Government. Leading figures in the scientific community were allowed to present their findings.

Stuart White from the Institute for Sustainable Futures, based at the University of Technology, Sydney, said in 2007 that ‘the suite of measures being implemented by the government, without Traveston Dam, will ensure water security for South-East Queensland until 2030’. His calculations were based on the Queensland Water Commission’s figures. He also contradicted then Water Minister Anna Bligh’s public reasons for the dam. Bligh said prior to the inquiry that the Traveston Crossing Dam was a long-term strategy. However, as White points out:

[The] development of the Traveston Crossing scheme has been facilitated by its inclusion in the Water Amendment Regulation (No. 6), which is in the words of the regulation ‘a water supply emergency regulation’ (Part 8, cl. 1). The Traveston Crossing scheme is part of the Government’s drought response legislation and is therefore by their [sic] own admission a drought
response measure. If as Ms Bligh states, this is not the case, the legislation is misleading. (White, 2007, p. 2)

Despite the criticism from White, the government has pressed on regardless.

This Senate Inquiry had no formal influence on the approval process and was instigated by the then federal opposition. However, the federal government is part of the approval process. Any development in Australia that requires an environmental impact study at the state level, and that also has an impact on matters of national environmental significance under federal legislation, needs to be assessed by the federal government. This process will be explained later in the thesis. However, what is relevant to the point made here is that the issues highlighted in the media during the Senate inquiry – and indeed throughout the campaign – inform and influence the process of approval to some degree.

The potential loss of threatened and endangered species as a result of the dam has received not only local attention from scientists but also international interest. Professor Jean Joss, a prominent scientist who studies the ecology of the lungfish, was quoted by local and national media. Here is a Sunshine Coast Daily article written by Carolyn Tucker that sums up her opinion on the proposed impacts of the dam:

International anger is mounting over the Traveston dam, with more than 100 scientists from around the world writing to the State and Federal Governments to register their protest … Scientists say the Mary and Burnett Rivers are the lungfish’s only natural habitats and if its breeding grounds are destroyed, answers to some of the secrets of evolution will be lost forever. Professor Joss said the Paradise provides ample evidence that the Traveston dam will have disastrous consequences. 'Quite apart
from the fact that the Paradise Dam is currently losing rather than accumulating water, the very extravagant fish lift constructed at taxpayer’s expense to “save the lungfish’ is useless for assisting lungfish spawning’,” she said. (Tucker, 2006a)

Jean Joss refers to the Paradise Dam on a nearby river that is the natural habitat for the lungfish. The abovementioned failed fish ladder (the ‘fish lift’) is subject to a court case in 2009, where environmentalists are claiming that the dam and the mitigation strategies fail to comply with the conditions under which the dam was approved. The dam was approved under the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC). The Mary River Dam will have an identical fishway. If the Paradise Dam mitigation measures are proved to have failed, then the mitigation measures planned for the Traveston Crossing Dam are placed under a cloud of doubt. This would mean that Jean Joss’s concerns are indeed valid, and assessment of the impacts of the Traveston Crossing Dam would not favour its proponents.

Approval for the project under the federal legislation is yet to occur. At the time of writing (mid-2009), assessment of the proposal by the federal government had not formally begun.

As the public issue progressed, it became apparent that the various public and collective ways in which people sought to resist the political decision to dam the river had varying degrees of success. The issue is ongoing at the time of writing this thesis. However, irrespective of the eventual outcome of the dispute (dam/no dam), I will demonstrate that the resistance has been effective on a number of levels.
1.4 Theoretical framework: Performativity, the public sphere and the case study

The key aspects of the theoretical framework are based on the theory of performativity and will be applied through a case study methodology. The influences on the modifications I have made to Butler’s theory of performativity have come from several sources: the phenomenology of emotions, in particular Merleau-Ponty’s (1946) work; recent work in protest movement theory; and media and cultural studies, with a focus on the relations between media and performativity. My rationale for choosing this approach was outlined in the first section of this chapter. Essentially, it evolved as I came to realise the need for an appropriate analytical framework to explain the processes in which I was involved when I became involved in the campaign to Save the Mary River case study.

I am reminded of two theorists who have guided my thinking around micro method and macro perspective, spanning all aspects of my theoretical framework. From Law (2004), I gained an understanding of the ‘messiness’ of social science method. Specifically, he claims that ‘the mess’ we often observe in data collection and measurement might actually reflect the reality of the world. It is a world that cannot necessarily be reduced and ordered according to the methods of social science. From Flyvbjerg (2001), I have learnt the usefulness of the Aristotelian term ‘phronesis’, which helps describe and guide the political process of knowledge production in the social sciences. Phronesis is variously translated as prudence or practical wisdom. It is from this broad base that I embraced the framework I outline here.

1.4.1 Arriving at the theoretical framework

During the early part of this research project, I adopted a theoretical approach that was quite different from the framework I eventually used. Initially, I was interested in
investigating the relationship between knowledge and democratic participation. In particular, I was concerned with how people become politically active with respect to the way the depth of participants’ knowledge related to their level of engagement in political action. I planned to use phenomenography (Martin & Booth, 1997) to explore the possible relationships. This approach is a useful way of understanding both deep and surface learning, and has been used to analyse people’s understanding of their relationship with the environment (Loughland, 2002). The rationale for choosing this framework lies in the possibility that activism may be linked to the knowledge gained by citizens about the impact of a campaign on their lives.

However, after conducting pilot interviews, I quickly realised it was only a partial explanation of the phenomenon of citizen engagement in political action. In the first few interviews, I could see that the personal dimensions of social impact and the reaction of citizens manifested in various ways in the public sphere were linked in some way. The personal impact on individuals from the first announcement that a dam would be built had an emotional element that made people feel compelled to act. Was it a natural desire to resist change? Perhaps.

But I perceived that the effect on people was not simply because their homes and land would be taken away and/or they might suffer financial loss. There was something about the way the announcements were made that had an effect on people. By this, I mean that there seemed to be a reaction to the words of the politicians, a reaction to the mere sighting of politicians and the intent of their announcements. The words seemed to become the weapons that inflicted the injustice of the proposal upon the residents of the region. I confirmed my intuitive conclusions when I recited some of the statements of Premier Peter Beattie and his successor, Anna Bligh, back to interviewees. The responses from the interviewees were remarkably strong. Anger, frustration, determination, resentment, as well as pain and sadness were some of the
responses I noticed. It seemed as though their responses were a bodily reaction to the words of the announcements. In some cases, interviewees acknowledged that the statements were the reason why they were protesting against the proposed dam.

From this understanding, I started the search for a theoretical approach through which to 'make sense' of my observations of citizen action and reaction in the public sphere. One of the key reasons for choosing performativity as a theoretical idea was that it rests largely on the notion that 'words can wound'. It seemed like an appropriate starting point to help me to understand what was happening in the Mary River Valley.

I was also guided by the work of Payne (2005), from the environmental education field. Adapting Payne’s ideas, the speech acts noted above can be read as text whereby the meanings of actions can be reduced to written forms and thus analysed in terms of a critical appraisal of activism. Payne argues that ‘while organic (human) body(ies) and material culture might be mentioned in such texts, the sensing/acting body’s presence and (partial) “unknowingness” is rarely examined, but methodologically assumed to be accessible and textually representable via fairly conventional but increasingly versatile means’. He calls for researchers to foreground the ‘primacies of practice and social action they call for in interpreting human embodied agency’ (Payne, 2005, p. 417). This perspective guided my appraisal of the case presented to me in the Mary River Valley.

1.4.2 Performativity: The first aspect of the theoretical framework

Performativity refers to the social process in which a verbal or textual proposition constitutes the object to which it refers. This proposition is called ‘the speech act’. A
speech act brings into being the very thing to which it refers. ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’ is an example commonly given to explain performativity. Butler’s (1997) approach explains how people do things to others with words through the reiterative power of discourse, and how this is contested in the public sphere.

This theoretical idea can be viewed as a parallel development of a Foucauldian perspective on discourse and truth in the spoken word (see Foucault, 1971). However, it is distinguished from Foucault’s work by a shift away from a representational understanding of social phenomenon to a performative understanding. Performativity does not attempt to describe things that represent power, but instead reveals a process of how power is embodied through speech. From such a perspective, the individual has power to resignify the initial speech act through speech acts that counter the original speech act. This is termed resignification. Resignifying speech acts is a form of resistance that attempts to bring into being the preferred reality of marginalised individuals. In Butler’s (1997) notion of performativity, she identifies that resignification is about bringing into being a new or different identity to that that is imposed upon someone.

The theory of performativity helps to explain how socially excluded individuals and groups are able to challenge disciplinary and state power through the processes of the public sphere. At the centre of this theory is the age-old social science problem of agency in the face of disciplinary and state power. That is, how can an individual (or group of individuals?) effect change in a seemingly insurmountable social and political system through public sphere participation? To understand how individual and collective action influences power in the public sphere, a simple way of understanding the theory of performativity is to consider its four salient features.
The first of these is the notion that words can do things. People can do things to other people with words. There is a certain ‘doingness’ about words that is apparent in the effect words can have on people. The wounding effect of words, however, is not simply a result of the acceptance of a meaning of a particular word as defined by a dictionary. For instance, an insult is more to do with the (historical) relations between people than the pure meaning of a particular word as defined by external sources. Thus, there are important contextual issues that shape the effect of words upon the receiver. In short, words do things to people – words can wound (Butler, 1997).

Second, words can create something that previously did not exist. Butler’s (1997) notion of ‘excitable speech’ outlines a political process of how oppressed minority groups are given certain identities and disempowered through the speech acts of dominant institutional powers. Examples of this type of speech act are the terms ‘nigger’ and ‘queer’. I will be using Butler’s (1997) term ‘signification’ to describe this process.

Third, the signification of identity and the wounding effect of speech action can be challenged and redirected by the people who were targeted by the initial speech act. By this I mean that the words and their effect can be co-opted by the targeted person in order to ascribe new meaning to the words. Butler (1997) explains how the terms ‘queer’ and ‘nigger’ have been turned into positive terminology for the previously negatively signified identity label. In this way, socially excluded groups can ascribe new meaning to words and identities that previously were considered disempowering and, in the latter case, racist. In line with Butler’s approach, I will be using the term ‘resignification’ to describe this process. Butler (1994, p. 33) reminds us that:

It is important to distinguish performance from performativity: the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject …
So what I'm trying to do is think about the performativity as that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names. Then I take a further step, through the Derridean rewriting of Austin, and suggest that this production actually always happens through a certain kind of repetition and recitation. (Butler, 1994, p. 33)

Finally, the process of resignification can be facilitated by collective action. People who are targeted by an initial speech act can re-attribute the act and its meanings, and thus create a new identity through reinforcement with the aid of collective action. Thus, a collective identity can occur through resistance to the original speech action. An important feature of this process is that resignification of a collective identity can be enhanced through positive engagement in the public sphere.

Butler’s theory of performativity has been criticised from many perspectives. For example, from a post-structural perspective, Mills (2003) argues that Butler over-emphasises the linguistic effects of the speech acts of individuals who are attempting to effect change in power relations. I will discuss these aspects in more detail in Chapter 2. There have also been a small number of empirically based studies that modify her original theory. These studies have been applied to cases that are not primarily about resistant identities. Based on this work, I have adopted Butler’s approach – with some modification – and applied it to help me to understand the Save the Mary River campaign. Political performativity is the term I will use throughout this thesis to denote the modified version of Butler’s original idea. This approach uses Butler’s notions of ‘iteration’ and ‘resignification’ but places more emphasis on the ‘life world’ of the subject. Instead of identity as the object that is brought into being, I use ‘life world’ as the ‘object’ of performativity. There are many interpretations of the term, ‘life world’ but in this study, I use it in a similar sense to Merleau-Ponty’s (1942)
phenomenological approach. Thus, I am reframing the idea of performativity to account for the critiques which have been levelled at it.

The life world, as defined by Merleau-Ponty (1942), is the process and outcome of how meaning is made in the world. Lived bodily experience prior to reflective representation or analysis is considered the basis of meaning. At the same time, the life world also refers to a horizon or background on which things appear to be made meaningful. This involves the individual as they are embedded in the cultural world and is thus more than an individual process of how things are made meaningful. It is also an intersubjective one. I will discuss these aspects in more detail in Chapter 2. However, before leaving this topic, Merleau-Ponty’s contribution to our understanding of perception can be useful for interpreting Butler’s post-structural approach. Through the notion of performativity, I will examine how people are being shaped by the life world through speech and other political actions in the public sphere, while at the same time individuals attempt to reshape their life world.

In adopting this approach, I will emphasise the historical and emotional context of the life world when using performativity as a lens through which to understand resistance. Individuals and groups attempting to resignify the initial speech acts of the announcement of the dam project, for example, resulted in a range of acts of resistance. In this study, I have analysed the ways in which people have resisted the idea of the proposed dam and have categorised these actions into themes in order to understand the overall research question. All of the themes I have identified relate to attempts by individuals to resignify a different future life world from the one imposed on them by the actions of the Queensland Government. The analysis examines the relationship between the initial speech acts of the government and the resignification processes of the citizens in resisting the proposed dam. Thus the themes are directly
related to the ways in which citizens have attempted to resignify public sphere speech actions to challenge the power of the state and its regulatory regimes.

The above account of performativity has similarities with a number of other theories about power and change. Foucault’s idea of govern mentality (Foucault, 1991), discourse analysis (Foucault 1980) and the micro-politics of resistance (Foucault, 1975) have all made important contributions to Butler’s (1997) concept of performativity as well as to my own modified form. Derrida’s (1978), notion of iterability is adopted by Butler in her later works, and makes a valuable contribution to performativity in general (Vasterling, 1999). Habermas's theory of communicative action bears a similarity to Butler’s ideas of performativity but differs in that the German theorist focuses on structural conditions which are needed for deliberation in the public sphere (Calhoun, 1995). The influence of Gramsci's notion of hegemony is also found in Butler’s performativity. Media framing theories (Hall, 1993, 1997) also bear similarity to Butler’s theory of performativity. However, the agency in Butler’s theory distinguishes it from media framing theory.

In this section, I have explained the important aspects of Butler’s (1997) theory of performativity. I also began to explain how I would adapt that theory and apply it to this project. The term ‘political performativity’ will be used to expand on Butler’s notion of performativity. The difference between political performativity and Butler’s performativity is the use of the life world of individuals, as opposed to identity, as the focus of change. I will detail political performativity theory in the literature review, specifically section 2.8. The reason for this is to fully explain Butler's theory of performativity and then critique it.
1.4.3 The public sphere: The second aspect of the theoretical framework

The definition and examination of the role and purpose of the public sphere have received considerable attention. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) offers a perspective that focuses on the necessary conditions for a genuine democracy. His concept of the public sphere describes a space where the private interests of citizens are communicated with the intention of affecting state power. In essence, it is a space where private and common interests of citizens influence state power by holding the state accountable for its actions. Habermas talks of the ‘bourgeois public sphere’, which consists of social spaces where individuals gather to discuss their public affairs and to rally against forms of social and public power of the state and other oppressive institutions. I prefer a different definition or depiction of the public sphere. Fraser (1990) identifies the public sphere as not being characterised by a level playing field. In this interpretation, private interests are not equally voiced or heard in the space of the public sphere. Habermas also does not clearly distinguish between public and private spheres and their relation to the state. Indeed, the idea that there is one public sphere is dispelled by Fraser (1990, 2007), who argues that the public sphere has multiple dimensions, albeit with vague boundaries, and is plagued by inherent power issues that limit entry and expression. For Fraser, a Habermasian view of the public sphere is inherently flawed as a vehicle for achieving public good outcomes because of its structural idealistic rational tendencies. Structural issues will always exist and cannot be solved before entry into the public spheres. I find Fraser’s rethinking of the idea of the public sphere more convincing, and I have adopted this as a guiding framework for my analysis.

This framework incorporates the idea of counter-publics in opposition to the state (Asen & Brouwer, 2001). From this perspective, state power can be challenged both by counter-publics that challenge the state directly, and by also a culturally created resistance that is mindful of the imbalances of power. Understanding oppositional communication
practices is vital for a deeper understanding of the power relations between the state and counter-publics (Palcweski, 2001).

Given that activists are well aware of the ‘tilted’ playing field, how do they engage with such an environment? Social movement literature offers a path for further development of Butler’s ideas. In this study, I have narrowed the scope of social movements to protest movements. The reason for this is that there are many social movements that do not use protest as a mode of social change. Recent developments in protest movements can be used to help understand the (in)effectiveness of public sphere action by the citizenry. Along with Armstrong and Bernstein (2008), the assumption about power in this study is that, first, the political and economic structures of society are not the primary residences of power. However, I do acknowledge that the people of the Mary River who have felt pressured to vacate their land may feel that the state has ultimate power. Second, there are multiple sources of power (the state does not have a monopoly on this in Western democratic countries). Third, until recently, protest movement theory viewed culture as a secondary phenomenon. The most significant development relevant to this study is the call for culture and emotions to play a more central role in explaining collective action (Jasper, 2007). These developments pave the way for using political performativity as an approach to understand protest action in the public sphere.

The case study: The third aspect of the theoretical framework

The third key aspect of understanding the theoretical framework I have adopted is the use of a single case study approach. This helps to organise the study and allows for a multidisciplinary approach to answer the research questions. It is important for this study because the key research problem concerns a large-scale phenomenon that crosses spatial, temporal and disciplinary boundaries. Using this approach presents both opportunities and constraints, which I will outline in greater detail in Chapter 3.
through the inherent features of the single case study. Increasingly, the single case study is becoming an accepted methodology (Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

This investigation is also a case study that can be considered as an ‘extreme case’ (Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Extreme cases occur where, if specific processes and outcomes were not evident, they would be extremely unlikely to be exhibited in future scenarios, given similar contexts.

The Save the Mary River issue fits with the definition of an extreme case because of the political context surrounding the announcement of the proposal and the large-scale public reaction to it. As such, I have adopted this as a way of exploring the processes of political performativity. In such a case study, the processes that are revealed will be capable of being applied to other political settings. This feature of extreme cases was evident ‘on the ground’ during the Save the Mary River issue. Participants in the Save the Mary River case study used the successful Franklin River Dam case in Tasmania not only as a metaphor to frame their own predicament, but also as an example of what could be achieved. Points of similarity to and difference from the Franklin River Dam campaign became part of the strategic tools used by the protest movement in the Mary River Valley.

Underpinning the use of the case study methodology is the acknowledgment that the holy grail of generality can be achieved through a focus on processes that work through the contexts of extreme cases (Flyvbjerg, 2003). Additionally, there is increasing value placed on practical knowledge and the judgments researchers are called upon to explore and reveal through the research process. From my experience in investigating and participating in the Save the Mary River case study, I can conclude that this type of engagement facilitates an intimate awareness of the ‘data’. A more detailed discussion of the pros and cons can be found in the methods chapter.
As is now evident, this story will be told from the view of a partial insider. I have purposefully engaged with the campaign resisting the proposed dam in order to gain an intimate understanding of the issues facing people who oppose the development. I say ‘partial’ because I was well aware of the pitfalls of ‘going native’, as described by Tresch (2001). I managed to achieve this through a reflexive research process. This was facilitated in several ways: first, through my home and workplace being physically distant from the study site; second, through the process of publishing research material regarding the aspects of the case, which meant I had to assess my personal and research politics; and lastly, through critical questioning of my research by supervisors and other interested colleagues, which created a distance that has facilitated my capacity to make robust judgments about the research process. These issues will be discussed further in the methods chapter.

1.5 Research significance

This research makes a significant contribution to advancing our knowledge and understanding in the following ways. First, it contributes to developing ways of thinking about performativity protest movement processes. The development of aspects of agency within performativity, and the importance of the emotions, potentially lead to a better understanding of how social movements start and grow collectively.

Second, my investigation contributes to the knowledge of how to facilitate collective action in the public sphere. In a practical way, there is room for the development of strategies of public sphere engagement that link cultural and media processes. Activist’s conscious of the process of performativity may be able to use resignification to strategically direct public sphere debate. Environmental advocacy education literature and strategy appear to be catching up with the theoretical developments in an
understanding of collective action. For example, Whelan (2002) has identified a lack of activist training in general. Education and training focus on networking and organisational development. There is little focus on collective action processes involving strategies that have the potential to at least impact on the public sphere. This is ironic, as a significant majority of environmental and social advocacy campaigns are aimed at changing public perceptions in order to effect political change.

The recent success of online activism groups such as MoveOn in the United States and GetUp! in Australia have paved the way for activists to expand their repertoires in the use of media to influence public sphere debate. Strategies in the effectiveness of these new forms of public sphere actions are still developing, along with the communities that use them (Chadwick & Howard, 2008; Dovey, Lister, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2009; Van de Donk & Loader, 2004). This study contributes to the needs of identifies in environmental advocacy education, particularly in the links between new media and protest-formation processes.

Last but by no means least, my study has already made a contribution to public sphere activity through my involvement with the diverse community resisting the Traveston Crossing Dam. Although this study does not formally adopt an action research methodology, my own involvement with the people resisting the proposed dam could be considered under such a rubric. The process of research has not been a one-way flow of information from participant to researcher. Irrespective of the worth of my contribution in terms of changing the decision of the dam, the simple fact of engaging with people who resisted the dam through interviews and sharing my knowledge of political process in a small way has been part of the reciprocity of the research process that extends beyond the ‘academy’.
1.6 Project outline and scope

The announcements of the project and changes to the project define the scope of this research project. The initial announcement was made by politicians on and in the weeks after 27 April 2006. This is the start of the case study. The changes to project design, compensation and land acquisition include the modified proposal by Premier Peter Beattie on 5 July 2006. Smaller but still significant changes to the project were announced by Beattie’s successor, Premier Anna Bligh, at a public meeting in Gympie on 3 November 2006. In December 2008, problems with the approval process precipitated a delay in the proposal, announced by Anna Bligh. The end of 2008 is the end of the case study.

A number of groups formed in response to the proposal. The group at the centre of the resistance was, and still is, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee. There were many online groups formed as a reaction to the issue. There were also many conservation and community groups that officially opposed the proposal. The Save the Mary River chapter in Brisbane is a group worthy of mention here. This small group was one the few opposition groups formed outside the Mary River region. There were also many people who were not part of any formal group. Therefore I have not focused on any one group. I have not differentiated between activists and protesters: I use both terms to describe people who resisted the proposal.

The chapters in this thesis use material from events that occurred during this period. Chapter 2 explores the literature that grounds the theoretical framework of the study. This entails a review of relevant literature as well as a discussion of the critique levelled at the theory of performativity. Additionally, a multidisciplinary approach to the study means that a number of fields of study inform my approach. In the search for a pragmatic response to the multidisciplinary research problem, I have developed a
theoretical perspective that offers tentative possibilities, rather than merely criticism. As such, the research runs the risk of theoretical critique from many different perspectives. Chapter 2 aims to reduce this risk to a minimum.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my methodology from a philosophical and practical perspective. This chapter explores some of the methodological challenges which have arisen during the course of the study. Despite attention to the concepts of rigor and reliability, I conclude that, regardless of the method, our knowledge is destined to be incomplete and fuzzy. Along with other researchers who have proposed this, I suggest that this may be due to the difficulty in making sense of a fuzzy world, a world that research processes attempt to order.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter to feature the findings of the study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 identify the three central themes that emerged from the data: democracy, certainty and the public good. As will be described in the methods chapter, these themes emerged through an inductive thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Each represents a lens through which participants contested and resignified the imposed life world that the proposed dam brought into being.

Chapter 5 explores the idea of certainty that emerged as another focus for the people resisting the dam proposal. The interviewees reveal how they attempted to resignify the certainty surrounding the announcement and the intent of the proposal through public sphere activity.

Chapter 6 turns to the final theme. The people resisting the proposal sought to resignify the public good of a future life world based on a ‘no dam’ political position. As with previous chapters, the ways in which the process of performativity was enacted are analysed in terms of collective action processes.
The conclusion revisits the main findings and addresses the ‘So what?’ question. How can individuals be empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere?
One must remember that power is not an ensemble of mechanisms of negation, refusal or exclusion. But it produces effectively. It is likely that it produces right down to individuals themselves. (Foucault, 1975, p. 113)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the ideas surrounding individual and collective environmental action in the public sphere. The aim is to examine how developments in collective action theory and the theory of performativity can explain how individual action can effect change through public sphere processes. The usefulness of these ideas for environmental advocacy will also be discussed.

First, I will examine recent developments in protest movement theory. The main point in this section is that theories on emotion in protest movements can be used to guide my central research question: How can individuals be empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere? Emotions in protest movements are one of the more recent productive trends in attempts to explore protest movement development. Next, I will delve deeper into theories of emotion to show how recent advances across a range of disciplines have led to a rethinking of the role of emotion in consciousness and intention. This
sheds light on why emotions have become a major focus of recent collective action research interest. My intention here is not to enter into cross-disciplinary debates over the role of emotion in cognition and consciousness. These are summarised in the work of Lewis, Haviland-Jones and Barrett (2008). The purpose here is to explore how the theories of emotion can help to explain and understand the processes of performativity and protest action. I examine Butler’s theory of performativity in more detail. I focus on Butler’s (1997) original theory that explains how agency is possible through a contest of speech acts in order to create or reinstate identities of subjugated people. Next, I move on to consider how performativity is situated within theories on the public sphere. This leads into a critique of Butler’s theory of performativity. The various critiques levelled at her work have not diminished the popularity of her work in theoretical circles and popular culture. The main critique which Butler acknowledges is that her writing is obtuse and abstract. I have selected the literature that best summarises the critique. I consider the important contribution of public sphere and media literature to explore how developments in media studies can augment Butler’s conception of the public in light of my aim to modify her theory for use in this thesis. Lastly, I examine how environmental advocacy may benefit from Butler’s work on performativity. Currently, culture is very much placed as a black box of practice for most environmental advocacy individuals and groups.

The literature I have included in the review comes from diverse fields of study. These include psychology, cultural studies, social movement studies, media studies, environmental activism and to a lesser extent environmental education. The aim of undertaking a multidisciplinary approach to the review is to examine the core phenomenon of protest action. As will be revealed in the review, the phenomenon does not lend itself to being captured by one approach or method. There is a growing list of researchers that call for multidisciplinary approaches to social movements (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2007; Leach & Scoones, 2007; McAdam, McCarthy, &
and there are also several theorists who have proposed alternative ways of using the theory of performativity to understand agency (See Bell, 1999; Houston & Paulido, 2002; Lloyd 2007; Nash, 2000; Nelson, 1999; Powell & Gilbert, 2007; Swanson, 2007).

The literature review ultimately contributes to a greater understanding of how citizens’ personal involvement in the public sphere can effectively influence political decision-making processes despite those citizens being marginalised from the process itself. In other words, how can one person change their world in the face of insurmountable political odds?

2.2 Recent developments in collective action and social movement theory

In this section I demonstrate how the synthesis between recent developments in social movement theory and the theory of performativity can be useful in understanding the process of protest. The literature dealing with social movement theory is extensive. To limit its scope, I have focussed on research dealing with protest movements as opposed to social movements. This is because there are many social movements that do not use protest as a way of achieving their ends (Jasper, 1997). Thus, I have used the terms ‘activism’, ‘protest’ and ‘protest movement’ to limit the range of readings I will critically evaluate. There are three key points on the topic of protest movements that I will use to guide my review. These are the contribution of positivist and/or structural accounts, the rise of the interpretivist approach that prioritises a process view, and finally a recent trend in multidisciplinary approaches to gain a holistic view.

The first point to make is that structural and positivist accounts of social movements have highlighted the basics of social movement characteristics and processes. It is accepted in social movement studies that, for protest to occur, the people need
resources at their disposal (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, Noakes & Johnstone, 2005). Studies have also shown that the likelihood of collective action increases when networks among potential participants and activists become dense (Rosenthal, Fingrutd, Ethier, Karant, & McDonald, 1985; Gould, 1991, 1993; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Mueller, 1994). Political opportunity is also acknowledged as being instrumental in the effectiveness of political action (Tarrow, 1998). The conclusions have resulted from changes not only in research focus but also in research methodology. During the 1970s, there was a move in research focus towards organisational structures and political factors from a previous emphasis on behavioural research focusing on individuals (Crist & McCarthy, 1996). These changes have led to greater understanding of protest movement conditions and features.

However, the conclusion in some quarters in the field of social movements is that these approaches have reached their limits in terms of explaining the power of process (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Jasper, 2004; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995). For example, these ideas cannot help us understand how a particular movement becomes active (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). The main reason for this is that these theoretical approaches hold that power is conceived as a central object that is held by people and institutions. Even within political opportunity theory, power is treated as an external phenomenon to the protester.

The approaches concerning organisational structures, political factors and behavioural research tend to be based on an assumption that political power exists only if there is direct confrontation involved. From these perspectives, power is centralised around one source. For example, Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl (2005, p. 1) argue that ‘the political process model assumed that domination was organized by and around one source of power, that political and economic structures of society were primary and determining, and that culture was separate from structure and secondary in
importance’. I would add that most theory around collective behaviour, resource mobilisation, networks and political process is based on premise of the centralised structural notion of power. Following Armstrong and Bernstein (2008), the assumption underlying the argument that I am proposing is, first, that the political and economic structures of society are not the primary residence of power and, second, that culture is not separate and is not secondary in importance in the creation, harnessing and exercise of power.

The second element in this part of my literature review concerns the rise of interpretivist approaches. The interest in applying interpretivist approaches in the study of social movement has been useful in examining the processes of protest and social movement formation (Goodwin & Jasper 2003; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001; Polletta, 2006). Researchers began to realise that people viewed their world through cultural lenses and this impacted on the way protest formed and developed (Goodwin et al., 2001).

Within the interpretivist turn, the other development has been the study of collective identity formation, mainly because group solidarity was seen as an important part of social movement development and maintenance. Olsen (1965) provoked the social science community when he declared that ‘rational, self interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests’ (1965, p. 2). Collective identity formation has been one of the larger areas of research in the interpretivist approach. The importance of taking into account values, meanings and emotions in a cultural context has been the strength of this. The debate continues as to the relative importance of the individual or society in making meaning and sharing those meanings (Swidler, 2001). Irrespective of the perspective taken, the implications of the interpretivist research approach mean that structural relations between the state and society can no longer be taken to be the central focus of power (Nash, 2001).
Within the interpretive turn, human agency became more of a focus in protest movement theorising (Morris & McClurg–Mueller, 2004). Rituals and network formation were important processes and were also examined in this approach. This approach conceives of collective action process as part of a collective identity construction where the rediscovery and creation of identity can create political opportunities for members of protest movements.

Recent developments in theories of identity and social movements have focused on the different interpretations of identity from various disciplines. The general aim of these works has been to understand the self in the process of identity formation and collective identity formation (Stryker, Owens & White, 2000).

Critiques of the earlier work on identity and social movements targeted the assumption that social actors change identity on the basis of rational principles. This can also be said about collective action theory, which is based on the reduction of citizen action to psychological parameters that are ontologically separate from the culture (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008).

Additionally, much of the analysis in this line of research is at the micro level and commonly uses framing as a method of analysis. As such, it tends to suffer from particularising events and fails to formulate a more general understanding about the phenomenon of protest and the formation of social movements. For example, researchers have identified hundreds of different ways that protest actions have been framed in the media. However, media framing does not help to explain how a protest grows and how particular movements become active. (Benford & Snow, 2000)
I will not give an extensive outline of recent work on identity in this review. The point of signposting this area of research is to acknowledge that the actions of the self and this contribution to the notion of solidarity are important in understanding protest formation (see, for example, Olsen, 1965; Turner, 1987; Stryker, Owens & White, 2000; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Performativity as outlined by Butler (1997) is also concerned with the process of identity. However, the work on identity and protest movements is important but peripheral to this study because the research approach I have taken is centred on the life world of the participants. I suggest that, from the perspective of the protester, it is more important to understand how individuals can change their life worlds as opposed to their identity. Similarly, I argue that it is more important to protesters to understand how they can change their lived bodily experiences and the background which makes that experience meaningful. It is easier to conceive of how actions of protesters can change the external threat of the dam by proposing alternative life worlds than through creating resistant identities.

The third point in this initial literature review of social movement research concerns an emerging trend towards multidisciplinary research that is relevant to the activists themselves. Klandermans and Roggeband (2007), in their *Handbook of Social Movements Across Disciplines*, have repeated previous calls for a holistic approach to such research. They note that a multidisciplinary approach has been mooted in the past, but there is little evidence of research that has met this challenge. The aim of such collaborative research is to foster innovation in the approach to answer both old and new questions. In using this approach, researchers focus on a phenomenon and use different methodological and philosophical approaches to help unpack that phenomenon. There have been some attempts to synthesise the multidisciplinary research on protest movements and I will canvass two examples below.
One example of this approach in understanding protest movement is offered by Leach and Scoones (2007). They propose a synthesis of the major theoretical perspectives through a number of case studies to understand how protest movement theory engages with theories of citizenship. Leach and Scoones (2007, p. 1) identify overlapping perspectives on processes of collective action which ‘point towards an understanding of “mobilising citizens” as knowledgeable actors engaged in a dynamic, networked politics across local and global sites’. They identify three key emergent themes of mobilising citizens:

knowledge and power; cultures, styles and practices of activism, and the increasing array and complexity of arenas in which citizens press their claims, including legal spaces and the media (Leach & Scoones, 2007, p. 1)

This is different from traditional approaches to social movements because it focuses on a central organising concept and then crosses disciplinary boundaries to problematise that concept in relation to established social movement theory. The authors note that the rise of new media, the accessibility of information and the way that information is enacted in the public sphere warrant further attention (Leach & Scoones, 2007). In this way, the notion of power becomes decentralised. These types of research strategy are yielding fruitful evidence of the processes of protest. Myers and Cress (2004) call for researchers to consider social movement research and theorising more broadly. By this they mean that researchers should move ‘beyond a state-centred view of contentious politics and toward a more open definition of what might be fruitfully examined by social movement theories’ (2004, p. xi). Myers and Cress claim that much important social movement activity would be lost unless the researcher used a broad frame to capture more activities that constitute contentious politics. In doing so the research would not
only contribute to academic scholarly debate about the process and outcomes of protests and movements but would benefit the practitioner. Bevington and Dixon (2005, p. 185) identify that the quest for theoretical understanding does not necessarily preclude practical relevance:

a movement-relevant approach has the potential to transcend these schisms (such as structure versus culture). At the same time, this approach does not categorically reject earlier theoretical perspectives, but instead seeks to glean what is most useful for movements from these earlier works.

These theoretical signposts from established researchers in the social movement field lend weight to my use of performativity as a way of understanding protest movement processes in light of their theoretical and practical applications. Emotions are an important component of the way I have used performativity in understanding action in the public sphere. In the next section, I will examine how the role of emotions in protest movement research has become a popular focus.

2.3 The Emotional Turn in Protest Movement Theory

As my second example, I suggest that research on emotions in protest movements offers way of synthesising multidisciplinary research. The sociology of emotion has gained momentum in recent years (Flam, 2005). As result of the primacy of emotion in sociological inquiry, it has also spilled over into social movement research. The emotional turn in social and protest movement research occurred in the late 1990s, but remains an under-researched phenomenon (Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005). The role of emotions is important to my approach because of its relationship to performativity and understanding power. Gould (2003, p. 179) agrees:
Attention to emotions can also provide insight into other perplexing and understudied questions about social movements including frame resonance, internal conflicts between movements and the communities from which they arise, rituals and symbols, identity constructions through activism, choice of tactics and the like … It seems clear that a focus on emotions, in interaction with other factors can only strengthen analyses.

However, it cannot be assumed that emotions are a universalising concept in understanding protest movements. Thus, the purpose of this review is to determine what evidence exists to support the concept that emotions play an important role in the development of protest movements and how this is related to performativity. Emotions play an important role in social movement theory at three main points: in the initial stages of protest; in sustaining protest over time; and in the exercising and experience of emotions as individually and collectively powerful. Emotions can provide a greater understanding of how power is created, exercised and experienced by individuals, groups, organisations and the state.

Emotions play a vital role in formation of protest both at the individual and the collective levels. Moral shock is quite often the basis for action towards the object that caused the shock. Social movement theorists Woliver (1993), Gamson (1995), Jasper (1997) and Ost (2004) conclude that when people experience moral outrage they tend to form groups to protest, irrespective of their prior friendships with others. Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) and Vanderford (1989) have noted that protest organisers can successfully work hard to create a sense of threat and a sense of moral outrage, and provide a target for the anger of fellow protesters in a process that transform emotions into beliefs.
Moral outrage is not the only emotional phenomenon that forms the basis of social movements. Allahyrai’s (2003) account of the role of emotions in the ‘felt work’ of caring for others through charitable action in the public sphere does not involve outrage. The deep ecology movement also promotes emotion, morality and cognition in the form of ‘self work’ to merge with political action (Macy, 1998, 2000, 2005). Other literature dealing with such concepts as ‘sense of place’ (Tuan, 1977) also acknowledges that emotion is involved with protest action. People’s identities are often linked to particular places, and the associated emotional attachment forms the basis of action to prevent a sense of loss with that place (Milton, 2004). Despite the claims made by Meyrowitz (1986) that the impact of electronic media on social behaviour would mean that sense of place would be lost, this prediction has not been realised completely. These types of emotion are what Jasper (2001) calls ‘shared emotions’ in that emotions are fostered by the group and target objects outside the movement.

Emotions also play an important role in protest movement theory because those experienced during movement development can play an important part in sustaining a movement. Jasper (2001) calls these emotions ‘reciprocal emotions’. They help to build and sustain a movement’s subculture (Diani, 1997). Conversely, burnout is a large feature of protest groups. Important to the present review is King’s (2004) view, noting the role of passion in sustaining commitment and energy to the protest action. King (2004, p. 73) found the activists did not experience burnout if they maintained ‘their passionate participation in creating social change, regardless of circumstances, rather than simply enhancing their commitment to a particular organization’. In order to maintain their passion, King (2004, p. 73) concludes that participants in her study focused on ‘being present or "in the moment", taking responsibility for action, being reflexive, and having a rhythm for managing the identity process’. Importantly, emotion needs to be self-managed in protest movements and, in particular, reflexively engaged in protest dynamics.
Another action that is not sustaining is the retreat of some members of the protest movement back into the private sphere. This commonly occurs after engaging in public sphere activity (Hirschmen & Schumpteter, 2004). Frustration, disgust and anger with the intensity of the social realm within protest groups can lead to a retreat to private life worlds. Retreat also occurs when romantic and other deep relationships form within protest groups. These people quite often retreat from the protest group (Collins 2001). Emotions also play an important role in protest movement theory because of power and its slippery nature. A focus on emotions can provide a greater understanding of how power is created and exercised by contesting individuals and groups, organisations and the state.

From a sociological perspective, Kemper (2001) identifies that emotions result from the differences in social relations. Emotions manifest from differences in participants’ own status and power compared with others’ status and power. Power is conceived as an entity that creates emotions through relationship differences. Kemper (2001) identifies many emotions as a result of different combinations of power and status. This evidence is difficult to refute. However, if differences in power and status lead to emotions, what role does emotion have in determining the properties of social movements? Tarrow (2008) identifies such properties as collective challenge, common purpose, solidarity and collective identity, sustaining contentious politics and political opportunity. As outlined above, these have a role to play in formation of conflict and the sustenance of protest movements; however they do not explain how emotions can create power.

Another way to understand the role of emotion in protest movements is to conceive of emotions as a process of creating power. From a post-structural perspective, emotions are one of the means through which power is realised.
Anger is in integral part of the protest movements. The following account counteracts a fundamental assumption that emotions are separate from action and power:

In most academic research on politics, emotions are deemed important only to the realm of subjects or citizens, not to power. Emotions are presented as a problem power has to deal with, not something with which power is itself intimately involved. (Ost, 2004, p. 229)

Ost (2004) proposes that emotions are intimately involved with identifying a collective challenge, creating mutual purpose, and creating solidarity and collective identity. He also says they are important in sustaining contentious politics and creating political opportunity:

Anger is not something that only occasionally bursts onto the political scene, but is central to ‘normal’ politics as well. Anger is central to politics both as a diffuse, untargeted sentiment citizens experience, usually economically, and as the emotion political organizers need to capture and channel, which they do by offering up an ‘enemy’ they identify as the source of the problem. Opposition movements and parties of power alike succeed when they persuade people to accept the enemy they propose. (2004, p. 229)

Ost’s term ‘anger’ could be broadened to include all emotion expressed as a result of loss or the potential for loss. This would encompass the many and varied ways emotions are captured and channelled. The key point Ost (2004) makes is that protest movement activists are called political organisers of emotion. In many instances, the organisers are themselves the ones experiencing the anger. This indicates the power of emotions in their own right.
The next example is from Sarah Ahmed (2004). In her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, she adds the page missing from Orr’s arguments. Orr does not detail how emotions are produced effectively by individuals and groups through the collective manifestations of what people feel. To understand Amhed’s argument, the example of mourning is used below. Ahmed (2004) asks the question:

What does it do to say a nation mourns? The feeling does simply exist before the utterance, but becomes ‘real’ as an effect, shaping different kinds of actions and orientations. To say ‘a nation mourns’ is to generate the nation, *as if it were a mourning subject*. The ‘nation’ becomes a shared ‘object of feeling through the orientation’ that is taken towards it. As such emotions are performative and they involve speech acts which depend on past histories at the same time generate effects. (p. 13)

What Ahmed (2004) is claiming is that collective emotions are brought into being through making the emotion belong to ‘a collective’ through the very act of speech. Whilst Ahmed’s (2004) example outlines the collectivity and production of emotions of mourning, other emotions can be brought into being in a collective sense.

In other instances where anger is not the focus, other emotions are used to help frame political protest, create collective identity and communicate powerlessness. Hart (2007), in an analysis of humour, details how emotion can challenge and create power in a positive way:

The findings point, above all, to the power of humour in the framing of political protest. Humour was used in quite different political opportunity structures, from open democratic societies to harsh repressive regimes.
Often, humour furthered the development of the collective identity of a social movement, whereas in several cases humour acted as a powerful communication tool, serving as a true ‘weapon of the weak’. (Hart, 2007, p. 1)

Disempowered people are capable of creating power through the very act of resisting authority through humour, irrespective of the political system. Hart’s (2007) analysis of humour as power shows emotions to be a means through which political ends can be served. Humour expressed in the public sphere can not only concisely facilitate social attention towards particular causes, but also identify power differences. Through exposure in the public sphere, oppressed people attempt to reconfigure power relations. Humour creates power. This is not to say that any humour is powerful. Hart (2007) notes that much humour is not effective in changing the status quo. In other instances, it backfires on the protest group. However, one unambiguous conclusion can be made from his work. Hart (2007, p. 18) states that for humour to be successful there must be ‘the condition of a pre-existing collective identity, or a strict setting of the jokes … without a certain existing collective identity, humour has very little direct impact on social protest’. Finally, humour facilitates social attention, but it does not flourish without a social setting conducive to its reception. It would seem that the power in the action of humour is incremental and insidious. Over 60 years ago, George Orwell said ‘each joke is a tiny revolution’. Humour can thus be used as a way of creating power by identifying power difference, and it can also used as a way of facilitating social attention. Next I will examine the notion of suffering. The purpose of exploring a range of emotions experienced in protest movements is to demonstrate that power is created by and exercised between contesting individuals and groups, organisations and the state.
The next example of emotion and power is drawn from work on non-violent protests and protest suffering. The effectiveness of protests by Ghandi in India is an example of this form of protest. Biggs (2004) outlines a theory of communicative suffering. This theory speaks to the shared meaning of loss as a source and medium of power. It does so because ‘suffering conveys information: it is an honest signal, because it is costly. A leader who suffers signals the sincerity of his or her commitment to the cause.’ (Biggs, 2004, p.17) The emotional element facilitates sincerity in the message and signals the extent of the deprivation. Actions speak louder than words.

The second part of Biggs’ (2004, p. 17) proposition is that ‘suffering evokes emotions, over and above any information conveyed. By means of anger and guilt, it can motivate others to contribute, helping to overcome fear and self-interest.’ There is a manipulative element to suffering in that the compassion of ‘others’ may be used against their interests. The ‘other’ being targeted by the protester may be unmoved by their suffering but they do not want to be implicated in it. In these three ways, Biggs (2004) shows how power is created through the action of communication.

In this section on how emotions can provide a greater understanding of how power is created, exercised and experienced, the last example I wish to explore is how emotions are inextricably part of the makeup of the protester in the ‘practice’ of protest. King (2006) argues that, for individuals to truly create a new society, they need to be deintegrated from present or existing society. She uses Touraine and Macey’s (1995) notions of social creativity to claim that if individuals can free themselves of (one set of) social norms and roles, then the subject becomes part of the social movement that is desired. In this way, the subject becomes the social movement.

In order that the activists become a social movement, the individuals involved need to engage in the practice of emotional reflexivity. King (2006) examines a program where
this practice yields mixed but generally positive results for activists. She found (2006, p. 876) that when ‘activists’ use practices of emotional reflexivity as a means of deintegrating themselves and problematising their internalization of social norms, ‘these practices enable them to both sustain their activism and act creatively in producing society’. Emotional reflexivity meant that that they could use their emotions in appropriate ways to further the protest aims. It was not always appropriate to express anger or other ‘negative’ emotions in certain social situations. This example points to the power of expression of emotion in the public sphere. These conclusions about deintegration are also found in the recent work by Summers-Effler (2002, p. 41). She too notes that emotions are powerful in the sense that they constrict action and also create the potential for action. Through her ethnography of women attempting to establish a women’s shelter, Summers-Effler concludes:

> The emotional dynamics of subordinate positioning operate[d] to limit women’s options in face-to-face interactions in such a way that the status quo is usually reproduced. This theory-building is supported by interviews with women about feminism and feminist activism … to explain the emotional dynamics that would likely produce critical consciousness and encourage resistance. (2002, p. 41)

From this review, it is clear that the emotional aspects of power in protest movements are important in the production and maintenance of resistance at the micro level of individual empowerment, and at the macro level in terms of politics. With regard to the micro level, Biggs (2004), Hart (2007), King (2006), Summers-Effler (2002) and Ost (2004) point towards the importance of emotional relations of participants in protest processes, particularly in the way power is produced and exercised. Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005, p. 492) eloquently summarise this:
Power is itself not a substance or a possession to be ‘seized’ or ‘held’ … but rather, an outgrowth or effect of the relative positions that actors occupy within one or more networks. Power is unthinkable outside matrices of force relations; it emerges out of the very ways in which dynamic configurations of relations are patterned and operate. (Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005, p. 492)

In this way, protesters can experience and express emotions in protest as an important element of an empowering process. Fundamental to this is the destabilising effect of the expression of emotion on power relations between the protester and the state. This has been identified by Hariman (2001) as a fundamental component of emotion and the power of expression in defiance of the state. The examples above testify to the destabilising effect and the care needed to manage emotions in the process of expressing these in the public sphere.

If this understanding of power is accepted, this gives hope to individuals who do not have significant resources or occupy a privileged social position. Astute protesters know this and exploit it. Power, then, is a matter of location and relation, and can be envisaged as fluid. Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005, p. 491) propose that ‘emotions constrain and enable a collective-psychological context of action … power is a matter of location within flows and investments of (psychical) energy; it depends upon positioning within networks (of emotional cathexis, identification, or trust)’.

I have also argued that multidisciplinary approaches to the study of protest movements are best utilised when they engage with concepts that have broad application. Emotions are one such concept:
Emotion, like culture, is a dimension of all social action, attending to emotion will illuminate more clearly all the key issues that have exercised scholars of movements: why do people join social movement? Why do movements occur when they do, Why and how are movements organised the way they are? ... After years of neglect, the study of emotions is experiencing resurgence among social movement scholars. It should become a routine aspect of movement analysis. (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001, p. 425)

The role of emotions in theorising protests and their processes is a much-needed development in social movement theory because it links the way participation in the public sphere can influence political decisions through the power of emotion. In a sense, performativity is the creation of a story that counters and creates new worlds through the power of emotion. In the next section, I examine recent developments in the study of emotion in action. Central to the life world is the enactment of emotion. As such, it is relevant to offer a detailed account of the synthesis of literature on emotion and protest movements. This will be useful in understanding the creation of the life world through performativity in the latter sections of this review.

2.4 The primacy of emotions in the life world

Until recently, emotions have had a bad rap. In their *Handbook of Emotions*, Stets and Turner (2008) identify that it is only recently that emotion has become the focus of sociological inquiry. They acknowledge that this is a surprising turn of events, considering how obviously human behaviour interaction and organisation are driven by emotion.
For more than 175 years, many Western philosophers and sociologist have embraced Cartesian Dualism to the extent that emotions have been treated as agitations or dispositions (Lewis, Haviland-Jones & Barrett, 2008). This places emotion in a secondary place to rationality. This view is one that still held by many people in Western societies (Lewis, Haviland-Jones and Barrett, 2008).

The way in which emotion has been envisaged in Western society is similar to the way consciousness has been conceptualised. The dominant paradigm of understanding consciousness in Western society is as follows. An action is said to follow a stimulus in the gathering and processing of information (Foster, 1996). A response occurs after the information is processed. Consciousness is considered the side-effect of a linear causal process. However, recent developments turn this approach on its head. The critique of cognitivism and development of alternative approaches are sourced in evolutionary biology, embodied robotics, phenomenology, dynamical systems and advances in psychology (Nunez & Freeman, 1999). The merging of disparate fields of inquiry has allowed a more complete but still developing picture of emotions and their role. The alternative view of emotions is best summed up by Ellis (2005, p. 17):

"Emotions are aspects of the organism's ongoing self-organizational activity, and these emotional processes drive the processing of information rather than being merely responses to it. Objects and events do not so much cause affective responses as they are used by the organism for its own emotional purposes.

One of the things on which Ellis (2005) based this conclusion was the neurological observation that, when a threatening object is placed in the view of a person, the emotional parts of the brain are activated before the part of the brain that cognitively processes this information. In other words, we emotionally experience the threat of a
knife before we actually rationally can describe what that knife means and then make judgments about future actions in relation to the threat. The process also allows the person to make judgments about what is important in the field of attention. The emotional threat helped make the decision that the knife was the object to focus on at that point in time. In this example, the knife was the primary object of attention despite the multitude of other aspects sensed at that time. Ellis (2005) concludes from a growing body of evidence that emotions are precognitive and enact consciousness. This is important to my study because it helps to explain how most individuals reacted negatively to the ‘bad news’ of the announcement of the dam. Their emotions enacted consciousness and subsequent reactions, depending on their particular life world.

These conclusions about emotions concur with previous theorising by phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962) on the role of emotion in perception. In particular, Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) reference to a person having an ‘intentional arc’ is used to help understand how individuals direct their attention and subsequent cognition. This helps explain why the knife was chosen as an object to direct attention. Merleau-Ponty uses the term ‘intentional arc’ to identify non-representational intentionality. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> the life of consciousness is subtended by an intentional arc which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation or rather which results in our being situated in all these respects. It is this intentional arc which brings about unity of the senses, of intelligence of sensibility and motility. (1962, p. 136)

Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is a reflexive understanding of the world and bodily action. The term ‘intentional arc’ refers to those ‘things’ to which the individual directs attention in order to maintain an acceptable state of being. However, at the
same time the intentional arc is exactly those ‘things’ that guide attention. The intentional arc is both the object and process. Emotions play a role in the action in relation to the emotional arc.

How emotions are realised or enacted in this process is best described by Freeman (2000), who suggests that emotions orientate future action to ensure the unity of the senses, the intelligence of sensibility and motility of individuals. Metaphorically, this can be described as the ‘stretching forth’ of intentionality.

A common assumption made by cognitivists is that a feeling has no intentionality until we cognitively assess its cause. However, stimulus is generally felt as an emotion that may be potentially important for a person’s purpose prior to more cognitive process taking place. In Ellis’s words (2005, p. 16), ‘emotions are self-organising because emotions are not reactive but enact consciousness. Emotions are enactive.’

Intentionality of emotion can be conscious and/or preconscious. The preconscious registering of affect produces feelings. In the case of the knife example, the intentionality of emotion is preconscious. It evokes fear. This is important to my argument in this thesis in that the initial announcement of the dam resulted in an intentionality of emotion that was preconscious. The intentionality of people upon hearing the initial announcement will be guided by their emotional experience of the situation. This will lead to the particular way an individual understands the immediate impact of the dam in relation to their life world.

However the enactment of emotions that are felt during a more complex experience can drive consciousness. People’s intentional arc can be affected by feelings created during an experience (Ellis, 2005). This is important to my argument with particular regard to the resignification process because the emotions enacted by perceptions of
the dam announcement direct further consciousness. That consciousness involves actions based on the emotions enacted by their perception of the impact on their life world. So it is not only the enactment of emotions regarding the initial announcement that is important in the resignification process. The emotions felt over a long period of time can affect an individual’s intentional arc. This is because emotions are not just pre-reflexive experiences; rather, people reflect on their emotions, as Freeman (2000) suggests:

> At a more complex level, emotions are experiences. They are the feelings that accompany the emergent actions that address the anticipated futures of gain or loss in one’s attachments to others, one’s livelihood and safety, and the perceived possibility or impossibility of changing the world to one’s liking or advantage: joy, grief, fear, rage, hope and despair. (2000, p. 5)

Not only does the phenomenon of an emotion orientate the way an individual can act in relation to their intentional arc, but also emotions can enact other emotions and thus change a person’s intention:

> The perception of one’s own action and state, and of the states and actions of one’s friends, shapes the basis for one’s own next action. It is neither necessary nor feasible to separate the expression of autonomic states and one’s perceptions of them in the intentional loop. They evolve as an organic whole. (Freeman, 2000, p. 6)

While there is a philosophical debate over the process of the development of feelings (Stets & Turner, 2008), one thing is apparent: emotions and their relationship to action are a complex system of intra- and intersubjectivity. For the purpose of this study, these two concepts of emotion are used. Emotional intention is both preconscious and
conscious. These perspectives can be applied to emotions as they relate to protest action.

Incorporating the role of emotion and intentional arc in social protest offers a useful methodological tool to aid in the interpretation of the emotional responses of people resisting the dam. Much work has been done on emotional reactions to events and the subsequent action of protesters. Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) have categorised basic emotions as they relate to protest. These are shown in Table 1.
Table 1. Categories of emotion in protest participants (after Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001, p. 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term</strong></td>
<td>Hate, love, compassion, sympathy, respect, trust, loyalty, moral outrage, some forms of fear – dread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resignation, cynicism, shame, paranoia, suspicion, optimism, pride, enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short-term</strong></td>
<td>Fright – startle, surprise, shock, anger, grief, sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety, joy, euphoria, depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reviewing the developments outlined by Ellis (2005), I have revised the table originally produced above by Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001). I have added moods to the matrix because these emotional states help direct the emotional attention of the participant. I decided to include these after observing the effects of mood on people’s reactions to political announcements concerning the proposed dam.

Political action that enacts more short-term emotions such as fright, surprise, shock, anger, grief and sorrow will affect the intentional arc in ways that have short-term consequences. Action tends to be severe but short-lived. However, if there is a repeat of the action by a so-called oppressor then the emotional enactment is repeated and is thus more long term. This is important for the performativity analysis of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal because of the nature of the changes involved.

Longer term emotions such as hate, love, compassion, sympathy, respect, trust, loyalty, moral outrage and some forms of fear, such as dread, have the capacity for sustaining action. This is particularly so if the object of the feeling does not diminish or disappear. In this way, if the object does not diminish, the feelings that accompany the
actions of protest can also be an event for further emotions. This is important for my performativity analysis of the dam case study because the mood of the people resulting from changes to the project had an effect on the emotional reaction in the longer term. The characterisation of emotions by Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) is a useful typology which I will adopt in this thesis.

The emotions tabled above can be also thought of as collective emotions. For emotional relations to come into being, there is a mutual integration of emotional experience that cannot be described by analysing the individuals themselves.

From this review of the literature, I have shown that recent theoretical investigations involving emotion point towards an enactment model of consciousness. In other words, emotions enact consciousness. This does not mean that a predictive cause and effect model can be used. The life world of each individual is unique, and thus each intentional arc is different. The implications for protest movement theory are that emotions are primary to the enactment of intentionality. How people commit themselves to ‘shared’ forms of intentionality (collective action) based on emotions and intentional arc is the ‘black box’ of protest movement research. The relational and enactment features of experiencing emotions are central to my argument in this thesis.

2.5 Butler's performativity: Speech acts and resignification

I will now discuss the theory of performativity as proposed by Butler (1997). This is important because it is the basis for understanding resistance in my project. As shown in the previous section, emotions are important in understanding protest movement formation and growth. They are also important in understanding how power is part of the formation growth and sustenance of protest movements. Emotions are useful as a concept that can expand Butler’s theory of performativity. However, first I need to
explore the idea of performativity and to extract elements that are relevant to my own theoretical trajectory.

Protesters seek to use culture strategically. During times of cultural upheaval (unsettled times), protest movements have tended to grow and flourish (Swiddler, 1995). However, if researchers focus purely on structural economic and political conflicts, then there is the potential for shallow activist and protest theorising (Polletta, 2008). This is the impetus for choosing Butler’s theory of performativity as a way of enriching our understanding of protest movements and the processes that create and sustain them.

Butler’s notion of performativity considers how people can resist through actions in the public sphere. The approach continues to receive attention from theorists in cultural studies and sociology despite criticism of her work from various quarters (see Kirby, 2006; Loizidou, 2007; Chambers & Carver, 2008; Lloyd, 2007). One of the reasons why Butler’s work is still popular is that she gives hope for agency whilst acknowledging the force of disciplinary power. The basis of her argument is that performativity is about bringing ‘something’ into being that did not exist through a speech act. For Butler, that ‘something’ is the identity of marginalised individuals in society. The main point of Butler’s notion of ‘resignification’ is that the ‘something’ is not stable. The individual has the capacity to recreate the identity through repeatedly challenging the claims made by those who impose the undesirable identity. Butler’s approach offers a way of understanding collective acts as well as a process by which collective resistance is enacted. This is not without ontological problems related to the individualisation of resistance and an over-emphasis on language as the object of resistance. I will address these issues later in this chapter.
The initial speech act

The initial speech act is the important starting point in the theory of performativity, which has its origins in speech act theory and pragmatics. Butler’s theory is derived from speech act theory proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). This approach helps to explain situations where the act of speaking and or writing particular words has an effect upon individuals and social groups. The context of the spoken word is paramount to understanding the impact of the meaning within the speech act. There are several ways that Austin (1962) describes them. The ‘illocutionary act’ is a speech act that creates something by the very act of *saying* that something. This contrasts with the ‘perlocutionary act’ *performed* by saying something. This can be thought of as having psychological consequences as a result of ‘saying’ the particular words. The last category of speech act identified here is the ‘locutionary act’, simply described as a speech act that refers to the *surface meaning* of an utterance.

To understand the differences between these types of speech acts, consider examples taken from the dispute over the Franklin River in Tasmania. During the height of the Franklin River debate, the then Premier of Tasmania, Paul Gray, described the World Heritage-listed Franklin River as ‘a leech-ridden ditch’. From a locutionary perspective, it may well be that the Franklin River has many leeches living in its valley.

However, from an illucutionary perspective, the speech act creates the thing to which it refers. Thus, the mere act of stating that the river is a ‘leech-ridden ditch’ by someone in a position of power creates the notion that it *is* a leech ridden ditch – a place that has no value, except for leeches! This particular speech act had more force because the speaker was the Premier of the state of Tasmania. The statement was circulated across Australia by the mass media at the time and has continued to appear on the internet, which emerged well after the utterance. Repetition was also important in the

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5 For an overview of the environmental issue of the national Franklin River campaign, See Bandler (1987).
creation of a ‘no inherent value’ meaning placed on the Franklin River, as stated by the Premier.

From a perlucutionary perspective, a speech act has an effect as a result of saying something. In the case of the ‘leech-ridden ditch’, the comment had the psychological effect of strategically ridiculing the people who valued the place for its natural heritage.

These examples demonstrate that the notion of power is central to both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Butler’s (1997) notion of ‘excitable speech’ is relevant to this discussion. Here, she examines the issues of hate speech and the power of censorship. The relevance of her arguments lies in her analysis of subjectivity and power. She questions the myth of an independent subject who wields power in the context of censorship. Action by censorship officials is not only an effect of state power, but also is a condition of language and discourse themselves. Using a Foucauldian perspective, Butler (1993, p. 2) argues it may be more relevant to understand that ‘performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but rather as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains’. Thus, individuals who initiate the speech action are integral players in the production of power dynamics between themselves and the targeted people through the speech act. Thus, the ‘leech-ridden ditch’ and the production of the ‘inherent worthlessness’ of the Franklin River became a central organising discourse of the debate over dams in Tasmania.

Another key feature of performativity briefly outlined in the above discussion is the use of repetition of speech acts in the formation of the identity of the targeted subject. In order to exert power, the speech act must be used repeatedly to bring to life the identity of the targeted subject. To give greater power to the speech act, recourse to social norms or even law is undertaken as part of the process of repetition.
Thus far, performativity can be described as the repetitive speech acts of certain people that are intertwined in the production and or maintenance of particular discourses in order to create the identity and discourse of targeted subjects. So far, I have portrayed the description of performativity as a process of creating the identity of the targeted subjects as a one-way phenomenon.

Resignifying speech acts

Butler (1997) proposes that there is potential for re-creation of identity of the targeted subject that challenges initial speech acts through what she calls resignification. The characteristics of the resignification of a subject who attempts to resist the speech acts are as follows:

- Initial performative speech acts are made in the public sphere by a dominant power. These acts are repeated to increase the force of the speech act. Law may be used to give force to the speech acts and vice versa.
- Citizens are personally affected by these initial speech acts.
- Citizens resist the initial speech acts through performative acts in the public sphere.
- Citizens transform the initial speech acts through resignifying the initial speech acts through performative (speech) action.
- Citizens continue to resignify performative (speech) acts thorough performative means (including speech acts).
- The process creates the resisting identity of the citizen.

By entering into the public realm through performative acts of protest, the very action of a subject reveals the very nature of power itself in the contest over meaning revealed
through a performative speech act. The creation of identity has political ramifications in terms of the relation between resistance and agency, as Butler (1997) argues:

Agency is not proof of the existence of an identity, but is instead the creation of an identity through a referential repetition, that speech provisionally institutes an identity and at the same time [opens] the category as a site of permanent political contest. (p. 326)

Identity is the focus of the process of resignification in performativity. In this way, Butler’s theory informs collective identity formation theory by offering an account of how individual action coalesces with collective identity process. On resistance, the individual and collective action Butler (2000) has this to say:

Now, I think it’s possible sometimes to undergo an undoing, to submit to an undoing by virtue of what spectrally threatens the subject, in order to reinstate the subject on a new and different ground. What have I done? Well, I’ve taken the psychoanalytic notion of foreclosure [6], and I’ve made it specifically social. Also, instead of seeing that notion as a founding act, I see it as a temporally renewable structure – and as temporally renewable, subject to a logic of iteration, which produces the possibility of its alteration. (p. 739)

Butler says the process of iteration7 is a temporary one. The act of iteration, if it occurs in the social world, is a process that has more force to destabilise the speech acts of authority. Butler insists that this process is inevitable and carried more force when it occurs in the social world. It is inevitable because of the subjectivity of the lived

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6 Foreclosure is an operation of repudiation. Repudiation by an individual of the very act of signification from authority.
7 Iteration can be understood simply as the repeated action of resignification.
experience and the interpretation of the world (from Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) perspective) but the subsequent iteration is difficult to predict:

So, in answer to the question ‘How is it that subordination and subjection are the very conditions for agency?’ the short answer is that I am clearly born into a world in which certain limitations become the possibility of my subjecthood, but those limitations are not there as structurally static features of my self. They are subject to a renewal, and I perform (mainly unconsciously or implicitly) that renewal in the repeated acts of my person. Even though my agency is conditioned by those limitations, my agency can also thematise and alter those limitations to some degree. This doesn’t mean that I will get over limitation – there is always a limitation; there is always going to be a foreclosure of some kind or another – but I think that the whole scene has to be understood as more dynamic than it generally is. (Butler, 2000, p. 739)

It should be noted that Butler is not talking about structural limitations here. Rather, it is the ways in which we structure the unseen/heard world through ‘taken for granted’ ordinary language that become a true indicator of reality. The key point here for my arguments in this thesis is that there are some fundamental limitations on the capacity for resignification (iteration) by the subjugated citizen because the process is always in flux. It is through process of iteration that the self is engaged in ongoing and incomplete ‘development’.

The source of the ongoing process is found in how resistance embeds the individual in the social world as a result of the disruption of ‘taken for granted’ ordinary language. The relationship between performativity and the public sphere will explain what Butler means in terms of resignification in the social world. The public sphere and performativity is the focus of the next section.
2.6 The public sphere and performativity

Butler’s work has been juxtaposed with Habermas’s (1981) discursive participation in the public sphere (Kulynych, 1997). In a similar way to Butler, Habermas examines participatory politics in the public sphere with a broad categorisation of acts that constitute participation. However, his theory of communicative action has been criticised for ignoring disciplinary power that is inherently constituted by the existence of the public sphere (Honeth, 1991). Habermas’s essential argument is that if structural features of the public sphere are attended to, then rational communication will result in challenges to dominant forces. The choice of Butler over Habermas as the theoretical basis for my argument stems from the position of agency in the face of problematic engagement in the public sphere, and the almost impossible task of changing the structural features of the public sphere in order to engage.

The main point of difference between Butler and Habermas revolves around how features of the public sphere and contesting points of view should be resolved. Habermas emphasises the structural requirements of a robust and functioning public sphere in order to facilitate deliberation, whereas the structural inadequacies (for example, weak freedom of information laws) are the very reasons why Butler’s idea of performative deliberation emerges. It is the very fact that inadequacies and the imbalance of power are inherent in the public sphere that necessitates a form of deliberation in an ‘improperly’ functioning discursive space. Deliberation from a performativity perspective is the very act of resistance resulting from an unequal and problematic public sphere. Deliberation occurs despite Habermas’s normative idealised functioning public sphere not being realised. Having stated this, a functioning public space is needed for the power inherent in political association to be exercised (Arendt, 1972). Even in the case of the Save the Mary River case study, the non-ideal
functioning of the public sphere has been an adequate albeit problematical site for deliberation in broad democratic terms.

The reason why it is important to understand the difference between Habermas and Butler is that Butler offers a mechanism through which individuals can negotiate within the far from level playing field. It is also a mechanism that is born out of this state of play. For example, there is more force in some speech acts than others.

So far, I have treated the term ‘public sphere’ as a unitary phenomenon. Fraser’s (1990) contribution to the debate is important to acknowledge here. Her contribution is threefold. First, she points out that the ‘sphere’ is not one but multiple in geographical and geo-political terms. Like Butler, Fraser focuses on the notion of resistance using the notion of counter-publics. Counter-publics resist dominant publics by their very nature in being excluded from dominant groups. These groups tend to form their own counter-public spheres in reaction to the unequal access to the more regulated spheres.

The public sphere and the rise of counter publics is a phenomenon that has uneven geographical distribution in contemporary Australian society. It is also a dynamic phenomenon. The increasing urbanisation of Australian society presents pressures on the periphery of major urban centres. The increasing resource needs of society coupled with population growth means that the periphery generally becomes a minority in a democratic sense when decisions about resource management come to the fore. Counter publics based in the periphery thus face problems of gaining support from public spheres because of differences in values and attitudes stemming from geographical differences. The rise of the internet has to some degree helped rural communities cross the public sphere divide. However the digital divide is still present in that fast speed connection is still only a service that is found in major urban centres.
Given the rise of media that rely on fast speed connection these communities are at a disadvantage.

Despite these problems rural communities on the fringe of urban centres have realised the value of targeting various public spheres in unison to create more powerful communication strategies. Iveson’s (2007) investigations of the geographies of public sphere reveal that those who engage in the public sphere combine action on a ‘stage’ screen and print to increase circulation. This has become standard practice for activists attempting to mobilise large scale public support in Australia.

An additional contribution by Fraser (1990) is that there has been an increasing phenomenon in which the private realm of the citizen has become the public domain. For example, one of the outcomes of the feminist movement is that a primarily private issue has been made public. This means that, from a Butlerian performativity perspective, there is an increasing legitimisation of individuals who resist power in the public sphere to do so in private and personally performative ways. They do so in a discursive space increasing in its number of ways/sites for deliberation. These sites are geographically and politically diverse and have differing levels of exclusion/inclusion that, by their very regulation, dictate the nature of the potential power inherent in the process of political participation and association.

For example, Marcuse (1969) identifies the absurd situation that democracy provides a legitimate framework for effecting change but at the same time that very framework is an impediment to change. Dissent and protest can be tolerated, but only if they adhere to the rules of the political and cultural system. This results in a situation where ‘the opposition is thus sucked into the very world which it opposes (Marcuse, 1969, p. 64). Drexler (2007) also examines the contradictory nature of democracy and the inherent challenges of exclusionary democratic settings:
Within established democratic processes, oppositional action – to be counted as proper, legitimate, political, reasonable, even sensible – must adhere to the rules of a game that is rigged in favour of the maintenance of the very processes the action wishes to disrupt. (p. 1)

I am reminded upon reading Drexler’s quote of the structure–agency debate (Archer, 2003). Are the structures too overwhelming for the subject to overcome? The point of choosing Butler’s theory of performativity and not Foucault’s perspective on discourse, for example, is because I am interested in the possibility of the subject acting in the face of the rules of a game that is rigged in favour of the maintenance of the very processes the action wishes to disrupt. Like Butler, I have not discarded the work of Foucault in this analysis. Indeed, the citizens resisting in the Mary River region know too well that the rules of the game are rigged against them. This does not mean they have given up, or will do so.

Upon choosing Butler, I was faced with the theoretical challenges that Foucault proposes in relation to disciplinary power and how the individual is positioned in relation to power. The similarities between Butler and Foucault seem abundant. Indeed, Butler has been described as a neo-Foucauldian ‘because she argues that power is productive, constituting the subject rather than simply constraining it, and that resistance is never external to power but reinstates its norms in the very process of subversion’ (Mills, 2003, p. 253). However, there are two principal differences that are relevant to my theoretical position. First, power is ‘not locally contextualised’ in Butler’s theory (Mills, 2003); and second, Foucault adopts a representational conception of text (Kulynych 1997). These two differing aspects of the conception of power warrant further investigation.
The local contextualisation of power can be found in Foucault's various writings. A starting point for resistance to power emerges in his theory of the micro politics of resistance where he says (1980, p. 142):

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies.

The notion that resistance is possible at the very point where disciplinary power is exercised is a cornerstone of Foucault's micro politics of resistance. This is similar to Butler's stance. Both theorists agree on the nature of regulatory or disciplinary power. However, Foucault's approach dampens the possibility of agency by positioning individuals as pitted against a monolithic characterisation of disciplinary power. To change power relations, one would need to change discourses. How individuals can do this is less clear in Foucault's work compared with that of Butler. Foucault has a focus on the context of power, whereas Butler is looking for a less context-dependent (universalising?) point from which resistance can manifest.

Agency is possible in Butler's theory of performativity. It is possible at the point of resistance when language fails to fully capture what it is that it purports to signify (Mills, 2003). This then leads to the potential for others to resignify the unstable proposition. Despite the universalising characteristics of Butler's theory, it does provide a distinct way for the subject to resist power (Kulynych, 1997; Lloyd, 2007).
Mills (2003) and other scholars (see section 2.7 below) criticise Butler for elevating a dispute over language to account for the politics of power, labelling it her linguistic vulnerability. This may be so, but only if language is constituted as representative of action and ethical positions.

According to Kulynych (1997), the problem of Butler’s linguistic vulnerability lies in the (false) presumption that resistance is representative or expressive of action. Kulynych says that the very act of resistance indicates there is something wrong with the current situation. How the subject comes to know about a situation is through action that reflects the ethical wrongness of the action. Equally, reaction represents the ethical rightness of the action in relation to that situation. Resistance tells us something about the type of beings who are resisting. The performativity themes that I have identified in this study do not represent resistance or represent the ideas of the people who are resisting the proposed dam. Speech action is the embodied performance of power through the use of words (and other public sphere actions) of both the state and the people resisting the proposal.

Both Foucault and Butler are interested in power and the way it is exercised. However, their conceptions of how the subject is positioned in relation to (possibly) exercising power are quite different. Within Butler’s idea of performativity, there is hope for the individual seeking change through the concept of resignification.

I am not denying the importance of discourse in understanding regulatory or disciplinary power. I have chosen performativity as a theoretical framework to help understand how individual agency is possible in the face of disciplinary power that is so convincingly explained by Foucault. This explains how people can reorient identity/power relations through the use of certain political acts in the public sphere that have a speech component. Subjugated individuals can re-create an identity through
reconfiguring the speech acts of the dominant interests for their own purposes. One of the reasons why I chose this approach was because of the inherent nature of power as theorised by Butler. However, there are further problems that need to be explored before I can adapt the theory of performativity for my own use.

2.7 Critique and development of Butler’s theory of performativity

I never expected my work to be read by very many people. I am dense, I am abstract, I am esoteric. Why should I become popular? But politically it is important that people ask the question 'what is possible' and believe in possibility. Because without the motion of possibility there is no motion forward. (Butler, 2001, para. 10)

The reason for offering this quote is to sympathise with the performative intention of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. However, I offer the following critique mindful of Butler’s intention of seeking the possibility of change as well as understanding the ontological minefield that her theoretical argument negotiates. Critique is important to clarify and build on theory.

Butler’s approach has received considerable attention as a result of theoretical insights into cultural recognition and identity politics (Boucher, 2006). The account of agency and power in the theory of performativity has stimulated debate surrounding how dominant social forces can be reflexively challenged by individuals and groups through the performative repetition of speech acts in the public sphere.

Critique of Butler’s theory of performativity has been deemed necessary by a number of writers. They theoretically and practically interrogate how the processes of individual performative action and identity formation translate into the social dimension of political
action. The critique generally centres on the ahistorical nature of Butler’s performativity. However, Butler’s approach is not a totally ahistorical and decontextualised account of agency. Foucault’s ideas on governmentality, with their regulative discourse perspective on power, have influenced her thinking. As such, her account of subjectivity and agency, to some degree, acknowledges the historicity of the speech act (Kulynych, 1997).

Despite the influence of Foucault, there has been considerable critique of the theory of performativity’s lack of acknowledgment of historical and other contextual matters. The critique can be categorised into three areas. The first centres on the over-individualisation of resistance and the linguistic vulnerability inherent in the theory of performativity. The second is the lack of social embeddedness of Butler’s idea. And lastly, it has been suggested that the theory downplays disciplinary power in a quest for agency.

**The individuality in Butler’s performativity**

Performativity has been accused of theoretically misdiagnosing social action processes by offering an individualising theory of social change (Boucher, 2006). It has been suggested that a focus on the resistance by individuals in purely discursive abstractions, thus not acknowledging the more tangible actions of oppressors, is one major limitation:

>S he locates the central dynamic of contestation in the vicissitudes of hegemonic norms in the ‘psychic life of power’ within an individual, her theory remains confined to the perspective of the isolated individual either resisting their subjectification or confronting their oppressor. Having located the basis for resistance in individual psychology, Butler conceptualises this resistance in phenomenological terms of personal
narratives and subjective melancholy, in abstraction from structural determinants such as material interests or crisis tendencies of the social system. (Boucher, 2006, p. 114)

This does not mean to say that people who are the subjects of Butler’s theory-building have not actually resisted their subjectification en masse, or that they have not confronted their oppressor directly. Rather, the theoretical position that Butler takes is one that elevates the ‘individual over the institutional, by virtue of a focus on individuation that only includes the social as the empirically given, as the factical backdrop for the perennial drama of the one-on-one encounter of self and other’ (Boucher, 2006, p. 136).

Lovell also argues that the social element is not incorporated in Butler’s notions of agency, concluding (2003, p. 1):

Butler’s theory of iterability works to endow the capacity to authorize against the grain of institutional authority with individuals and their acts and hence neglects the social contexts that inform and de-limit this capacity. ‘Resisting with authority’ is possible precisely because it is not endowed by individuals or their acts, but is collective and interactional.

For example, many people do not wish to protest because of fear of repression – real or imagined. Collectivity is one way of going against the grain of authority with less risk of social consequences. A lack of collectivity would conversely increase the risk for some individuals. A focus on identity as the point through which Butler conceives of resistance limits her to individualised notions of agency.
Butler’s absence of material and economic processes in resistance

Houston and Paulido (2002) and Nelson (1999) also critique Butler’s notion of resisting authority by offering a reading of performativity drawn from socially based empirical realities such as class, race and gender. They argue that the material and economic processes in which class, race and class are constructed, located and negotiated within the specific circuits of power are vital for a deeper understanding of performativity. This reading allows for a replacement of the abstract individual who resists a purely discursive world divorced from the institutional sites of power.

An under-emphasises of ‘the realities’ of power in Butler’s performativity

Lastly, there are critiques of Butler’s ideas that relate to power. Dessinger (1994), Sahil (2004) and Allen (1998) argue that there are ontological inconsistencies that lead to problematic generalisations about the notion of agency. Butler’s theory speaks only to the individual rather than social transformation as the embeddedness of speech acts and the power relations that constitute and enable them are theoretically bypassed (Rothenberg, 2006). In addition, Lloyd (2007) argues that Butler over-states the efficacy of the state in achieving its regulatory goals but is also ambiguous about the role and conceptualisation of the state in regulatory efforts of power and identity.

Mills also levels criticism at Butler for not being specific about power because of the linguistic vulnerability of her work. With reference to democratic contestation, Mills (2003, p. 253) argues that the theory of performativity ‘conflates power and language, these commitments ensure that politics takes place primarily in the realm of the linguistic’. In Butler’s work, sovereignty is over-shadowed by attention to the power of speech acts. This ignores the power of the state and its legislature. To some extent, Loizidou (2007) counters this reading of Butler. She argues that the possibility of

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8 In this case, Houston and Paulido (2002) refer to the historical memory and the embodied notion of subjectivity underpinning collective performative resistance.
people’s lives is more liveable and viable as a result of the processes Butler articulates. These processes occur within the parameters of a continual agonistic relationship between ethics, law and politics. These are the very sites at which meaning is contested through the performance of language.

Given that there is considerable critique and support for Butler’s ideas, I will outline the opportunities I argue do exist for the application of performativity in relation to political resistance.

So far, the focus of political acts has been on accounts of resistance through a focus on Butler’s preoccupation with identity. However, if the focus is shifted to one of performative acts as opposed to speech acts, the forms of political participation and the methods of resistance are broadened considerably. One of the most important contributions of the idea of performativity is that it challenges the notion of representation, not only in terms of democracy, but also in terms of how reality is conceived. In doing so, other applications of Butler’s ideas are possible.

One such application is Swanson’s (2007) use of performativity to analyse the power of capitalism. She adopts an anti-economic position in that she believes Marxist accounts of power resort to essentialist notions of the role of economics. From this position, she recognises that if economic relations are politicised, the scope of not only social change is broadened:

For example, both anti-economistic Marxian theorists and Butler adopt an anti-liberal, anti-voluntaristic notion of power and resistance, recognizing that ‘power’ operates through the endurance and effectivity of specific and thoroughly social, historical, and contingent practices (e.g., norms, identities, languages, [cultural] knowledge, laws, the distribution and
valuation of resources) and that emancipatory social change requires widespread individual and collective efforts to alter oppressive social practices. (Swanson, 2007, p. 6)

She also addresses the critique, outlined by the above writers, that performativity speaks only to individual change and not emancipatory social change that requires widespread individual and collective efforts to alter oppressive social practices. She offers a different interpretation (Swanson, 2007, p.10):

[T]hrough her concept of reiteration, she, like anti-economistic Marxian theorists, conceives individual action, practices, and social change as thoroughly social and historical and as embedded in collective/social action and norms. And because political collectivities and movements are composed of non-identical individual subjects, Butler’s examination of individual action, identity, and agency is appropriate and useful.

Here, Swanson (2007) claims that Butler’s concept of reiteration enhances our understanding of the social. How this occurs is demonstrated in the following excerpt. With reference to the action and the social embeddedness of that action in history, Swanson (2007, p. 10) argues:

an action’s formal conditions of existence include the past repetitions of that action, which have made it socially recognized, and the conventions, rituals, norms, regulatory ideals, etc. upon which past reiterations drew (and the current action now draws) and which allowed them (and allow the current action now) to be recognizable and more or less socially effective. To be sure, practices can always be reiterated or performed in ways that others do not recognize, deem inappropriate, or consider ineffective – but
these very judgments depend on the same, or very similar, conditions of existence.

If Swanson's claims are accepted, then Butler’s theory of performativity is ripe for the inclusion of other actions (not only speech) and the idea that the social realm is fundamentally part of the reiteration process. Swanson has offered a reading of Butler that allays concerns about the individualistic feature of performativity. Bakhtin's (1981) work on speech acts also identifies that socio historical processes can be used to align and develop social dimensions of an existing situation from previous situations. It is because of these critiques that an individualistic account of performativity will not be used as a theoretical lens in this thesis. The scene is set for refocusing the gaze on performativity for the present study.

2.8 Political performativity

In this study, I use the concept of life world as the alternative to identity in Butler’s theory of performativity. Political performativity is a process of political contention surrounding the life world of a citizen. Citizens resignify the imposed action of authority to recreate a preferred life world. The imposed action of authority can be a speech act or the embodied act of the authority. The preferred life world of the citizen is sourced in the emotional attention that the citizen gives to the imposed action of authority. Resignification occurs through the embodied action of citizens resisting that authority. This includes speech acts. The force of the resignification is heightened through the performance of the action in the public sphere. These are the actions that that are the foci of this research. The explanation and justification of this theoretical approach is given below.
Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the intentional arc can be used as the basis for the life world orientation. The concept of life world is used in phenomenology (Husserl, 1936) to refer to the world ‘as lived’ in a pre-reflexive state of understanding. Habermas (1981) also uses the term, but it is juxtaposed with more structural elements alongside the notion of the life world. In this thesis, I propose a different approach. I will apply a reading of Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) concept of the life world. Central to this is the notion of an intentional arc of the subject. The use of the intentional arc is important to understand here because it is the feature that is the basis of both the speech act and the preferred outcome of the speech act:

The life of consciousness – cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life – is subtended by an ‘intentional arc’ which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 136)

Merleau-Ponty’s notion of life world is a useful conceptual tool to help in the development of a theory of performativity. His explication of embodied subjectivity, including a reinterpretation of the phenomenological category of intentionality, is needed to overcome Butler’s static conception of speech acts. Vasterling (2003) identifies that Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) account of the relationship between the body and language provides a perspective that not only considers what the speech act has done, but also – and perhaps more importantly – what the subsequent speech act is going to do:

Merleau-Ponty’s account of the relation of body and language provides satisfactory answers to the questions Butler’s account raised. Butler’s argument concerning the constructedness of the body was inadequate in that it failed to account for embodiment and intentionality. This failure is
mainly due to Butler’s one-sided focus on language as ‘spoken speech’, as a system of sedimented and, hence, iterable signifying conventions and practices. What is missing from her account is a conception of language as ‘speaking speech’, as the expression of signifying intentions. (Vasterling, 2003, p. 213)

Another important extension of the theory of performativity is the role of emotion in speech act processes. Recent work in multidisciplinary research has placed more weight on the role played by emotions in cognition. As such, emotions are vitally important in the process of resignification.

Thus my use of the preferred concept of the life world acknowledges the use of identity in Butler’s version of performativity but expands this to include the body both in terms of perception and intention. The growing understanding of the role of emotion in perception and cognition also emphasises the importance of the intentional arc in the life world of the individual (Ellis, 2005).

Emotion is also important to the concept of the life world. Resignification is based on the emotional response of people in relation to their intentional arc. In this way, the thing that a person is attempting to bring into being is the life world that is congruent with their emotional needs. The point of resistance is the objection to the imposed life world by the oppressor. The imposed life world can actually be experienced immediately or it can be a threat of future action. If the life world is the thing that is resisted, then the social realm is naturally encompassed in that perspective on resistance.

From the health studies field, the work of Winance (2007) suggests that speech acts are descriptive, prescriptive and embodied, creating differences in the life world for
individuals. She argues that ‘words define a person’s world, body and (dis)abilities. They thus define the way in which this world can (or cannot) be changed through political action and by creating a group.’ (p. 228). Similarly, in political action, the words create difference in the projected life world of citizens. Emotions are fundamental to creating different life worlds.

The point of this line of argument or theorising about emotion and action is that it is concerned with the primacy of perceptions and how people react to the initial speech act within a performativity framework. Individuals react in relation to the perceived (potential) impact on their life world.

2.9 Performativity and media

To understand how performativity can be developed as a more credible theory of social change, I will consider the ideas of mediatisation and media framing and their relevance to the theory of performativity. This will allow for a reorientation of performativity away from an individualised theory of change to one that includes the social and political dimensions of social movements. This is done in the context of changes in the purpose and or function of the media and the public sphere. Dahlgren and Sparks (1993) pose the question: Can the media play a role in the formation of a ‘public sphere’ when public service broadcasting is under attack and the popular press plays to ‘the market’ with a steady stream of celebrity gossip and sensationalised reporting?

Additionally, the changes in media and society in recent decades has prompted a re-evaluation of private and public life (Thompson, 1995). Kellner (1995) and Meyrowitz (1986) refer to the change as a ‘mediated publicness’. This involves the radical restructuring of the boundary between public and private social life whereby the
differences between the public and the private have been blurred, and a hybrid form of political life has emerged. To a large degree, this is shaped by the discursive practices of the production and consumption of new and traditional media.

These changes have not gone unnoticed by activists. The changes in the way activists do protest have meant a recasting of how they engage with and manage local structures, leadership of groups, recruitment of protesters, political opportunities, and changing nature-framing processes (Langman, 2005). They include democratic methods of participatory organisation and clever use of electronic media.

The rise of new media has given hope to citizenship in the public sphere. For example, Boyle and Schierback (2009) found a distinct difference in the role that alternative and mainstream media play in predicting different types of participation in protest action. They conclude that, increasingly, the use of online news sources play a critical role in facilitating both traditional, alternative and protest forms of participation (Boyle & Schierback, 2009). Irrespective of the type of protest, all protest participants relied on some form of web content. It was noted that non-mainstream protest activities correlated highly with participant use of alternative media. Importantly, Boyle and Schierback (2009) suggest that the decrease in TV and newspaper consumption ‘represents a broader trend, with fewer politically active individuals relying on “old” media’. They point out, however, that all participants in their study still consumed mainstream ‘old’ media and that it commonly was the starting point from which to search for more and valid information. It must be noted that these conclusions can only be made about the characteristics of a Mid-Western state in the United States (Boyle & Schierback, 2009). This conclusion is similar to Hermes’ (2006) position on the importance of the internet for citizenship and the media. He claims that citizenship through new media is not necessarily creating a new citizenry, but rather offering new modes of engagement and expression. His conclusions do not discount the potential
for more effective citizen engagement in the public sphere. These findings resonate with the research findings of others.

Pickerill (2001), for example, observed in Britain that computer-mediated communication technologies increased the mobilisation of citizens in existing activist networks. However, computer-mediated communication technologies had a limited effect in integrating new citizens into activism. There were few incidents of online activism in the 1990s in Britain (Pickerill, 2001).

However, things have changed since then. One example is GetUp!. It is a group whose online campaigning had attracted more than 175,000 members as of the end of 2007 (GetUp!, 2007). In May 2009, there were more 325,800 people identified as network members or supporters (GetUp!, 2009). With varying degrees of success, GetUp! campaigns have influenced political debate and contributed to changes in political policy at the federal government level (Huijser & Little, 2008). The interesting feature of this organisation is that it is issue based. The decline in political party and environmental group membership, contrasted with the rise of this type of interest group, is symbolic of changing notions of democratic participation in Australia (Huijser & Little, 2008). Indeed, Backhouse (2007) says that, despite their potential to be subsumed within traditional political and environmental groups, these types of forums are extensions of the ‘town meeting’. However, their voice of influence is directed in more visible ways and is largely independent of mass media, although they use mass media to distribute their messages – for example, through advertising (Backhouse, 2007).

Despite the problems noted thus far, the groups and individuals who attempt to achieve social change in the public sphere continue to find opportunities in the combination of old and new media. The importance of these opportunities means that protest groups need to understand media and the processes involved in its production and
consumption. The important aspect here in relation to my arguments in this thesis is that the relationship between ‘mass’ and ‘new’ media relies not only on network features, but also the creative elements of engagement within these spheres and the unpredictable actions of people that result from this engagement. I stress the unpredictability of the future action component because it has been noted that the interactive nature of ICTs makes them vulnerable to start-up and continuation problems (Markus, 1987). New citizens joining such groups can have negative effects on online group development.

Understanding media framing is critical in the synthesis of performativity and the media, necessitated by a constantly changing media environment. One way that media studies have explored this is to conceive of progressive enactments (such as performativity) through a focus on how the media ‘message’ resonates with the receiver. Thus, framing is seen as relevant to performativity.

However, Benford and Snow (2000) remind us that there are relatively few studies examining the mobilising potency of media framing. In particular, they identify that there is a need for more empirical audience studies to explore the factors that lead to the effectiveness of frame resonance with the receiving citizenry. Given that limitation, it is understood that the reception of a frame by the public is contingent on the resonance of the performance. Factors that have been identified as important in frame resonance include frame credibility and frame salience (Benford & Snow, 2000). Frame credibility refers to consistency of the frame, empirical credibility of the frame and credibility of the frame-maker. Frame saliency refers to the alignment of beliefs and values with the frame, experiential relevance of the frame with the targets of the frame, and the cultural relevance or narrative fidelity of the frame with the targets. The cultural relevance/narrative fidelity feature of the frame is said to be vitally important in framing effectiveness. Untested empirically, the hypothesis is that the greater the narrative
fidelity, the greater the salience of the frame, and thus the greater the prospect of collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000). Although I have not specifically adopted framing theory here, it has clear similarities with my line of argument. Similarly, the depth of public opinion research (see Donsbach & Traugott, 2008; McCombs, 2005) is testimony to the importance of the changing role of media in political influence and social change. I acknowledge that research in public opinion formation is also a similar to the topic of this thesis, but differs in the focus site of production of meaning and actions. My research is focused on the individual in the process of collective resistance from a cultural perspective. This perspective intrudes on media research.

Perhaps inevitably, there has been some critique of framing and protest movement theorising. Carragee and Roefs (2004, p. 214) argue that framing theorists have neglected ‘conceptual problems in the definition of frames, the inattention to frame sponsorship, the failure to examine framing contexts within wider political and social contexts and the reduction of framing to a form of media effects’. In short, research efforts have under-theorised and under-researched how power is related to social movements and media. The growing awareness of the importance of new media in counter-public sphere activity is being met with growing interest in research agendas within and outside media and cultural studies (Downey, 2003).

At this point, it is worth mentioning Hall’s (1973, 199) contribution to understanding media production and consumption. His account introduces the political dimension lacking in the more instrumental attempts to understand media framing. Hall has much to say about power, resistance and hegemony. Using a post-Gramscian approach to power, Hall argues that individuals actively embrace knowledge (text) gained through the media by a process of negotiation and opposition. The meaning of a particular text is dependent on the cultural context but is always somewhere between the producers of the text and consumers’ understanding of it. Modern culture is not determined by
economic factors, but rather by the cultural factors that mediate interpretation of text (Davis, 2004). Fundamental to Hall's use of the term ‘cultural’ is how ideology distorts, inflects and binds individuals. However, ideology is not a concrete phenomenon as it cannot embody or express the full social relations that underpin the social world (Hall, 1977).

For the purpose of this study, Hall (1997) informs the debate by offering a similar social process to that described by Butler. The social world is incomplete in its grip of the individual through either foreclosure (Butler, 2001) or ideology (Hall, 1997). The principal difference in terms of resistance is that Butler offers a model that accounts for action as non-representational. Action is the actual making of meaning through iteration, whereas Hall uses the term ‘ritual action’ as modes of resistance.

As such, the realisation of performativity through the public sphere is contingent on the politics of the media. How the processes of performativity are mediated through formal and informal media networks will in turn influence the processes of social attention that may translate into collective action. Thus, recent developments in the notion of mediatised politics are important to explore.

The definition of mediatisation is elusive. In its most general form, mediatisation ‘describes the transformation of many disparate social and cultural processes into forms or formats suitable for media representation’ (Couldry, 2008, p. 377). Stromback (2008), in a summary of the papers on the concept, identified the various conceptions of the term. He concludes that mediatisation is how social and cultural activity assumes media form in a dynamic staged process in which the governance of media independence is prescribed by certain logics. Stromback (2008) argues that the first logic of mediatisation concerns the sources of information. Whether the media or personal communications are the dominant source of information determines the initial
outcomes of media form. The second logic he proposes is whether the media are independent from or closely related to political institutions. The third logic is whether media content is governed by a political or media logic. The last criterion he identifies is whether the political actors themselves are governed by the logic of politics or media logic. These aspects of mediatisation can be applied to a particular issue through time. The stages of logic are linear in that latter stages follow earlier ones. However, I observed in the Save the Mary River case study that some of the stages could occur simultaneously.

A discussion of mediatisation as it applies to performativity is important because this may counter the critique regarding under-prioritising the social realm in performativity’s capacity to explain social change. My argument here is that the critiques of performativity as an individualising theory of social change miss the point that political action, from a performativity perspective, does occur in a social realm, despite the focus on individual performance. This is especially so if the public sphere is a means through which individuals have the life world imposed upon them. The issue of individualisation is made void at the point of entry of the individual into the public sphere.

From a media studies perspective, Cottle (2007) acknowledges what Butler flags in her theory of performativity: that performativity of resistance through the public sphere, and – more importantly – through formal media production processes, allows for the creation of identity and discourse that resists the old and creates new power relations. An examination of the reflexive processes involving the other, media and hegemonic power is timely:

These more progressive enactments are too often overlooked and under-theorised by critical researchers today, who remain theoretically fixated on
the media’s construction of the ‘other’. In an increasingly reflexive, culturally pluralistic and globalising world, it is time to acknowledge and bolster the more politically productive representations of mainstream journalism. (Cottle, 2007, p. 37)

From Cottle’s perspective, the theory of mediatisation helps in understanding how outsider groups’ claims for recognition have been undermined by negative stigmatisation and denigration through the mainstream media. However, this position is not fixed in time. Mainstream media do produce representations that elevate particular voices and give form to the identity of the marginalised misrepresented ‘other’. As Cottle (2007) points out:

Mainstream media are in fact capable of producing representations that give voice to the voiceless and identity to image. These representations perform an important role in the symbolic rehabilitation of former ‘others’ – whether they are, for example, asylum seekers, terrorism suspects, Aboriginal people or victims of war and famine – and they do so through journalism’s performative deployment of powerful communicative modes of display and deliberation. (p. 37)

Media play an integral part in the process of political performativity. Cottle’s (2007) work on mediatisation of the marginalised ‘other’, combined with political performativity, forms the basis of this analysis. This focus is justified by Downing’s (2008) evaluation and critique of recent social movement theorisation. He argues that mobilisation literature and social movement studies literature has rarely entered into a deep analysis of the relations between the media and social movements. Recent work by Cottle (2008) examining changes in the media politics of dissent concludes with a series of issues relevant for researchers interested in protests and media. These
issues can be reoriented to suit the perspective of protest movements, thus identifying the problems that performativity may help to solve. He argues that politics today exists in a cacophonous field of protest. Not only has there been an increase in issues vying for media attention, but social changes concerned with de-traditionalisation, individualisation, globalisation and increased reflexivity (Buaman, 2007; Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1994) have problematised the act of protest for individuals, groups and also researchers interested in charting their course.

Cottle (2008) has argued that the complexity of information and the interlinking of local to global networks of communication pose additional problems and opportunities for protesters. It is increasingly problematic for protesters to engage with media that are attempting to chart and represent the ‘glocalisation’ (Robertson, 1995) of people’s involvement in protest and at the same time develop ways of communicating this through interlinking of local to global networks of communication. On top of these issues, the spectacle of drama continues to run the risk of being appropriated by media interests in the hegemonic landscape of media and developing new media (Cottle, 2008). This ensures that the increasingly individualistic world is a challenge to protesters attempting to facilitate collective action. The flip side is that individuals are afforded more saliency in the mediatisation of protest in this world. This is an opportunity for performativity to play a part.

In order to ensure the power of protest, today’s repertoires of contention need to evolve with changes in new media. In this way, creative adaptations and innovation may serve resistance through a reflexive orientation to media performance. Stromback’s (2008) mediatisation logics may help to chart a course for performativity. In environmental public sphere issues where media are the dominant sources of information as opposed to personal communication, individual performativity in the media becomes an important process that can both instigate and facilitate social change. In such
situations, the environmental issue becomes newsworthy and in many cases the fact that mass media have reported the issue is celebration enough for the protesters. However, for increased effectiveness in a dynamic, mediatised world, activists need to counter actions and words of the dominant elite by using methods in new and evolving communication modes. New media, despite their potentially closed broadcasting features, facilitate this process by repeating, for example, both positive and negative mass media reports as well as countering mass media versions. This may not occur in the process of the mediatisation of an issue.

Other logics, such as whether the media are independent of political institutions and whether the content is governed by a political logic or media logic, will also influence the process of performativity in the public sphere. If performativity is a possible way of initiating and facilitating protest movements, charting a course through media politics is important for protesters. This is highly problematic, as Cottle (2008) points out. It is an area of research that needs further investigation. Political performativity in terms of the Save the Mary River case study contributes to the first element of the mediatisation process. Specifically, this is concerned with the role of individuals in the political performativity process and the ways in which this translates into power for the protest movement. How this contribution can be taken up by activists is best seen through the perspective of activist education, which charts the development of practical information on how to create and sustain effective political action. In the next section, I will focus on the application of research to that of performativity in activist education and training literature.

2.10 Application to environmental advocacy education

Education for environmental advocacy has only recently acknowledged the importance of cultural dimensions in protest action. The survey of literature on education for
environmental advocacy does not acknowledge the recent trends in practical protest movement literature. Environmental advocacy education is focused mostly on networking skills and organisation development. In this section, I will review the literature that describes educational curricula for environmental advocacy. The purpose of this is to show that there is a gap between the knowledge of activists and their trainers in terms of their roles as change agents of culture. The theory of political performativity would be a useful addition in helping to understand the various cultural processes of protest movements.

Whelan (2004) identifies six categories of environmental advocacy strategies most frequently practised by the contemporary Australian environment movement. These are drawn from a much more diverse range of advocacy strategies described in social movement literature. These strategies include: reformist, electoral and educational, direct action, emerging technologies and mass media, and interpersonal and creative approaches. Of these, the emerging technologies and mass media, and interpersonal and creative strategies closely identify with activists’ role as change agents of culture. However, these strategies tend to focus on getting the message out as opposed to processes by which messages are processed and received by audiences.

Chase (2006) has also examined the needs of activists, identifying five general content areas after determining the stated needs of practitioners and the findings of social movement theorists. These include ecological literacy, organisation-building skills, social action skills, ‘big picture’ political understandings and life-skills/personal growth. These aspects were considered to be the key building blocks for any coherent curriculum plan for an academic environmental advocacy and training organisation program. What is lacking here is the education about cultural processes in collective action. To some degree, agenda-setting strategies may be useful to plug this hole, but they do not provide any depth of understanding of cultural processes.
Earlier work in assessing the needs of activists was carried out by York (1997). The common theme in this assessment is a focus on raising awareness of political opportunities, the role of networks, skills and efficacy in policy development and, to some degree, targeting of power brokers in society (interest groups, sympathetic organisations and elites). To a greater extent Lattimer (1994) targets the sources of power and notes that cultural creation is an important aim for activist education. This research focused on resistance through non-cooperation campaigns, legal action, public education campaigns, corporate campaigns and government lobbying.

Whelan’s (2004) thesis on education and training for effective environmental advocacy reaches a number of conclusions that are relevant to the present study. Whelan examined the ‘Heart Politics’ environmental advocacy training group. This group is relevant to the present thesis because it is a group that acknowledges the emotional side of activist work. Whelan (2004) found that:

During this focus group session, participants agreed that social change theories (such as Moyer [1987, 1990, 1993]), activist learning models (such as Webb, 1984a) and campaign analyses (such as Runciman, Barber, Parlane, Shaw, & Stone, 1986) offer rare and potent insights that may significantly enhance activist education activities. Unfortunately, these publications invariably have limited distribution. Participants also expressed strong support for the establishment of a permanent activist education centre such as the Highlander Centre. (p. 378)

The social change theorists referred to above include Moyer (1992), who characterised the eight stages of successful social movements, Web (1984), who examined the political skills and performance amongst political activists and the implications for
political education, and Runciman et al. (1986), who described the learning and insights gained from their fight for the Franklin Dam. Cultural and social models for change in these examples are not given high priority. It would seem from Whelan’s (2004) research that activists are particularly interested in social change theory and its application to practice, but that the models of change are limited to more structural features of protest movement theory.

To some extent, the current work by the Change Agency, now headed by James Whelan, is endeavouring bring culture through the activist education doorway. The initiative is an outcome of the needs identified in Whelan’s PhD thesis. A review of the Change Agency’s website reveals a range of research articles and other resources that do focus on cultural aspects of social change. These included filmmaking strategies and books describing the determinants of cultural change within protest movements. Despite these resources, the education and training opportunities offered by the Change Agency continue to focus on organisational development and strategising for change. Given the cultural turn, as evidenced by material presented in the organisation’s website, it is only a matter of time for cultural processes to be prioritised in education for environmental advocacy. Given the ‘emotional turn’ in protest movement research literature, the opportunities for implementing more sophisticated models of change that accounts for diffuse power is growing. To some degree, the protest movement is moving towards prioritising non-structural sources of power.

2.11 Chapter Summary

In this literature review, I have attempted to:

- outline developments in social movement theory and collective action theory;
- provide evidence that emotions and cultural aspects are the forefront of theorising about collective action in the public sphere;
- outline Butler’s (1997) theory of performativity; and
- position Butler’s theory within the public sphere.

The critiques of Butler’s theory of performativity, suggestions from media studies and trends in research into protest movements indicate opportunities for further development of the idea and application of performativity. In particular, application of the concept of the life world as opposed to identity as a focus for analysis allays expressed concerns of the ahistorical nature of performativity. A process that is enacted by the social basis of emotion will go some way towards answering the critique regarding individual psychology. So too will the use of media as sites of resignification of the protesters’ world. Envisaging the public sphere as multi-layered, contested and poorly defined in terms of private sphere overlap and structure all combine to ensure that performativity in the public sphere is an incomplete project. These elements identify the need to develop an alternative to identity as the unit of analysis. This particular aspect and the feature of the research process will be outlined in the next chapter.
Certainly no simple opposition exists between academia and activism. Rather, occupying a third space of critical engagement enables research to become a personal and reflexive project of resistance. Clearly, such a space must be one’s own, not one prescribed, ordered, expected or enforced. (Routledge, 1996, p. 411)

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I present further details of my theoretical framework and the methodology I have used to explore how individuals may become empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere. The ethical considerations of the research are also detailed. Eight sections, outlined below, examine these aspects of the methods.

The first of these sections outlines my role as a critically reflexive researcher and describes how the purpose of the research influenced the methods. In this section, I explore aspects pertaining to the critical reflexive researcher, including issues surrounding reflexivity and the position of the researcher in the research process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Maxey, 1999); the inherent difficulty in making sense of a messy world with traditional social science methods (Law, 2005; Urry & Law, 2004); and the purpose of social science research (Flyvbjerg, 2003; Giroux, 2003; Maxey, 1999).
In the next section, I discuss the case study method and how it relates to the ideas I have outlined thus far. This approach was chosen as a framework in which to situate the analysis of political performativity. Flybjerg (2003, 2006) and Yin (2002) have guided my use of the single case study approach. The main benefit flowing from this is that the appropriateness of data collection and analysis is guided by the need for meaningful and purposeful targeting of the research question. This has freed me to pursue a range of data-collection and analysis techniques appropriate for the project.

Sections 3.4 to 3.7 detail the research design. In these, I outline the specific techniques of data collection, analysis and presentation used. In particular, I detail how political performativity was used as the main analytical method within the bounds of the case study. This enabled me to explore how power between individuals and the state might be reoriented through particular forms of citizen action in the public sphere. To make sense of the large scope of the study, I used a thematic analysis of participant responses to my interview.

The last sections examine other approaches that have been used to understand protest action and the ethical dimensions of this research. I will detail the predominant methods and frameworks used to examine collective action – political analysis, positivist approaches, cultural and media studies – and will highlight the similarities and differences between performativity and each of these approaches.

3.2 Reflexivity, mess and purpose

Reflexivity in the research process is important because it is essential for the validity and reliability of qualitative research. It is important to note here that in this thesis the terms reliability and validity will not used in the same way that positivist perspectives on research methods would. Rather similar findings of the study would be realised if the
same research framework was adopted by another researcher who had similar professional and interest in the research topic. Central to the research methods of this thesis is the concept and practice of reflexivity.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) outline four levels of reflective research that are of particular relevance to my study. The first level concerns how the researcher interacts with empirical material and constructs the data. The next concerns the researcher’s interpretation and search for underlying meanings, while the third level is about critical interpretation of the political and ideological aspects of research. The last level entails the self-critical and linguistic reflection of the researcher. These aspects are separated here for the purpose of communication. However in practice these aspects are intertwined and sometimes difficult to differentiate in the practice of research.

A criticism that may be levelled at this thesis is that it is an exercise in providing evidence to support my opinion on the proposed dam - an opinion clouded by my emotional involvement. However my reflexive process of engagement in the research process negates this claim.

It was true that my involvement in the research topic has not only focussed on researching the phenomenon of political performativity. I felt compelled to be involved in the plight of the people affected by the proposal. I also campaigned against the proposed dam after I assessed the proposal against various environmental assessment criteria as laid down by the Australian Government’s Department of Environment. During the whole length of the public sphere issue I revisited my position on the proposal and at each time I came to the same conclusions. I concluded that the project had procedural flaws that impacted unduly on the people in the impacted area and that the positioning of the dam was ultimately unsustainable.
My emotional involvement in the issue may be seen as an impediment to rational judgement in the research process. I argue with others researchers (Anderson and Smith 2001) that emotions have been unduly banished from the production of knowledge. Because of my emotional involvement my critical perspective has been heightened. Understanding that the impacts of the proposal had (and is continuing to have) real and tangible consequences contributed to my heightened awareness of the processes involved with people’s resisting the proposed dam. My emotional involvement has allowed me to better understand and ‘see’ the process of performativity. At the same time I needed to be acutely aware of the intention of the emotions I was experiencing particularly during the data collection phase. Rossenberg (1990) argues that reflexive understanding of emotion help drive attention, awareness and intentional ‘use’ whereas unreflexive emotional engagement leads to unintentional display emotion. In line with these comments I have ensured I have become aware of my emotions and controlled their expression in public. By public I mean: my interaction with the interviewees and other people from the thesis study area; my publications and comments made in the media; my comments made in the public addresses to scholarly and public audiences and lastly my written work, which includes this thesis. As a researcher at Griffith University I have also been aware of the institutional risks involved with my public sphere engagement. I have negotiated these risks through communication with other researchers and public relations staff at Griffith University. I was acutely aware that I could not use my position as a platform to campaign against the dam based only on my emotional reactions to the impacts of the proposal.

This approach adopts similar characteristics to the non-constructivist approach in social science that is increasing concerned with ‘affect’.

Non-constructivist approaches - approaches associated with being and doing, with participation and performance, with ways of knowing that
depend on direct experience (including autobiography and biography) more so than reflection, abstraction, translation and representation - offer encouragement, if not as yet clear strategies, for accessing the world as mediated by feeling. (Anderson and Smith 2001, p.9)

The mention of unclear strategies in this approach relates to the idea that the concepts of emotion and reflexivity are ill defined and quite possible undefinable in terms of a recipe approach to research. Other researchers examining the concept of ‘mess’ in social science offers possible pathways in this approach.

A major breakthrough in the research process was the realisation of the inherent difficulties in making sense of a ‘messy world’ with traditional social science methods (Law, 2005). In developing a theoretical framework for this investigation, I was thwarted in my attempts to make sense of the dynamic and hard-to-grasp world in which the research topic was situated. Law (2004) identifies that a common assumption of research generally is that messy findings are the result of poor research processes. Law indicates that, in order to make sense of this ‘messy world’, contemporary social science methods persist in seeking clarity and precision. However, the notion that the world might be fluid, ephemeral, elusive and multiple is unthinkable and incompatible with the processes of making it seem clear and definable. However, the difficulty in making such orderly generalisations may be the result of a ‘messy world’ and not the limitations of method.

Based on this assumption, the ‘mess’ I experienced in determining the ‘right’ methods to cut through this fluidity and elusiveness is not the result of a lack of knowledge or experience. I found it interesting in that for every breakthrough in my methodological understanding of the research process, the more confident I became in doubting that ‘the method’ could precisely order the world through the research process.
One critical reprieve in the process was encountering the notion that the very activity of developing a methodological tool was a political act. Law (2004) proposes that a ‘performative understanding’ of the research process might help to explain the outcomes in more ‘precise’ ways than technique. As Law and Urry conclude, ‘research methods in the social sciences do not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it’ (2004, p. 391). They continue: ‘They are performative; they have effects; they make differences; they enact realities; and they can help to bring into being what they also discover.’ (Law and Urry, 2004, p. 392–393) Indeed, ‘to the extent social science conceals its performativity from itself it is pretending to an innocence that it cannot have’ (Laws and Urry, 2004, p. 404). This leads to the consideration of the idea of a ‘performative’ social science.

Thus, not only does the theoretical framework of this thesis help in making sense of the field data, but also it enables the identification of a performative element in my own ontological approach. Although there is a difference in the concept of performative and performativity, there are similarities in that what is done through the research act is the common element.

My engagement with the Save the Mary River issue as an academic activist who has taken a stance to resist the proposal allows me to understand, albeit in a minor way, what the citizens in the Mary Valley are experiencing as a result of the proposal to build a dam. My position as a researcher who is partially within the research ‘sample’ allows insights into the processes of democratic participation.

From a positivist’s position, alarm bells might already be ringing. From a traditional social science approach using positivist frameworks, my engagement with the research ‘data’ would be seen as problematic to method. However, the performative enactment
of the research has been a vital part of making research judgments regarding the
analysis of political performativity in the case study.

Flyvberg (2001) offers a perspective on the purpose of research and the political nature
of the research enterprise. He has adopted the Aristotelian term ‘phronesis’ (prudence
or practical wisdom) to describe the politics of knowledge production in social science
work.

In Aristotle’s words, phronesis is a ‘true state, reasoned, and capable of action with
regard to things that are good or bad for man’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 2). Phronesis goes
beyond both analytical, scientific knowledge (episteme) and technical knowledge or
know-how (techne) and involves judgments and decisions made in the manner of a
virtuoso social and political actor. Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that phronesis is commonly
involved in social practice, and that therefore attempts to reduce social science and
theory either to episteme or techne, or to comprehend them in those terms, are
misguided.

Phronetic research focuses on the importance of practical activity and practical
knowledge in everyday situations. It may mean, but is not limited to, a focus on known
sociological, ethnographic and historical phenomena such as everyday life and
everyday people. What it always means, however, is a focus on the actual daily
practices which constitute a given field of interest, regardless of whether these
‘practices take place on the floor of the stock exchange, a grass roots organisation, a
hospital, or a local school board’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 134). This conclusion bears a
similarity to Alvesson and Sköldberg’s (2000) conclusions regarding social reality and
how this is no different from the daily language and practices of society, of which
researchers are an integral part.
Flyvbjerg’s (2001) contribution goes further, suggesting that if social science wishes to cast off its ‘looser role’ in the science wars, then it needs stop attempting to emulate natural sciences’ focus on prediction. It also needs to focus on things that matter to the local regional and global communities with an emphasis on values and power:

We may transform the social science to an activity done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future. We may in short arrive at a social science that matters.

(Flyvberg, 2001, p. 166)

By choosing to focus my research on individuals’ resistance to the proposed dam in the Mary River Valley and how that translates into the public sphere, I have chosen to explore the daily practices that constitute the field of interest of the meaning and outcomes of democratic action. These are co-created in the performativity of the research process and the political performativity of the public sphere action by the activists. Using a case study approach gives structure to the purpose of the research and offers a framework to deal with the ‘mess’ of comprehending the political performativity of resistance with regard to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

3.3 The single case study approach

The topic is suited to a case study approach. I chose the events and issues surrounding the proposed dam on the Mary River to illustrate the processes of collective action because of the contentious nature and the relatively large size of the public sphere issue. The land use issue at the time of writing was still being featured in regional, state and national media. It also had a definable geographic study area,
which aided in field research and in managing the scope of the study. Notwithstanding this, the issue cut across many political spheres reaching out from the Mary River region to Brisbane and Canberra – places where political decisions were made in the approval process.

The use of single case studies has gained a growing acceptance as a legitimate research methodology that contributes to theory building (see Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2003, 2006). Anthropology has also had a long history of the use of the single case study in research (Geertz, 1983). This approach has traditionally been used for pilot studies with the aim of obtaining hypotheses to test on larger representative samples. It is claimed that the results from case studies cannot be generalised to other or wider sets of data. However, this notion and other assumptions have recently been challenged. Flyvbjerg (2006) has outlined five common misunderstandings about case study research. I will reproduce the misunderstandings as headings under which I will discuss how my own case study aligned with these arguments. I will also note the difficulties I experienced regarding the application of a single case study approach to particular research questions and the theoretical approach I adopted.

**Misunderstanding 1: General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.**
(Flyvbjerg, 2006)

Fundamental to ‘good’ research practice within the case study approach is the need to be conscious of the process by which knowledge is crafted. If an analogy of learning is used to understand the process of the researcher becoming the expert, we can see how the role of context-dependent knowledge is critical in drawing conclusions from research in general. The process of becoming an expert is based not on the learner following rule-based (context-independent) learning processes. Rather, intimate
knowledge of relevant experiences is sought by the learner to enable progressively more complex and competent judgements about the world. The same process can be applied to the case study researcher.

It is through this process that I have been able to make judgements important to the outcomes of the research. For example, the thematic analysis of political performativity has been gained from my developing experience within the object of study itself and the feedback from project participants. In this way, testing of theory has been continual throughout the process of the research. Thus, concrete and practical context-dependent knowledge as opposed to rule-based context-independent knowledge has been critical in informing my analysis.

**Misunderstanding 2: One cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.** (*Flyvbjerg, 2006*)

The holy grail of generalisation – the focus of positivist research within the physical and social sciences alike – has one central assumption that begs to be unpacked from a case study perspective. This assumption concerns the application of Popper’s (1959) concept of falsification. Relevant to this discussion is the question of what data count as legitimate data in the process of falsification. The data that can be used to falsify theory are quite ambiguous. The classic example used to illustrate Popper’s falsification claim is the example of black swans. The theory of ‘all swans are white’ was proved to be false through the discovery of black swans. What is relevant here is that the case study was in fact the very ‘data’ which led to proof of the falsification of the original theory and subsequent new theory. The observations of black swans in a new context led to the falsification of the theory of white swans. Thus, the black swan case does have a role to play in scientific development. Cases can therefore play a
major role in the building of research knowledge. However, the major role of the case study is one of example, rather than in generalising context-independent knowledge. The power of example is an under-emphasised feature of case study research which is important in the development of knowledge.

The story that unfolds in the case study of the Save the Mary River issue is one of how power is challenged and created through actions in the public sphere. It may be that the case of the Mary River is capable of being generalised in a context-independent fashion, but more importantly the context-dependent features make it a great example for future application. My data analysis of political performativity pertaining to the power relations between the state and the affected individuals manifested through the public sphere will be extremely relevant to future activists. The lessons that can be learnt from this have important outcomes that build on the lessons learned from other land use issues, in particular land use disputes over dams.

Misunderstanding 3: The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses – that is, in the first stage of a total research process – whereas other methods are more suitable for hypothesis-testing and theory-building.

While case studies are useful in generating hypotheses, they are also useful in testing them, as discussed above. However, this is not the only use for case studies. Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies there are many types of cases. Those relevant to my own study are extreme and possibly critical cases. The Save the Mary River case study can be considered an extreme case in that it exemplifies the processes and features in a dramatic and easily identifiable way. Based on Flyvbjerg (2006), my argument is that there is little hope of identifying processes under investigation from non-extreme cases where they may be either invisible or absent. The validity of the research processes within extreme case studies is strengthened by the very fact that the case and the
features within it are easily identifiable exemplars of the processes under examination. Similarly, the reliability of the research is strengthened in extreme cases because the context-dependent nature of the findings is also easily identified as a result of the extreme exemplars of the process under investigation. These two features give weight to the argument for generalising from extreme cases, particular by way of example. Furthermore, if the processes do not occur in extreme cases, the likelihood of them occurring in other cases is also low. The opposite is also valid in that if the process does not occur in an extreme case it is most likely not present in a case where the processes are less obvious. Thus the power of example through the case study is a way of generalising findings that are relevant to other situations with similar contexts.

In support of this argument, it appears that similar public sphere processes occurred during the construction of another dam on a river system just to the north of the Mary River not long ago. The Paradise Dam was completed in November 2005 and the Queensland Government used similar institutional and public sphere tactics to ensure its seamless construction. The activists from the Save the Mary campaign used experiences from the Paradise Dam event to predict the processes that the state government would use in the Traveston Crossing Dam case. This tactic has proved useful for the activists. This also adds weight to the argument that a particular case can offer generalised information to aid in the prediction of the future processes.

**Misunderstanding 4: The case study contains a bias toward verification – that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions (Flyvbjerg, 2006).**

Flyvberg (2006) indicates that a single in-depth case study lends itself to falsification and not verification. Many theoretical assumptions and tentative theories are cast off as the researcher gains a more complex understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through immersing him or herself within it. Gertz (1995) argues that
fieldwork is a powerful and disciplining force that quite often reorientates original conceptions. The ‘proximity’ of the researcher to the phenomenon under research, considered the source of bias, is the very feature that enables the disciplining force of the case study.

In the case of the Mary River Dam, as outlined in the previous section, I discarded my initial theoretical framework not long after my entry into the field. This was an obvious choice. I consider that simply accepting the original research question and not changing my theoretical approach would have led to a verification problem. Engaging with the subjects of my research was central to the change in my theoretical approach and the subsequent development of my research questions.

**Misunderstanding 5: It is often difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.** (Flyvbjerg, 2006)

To answer this, Laws (2004) has more to say than Flyvbjerg (2006) about developing general propositions about case studies. As stated in Chapter 1, the difficulty in making orderly generalisations may be the result of a messy world and not the limitations of method (Laws, 2004). The emphasis on making sense of the researcher’s world through tools that attempt to order complexity and ephemeral qualities of our world might be counterproductive to making conclusions about that world. Flyvbjerg (2006) again uses the analogy of learning, comparing the expert and the beginner to illustrate this issue facing the researcher. Something essential may be lost in summarising the case if prescriptive rule-bound methods are used. Intuitive understanding that comes with immersion with the subject allows for a narrative of the case study to contribute to research knowledge in ways that capture the complexity and elusiveness of order.
In the case of the Mary River Dam, how to tell the story of the political performativity of resistance in the public sphere was – and remains – challenging. In the analysis, there was a tendency to either tell the story in too much detail that detracted from the purpose of the research, or pendulum from this problem and summarise the case in an attempt to make sense of the case study data. In both instances, my text did not do justice to the story of the people and often failed to capture the real experience of their resistance. As a result of a growing awareness of the pitfalls of analysis and presentation of a complex case, I have noted the pitfalls in researching complexities in the conclusion of the thesis.

In the above paragraphs, I have given a brief overview of Flyvbjerg’s (2006) five misunderstandings of case studies with examples of how my study deals with the related issues. To summarise, Flyvbjerg (2004) contends that the typical assumptions of case study research methodology are wrong. Typically, case studies are thought of as research sites in which hypotheses can be formulated based on the relationships discovered. Typically, no generalisations can be made as a result of using a single case study. However, case studies should be seen as a window into processes that are historically situated, and thus are relevant to other contexts that have similar historical contingencies. Therefore the holy grail of generalisation can be grasped through applying historically contingent processes from one case to another.

3.4 Data collection

Performativity was part of the interview process. By thinking ‘per formatively’, the interview was conceived not just ‘as a method of gathering information, but as a vehicle for producing performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society’ (Denzin, 2001, p. 24). Furthermore, Denzin (2001, p. 26) argues that interviews are sites where ‘text and audience come together and inform one another’. Having a
common interest with the research subject enabled me to engage in an empathetic rapport, which was beneficial in the ‘co-production’ of research findings. This aspect has been identified as important feature of researching the life world of participants, particularly when a non-textual, non-representational approach to research is adopted (Payne, 2005).

Patton (1990) has identified three types of qualitative interviewing for research purposes. These include the informal conversational interview, the guided interview approach and the standardised open-ended interview. A guided interview approach was chosen to best systematically cover the topics related to the research question while still obtaining maximum information through a relaxed atmosphere. It was also important to use this approach because the participants quite often used the interview for therapeutic purposes to relieve the extreme stress of the situation on their daily life.

Also considered in the interview process was Kvale’s (1996) guidance on obtaining greater understanding of the life world and meanings through employing appropriate interview techniques. Key aspects included a focus on specific details of how people were affected and the actions taken by them. I also adopted a deliberate naïveté to explore unexpected responses from participants. I did not ask the participants to directly answer interview questions based on the sub-research questions. I aimed to explore whether performativity and collective action were indeed part of their daily lives. If participants did enter into a conversation about performativity and collective action – most often by discussing processes inherent in these ideas – I asked more questions to elicit the meaning of those actions.

The interview questions that generally guided the conversation were:

1. What knowledge do you have about the proposal to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing?
2. How has the announcement impacted on you personally?

3. What actions have you taken as a result of the impact on your life?

I conducted interviews with a diverse range of citizens from the Mary River Valley and regional areas. The choice of interview participants was guided by the need for a diverse range of people in the region. The choice was also made based on whether the citizens entered the public sphere in the course of their resistance to the dam proposal. This strategy was based on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) approach of maximum variation sampling. This allows for the capture and description of central themes or themes that cut across a great deal of participant variation. This is important in the single case study methodology.

The individuals interviewed were evenly distributed across a range of demographics. Politicians, environmentalists, farmers, town citizens, ‘tree changers’, new emerging activists, business people, teachers, and so on were chosen. Age and gender were also considered in attempting to obtain a diverse range of participants. In total, I interviewed 30 individuals. Linked to the interviews were their performative action(s) in the public sphere. In other words, they were chosen because they participated in public sphere action.

From the interviews, the participants identified their public sphere actions. In cases where this did not happen, the participants’ actions in the public sphere were identified through analysis of public sphere events where I knew they had some involvement. Text and other forms of media from these public sphere actions were copied, recorded and stored for later analysis with the text of the interview. The citizens I interviewed to

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9 Tree changers were the self-referenced name for people in the local community who had downshifted from the city to rural lifestyles. Downshifting is a term used to describe people opting out of the pace of city life. The other more popular downshift is the sea change movement in Australia.
examine the initial reaction and the political performativity surrounding the announcement are listed in Table 2.
Table 2. List of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob Abbot</td>
<td>Cate Molloy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Elliot</td>
<td>Dawn Gill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Ingersoll</td>
<td>Steve Burgess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta Martin</td>
<td>Tameille Andreison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Cochrane</td>
<td>Gary Blyton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyn Dillon</td>
<td>Bronwyn Kerr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Love</td>
<td>Steve Posselt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juanita Wheeler</td>
<td>Glenda Pickersgill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Morley</td>
<td>Kali Parker Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Hill</td>
<td>Tania Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Stewart</td>
<td>(Jane)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Kruetz</td>
<td>(Gail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Gibson</td>
<td>Mic Vernados</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Alderson</td>
<td>Keith Gall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Names in brackets indicate pseudonym.

These people agreed to have their names published in the final thesis publication. They freely gave consent for their identity to be known in the publication. There were two people who did not give consent. Their identities have been withheld.

Other data sources included websites, public meetings, protest activities, photographs and participant observation. A list of these sources has been given in Table 3.
Table 3. Other data sources for the analysis of political performativity

**Save the Mary Web Portal** – there were numerous websites created to convey information about the issue. This included links to YouTube-style videos produced by local people.

**Traveston Swamp Online Forum** – This forum was initiated not long after the initial announcement. It continues to be the site where media articles from print and online sources are posted as well as information vital to the fight to save the Mary. This is an open forum.

**Public Meeting, 5 July 2006** – Peter Beattie came to the Gympie Showground to announce changes to the proposal. A transcript of the event was taken from a video recording of the four-hour event.

**Public Meeting, 3 November 2006** – Anna Bligh also came to the Gympie Showground to announce further changes to the proposal. A transcript of the event was taken from a video recording of the two-hour event.

**Documentary footage** – One documentary was completed in 2007. There are a number other documentaries currently being made.

**Media** – Print media and associated online sites were the main source of media. I collected and read over 1,500 articles that were published online. In some instances television transcripts were used as data sources. The most commonly used print media based in the local area were the *Gympie Times* and *The Sunshine Coast Daily*. The *Courier-Mail* was a source of data that indicated media and political processes at the state level.

**Press Releases** – The state government released a number of press statements at the time of the initial announcement and subsequent project changes.

**Proponent’s Website** – information from the Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd (QWI) was used as a site of reiteration of announcements made by the state government. It was also used as a way of verifying information such as key dates. QWI is a wholly owned by the Queensland Government.

**Participant Observation** – I attended a number of protests. These included the street march on the Labor Party State Conference and the flotillas on the Mary River and Brisbane River. Notes of these events were taken.
3.5 Political performativity

Performativity is different from representational methods of research in the social sciences. The key point is that performativity contributes to balancing what I have argued is a previous overemphasis on representation. In short, ‘text’ tends to have been given priority over practice as the object of analysis. By adopting a non-representation approach in my theoretical framework and analysis, aspects such as emotion can be examined as pre-discursive phenomena that link with the concept of political performativity.

3.5.1 Initial speech acts

Initial speech acts came from collected texts of the public sphere speech acts of politicians and public officials. The collection of these texts was made possible through online searches of articles and statements in the archives of newspapers and government websites. In the case of public meetings, private video recordings of the events were made. Some recording of the television broadcasts of major political announcements was also included as data for analysis. I attended many of the public events where politicians announced the plans for the proposed dam. Thus field notes on the context and characteristics of the public meetings were also made and these notes were later used in the analysis.

The sample for the first part of the study comprised the politicians governing the state of Queensland, public officials and quasi-public officials who made public statements outlining the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. All their statements are on the public record. The names of the people are as follows:
- Peter Beattie (Premier of Queensland from 20 June 1998 to 13 September 2007);
- Anna Bligh, (Premier of Queensland from 13 September 2007 to present);
- Graeme Newton (Current CEO of Queensland Water Infrastructure (QWI));
- Major General Arnison (Leader of the Community Futures Taskforce);
- Henry Palaszscuk, the previous stage government minister for natural resources and water.

The timescale of the sample was from the first announcement of the proposal on 27 April 2006 to December 2008. There were a number of significant statements made by the state government during this time. Most of these were made in the year of the initial announcement. During 2006, various plans for the dam were released publicly. In December 2008, problems with the approval process precipitated a delay in the proposal.

The literature review in Chapter 2 noted the recent developments in implicating the role of emotions in understanding how and why people come together to protest. I have focused on the role of emotions in performativity because of a feature I noticed when analysing the results. When I started to document the initial speech acts and then document the resignification of the life world of the people resisting the proposal, I observed significant emotional responses. These responses seemed to fit in between the initial speech act and the resignification. Emotions could be considered part of the resignification of the initial speech act, but there is a subtle separation of the speech action and the felt emotion. Based on recent developments in emotion theory, emotions have been credited with a more important role in action and consciousness. Emotions enacted from a response to the external world occurred "a priori" to rational thought. Thus the emotional response to the initial announcements occurs prior to the resignification process, assuming that resignification through speech acts and other
embodied actions involve rational processes. This is not to say that emotions do not manifest themselves in resignification. However, emotional responses can occur without resignification. This aspect is examined first in findings in Chapters 4 to 6.

The emotions that may occur in the short term are surprise, shock, anger, grief and sorrow. In the longer term, those which emerge include hate, love, compassion, sympathy, respect, trust, loyalty, moral outrage and some forms of fear such as dread (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001).

Emotions can also be enacted from rational thought. Reactions to the initial announcement can occur through the individual becoming conscious of the impacts of the announcement through reflection on its consequences. Importantly from a political performativity perspective, engagement with the public sphere enables a mutual awareness of people experiencing similar circumstances. I use the term ‘social attention’ to describe this process.

Emotions can thus enact resignification in the public sphere. In turn, they can also be facilitated by the resignification process in the public sphere.

3.5.2 Resignification

For Butler (1997), the focus of resignification is one of a recasting of identity. A different identity is enacted through the reactionary speech act to counter the imposed the speech act of the ‘oppressor’. In this thesis, instead of identity being used as the object of resignification, the focus is the life world of the person who is resisting.

Fundamental to the life world is the intentional arc of the individual. This links the emotions and desired life world. Resignification can be seen as the actions that are based on our past, our future, our human setting, and our physical, ideological and
moral situation. Resignification in a political performative sense is a contest over a future embodied reality. The initial speech acts intend to disrupt the life world of the participant, and the action of people resisting are an attempt to resignify a more desirable life world.

Typical actions people took in order to resignify a more desirable life world included:

- being quoted by the media;
- posting comments on public internet forums and blog sites;
- being present and commenting at public meetings and protests;
- promoting protests and other direct action in public;
- creating and displaying visual arts;
- writing songs and performing them in public;
- online activism – creation of internet sites;
- signing petitions;
- letter writing to politicians as well as writing letters to the editor;
- sign writing in the local area;
- volunteering at the information stall during public events and festivals;
- making statements in documentaries;
- making statements at the Senate Inquiry;
- making formal submissions to the Senate Inquiry.

Actions that attempt to reinstate the life world of the participant are used to show the political performativity of resistance to the project. In terms of the research question as to whether individual action translates in to collective action the process of resignification in the public sphere contributes and is part of the process of collective
action. Thus the process of resignification and the emotional aspects as they pertain to collective action are the focus of the analysis of resignification.

3.5.3 Collective action and the public sphere
The third research sub-question asks: in what ways has individual resignification facilitated collective action? The terms ‘collective action’ and ‘critical mass’ will both be used in the analysis and discussion of the thesis.

In recent times, critical mass as a construct in social movement theory has dropped out of favour with researchers because of its mathematical approach to social phenomena (Oliver & Marwell, 2001). However, the concept does have a place in this thesis because it is one of the tangible objectives of protesters in the Save the Mary River case study – despite the theoretical use of the term to denote models of behaviour. In relation to critical mass, protest groups attempt to increase network ties so as to effect greater collective action and to decrease the costs associated with the practicalities of political action. In addition, larger group sizes are beneficial from a resource perspective (Oliver & Marwell, 2001).

There are many uses of the term ‘collective action’. Early models used a similar approach to the notion of ‘critical mass’. These can be typified as a structural approach (Melucci, 1996). There are a number of models drawn from various conceptualisations of the term under this umbrella: ‘single-actor models’ that treat the ‘group’ behaviour as given; the interdependent aggregation of individual choices into collective action; the collective decisions of individuals with different interests; and the dynamic interactions among collective actors and their opponents’ (Marwell, Oliver & Prahl, 1988). From this perspective, there is something about the structure of relations between people that determines whether something is collective or not. I do not use this definition in this study.
In this study, I borrow Mullucci’s (1996) definition of collective action. He defines collective action as a set of social practices:

(i) involving simultaneously a number of individuals or groups (ii) exhibiting morphological characteristics of contiguity of time and space (iii) implying a social field of relationships and (iv) the capacity of individuals involved of making sense of what they are doing. (Mullucci, 1996, p. 20)

Using this definition, I will identify collective action in its various forms in relation to the three major themes of performativity I have outlined in this study. Note here that collective action is not only the mere physical presence of others but also the intentionality of togetherness contained in the action. This allows for other ways of conceiving of collective action such as online activism and actions portrayed in the media.

Collins (2001) notes that, for social movements to begin, large numbers of people who emotionally experience the same phenomenon need to come together. Importantly, the people coming together need to become aware that others are also experiencing the same phenomenon. The conscious, mutual focus of attention is as important in the development of social movements as the need for a critical mass of people. Within each of the themes, I examine how individual actions contribute to the mutual focus of attention and how emotional experience is part of that.

I will examine how actions in the public sphere facilitate this process in the analysis. Political performativity is further enhanced if it also involves the mediatisation process as described by Cottle (2007). The process of facilitating social attention of mutual awareness of people experiencing similar circumstances is enhanced through the
media. Additionally, the publication of protesters' concerns in the media is also a form of collective action. Considering the increased importance of media markets in the success of any media enterprise, the mere existence of a protest article is testimony to the collective interest of the media consumers (Cottle, 2007).

3.6 Themes of political performativity

The methods of analysis of political performativity are outlined in this section. I will focus on the key elements of political performativity that emerged from my analysis: the initial speech acts; the embodied and political history of the initial speech act; the emotions that provide a window into the intentional arc of the life world of people resisting the proposal; the process of resignification; the role of media in resignification; and the role of resignification in collectivity. The analysis focuses predominantly on the initial speech acts and the resignification.

I have used the original names of the interviewees to give more meaning to the stories and the political context presented in Chapter 4. These participants were willing to have their involvement with politics of the proposal publicly exposed. The process of consent has followed the guidelines outlined in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007).

An important point about the ‘data’ presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 is that the account of performativity is my interpretation of the aspects and issues that pertain to performativity. For example, the political historical context of democracy that is important in understanding why there was a reaction to the initial announcement is based on the interviews I conducted, analysis of media reports and my reflexive understanding of the issue through participating in the campaign itself. In this way, I
can conclude that my judgment about the context closely resembles that of many of the participants.

Exploration of the resignification of desired life world’s was undertaken using an inductive approach based on Boyatzis’s (1998) method of data-driven thematic analysis. The judgments identify larger themes through the aggregating of previously coded smaller sections of text. Practically, this meant that I coded statements of all participants and then grouped these codes into larger groups. I made judgments about the similarities of coded statements and determined the three emergent themes of democracy, certainty and the public good had the best fit in terms of the performativity of the save the Mary River campaign.

The validity of the thematic analysis across all data was verified by constantly comparing new codes against older codes under the identified themes. The themes of democracy and certainty were relatively easy to identify. The third theme of public good was more problematic. The term ‘impact’ was the alternative to the theme of public good. However, this was discarded after I realised it did not characterise the desired life world of the people resisting the proposal using this term.

The software package Nvivo was used to facilitate this process. Nvivo has attracted criticism from researchers (Kelle, 2004) as a result of its propensity to distance itself from the researcher. I found that if it was used as a critical tool in which the judgments of major themes was undertaken by myself then I did not get lost in the data or become alienated from the meanings in the text.

As a test of reliability, I also kept in mind the possible applicability of the three themes to other environmental issues. I have been following the climate change debate with
some interest and can see that these themes could also be applied to the political performativity of climate change. However, this would need further empirical support.

3.7 Interviewer reflexivity and politics

My personal and professional reflexivity and politics was an aspect about which I was particularly conscious during the interviews. I purposely chose not to interview Queensland Government officials or politicians for the purpose of data collection. This deliberate decision allowed me to take on an insider perspective within the case study. Due to the hostility of the people toward the state government in the Mary River Valley, I wanted to ensure that they felt I was not part of the Queensland Government's efforts in constructing the dam. When I made my first site visit, I noticed that the locals were extremely suspicious of outsiders, however remotely linked to any government institution.

I also ensured that I told the participants in my study that I was not interested in obtaining interviews with Queensland Government officials or politicians as their perspective did not aid in answering my research questions. Offering this information had the effect of legitimising my role as an insider, and I felt that many people passed on information that may not have been forthcoming if I had interviewed people on both sides of the dispute.

I also used a reflexive approach to the thematic analysis. The theme of public good was verified by the two people who were profiled in that chapter. I gave a copy of the section that was relevant to Glenda Pickersgill and Steve Posselt to comment on the validity of the analysis. They both said they agreed with the analysis and contributed more information to verify my claims. Verification of the other chapters was carried out
through discussions with other researchers interested in the proposed dam on the Mary River. I received critical but positive feedback on the findings of Chapters 4 and 5.

Insider research has both benefits and costs. The negative aspects of adopting this perspective is that the researcher runs the risk of ‘going native’ or developing ‘over rapport’, leading to errors of analytic judgment (Searle, 1998). To overcome this, Babbie (1992) suggests researchers should instill a degree of separation to facilitate frames of reference needed for analytic research judgments. In terms of my analytic position in the study, it was fruitful to have a break between the interview and field research and the analysis. After the interviews, I worked on another research project for six months. This gave me distance from the interview text and other material. As a result of the break, I felt detached about the participants’ contribution to the central research question but was still capable of understanding their values. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that through being able to personally understand the values of participants, an inquiry into particular phenomenon can proceed more meaningfully and produces insightful interpretations quite often lacking in other methods.

3.8 Other methods used to understand collective action

In this section, I outline alternative methods that were considered for the study. My intention is to illustrate that the methods chosen in this study were the most appropriate for the purpose of the current project.

Discourse analysis is a widely used theoretical and practical research method. It is also a nebulous concept because it is both a method and a theoretical concept. Various forms of theoretical conceptions and applications have developed since it was first brought into the research world by Harris (1952). I will not examine the ways in which it has been understood and applied since then, but rather outline why discourse analysis
was not adopted as a possible method of analysis. The main reason why it was not adopted was that discourse can objectify textual representation. This leads to the emphasis on the text as representative of practice with a loss of analysis of the contextual doing side of discourse.

Ever since Goffman’s (1974) first essay on frame analysis in social movements, the theory has increased in popularity as a way of explaining framing tactics, framing contests and counter-framing tactics as part of collective action processes. However, there has been much criticism. Studies that have examined these topics have failed to illuminate the factors that shape the outcome of such contests other than the groups that employed the most resonant frames (Benford and Snow, 2000). In particular, power has been neglected in the process of frame construction (Carragee & Roefs, 2004)

Framing analysis was not chosen as a method because media are not the prime focus of the research question. The main focus is on effectiveness of individual action in the public sphere to create a world that resists the imposed world of the state. The concept of mediatisation as described in Chapter 2 better suits the analysis, as it focuses on power and the capacity for the individual to gain media coverage.

3.9 Ethics applied in the study
Ethics approval from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is presently being sought. The information sheets and consent forms were given to the participants before the interview commenced. These are attached in Appendix B. At the interview it was stressed to the participants that the information collected in all surveys and interviews completely confidential. From the outset I was planned the accounts from participant be confidential. However as the study progressed I realised
that many of the people would be easily identified in the final thesis document despite efforts to maintain anonymity. I also noticed that many of the interviewees desired their stories to be published with their identities known. Therefore I later sought consent from all participants to allow their names to be published. Additional consent forms were sent to all participants. Again it was stressed that they had free choice as to the whether their identities would be revealed.

Access to individual all survey results were confined to the author of the study, Robert Hales, and the study's supervisors, Associate Professor Michael Meadows and Dr Jo-Anne Ferreira. Published results included only the real names of those who gave consent. A pseudonym was used in published material for people who did not give consent. The ethics of the study will be conducted in accordance with the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. Copies of ethical clearances from the Ethics Committee from Griffith University are given in Appendix C.

3.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I detailed my theoretical framework and the methodology of the study. Specifically, I explained my understanding of the notion of the critical reflexive researcher, including issues surrounding reflexivity and the position of the researcher in the research process ( Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Maxey, 1999) and how they relate to the conduct of my research. One of the main conclusions from this chapter was the realisation of the inherent difficulty of making sense of a messy world by employing traditional social science methods (Law, 2005; Urry & Law, 2004). I adopted a case study method as a way of acknowledging and attempting to overcome these problems. I also incorporated another important methodological tool into the research process: an empathetic approach to the research participants to ensure I was able to empathise with their life world. The pros and cons of this approach were discussed.
I also detailed the research design, outlining the specific techniques of data collection, analysis and presentation used. In particular, I detailed how I developed the idea of political performativity as the main analytical approach within the bounds of the case study. This was adopted in order to explore how power relations between individuals and the state might be reoriented through particular forms of citizen action in the public sphere. To make sense of the large scope of the study, I used a thematic analysis of participant responses through interviews with participants.
The political performativity of democracy

They phoned people and phoned people and under that tree over there, Rob, if ever this dam doesn’t go ahead, under that tree they would have a party… Because under that tree, Channel 9 couldn’t believe it, there were at least 200 people here. I couldn’t count them that day. That was with a few hours notice, to mobilise themselves. (Carol Elliot)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three chapters to examine the themes of political performativity in the Save the Mary River case study. The first theme that I examine concerns democracy. This was initially the most dominant theme identified in the public sphere campaign to stop the dam on the Mary River. This was undertaken through a thematic analysis of interviews. Media reports and my engagement in the issue helped to verify these themes. My reflexive awareness of my involvement in the issue will documented at relevant points in the chapter.

In this chapter, I have outlined the initial announcements of the politicians and their intended targets that relate to the democracy theme. I next examine the ways in which people have resignified democracy in the first year of the issue. The findings presented in this chapter may be considered contentious. To decrease the contested nature of my claims, I have given my interpretations of the contextual and historical background to the political performativity of democracy. I have done this to ensure that I adequately explain why there was such force contained within the initial announcements. Because this is the
first chapter of the findings, I have described the context of the dam in more detail in this chapter compared with other chapters. The context described here is relevant also to the themes of certainty and public good.

The aim of thematic analysis of the political performativity of democracy is to document and analyse the reactions of people resisting the proposed dam. Fundamental to the resignification of democracy is the vision of what democracy looked and felt like for people who were the targets of the initial announcements at the time of the announcement. The resistance to the initial announcement in terms of democracy is an attempt to ensure that the people’s own embodied reality of democracy is maintained or reinstated. It is an orientation towards a different future, compared with that embodied in the initial announcement. What made me decide on the theme of democracy was the presence of a large number of statements concerning democratic processes. Here is one such statement from an interview participant:

If you think for one second that we live in a democracy, you are misled.

What’s worse than not living in a democracy is that we do think we are in a democracy. (Andreison, 2007)

Interestingly, Andreison (2007) identifies the very contradiction of democracy that I noted in the literature review and the problem definition in the Introduction. That is, the people resisting the dam have a number of ways in which they can participate in the decision-making processes of the dam, but these do not favour those who resist.

The public perception about the democratic process in Queensland has changed over the past 30 years. Recent changes to government – such as eDemocracy project in Queensland – have impacted on people’s attitudes to democratic processes (Hogan, Cooke & Henderson, 2004). Despite some of the major concerns raised in the Introduction
to this thesis, Queensland is considered a liberal democracy and shares the phenomenon of high levels of public involvement in government functions (Ingelhart & Catterberg, 2002). The resignification of democracy lies at the heart of that future for many people who live in the Mary River Valley and who are affected by the proposed dam.

In this chapter, I will first consider the initial announcements and their contextual and historical features, giving particular attention to the contextual and historical contingencies that led to the announcement. Next, I explore the resignification of democracy that resists the initial announcement through an analysis of the emotional attention of participants. The responses to the series of announcements will be examined using the framework outlined in Table 1 (after Goodwin et al., 2001), which looks at the types of emotional response and an analysis of the ways in which people attempt to resignify the meaning of democracy in the public sphere. I will examine the public sphere actions of individuals that have personally resignified a different meaning of democracy compared with the one imposed upon them by the actions of the Queensland Government. In particular, I will explore how the above resignification of democracy has led to collective action and how emotional and historical contingencies played a part in political performativity. Practically, this means that I have examined a number of actions which are typical to protest. These actions form the headings of the chapter.

Due to the constraints of space, I have focused the majority of the analysis on the events of 2006. This time period includes the initial announcement, the changes to the project announced by Peter Beattie in July 2006, and further changes to the project announced by Anna Bligh in 2006. This timeframe includes the Queensland state election in October 2006. This is the time period in which the major democratic opportunities occurred. The only argument against this is the so-called delay in the project that occurred in late 2008 which was linked to the Queensland state election in 2009. This announcement does
relate to the democracy theme, but is analysed and discussed in the chapter on public good.

4.2 The initial announcement

The stories that are presented in this section are embedded within the historical context of state politics and local government politics. Cutting across these levels of government are the politics of water and the environment. In addition, a state election was held in the latter half of 2006. This heightened the political opportunities for citizens to halt the construction of the dam. It also increased the need for the state government to control the public sphere debate of the dam proposal and water issues in general using its public relations department. This context forms the basis of the following analysis of the resignification process stemming from the initial announcement until the end of 2006. The historical context that I outline below is based on my interview data, informal conversations with a range of people who reside in the Mary River Valley, analysis of relevant Queensland Government reports and interpretation of media reports since the initial announcement.

One of the most provocative acts surrounding the initial announcement was the fact that the Premier did not set foot on the proposed dam site; rather, he took a helicopter flight over the valley with the local mayor and another state minister on the day of the announcement. This is but one of the actions that became a point of contention with the local people who resisted the proposal. From the information I have gathered in this study, it is clear that there were major points of contention regarding democratic processes. From a representative democracy perspective, the state government did have a mandate to make decisions about the provision of water supplies to South-East Queensland. However, the point of this thesis is that minorities do have certain rights and that these rights can be exercised through political acts in the public sphere. As will be
demonstrated by the accounts presented below, the inclusion of a democratic process did not occur in the eyes of the residents. The greatest opportunity to redress the situation has been to resist the proposal through actions in the public sphere. As will be shown in this thesis, the resistance at the local level has involved a considerable majority of citizens in the area. The aim of their actions has been to influence public opinion in areas outside the immediate impact area in such a way as to ensure the election of the opposition conservative party to government in Queensland. The opposition opposes the dam. The other aim of their public sphere actions was to influence the federal government environmental assessment of the project – again, through the influence of public opinion to apply electoral pressure – through political lobbying.

It should be noted here that the politics of the issue in the public sphere have influenced the formal assessment process under the federal *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC). Under this Act, developments that impact on matters of national environmental significance need to be assessed. Its primary function is to protect threatened and endangered species. The proposed dam will potentially impact on a number of threatened and endangered species, with the lungfish, the Mary River Turtle and the Mary River Cod the most notable.

At the time of the initial announcement, there were a number of people in the Mary River Valley who realised that public sphere pressure needed to be applied to the federal government assessment process. However, most of the people in the area focused on the political opportunities in the short term. This is the focus of this chapter.

I have provided an excerpt from a Queensland Government press release below to highlight the aspects that relate to the political context of the dam decision. The intent of presenting the quote and the media articles that follow is to identify the role of the
announcement in the development of the political performativity of democracy. A complete version of the press release is given in Appendix D.

Premier Visits Possible New Dam Site

Premier Peter Beattie and Water Minister Henry Palaszczuk visited the site in the Traveston district today. ‘A dam on the Mary River catchment is essential for the south east corner of our State – especially the Coolum region as well as the burgeoning Sunshine Coast,’ Mr Beattie said. ‘Traveston has been identified by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water as a promising site for the dam through its work developing the South-East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy. ‘We will now completely assess this site so a final decision can be made on the positioning of the Mary River dam and work can start to have it built and operating by the end of 2011.’ Mr Beattie said water was liquid gold and ensuring we had adequate supplies to support population growth and development was one of the great challenges the State faced. (Beattie & Palaszczuk, 2006)

The initial speech acts of announcement were a trigger for this political performativity theme to develop. Peter Beattie’s initial speech act displayed the intent of the project – for example, by stating in the initial media statement that ‘We will now completely assess this site so a final decision can be made on the positioning of the Mary River dam and work can start to have it built and operating by the end of 2011.’ Implicitly means that the consultation phase of project development has been bypassed. Additionally, the fact that the announcement was made through the media set the scene for a particular style of consultation that has prevailed.
To a person who does not live in the Mary River Valley, these words may appear innocuous. However, they drew much emotion from the people directly affected. These comments have a political and historical context. The three aspects that I will examine are the claim of needing a local water supply, the ‘liquid gold’ comment and the inclusion of the water strategy as a justification.

First, the emphasis on local use of the water from the dam can be called into question because at the time of the announcement there were no water restrictions in the Sunshine Coast region. During 2006, there were severe water restrictions in Brisbane. Stating that the dam was required for the local water supply needs could be construed as an attempt to sell the dam idea to the Cooloola and Sunshine Coast regions. The state government’s attempts at selling the dam idea to the local region decreased after it was revealed that the water from the dam would be for Brisbane and not the Sunshine Coast. The people of the Mary River Valley and the Sunshine Coast were displeased with the idea of water going out of their region, given the cost to the local community and the local environment. The announcement meant that the reserved water allocation in the Mary River was to go outside the region.

The ‘liquid gold’ comment refers to how Gympie was once a prosperous gold mining town and to the idea that the water, like the gold, would once again bring prosperity to the region. The claim of economic benefits resulting from the dam has been a point of contention between the dam’s proponent (the Queensland Government) and the local people. Local interest groups and the Cooloola Shire Council reject the idea that it will bring net economic benefit. There have been conflicting reports tabled during the course of the public sphere debate that have countered the government’s reports. The initial news release also justifies why other sites were not chosen for a dam. The relevant statements from the government public relations departments are given below.

10 List of reports countering economic argument of the Queensland Government.
Premier Visits Possible New Dam Site

Mr Palaszczuk said the Government had ruled out constructing a dam at Cambroon, on Obi Obi Creek or Moy Pocket that have been previously suggested as possible dam or weir sites in the region. ‘Building a dam at the Cambroon site would have meant relocating the town of Connondale,’ Mr Palaszczuk said. ‘I would like to acknowledge the strong representations made to me by the Member for Glasshouse Carolyn Male and the Member for Nicklin Peter Wellington on these sites. The Government is acting accordingly by ruling out any water storages on these three sites.’ (Beattie and Palaszczuk, 2006)

The ‘strong representation’ referred to above is indicative of political brokering of deals done by the sitting members of the electorates in which alternate dams could have been built. Dam proposals in South-East Queensland in recent history have been highly contentious. The Wolfedene Dam nearBeenleigh, south of Brisbane, was planned to be built but was scrapped after the issue was used to the electoral advantage of the Labor government in 1989 (Peterson, 1990). The strategic assessment of the Traveston Crossing Dam revealed that other sites were considered. However, they were not chosen because they had lower water supply yields and higher social impacts. It was reported in the Sunshine Coast Daily in July 2006 that the then Water Minister, Henry Palaszczuk, listed the Traveston Crossing Dam as the fourth best option in a preferred list of dam sites.

However, the opposition party in Queensland at the time – perhaps predictably – labelled the decision not to dam the alternative sites as politically driven. The then Queensland opposition leader, Lawrence Springborg (Opposition seeks details, 2006,
para, 1) said ‘he believes the Government's sudden announcement of a new dam in the Mary Valley is an effort to create a smokescreen to hide other problems’.

The decision to dam the Mary River is purported to have been made as a result of the process of the South-East Queensland Water Supply Strategy. However, it is evident that the announcement was made prior to the completion of the strategy. For example, in the summaries of the three-stage consultative workshop that were part of the process of drafting the Water Supply Strategy, there is evidence of a major detour in the consultation process. There is a change in the key strategies examined between workshops two and three. The Traveston Crossing Dam was announced after workshop number two. In workshop number three, the participants were asked to consider a dam as the central component of the strategy and determine how other water strategies could be implemented around this component. This was not in the original briefing for the consultative process. The final South-East Queensland Water Strategy was released at the end of 2008 (Queensland Water Commission 2008). The Queensland water commission refers to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam as a committed project, indicating it as a project that falls outside the scope of the commission's decision-making processes. It is controversial because the strategy ‘lists the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam as "existing or committed infrastructure", even though it does not yet exist and has not yet received federal environmental approval’ (Engineers say no, Gympie Times, 2007, p. 7).

Given that the process of selecting the dam site did not follow the due planning process, it appears that the announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam was politically motivated to favour the incumbent party in power. Further evidence of this failure, and the implications for the people affected, is given below.
It was widely publicised in the media that there had been a lack of water planning and infrastructure development under the present Labor Government and, equally, under the previous conservative government.\(^{11}\) This lack of planning, coupled with the growing water crisis in South-East Queensland at the time,\(^{12}\) led to the need for immediate short-term solutions. However, the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal was a medium-term solution and was never meant to solve the supply issues presented by the drought in early 2006. The dam would take many years to build and would not solve the immediate ‘water crisis’.

The decision to dam the Mary River was made by the Premier, with an intent that was more than solving the so-called water crisis. It important to note that, the day before the announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam, a story of future severe water restrictions announced by the Queensland Government was reported in the *Courier-Mail*. An excerpt is given below.

Premier Peter Beattie announced today that Brisbane residents will have to cut their water use by at least 30 litres a day to help share the pain of one of the worst droughts in Queensland history.

Mr Beattie said the Government was undertaking a range of initiatives to help address the water crisis but residents in the suburbs would have to play their part to help people in regional and rural parts of the State.

‘This week I will announce the location of two dams in South-East Queensland,’ Mr Beattie said. ‘Unfortunately while the new dams will benefit the greater majority of our population they will cause a lot of hurt

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\(^{11}\) See Sunshine Coast Environment Council submission to the Senate Inquiry on Alternate Water Supplies for South-East Queensland (2007).

\(^{12}\) At the time of the announcement, South-East Queensland was experience a prolonged drought. However, it was not until 2007 that it was deemed the worst drought on record for the region.
In my opinion, the timing of the reports that outlined the restriction and possibility of severe restrictions in the future was a ploy by the Queensland Government to justify the dam to the Brisbane electorate. At that time, the water restrictions on the Sunshine Coast, the Redlands and the Gold Coast were not as severe as those proposed for Brisbane. Brisbane was running out of water, but the rest of the region was not.

In late 2006, a state election was looming and the Premier needed a political solution for the region’s infrastructure problems. However, it should be noted that the dam would not be built in time to avert the looming water shortage crisis facing south east Queensland. Inside information from the Beattie government sheds light on the situation in government at the time.

I interviewed an ex-Labor Party member about her understanding of the decision-making processes regarding the dam. She was privy to the discussions in the political party room concerning the rationale for the dam. I interviewed Cate Molloy after the election of 9 October 2006. Prior to this, she was the state Labor Party member for Noosa. This electorate is next to the Traveston Crossing Dam electorate of Gympie. During the lead-up to the election, Molloy was disendorsed from the Labor Party as a result of her opposition to the proposed dam. Her electorate was directly affected, as the water from the proposed dam would be used for Brisbane and locals did not want this to happen. This attitude was strengthened when they discovered that the water being pumped from the dam to Brisbane could not be reversed if it was ever needed by the Sunshine Coast (Tucker, 2006b). Molloy was keenly aware of her constituents’
attitude, not only to water issues but also towards environmental issues. She knew that her constituents were generally considered to have high levels of environmental concern.

Cate Molloy’s insights are important to this discussion about the politics of the announcements of the proposed dam. The insights help to understand how the political performativity of democracy with relation to the proposed dam came into being. This helps to understand the reaction of locals to the initial announcement:

Cate: Another caucus meeting I went to … it was that first one where he made an announcement and informed everybody that we’re going to build a dam. One of the Ministers stood up and said, well, I don’t have any problems with this. The National Party voters have never voted for us so stuff them!

Interviewer: Someone said that?

Cate: Yes … Now, I’m not steeped in Queensland politics historically but I do understand a very deep resentment from Labor people to National Party people and then I personally have to put it into a perspective of what the Howard Government is doing to workers with their industrial relations laws. So you’ve got this group of people up here in the Mary Valley, who have never supported anything Labor have done - and put that in. (Molloy, 2006)

Not only were party politics involved with a looming election on the horizon, but strategic political issues were also at stake. Molloy had further insights into the political justification of the dam:

Cate: This water crisis is so constructed.
Interviewer: How do you mean that? You were saying it was constructed.

Cate: I think so. The fact that it was announced, that only two or three people knew about it. Were they prepared for the flack?

Interviewer: Of the dam? I don’t know, were they?

Cate: If I’d shut up, it wouldn’t have got on to the front page of the Courier-Mail I was only able to give it a little bit of light for a short window of time. The best way to deal with her, is get rid of her. That shuts down [the issue of the dam]. Beattie’s saying ‘I don’t want to go up to Noosa, as I don’t want to be a hero in Brisbane’. Did you read that?

Interviewer: I heard that. Yeah, I saw that.

Cate: I don’t know what he called or referred to himself.

Interviewer: I couldn’t understand what he meant by that.

Cate: Everyone loves him in Brisbane because he’s going to build a dam and give them water. He doesn’t realise that he can’t make it rain. I believe there have been other ways of managing this without having to do a dam. With building the dam – another way of staying in power.

Interviewer: You thought there was another way of staying in power without building a dam, you think? Because people were saying that the dam and the water crisis had been constructed as a result of ... to combat the health crisis.

Cate: Yes. It’s taken it off the front page.

(Molloy, 2006)

The point of providing this interview excerpt is to highlight that the water crisis of 2006 (as well as the proposed solution) was used as a political strategy to avoid other major
issues facing the government. Preceding the 2006 election, the major issues were hospitals, water, growth pressures and ability of the coalition opposition party to function. During the election campaign, health care ranked higher in news coverage in the *Courier-Mail* compared with water (Dillon, 2007). The difference between the water issue and health was that water had a potential solution to the external problem of a drought whereas the health issue was more about a failure of planning with no external source to blame. Thus, the dam was considered a solution in Brisbane despite there being considerable local resistance to the project in the Mary River region. Later, in August of 2006, it was noted that the water issue was not only a problem but also the focus of the election campaign:

> Peter Beattie will pin his re-election hopes on Queenslanders believing that a plan to tackle the state's water crisis is more important than addressing problems in the health system. Mr Beattie's third term has been his most difficult, with problems in energy in the first year, health in the second and water in the third. (Fraser, 2006)

This perspective, focused on the political motivations of the dam announcement, was reflected in the understanding of the residents of the Mary River Valley. One local resident relates this view:

> The whole thing seems to be that Beattie needed something big, to be seen to be doing something, because he lives from crisis to crisis and this was an election year, he needed an area that nobody votes Labor so he chose this electorate and he could make it look like it was an

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13 It must be noted here that the issues listed above were secondary to how the election campaign itself was a topic of interest in the *Courier-Mail*. The election campaign itself had the highest content in the *Courier-Mail* and it is suggested that this emphasis, and a lack of analysis of the issues, led to health and water not being a central feature of the campaign (Dillon, 2007).
enormous dam so he could call it a mega dam which it’s not, because of
the depth of it. Beattie having said he’s going to do something with
regard to an election promise is going to do it. (Dillon, 2006)

From my analysis of the politics in the lead-up to the announcement, it was not difficult
to conclude that the decision to announce the dam was one made for short-term
political gain.14 If a robust and transparent water planning process was indeed a reality,
it would be evident in documentation of that process.

I will now examine some of the stories that highlight the extent to which poor
participatory processes resulted from the politically motivated decision to dam the Mary
River. This is important because the people mentioned below are the members of the
community who would and should have been consulted if there had been an inclusive
democratic decision-making process. The lack of consultation and its effects are
outlined below.

The next story, concerning reactions to the initial announcement, comes from Bob
Abbot and his account of the participatory processes surrounding the Traveston
Crossing Dam project. Bob Abbot is the mayor of the newly amalgamated Council of
the Sunshine Coast. At the time of my investigation, he was the mayor of the now-
defunct Noosa Shire Council. That council was considered a ‘green’ council, and was
one of the few that identified as such in Australia and had implemented a population
cap policy to limit the negative effects of growth in the shire. Bob Abbot, through the
Sunshine Coast Shire Council, is still politically involved with the dam.

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14 The only independent study to examine feasible alternatives to the dam has found that there are less
expensive options available that have less social and environmental costs (see Turner, 2007). Also the
dam was justified by one consultant’s report assessing possible dam sites. The ‘GHD report’, as is it is
referred to, was released months after the initial announcement.
After Beattie’s flight over the dam site, he travelled back to Brisbane where he announced the dam to staff and other government representatives. Bob Abbot was one of the people who heard about the proposal. His story of the announcement is presented below. His comments relate mostly to his involvement in the Water Resource Plan for the Mary River and negotiation about future water-sharing arrangements between local councils and the state government.

On the Monday before the dam announcement, interested representatives and stakeholders were briefed by the Department of Water Resources about the draft water resource plan. The plan was drafted in consultation with local stakeholders. The only thing mentioned in the draft that was remotely related to a dam was that the existing weir would be raised to cope with the extra flow being contributed by the raising of the nearby Borumba Dam. This dam is on a major tributary of the Mary River upstream from the weir. Included in the plan was a strategic reserve of 150,000 megalitres per year, which was thought to be related to the new weir and the raising of Borumba Dam.

On 27 April 2006, the draft plan and the consultation process were thrown out the window. Abbot explains how he heard about the announcement. The Premier interrupted a meeting between local government and state politicians:

On the Wednesday, I represented NorsROC (Northern Region of Councils) and a Council of Mayors that were meeting in the Premier’s office. I think it started around about 11.00 a.m. and we were meeting as part of a communications program to get the Council of Mayors into a position where they could discuss openly with the Directors of the Department I think it was Main Roads, Families, NRM, EPA, Local Government Planning and a couple of others I can’t remember, probably Families. It was chaired by Ross Rolfe and the four RCC
representatives, myself. I think Campbell Neumann, John Brent and Don Secombe were all there too.

At around about 11.45 a.m., Ross Rolfe called a meeting to a quick halt and someone asked someone else to go back into the Chair. He had to go to a meeting with the Premier. He’d be back in ten or fifteen minutes. The committee continued to work and after about ten minutes Ross Rolfe was back in the meeting with the Premier on his heels and the Premier walked up to the table and announced the construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam as part of the Mary River Resource Plan. It was as simple as that. It was some time within that time [Monday to Wednesday] that the mega dam was put into the resource plan without consultation anywhere. (Abbot, 2006)

Based on this account, there appeared to be no consultation with regional local government representatives over the Traveston Crossing Dam project. The communication between government departments at the upper levels was also limited. Further observations by Bob Abbot about the prior knowledge of senior management in the public service concerning the dam are given below. Abbot’s account reveals that other significant government officials in the meeting on the day of the announcement were also surprised by the announcement. With reference to the Mary River Resource Plan, Abbot said:

That seemed to me to be quite insidious and ironical that we’d plan that other thing [the weir and raising of the existing dam] and it didn’t show it up. I had great concerns at that time, and one of the things that did happen on the day, because we’d heard the highway consultation had been going on for two years and four million dollars worth of work spent
on it. I just turned around and looked immediately at the Director General of Transport, Dept of Transport and his face was just white. He’d just seen four million dollars worth of public consultation go down the drain because then he [Peter Beattie’s announcement of the dam] had taken out four or five, four of the five alternatives to the highway. So, he knew he was in trouble. But the thing that was obvious to me because of the expression on his face is he’d known nothing about it either. So the thing that enraged me in a sense that I was … we’d been duped. Either duped by the staff on the Monday, or duped by the Premier introducing the dam at that time. That was a real problem for me. (Abbot, 2006)

The staff to whom Bob Abbot referred to were with the Department of Water Resources; they had briefed the community stakeholders of the Mary River Resource Plan on the Monday before Beattie’s announcement on the Wednesday. Given the comments by Molloy (2006) concerning the decision-making processes prior to the announcement, it can reasonably be assumed that senior public service officials knew nothing about the plan for the dam.

The issue of failed participatory processes in the development of the Mary River Resource Plan is even more ironic given that the development of the early stages of the Water Resource Plan for the Mary River Basin was displayed on the Queensland Government’s website as a showcase of consultation. On that website, there were a number of poignant conclusions made by the Department of Water Resources staff concerning the public perception of the process. These comments relate to the drafting process between 1999 and 2003.

In the showcase, the concerns of the community stakeholders become clear and are extremely relevant to the decision-making processes concerning the proposed dam on
the Mary River at Traveston Crossing. It was published in 2003 and was removed from the website in late 2008. I have highlighted the most relevant key learnings pertinent to the contradiction in participatory processes:

**What are the key learning’s/insights about community engagement?**

- Consultative process should be flexible;
- Roles and responsibilities have to be clarified;
- Expectations have to be well managed (easier said than done!);
- There will always be a degree of suspicion;
- All consultation involves risks, weigh the benefits against these;
- Need to ensure the consultative process is the best medium for achieving desired outcomes.

(Department of Communities, 2003)

The ‘key learnings’ stated here indicate that the stakeholders appeared to be correct in their earlier suspicion about the consultation process. Furthermore, I think it is ironic that the company contracted to review the consultation process of the Mary River Resource Plan was the same company that provided the state government with a list of the potential dam sites in South-East Queensland. Guthridge Haskins and Davies Pty Ltd (GHD) identified the Traveston Crossing Dam site as the best storage option for a long-term water supply for South-East Queensland. This is the now infamous GHD report: *A Desk Top Study of Potential Dam and Weir Sites for South-East Queensland.*

This report was a point of contention with the citizens resisting the Traveston Crossing Dam. This report was a technical document that relied on a desktop analysis with no external consultation seeking expert opinion or public input. It was not an analysis that examined the water supply and demand management water strategies for South-East Queensland. The report was used to justify the dam but was

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15 GHD stands for the engineering consultants: Gutheridge Haskins and Davies.
not released until 5 June 2006. It was released only after repeated requests by the protesters and community leaders that this report be made public.

From other evidence, I have concluded that local state government public servants’ prior knowledge of the project was also extremely limited. This evidence is given below through the story of one of the local residents who is now one of the citizens resisting the dam.

Steve Burgess was equally shocked when he heard about the announcement. A teacher and agricultural scientist from the town of Dagun in the Mary River Valley, Burgess was informed about the dam through the media. This was one of the ways in which people in the Mary River Valley came to know about the proposal. The other was being told about the announcement by other locals. Here is Burgess’s recollection of the day of the announcement. He had participated in the drafting process of the Mary River Resource Plan:

I was utterly shocked when that announcement came. I was in the staffroom at work, I was teaching part-time at the school and I heard this announcement on the radio and my jaw just dropped and then I rang up Landcare and said have you heard anything about this dam? They said ‘Yeah, they just announced it’. I rang up DNR and said what can you tell us about the dam? Well not much, we found out about it yesterday afternoon. I said how big is it, the size? They said we can’t tell you much yet. So I then talked to a lady who works there [at the school] part-time, she’s a teacher aide. Her farm is right where the dam is going. I said, what can you tell us about the dam? She goes what dam? She goes what dam? Well it’s on your place, surely someone from the government has come out and talked to you about it, or you’ve seen someone on the ground. She said, no we’ve
never seen anyone. But the wall's on your property … she just went grey, it was such a shock.

And then when we heard a figure from DNR about the rough height, I went and got a contour map and traced the contour map and thought, it goes over the Bruce Highway. I'll ring the highway planning guys and said, ‘You can come clean now about the highway study, what's going on?’ … Because we've been involved in the highway thing because that impacts on the whole community and they said what's the dam got to do with us? And I said it cuts the Bruce Highway where you've got all your planning study. He said 'Does it’?

This is why, right from the start, I thought this is very weird. Why would the government announce a project when you haven't actually had anyone on the ground at the site? I just thought it was absolutely weird. The Main Roads said we're still calling for tenders on a local bridge and I said to them ‘Well it will be under water won't it?’ They said, ‘We know nothing about it’. So then when they found out that there was a public meeting I rang them up and said ‘Can you get some guys out there from DNR and Main Roads?’ And then they said ‘We don’t know anything about it’. I said ‘You’re going to have a lot of angry people down there wanting some answers from the government.’ And they said ‘It’s no use us coming out because we don’t know anything,’ (Burgess, 2006)

This story is evidence of the lack of consultation between departments as well as the lack of consultation with local people living in the impact area. It is a story that is common to all local citizens, whether they work in local government or live on the land in the impact zone. Documenting and verifying the lack of consultation has been
important for the Save the Mary River protesters. Their research has also revealed the lack of attention to democratic and planning process. One of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee members concluded:

> From what we can gather and what our researchers can find, there was only those couple of people in that helicopter that knew what was going on. No one else knew. Not even his own Labor Party – his colleagues in Parliament had no idea. (Blyton, 2006)

From the very start of the project, citizens quickly realised that there were issues of concern associated with democracy and procedural matters in the decision-making process. The implication of not addressing issues of process has been that citizens were immediately suspicious of any potential engagement with government processes. Any announcements from the government about democratic processes after the initial announcement have met with suspicion, if not outright hostility, in the region.

So far I have presented my interpretation of the participation or lack thereof in the announcements of the proposed dam. In terms of the context behind the announcement, there were a number of observations. The first was that the water crisis was perceived both as a physical reality but also one that was politically constructed. The construction related to the Labor government’s attempt to promote the perception that it was taking action on water infrastructure development. Important to that idea was the external threat of the drought. This meant that the government felt it was justified in taking drastic measures that superseded the need for consultation. Second, ‘damming’ in a politically conservative electorate needed no consultation. Gympie has traditionally been a conservative seat, which is highly unlikely to ever be won by a Labor government in the foreseeable future. Thus, consultation was not likely to win votes that would count in an election. Third, the political decision-making processes
bypassed planning processes. State government water management consultative processes were not inclusive of local government areas that would be impacted. Lack of consultation about committed projects is also apparent in the Draft South-East Queensland Water Strategy. This strategy was not completed before the announcement of the dam. The lack of prior knowledge in the public service also indicates a lack of cross-departmental planning. Lastly, there were problems with the false expectations of public engagement in government processes. There is a perception that governments are now more inclusive in their decision-making. However, public participation in this decision was non-existent. Showcasing the public engagement process of the Mary River Water Resource Plan is an example of the contradictory nature of the Queensland Government’s approach to consultation. It is a feature that is keenly felt by locals involved in the decision to dam the Mary River.

4.3 The emotional response

Valley of Tears: In a hall west of Noosa 50 people are discussing life and death. Mary Valley residents talk stress and suicide as moths circle the lights and flutter softly against the windows. On a collapsible table lie suicide-prevention handbooks. On another is a list of phone numbers for counselling services and Gympie mental health officials. (Robson, 2006)

In response to the initial announcement, an overwhelming majority of people affected by the dam in the Mary River region have attempted to assert a different conception of democracy to the one imposed upon them. In many cases, this has occurred through individual public sphere actions but there has also been significant collective action.

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16 The Traveston Crossing Dam is termed a ‘committed project’ in the Draft South-East Queensland Water Strategy. This denotes the exclusion of this project from the 1) planning and policy assessment, and 2) public consultation within this strategy.
In the following section I focus on the actions of individuals in the public sphere using a political performativity framework that incorporates the emotional attention of protest as described by Collins (2001), who notes that emotional energy needs to be directed and maintained in order for a social attention and critical mass to develop. Emotional responses to the announcements assist in understanding the process of resignification. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how resignification and its emotional basis are important in increasing social attention and facilitating collective action.

Emotion plays a key part in the response to the announcements. I use the following method to understand how emotions are part of the resignification process. First, I canvass a range of emotional reactions of participants that relate to the democracy theme stemming from the initial announcement. In doing so, I explore how the force of the initial announcements was personally embodied by people who resisted the dam from a democracy perspective. Next, I investigate responses to the initial announcements. The responses documented below are contingent on a mixture of the personal capacity, the historically mediated understanding of the issue and the psycho-social characteristics of the individuals involved. I have not sought to separate or reduce these ‘factors’ in attempting to uncover certain contingencies that underlie action from a political performativity perspective. Rather, through a range of examples from key individuals who embodied political performativity through their actions, I will demonstrate the way emotion has focused social attention on the issue.

From a political performativity approach, the emotional, historically embodied responses to the initial announcements are a personal attempt to counter the dominant forces behind the dam proposal. The reactions are not seen as symbolic or representational. I am not seeking to show that individuals want to make a point of symbolising injustice or representing injustice. However, my argument does not
exclude the possibility of these perspectives. In this study, I have examined the political action and the collective action through a different lens.

Extreme emotional responses to the initial announcements were felt by a diverse cross-section of the community. I have offered a number of quotes from individuals that exemplify these, the first from a semi-retired ‘tree changer’\textsuperscript{17} from the eastern side of the dam impact zone.

‘I’m going to build this dam and I’m not going to listen to the people …’
That was reiterated so many times, and every time you hear it, it just makes you want to cry and get mad. (Dillon, 2006)

The non-consultative actions of politicians had a major emotional impact on people like Dillon. The high emotional impact on people was a general phenomenon experienced by a huge proportion of the population. My interviews documented how the announcements emotionally impacted on people. In addition to the interviews, I noted the extent of the emotional impact by talking with many other people in the community who were not related to the protest groups. I also noted in public meetings the emotional responses to politicians and public officials. There appeared to be a link between people’s emotional reaction and the words and actions of the politicians. The next five quotes exemplify the link between the political speech act and the emotional response. They refer to the statement by then Premier Peter Beattie: ‘If we could build it somewhere else we would.’

\textsuperscript{17} Similar to the more popular term ‘sea change’, the tree change movement involves individuals and families downsizing in lifestyle from urban to rural regions. The change aims to slow the pace of life and is usually accompanied by a lowering of income but an increase in time. Important to the Save the Mary River issue is the fact that many people who make the shift have been professionals that can mount an effective campaign against the proposed dam.
Just sheer arrogance and coming across as a real dictator. Like not listening. He wasn’t listening to his ministers, he’s not listening to the people that he’s supposedly representing. (Martin 2006)

You go through a very bitter and angry stage and emotional stage but at the end, I’m 99 on your maiden test hundred and the umpire gives you out and you haven’t even touched the ball, so you’re pretty angry. (Cochrane, 2006)

The other thing he said, people power will not win. People power will not change this, this dam will be built. That has really … Because what he was really saying was I might be democratically elected but in fact you don’t matter. (Elliot, 2006)

When people say it’s a political thing, it isn’t a political thing it’s become very personal in this area. Because he is trying to infringe on our rights. We bought the property, some land has to be resumed for certain things, but so many, so much? It’s just … a complete unfairness to the people to the whole area. (Martin, 2006)

We went up there and I was talking to one of the coordinators from the save the Mary River Coordinating Committee – I forget their correct name and I noticed while I was talking to her that there was an underlying sense of emotional turmoil and a real sense of inability to get the message out and frustration and so on. (Love, 2006)

These quotes suggest a link between the emotional responses and the announcements. All are from people who live in the impact area of the dam. The
The exception is Dean Love. He is a documentary filmmaker and his comments are relevant because he made a documentary critiquing the dam proposal. He interviewed many people in an effort to try to understand the emotional impacts of the dam. The above quotes hardly do justice to the social impact and emotional tone of the responses I noted in the interviews. But it is clear that both the presence and the speech acts of politicians have played a significant role in amplifying the force of the announcements.

It should be noted here that became involved in documenting the social impacts of the proposal. I was involved in two notable projects. First in December 2006, I wrote a report that critiqued the Queensland Government’s management of social impacts. I used a report card approach and based my assessment on the International Principles of Social Impact Assessment. I concluded that in the first nine months of the proposal the Government failed on the majority of the criteria. I was also involved in the social impact assessment project initiated by local community to survey the values and attitudes and acceptance of the dam. I became involved in these projects because I was moved by the emotional and psychological impact of the proposal and the effect on the community. I was also motivated to be involved in these projects not only because of an activist agenda but also of a scholarly motive to document and subsequently poor social impact processes.

Carol and Rick Elliot were very active campaigners against the dam in 2006. Rick Elliot became the first leader of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee that was formed not long after the initial announcement. Here is what Rick said to the Courier-Mail in an article headed ‘We’ll be dammed if we move’:

No one from the Government has been here,' Mr Elliot said. 'We don't know exactly who is going to be affected directly and who is not. I was
in Brisbane in a hotel room (last week) when I saw the TV and Beattie standing there waving a map, and I rang Carol and said, ‘My God, that's our place’ and that's the first time anyone here had heard about it. This is a huge hardship for people … what astounds me is the level of just sheer, straight-out cruelty [of the announcement].’ (Green, 2006, p. 3)

There were many media reports that expressed the emotional sentiment and the intention to resist the proposal. Local newspapers were quick to publish material on the issue. There were fewer reports published in the Brisbane media, although there were still a significant number of articles in print and on television. The reporting style focused primarily on the government’s announcement, the emotions of people in the affected area and the immediate resistance. This brought attention to the mutual suffering of people caused by the announcement.

The emotional impact of the announcement was huge. One health care professional said the human impact was worse than a cyclone disaster because after the impact of a cyclone it goes away, afterwards the recovery progresses in a natural way. Then people can get on with their lives. The changes to the proposal and the long formal approval path meant that people experienced an emotional impact after each of the various announcements during the project timeframe. Each time a new announcement was made, the focus of attention was on the politicians who made the announcement. This repeatedly directed the people’s resistance towards a political performativity of democracy. Another way of putting it is that people were on a seemingly never-ending emotional rollercoaster that naturally provoked them into exercising their democratic rights.

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18 I am not at liberty to disclose the name of the worker for ethical reasons.
4.4 The resignification of democracy in 2006

The types of actions I examine in this section are what you might expect in terms of protest actions that relate to issues of democracy – rallies, street marches, sign writing, the visual arts and online activism are all activities that can be considered action representative of people’s desire for democratic change. However, these actions could be construed as being part of a process of political performativity. The actions brought into being the democratic life world desired by the people involved. Many of the activities are considered democratic actions in a representative sense. However, the reactions of people in the public sphere that were in direct conflict with the initial speech/action of politicians indicate something more than representation. The action is the enactment of a democratic life world desired by the individual. In many instances, the actions detailed below were undertaken irrespective of whether those taking them thought the action in itself would affect the final outcome. In other words, these were emotional responses that were more about the participants' life world than the external political arena they hoped to influence.

The particular focus of this section is to unpack the process of the political performativity of democracy with emotions as a central element. Through communication in the private and public spheres, individuals became aware of each other’s situation, which led to increased emotional energy, feelings of solidarity and moral superiority as defined by the emerging protest group. The social focus of attention is also important in the process of political performativity. Social attention grew through repetition of actions in the public sphere. The media coverage of the individual and collective actions facilitated this process.

The choice to focus only on the events of 2006 was guided by the way in which the theme of democracy had been enacted. The greatest collective action in terms of
people protesting in the public sphere was during this time. The effects of this protest did carry over into 2007 and 2008. For example, the people power of 2006 led to conservative and green federal politicians having the mandate to publicly scrutinise the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam through a Senate Inquiry into Alternative Water Supplies for South-East Queensland. In 2008, people power had the effect of politicising the federal government assessment of the project under the *EPBC Act*. The delay of the proposal in late 2008 was widely seen as a political ploy in the lead-up to another early election in early 2009. I will now examine the processes that contributed to the political performativity of democracy in 2006.

4.5 Initial public protests

From the outset, there has been outrage concerning the dam announcement. However, there was a short period of time where people did not know of others’ feelings about the proposal. During the first few days after the announcement, there was growing awareness that there were many other people who shared a common interest in being politically involved in resisting the proposal. Within a period of less than a week, residents mobilised to hold a public meeting in opposition to the proposal. This was the first of a number of rallies and public meetings attended by large numbers of local residents. Most of the rallies and meetings were held in the local area. The street march at the Labor Party State Conference in Brisbane on 10 June 2006 was an exception. This was the only time were large numbers of people gathered outside the Mary River region to protest against the dam in 2006.\(^\text{19}\)

The first few weeks of the conflict saw large numbers of people coming together to show support and to send a message to the state government. They also needed to find out information about the dam through local community-based meetings because

\(^\text{19}\) The exception to this was a protest paddle that occurred in the lead-up to the 2006 election. Over 100 people participated in a protest paddle on the Brisbane River.
the state government was not forthcoming with information. The state government predominantly used the media to announce details of the proposal in the first few weeks.

In a sense, the protest rallies and public meetings were representative of the feelings and wishes of the people affected by the proposal. They were also politically performative. The actions of the protesters brought into being the very thing to which they referred. Thus, the lack of democratic involvement of local people in the planning of the proposal was brought into being through the very action of the protest and the speech acts that occurred during those actions. The following quotes illustrate how democracy at this time was resignified by protest participants. Carol Elliot explains what happened in the local area in the first few days after the dam announcement:

Four hours’ notice. They phoned on the morning of the Friday, you know, 8–9.00 a.m., our local neighbours and then they got on the phones and by 2.00 p.m. that afternoon they had over 200 people assembled under our tree. So they came, just letting people know on the grapevine. It was then that we organised the plan to have the rally, the first rally. On the Tuesday following the Labor Day long weekend, over at Kandanga and at that rally there were 2000 people. (Elliot, 2006)

After the dam announcement, people heard about the protest group forming via the ‘bush telegraph’ and from roadside signs posted throughout the local area. The speed with which people organised to meet is testimony not only to the impact of the proposal, but also to the strength of local rural networks that aided organisation of gatherings.
The emotional energy was high during these times, and this was channelled into elaborating shared mutual interest in opposition to the dam:

People did phenomenal things to make sure we could have a rally that was sophisticated, that was intelligent, that was factually driven, knowing that all the emotions sat behind it. People did amazing things. (Elliot, 2006)

Elliot acknowledges the efforts of the people who protested, but importantly identifies the presence of anger and the fact that it needed to be managed. Early on in the campaign, a significantly large number of people publicly demonstrated against the dam. More than 2,000 residents from the area attended a ‘Valley Meeting’ on 2 May 2006. The local television and print media coverage of this event acknowledged the newsworthiness of a large number of people resisting the proposal. Newspapers ran articles almost daily for the first few weeks. The following statement from the Save the Mary Coordinating Committee website summarises the meeting:

The media was in full attendance with crews from TV, radio and newspaper. The meeting start was delayed by the people queuing at the 4 tables set up for signing the petition regarding the proposed Mary River Dam. The meeting was chaired by local resident Rick Elliot, who delivered a power point presentation of the current situation, interspersed with passionate but measured rallying comments and assurances of community resolve to fight this dam proposal. In true democratic style, any one who wished to have their say were allowed to, and most were brief except for the politicians! (Save the Mary River, 2006, para 1)
The statement acknowledges the importance of inclusion of all people wanting to have their say. In terms of resignification this allows for organic or ground up evolution of resistance. Thus the resignification is embedded in the social world. The people resisting were acutely aware of the need to respond in social appropriate/relevant ways. The ‘passionate but measured rallying comments’ indicates that the organisers were aware of the importance of emotional reflexivity in the resignification of democracy. From conversations with local people who attended and organised the event they said they did not want to be seen as just angry red neck NIMBY’s (Not In My Back Yard). It also acknowledges that the media are an important part of the process of resignification of the democratic life world desired by residents. Media portrayal of the growing mass of people, as well as the organisational efforts of the protesters, was an important element in the process of the resignification of democracy. One of the first stories to appear in the Courier-Mail was a story titled ‘Dams plans stir dissent’. Here is an excerpt from that story:

Mary River Action Group spokeswoman and landholder Glenda Pickersgill said about 2000 were at a meeting at Kandanga last week. Protesters included farmers, community groups and conservationists but the protest was expected to grow. 'We've only had since Thursday night to get organised,' she said. 'We have a website and I'm getting green groups organised. Phones are running pretty hot.' (Williams, 2006, p. 12)

Such large numbers of people mobilising in a sparsely populated rural area attracted the attention of local and regional media. A meeting in the township of Kandanga and another held later in Gympie were followed by articles in the local papers, including the
Gympie Times, the Sunshine Coast Daily and also in the Courier-Mail in Brisbane and on ABC radio and TV news. These meetings and the reports that followed represented an attempt to bring into being the democratic life world that was sought by the people resisting the proposal. This is an excerpt of an ABC News Online story that appeared after the rally in Gympie:

A protest meeting against a proposed dam on the Mary River drew more than 3,000 people to Gympie on Saturday night. … Representatives of the Cooloola and surrounding shire councils addressed the emotional public meeting along with conservationists, affected residents and farmers. The Federal Member for Fairfax says he’ll urge the Commonwealth Government to block the proposed dam on environmental grounds while locals have started a ‘fighting fund’ to campaign against it. Already, more than $15,000 has been donated. (Lamond, 2006, para 1)

What is interesting about this article is that the Save the Mary website does not describe the protest meeting in any detail. It has placed a link to the ABC website where the full article is used to convey what happened. The protest organisers directly used the media as a way of increasing the force of the resignification through the used of media report to convey meaning. In this instance the Save the Mary River protesters have used the media as a way of bringing into being the democratic life world of people resisting the proposal. The collective action has occurred as a result – and as part of – the process of public sphere engagement by the people resisting the proposal.
These early collective actions represent an enactment of democracy in the life world of the people involved in this process. Coming together, being physically part of a democratic process – these things were fundamental to the building of a critical mass (Marwell, 1993). Many people organising the meetings and rallies stressed that the meetings were about information-sharing and peaceful solutions – being part of democratic processes. Although emotions were running high, the purpose and actions of the meetings were not about conflict. Throughout the campaign, the Save the Mary Coordinating Committee has always wanted to be part of both the project approval and political processes.

The physical presence of large numbers of similarly affected people from a geographically defined area helped to facilitate a mutual focus of attention. However, it was not just the physical presence of people that enabled this. Actions involving websites, sign writing, creative arts, music and the media all helped to raise awareness of the issues. The theme of democracy was a dominant focus of attention for people resisting the proposal. I will now examine these actions in detail.

4.6 From letter writing to the internet

Traditionally, letters to the editor are a way of gaining attention in the public sphere. Below is a letter to the editor in the Courier-Mail that was written by a resident who was also a member of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee. Both the letter itself being placed in the media and the meaning of the text bring into being the shared focus of social attention surrounding the political performativity of democracy:

I despair at the lack of communication and consultation regarding this project. About 900 property owners are being asked by the Government to sacrifice their properties to ensure that Brisbane and
the Sunshine Coast have adequate water supplies. If we are being asked to sacrifice our dreams and aspirations, we have the right to be fully informed about why this is the preferred site. (Hedberg, 2006)

The publication of a letter resignifies the lack of democracy and the desire for a more democratic process. Through the publication of letters to the editor such as this one, the political performativity of democracy is brought into being through a shared sense of emotional attention. This has been a traditional form of participation in the public sphere. However, there are newer ways of engaging in the public sphere that are part of the process. An online forum and the Save the Mary website were created very soon after the initial dam announcement by Peter Beattie. I interviewed Steve Burgess, who was involved in creating one of the websites that the Save the Mary protesters have used. I asked him what actions he took after he heard about the proposed dam and what he thought was the purpose of those actions:

I've thought about why it dragged me in, why it sucked me in so much because my initial response was when I heard about it, I thought what a stupid bloody idea but I'll sit down and think about it and I'll make a list of pros and cons before I jump off, I wasn't going to write letters or anything. And I sat down and analysed the pros and cons and just came up with a lot more cons than pros, and then someone said well you ought to do a web page on it and I thought I could write a letter to the editor but in that time I could knock up a web page so I did that instead. (Burgess, 2006)

Given that letter writing is seen as a typical form of political action, it is telling that, for Burgess, an effective democratic action was to create a website. This indicates a change in the way of doing politics – even for rural Queensland in 2006. The purpose
of this was to facilitate a mutual focus of attention in the public sphere. Burgess in late 2006 had this to say about the features and purpose of the online forum:

A lot of people have been stuck at home with no contact and instead of worrying about things, they still worry about things, but people find themselves a job to do, getting online is being productive. They will go and research a particular issue and then go and put their findings up for other people to do it, so they’ve got a place to put it up and these are people that are not computer literate normally. It’s been a learning curve for a lot of people but instead of sitting at home stewing and worrying, people might not like going out or they’re feeling very stressed by something, they can sit there and do a bit of research on an issue or do a bit of writing or something and put it up there and feel as if they have contributed, and they have. So it’s been useful, I’ve even used it for myself as therapy from time to time. (Burgess, 2006)

What is important here is the productive aspect. By this I mean not just the production of knowledge for the online forum, but rather people engaged in the production of democracy by their very actions in placing comments online. These actions have a private aspect in that it is a type of therapy. However, participants either commenting on their personal situations or posting general information nevertheless facilitated a mutual focus of attention. The ability of online communication to create and sustain networks has been acknowledged as a vital tool in modern political life.20 Figure 2 presents three comments from the website TravestonSwamp.info that exemplifies not only

mutual social attention, but also the role of emotion in the process. The comments were responding to the forum thread of 'initial reactions':

![Table of forum posts](image)

**Figure 2. Posts from TravestonSwamp.info forum after the initial announcement by Peter Beattie**

There are three points made in the posts in Figure 2 that need clarification. First, the phrase ‘public meetings for the Mary Valley River System’ refers to the Water Resource Plan for the Mary River as previously described by Bob Abbot. The ‘rally last night’ refers to the Kandanga public meeting where 2000 people attended. SteveB,
who wrote the first comment, is Steve Burgess, whose interview responses I have detailed above. Burgess has been a regular user of the online forum to post comments on a range of topics.

The comments on the online forum signify the intent and solidarity of the people who were resisting the proposal in its early stages. They contribute not only to a conversation about participation in political process, but also to the ways in which the public nature of online posts facilitates mutual social attention. This is evidenced by the number of people viewing the posts but not making comments. There were more than 3,000 ‘hits’ on the initial reaction posting. The only more popular viewing topics in the general discussion section of the site were an e-petition, a discussion about a local controversial politician who did not fully support the anti-dam cause, a Courier-Mail editorial which was supportive of the Traveston Crossing Dam protest, and a topic on the Channel Seven Television News crew who visited the area prior to the public meeting with Peter Beattie in July 2006. All topics were posted in the first four months of the protest.

4.7 The ‘Flotilla of Hope’ – a protest paddle on the Mary River

There were a number of politicians who came to the affected area in the first part of the campaign. One of the most prominent federal politicians was Senator Bob Brown, the leader of the Australian Greens, who came to lead a flotilla on the Mary River and to speak at a public meeting. More than 120 canoes paddled down the river on 28 May 2008.
A resident of the Mary River Valley, Donald Maskall, was involved in what was dubbed the ‘Flotilla of Hope’. I met Maskall on the morning of the paddle and joined him in a canoe to travel down the river with the flotilla. Some months after the trip, he shared his thoughts on what was achieved through his participation in the event:

I felt this was something for us to participate in so that we felt good as it was to make a difference. I don’t know whether other people would feel the same way. At least then, I didn’t feel so bad when the election didn’t change the issue, well we’d still done something and that something was good for us at least. Even if it didn’t change the outcome of the election … Perhaps something that’s more obstructive would be more effective. I think you’d probably get, you’d certainly get less people like myself participating, I wouldn’t participate in something that’s very obstructive. I’d prefer to participate in things that are constructive, I guess and that’s why I really like the flotilla idea and I do like the idea of assisting with submission writing, those sorts of things. (Maskall, 2006)
The point of Maskall’s comments relevant to the process of resignifying democracy is that the purpose or intention is not necessarily one of protest for a desired outcome but rather to merely participate. The actual engagement in the democratic activity made him feel good. The link between the feelings of solidarity and benefits of democratic participation is also present, as this interview excerpt suggests:

I really believe is that most of the activities that have been undertaken, they’re sort of in the guises of protests and rallies and I really think it’s more to do with the people that are affected coming together and being part of the community and supporting each other than it is about changing other people’s opinions. I’ve participated in the Flotilla of Hope on the Mary River and you were there that day and that to me was mostly about how good it felt to be part of that community and at least we’re here sort of thing. (Maskall, 2006)

Thus, the outcome in terms of overturning the political decision of constructing the dam was secondary. A post on the TravestonSwamp.info forum also conveys the idea of the political performativity of democracy and the importance of critical mass in achieving this. This post suggests that knowledge of the protest action emotionally sustains and facilitates political action (see Figure 4).
Like Maskall, the woman who posted these comments felt that participating in a democratic action that involved large numbers of people had an intrinsic purpose. The benefits for her that flowed from her being part of a collective action were that it recharged her spirits and gave her emotional energy. The act of writing the post also helped in this process. It had an effect of enabling her to further participate in the political act of sign writing. Both the sign writing and online posts were public sphere actions that were an integral part of her emotional response to, and management of, the announcements.
Many other people had similar experiences of protest to those voiced by the woman in the online post. Placing signs on road verges and inside property boundaries in the district was common practice early on in the campaign. This action has continued throughout the three years of the campaign. This action will be discussed in more detail in section 4.9.

Figure 5. Comments about media portrayal by residents after the Brisbane rally, as posted on the TravestonSwamp.info forum

The presence of a federal politician who was instrumental in the decision to stop the building of a dam on the Franklin River in 1986 had other impacts. Although Brisbane media had picked up on the issue, the campaign until this time was generally framed as a local issue. The presence of Senator Bob Brown in the Mary River Valley facilitated collective action, and for a short time political action, seemed to not be associated with party politics. The Australian Greens and the conservative parties came together over this issue in 2006. Brown’s presence and participation also helped to extend awareness and understanding of the issue on a national front. Some

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21 This agreement did not extend to other issues. I was privy to emails between green groups and conservatives over the issue of the allocation of Green preferences in the 2006 state election. The emails verified the differences the political parties despite common interests in the Traveston Crossing Dam issue. This may have been one reason why mobilisation surrounding the Traveston Crossing Dam was problematic for the locals in the lead-up to the election.
regular contributors to the TravestonSwamp.info forum were very pleased with the news coverage of the ‘Flotilla of Hope’. Figure 5 shows the comments made that night following the early evening television news coverage.

The same day as the ‘Flotilla of Hope’ event, the Sunshine Coast Daily reported Bob Brown’s perspective concerning the national significance of the protest. Brown also identified the potential for people power in the campaign:

‘People power is a formidable thing and there is going to be enormous support for these people and this river,’ Mr Brown said. ‘This is not only going to be a national campaign. It goes beyond that because some of the species found in this river, such as the lungfish, are internationally important and I intend to make this a campaign in Canberra.’ (Remeikis, 2006, para. 3)

The presence of Bob Brown helped to bring greater social attention to the issue. Local people who participated with him in the protest perceived it as a way of enacting the democratic life world that they were seeking following the announcement to build the dam.

Bob Brown through participation in the flotilla of hope brought forward embodied historical meaning of the no dam campaign of the Franklin River to the Mary River. The triangular style of the protest sign for the Mary River even mimicked the no dam protest sign of the Franklin River campaign. The major difference between the two signs were that a yellow background was used in the case of the Mary River as opposed to a green background of the Franklin River protest. The use of the no dam triangle is discussed later in the thesis. The major point here is that resignification was aligned
through multiple forms of expression which sought to counter future life worlds imposed by the state. Socio historical embodiment of the resignification (similarity in signage and the presence of a key protester from previous events) was also important in legitimising resignification in counter publics.

4.8 Protest in Brisbane: The Labor State Conference 2006

Large numbers of people assembled for a street march to protest against the dam decision in Brisbane in June 2006. The event was designed to target the Queensland Labor Party State Conference in South Brisbane on 10 June. The protest included people from the Rathdowney region, south of Brisbane, where the Queensland Government had proposed another dam. This proposal was subsequently dropped by Peter Beattie in July 2006. By far the largest number of people attending the rally had come from the Mary River region. Several hundred people were reportedly in attendance at the rally (Dam protesters march, 2006). I was present, and I estimated the number of protesters to be at least 900. The types of people attending the march were reportedly not typical of street marches (Dam protesters march, 2006).

Figure 6. Protesters at the street march to the Labor State Conference in May 2006
Here is a perspective on democracy from one of the residents who was part of the campaign from the very start. Gail was an active campaigner and had featured in documentaries about the issue and in anti-dam literature. She attended the Brisbane rally. These are her reflections on participating in the protests of 2006:

One of the things of that sort of effect, as it’s effected me at any rate, is the way Mr Beattie did it all, like, just announcing it out like that. Nobody knew. Not even our Lord Mayor. This is one of things that has upset me the most, is that I feel disenfranchised from the district, the state. I even feel disenfranchised from Australia. I am not Australian born but I’ve been here for 50 years and I often say to people, I came here by choice. This feeling of being disenfranchised is really, really upsetting because it’s a feeling that not only has your place been taken away from you, your home and that but you feel as if your country, Mr Beattie has made me feel like this, has tossed you out. Don't want to know you anymore sort of thing. You don't count. That’s been one of the most distressing things.

Well, I went to the march down in Brisbane. I was hoping to get put in jail. I was a mother. I belonged to the generation that got married and had babies when they were 22 not 42 as they do nowadays. Nowadays career comes first and then you think now what haven’t I done? … So going down to this meeting and parading the streets in Brisbane, I must say I looked forward to and enjoyed as a sort of replay. Well, I missed out on it then but now I've got the chance. At 70 I’ve come in and been a rebel rouser. Being an activist, but of course it wasn’t just all fun, it was a serious thing. (Gail, 2006)
Gail (2006) typifies the predicament for a large number of people. For many, the political performativity of democratic action was about redressing feelings of not being part of the democratic process. Action is seen as a way of resignifying the life world that the initial announcement had removed. They attempted to create a life world through the very actions of coming together to protest. Their actions repudiated the very proposal that, in their eyes, lacked democratic process.

4.9 Sign writing

Protest signs erected in the local area have also been an important part of the political performativity of democracy. The very act of placing signs in public has resignified the very thing people set out to resist. What they resisted was the undemocratic decision-making process; by creating resistance in the public sphere through sign writing, they attempted to re-create a life world with democratic dimensions.

The creation of social attention is one of the primary aspects of the role of signs in the political performativity of democracy, and I will consider three central elements of this process: creation of the general ‘No Dams’ sign; the social attention and solidarity featured in road sign postings; and the features of the speech acts within the signs.

The creation of the Save the Mary River ‘No Dam’ sign in the form of a yellow triangle was done in order to copy the ‘No Dams’ triangle used in Tasmania’s Franklin River Dam issue in the 1980s. Steve Gall was one of the people behind the action:

So I just did things off my own back and still do. That’s what I have been encouraging, just do it. The first rally in Gympie, I ordered 1,000 No Dam stickers because I knew the Franklin Dam had this triangle with no
dam on it, I remember that. And I thought that would be good to get out there and I've since had another 30,000 of them made. (Gall, 2006)

The ‘No Dams’ yellow triangle is a symbol still used in almost all protest literature, and can be seen at all protest events. In the case of the Save the Mary River campaign, the decision to include this symbol was an attempt to align the collective action around the Mary River Dam with the Franklin River Dam dispute. Comments by the leader of the Franklin River Dam campaign, Senator Bob Brown, lent weight to the signification. The visit to the Mary River by Brown was reported in the *Sunshine Coast Daily*. His visit helped to focus mutual social attention on the issue at a national level by linking it to the Franklin dam issue.

This particular focus was facilitated by media articles like the one from the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, which reported that ‘The man who led the charge to save Tasmania’s Franklin River 25 years ago has turned his attention to Traveston and the Mary River, labelling it the “new Franklin” (Remeikis, 2006, para. 1).’

The yellow ‘No Dam’ sign had the tacit support from the leader of that campaign. His presence also helped signify the message of ‘No Dam’ through the local media. This helped raise awareness and solidarity, both within and outside the region. After the visit by Brown, there were two road signs placed on the entrance to the township of Kandanga. These stayed on the pole for a number of months after the visit. The signs are shown in Figure 7.
Figure 7. Signs posted in the town of Kandanga after Bob Brown visited the proposed dam site

In addition to the message in the text itself, the signs have another underlying effect. There is hope, trust and faith placed in the democratic processes to help to enact the desired life world of the protesters. The link between previous Franklin River ‘No Dam’ campaigns and the battle being waged on the Mary River is socially brought to the attention of all people in Kandanga by placing signs at the entrance to the small rural town. The signs facilitate mutual social attention on the role of federal politics and bring into being the democratic life world that the people of the Mary River Valley feel is lacking. The action was an attempt to resignify the meaning of democracy during the process of project approval.

Road signs placed in strategic positions throughout the region have been a characteristic feature of the resistance to the dam. The facilitation of mutual social attention and solidarity has been one of the effects of the protest action. There has been considerable support for people placing signs on their front gates, on prominent buildings in their property, and on roadside verges. The main aim has been to convey a message of protest. However, these signs do not just represent the wishes of the people erecting them. In most cases, the signs have taken on a humorous style. This
indicates they are not simply a means to convey a desire for certain political outcomes. There is a cultural context which underlies the style of the signs as well as the reasons why they were accepted by the community. Keith Gall was involved not only in the production of the No Dam triangle, but also created and placed many roadside signs throughout the district, as he explains here:

_Interviewer:_ I've noticed there has also been a lot of support from the local community in terms of leaving signs up, I heard someone say it's actually illegal to put signs up on the roadside, but there are many signs on the roadside. Do you know much about that, the story about that?

_Keith:_ Yeah, I know right at the very first few weeks there was some signs taken down, I think it was Skyring Creek Road, so I heard Council workers took down some of those signs which is their job, but once that was found out, the Mayor I'm pretty sure said no, don't take them down, leave them.

_Interviewer:_ That's quite amazing ... That's pretty significant.

_Keith:_ Yeah, I'm not sure if there was an actual written statement 'don't do this' or the nod just got, it just got mentioned we'd like to leave those signs up there and I think the guys pulling them down thought they were just doing their job anyway and they probably didn't have any trouble, saying ok we won't because they probably agree with it as well. (Gall, 2006)

The significant aspect about the signs being left alone by the Mains Roads workers was that the directive to remove dangerous signs from the road was not issued to the Save the Mary Group until September 2006. Given that a number of authorities did not police the illegal act of placing signs on road verges indicates that the solidarity across
various levels of the community appeared to be high. It should also be noted that there was little defacing of the signs by pro-dam residents.

Roadside protest signs had the effect of enhancing community understanding of the issue by ‘the average citizen’ making statements in the local public sphere about the proposed dam. There were purposes for the signwriting other than increasing social understanding of the issues, as Gall (2006) explains:

> I think the signs have been good. The humorous ones have been good for everyone’s health, in desperate times, it’s still good to have a laugh and a smile, so it’s been good in that score. And it’s also been good, it reinforces your attitude to fight this thing when you continuously see signs. (Gall, 2006)

The main focus of attention in the protest signs has been the Queensland government, along with Peter Beattie and/or Anna Bligh. Much of this has been humorous in style. People who have been affected by the proposal appear to ‘get the jokes’ evident in many of the community-authored statements and comments. Humour in this regard can be thought of as politically performative in that, depending on the topic, the very act of the joke resignifies the actions of the politicians by morally subverting their position. Much of the humour targeted the lack of democratic process associated with the proposal. The words and actions of Peter Beattie or Anna Bligh often became the target of the humour. Through these actions, the protesters are claiming a moral high ground. The photo in Figure 8 was taken at Peter Beattie’s public meeting in Gympie. The ‘Osama Bin Beattie’ sign was used by the Courier-Mail to help describe the sentiments of the people attending the rally.
The day after the public meeting, the *Courier-Mail* used the text from the sign as a way of portraying the sentiments of the people at the meeting. Part of the accompanying article is reproduced below:

Holding signs saying ‘Osama Bin Beattie’ and ‘Dumb Arsed Man’, they repeatedly compared him to a terrorist and called him an ‘arrogant wanker’. Tears and insults flowed as the marathon meeting stretched to four hours after Mr Beattie promised to answer every question asked. (Sentiments overflow at meeting, 2006)

During the protest, I noticed that the people who looked at this sign broke out in a wide smile or laughed openly. People who were affected emotionally by the proposal saw the humour in the sign. I am not sure if all Brisbane residents would agree. The point is that when the text of signs like these is used in the media, it plays a significant role in resignifying the political performativity of democracy. Greater sharing of mutual interest occurs when the media display the actions of individuals in this way. People who were
emotionally affected by the words of the politicians could readily see the humour in the signs. Collective action in support of the No Dam case was facilitated by people ‘doing democracy’ through displaying protest signs in the media. This claim is supported by the political impact of road signs during the election. In both the 2006 and the 2009 state elections, the state government ordered that protest road signs be removed from the Mary River valley region (Gardiner, 2006; Gorrie, 2009). It is claimed that the government actions were not political, but the local protesters disagreed (Gorrie, 2009).

4.10 Music

Resistance has also involved creative production in music and the arts as a mode of resistance. In a similar way to signwriting, these actions represent a way of bringing attention to the Save the Mary River cause through individual actions in the public sphere. Such private actions would not normally be considered an act of democracy. However, the role of these actions in bringing attention to the issues helped in facilitating or maintaining critical mass. An important element has been the enactment of the arts and music in the public sphere. The performance of these actions creates the very thing to which the action pertains – in this case, the lack of democracy in the approval process.

A music CD was made in 2006 with a long list of protest songs. Towards the end of 2006, songs from the CD were played each morning on a Sunshine Coast radio station. This created and maintained social attention. Keith Gall was one of the people who helped to produce the CD:

So when we released this CD, Jamie Dunn’s playing a song a day and there’s 24 songs. He’s probably up to about 15 to 20 now and each day he plays a song and
then rings Tony up and has a bit of a chat with him. Or he rings up the people who wrote the song. (Gall, 2006)

Many of the 24 songs focus on the undemocratic actions of the Queensland Government. The act of playing songs allows for the sharing of mutual emotional attention, not only through declaring the undemocratic actions of the government but also restating the desired life world of the songwriters. The following are the lyrics of one of Keith Gall’s songs:

Peter Beater, why don’t you come to your senses?
Flying over our fences, you want to drown our proud land
This is a smart state but you don’t get much dumber
And this Traveston blunder will drive us all from our homes
If you flood the Mary Valley Pete we will beat you
And were able to fight the fight to save our life for freedom on our land
Get your hands of Mary, Pete. We all know there’s a better solution
Shut-up your verbal pollution. Stop playing god with our lives
... Get your hands off Mary... (Gall, 2006)

There are three aspects of interest here that relate to my research questions. The action shows that an individual can write a song and, through radio broadcasting, have it heard in a sphere that extends far beyond the local region. Talking with an artist on air after a song has played not only allows for the song to represent the ideas of the person who wrote it, but also allows individuals to share their experience of writing and performing. This, in turn, leads to the sharing of emotional attention with listeners. In this way, individual action can bring into being the notion of democratic action, shared with others in the public sphere.
Songs used in this way are not just representations of political interest – they are political acts that bring into being the very thing to which they refer. Protest Music shapes dominant discourses via a multilevel textual action that counters the force of the state but at the same time is a product of the system it resists (Foster, 2006). Public sphere actions that have an impact on emotions become forceful through focusing social attention on the emotional elements that disrupt and destabilise norms of social order (Hariman, 2001).

4.11 The Arts

In a similar way to songwriting, the political action of engaging in the arts is part of the process of political performativity. I wish to focus on one particular artistic creation that is not generally considered an activist strategy but which has involved a relatively large number of local people and gained considerable local and statewide media attention – knitting! Specifically, it entailed the knitting of a scarf in aid of the Save the Mary River campaign. As an example of political performativity, it exemplifies how a seemingly non-political individual action can become political through public sphere action. Tania Murray was one of the people who started the project. She relates the story of how the scarf became a political tool:

_Tania_: I took it to the regional art gallery here and they have workshops once a month for children, like family days. So what I did with this particular scarf is I took it along and I took needles and wool and became part of this family activities day because I saw the process of the knitting, not just – I guess it’s woman’s work, but I also see it as an art form and that was really quite successful, we had a knitting circle and it was a way to engage more of the community in this project and also just to raise that profile just a little bit more.
I’m actually not a resident of the Valley but I’m an artist … I saw that as a way of perhaps what I can do is be a voice and just in my own way be able to take that message just a little bit further. Because I think, because it is the community on its own [the Mary River Valley], I think it does need people outside that community to assist it in its journey because I think it’s just too big [the Queensland Government proposal] and because in a way, it’s such an isolated community in a sense. They are a part of the Sunshine Coast but they’re very much their own community, they do need other people to really validate what they’re doing and to support them.

Interviewer: So that’s the main motivation?

Tania: Yes, the other thing that really is, what really speaks to me is the disempowerment, that I feel really strongly for them about what’s happening because I think that they’re so disempowered with what’s happening to their lives and to their situation that, that’s why I’ve become involved. That’s how I can relate to what’s happening to them, basically they’ve had all choices removed from them and I have some, that … where I feel the connection with them is that whole disempowerment of having a physical place and having no say about what happens to it. So that’s really why I’m involved is because of that and I feel very strongly to that we’re custodians of this country. (Murray, 2006)

The point that Tania Murray makes in relation to political performativity is that the action of knitting enacts political involvement when the purpose of the activity is to increase the mass of people resisting the dam. Her actions are situated both within and outside the local area, and thus seek to increase
regional support. Her actions also draw attention to shared feelings for people who have been disempowered by the government’s decision to build the dam.

By perceiving the scarf as a cultural creation that embodies protest, its very knitting then becomes a political action. The end-purpose of unrolling it in public places further politicises the action through attracting media coverage of the action. Murray relays her perspective on the emotional aspects of participation and creation as follows:

I think that's what it is and it's just giving opportunities maybe to be in the media, but more about giving other people a chance to contribute and feel like in some way they can contribute to a project over, instead remain powerless about what's happening. On the other hand, people in their own way can feel like they're involved and maybe even keep that interest. They know that they’ve contributed in a small way to a project. (Murray, 2006)

The media attention on the activity grew along with the size of the scarf. The events where the media chose to document its unfurling were the Senate Inquiry in April 2007 and the June 2008 Labor Party state conference. Excerpts from news reports by the ABC and Sunshine Coast Daily are instructive:

**Rally outside Mary River dam inquiry**

About 40 anti-dam campaigners gathered in Brisbane this morning outside the Senate Inquiry into the State Government's planned Traveston Crossing Dam. The group travelled down from the Mary Valley and unfurled a 370-metre-long hand-knitted scarf to symbolise their unity against the controversial dam. (Jacobi, 2007, Para 1)
Union 'ambush' steals dam rally limelight

He said a 470m-long scarf knitted by Mary Valley locals was used as a prop. ‘We were strung along the highway for about 700 metres – we had signs along (the scarf) identifying places affected by the dam from Maleny to Fraser Island,’ Mr Porter said. (Lander 2008, para. 12)

The scarf was unfurled at several events apart from those mentioned above, symbolising social support during a period of disempowerment for many people of the affected area. The media reports these types of actions as symbolic. I am not arguing that they are not symbolic. However, I suggest that there is a greater process of symbolic actions – such as the ones outlined in the media above – that brings into being the desired elements of protesters’ life worlds. Fundamental to this desire for a different life world is emotion. Murray (2006) uses the word ‘feeling’ to describe the relationship between the action of creating the scarf and the Mary River. She uses the words ‘feel like they’re involved’, ‘I feel very strongly’ and ‘I feel the connection with them’ to describe the relationships. Emotion is directing the attention she places on the Mary River issue and the political performativity of the actions of knitting the scarf.

The scarf was also unfurled during the visit by Bob Brown to the Mary River in September 2008. Figure 9 shows the scarf that was used to border more than 300 people who attended the public rally.
The ‘Knit for Mary Scarf’ was placed in a circle for people to gather around to listen to Bob Brown’s address. The rally was part of the ‘Climate Torch Relay’ organised by the socially and politically progressive action group, GetUp! The relay was crossing the country to promote political action on climate change issues at the time.

It has not gone unnoticed that many of the performative actions in the process of resignification were gendered. Much of the ‘protest’ over the proposed Mary River dam may appear apolitical. How women responded in terms of resignifying democracy might appear apolitical: knitting might not be immediately considered a subversive action. However, the private sphere action of knitting has become public through joining others in public to knit and then staging events with media to gain expression of community response to the undemocratic approach of the state. The transforming of what is typically private action to a public concern is one of the features of feminist activism (West and Blumberg, 1990).
4.12 Public meetings: Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh

The next public sphere action in 2006 on which I will focus is the visit by Peter Beattie to Gympie in July 2006. In early July 2006, there were growing rumours that Beattie was to visit Gympie to consult the people of the region. He appeared to be concerned not only about the growing mobilisation in the Mary River Valley, but also the impact the campaign might be having in Brisbane. He announced the venue and place for the public meeting late in the day of 4 July 2006. He called the public meeting for the next day, 5 July. The short notice added to feelings of a lack of trust and negativity towards the Premier by Mary River Valley residents, as Dawn Gill (2006) laments:

But he didn't let us know until 3pm the afternoon before where and when this meeting was going to be. Did he think we were idiots? Did he think that we weren't going to be able to get 2,000 people together to protest this thing? He can tell Brisbane, it made Brisbane news that oh yes, he was coming to face these people but he didn't give these people the decency of a bit of prior notice. (Gill, 2006)

Despite the short notice, there was a large crowd waiting for the Premier. The online forum by that stage had become a focus of attention for the campaign. More than 11,000 hits were recorded on the site from people who were interested in Beattie's visit. I was present for the meeting and stayed for the whole four hours that the Queensland Premier spoke.

He arrived late for the meeting, and the emotional energy in the large crowd was highly charged. Upon his arrival, a number of important things occurred. He was booed by the crowd and was not allowed to speak for some time. Next, there was a stunt that
resignified the democratic life world of the people resisting the proposal. Carol Elliot described the events:

Carol: When Beattie came up, that action of Ian Watt, where he very quietly handed out those bits of paper to tell us all to stand and turn our back on Beattie when he walked in the door. That’s the Uniting Church Minister, whose idea that was.

Interviewer: Really? He did that?

Carol: He gave us little bits of paper and we handed them on to people and I thought that would never work. That was Ian Watt, quiet, demure, Ian Watt, a Uniting Church Minister, who quite proudly on his church over there at Amamoor has a Save the Mary River triangle. Yeah, Ian Watt did that. That was powerful. (Elliot, 2006)

The performative impact of this event was striking. The democratic life world that Peter Beattie was attempting to create was personally and publicly rejected by the residents. This action directly countered the statement that Beattie made in public on 22 June 2006 when he declared: ‘People power will not stop the dam.’ That statement has been used effectively by people resisting the dam as a way of defining their own democratic actions that year the minister responsible for water, Anna Bligh, hosted another public meeting with about 2000 people in attendance. There are many aspects of this upon which I could draw on to illustrate the political performativity of democracy. However, I will focus on one to illustrate my point. During the meeting, the Reverend Ian Watt spoke to Anna Bligh, explaining the reason for the stunt at Peter Beattie’s public meeting:

Reverend Ian Watt: I have a question: Why did we turn our backs on the Premier? Because he turned his back on us as citizens of
Queensland. How do you expect Queensland to relate to you when you invade and trample our rights as Queenslanders and threaten to dispossess them? Are the residents of the Mary Valley and surrounds expected to sit around and talk respectfully as though we are talking to honourable people? You can behave as treacherously as you like but don’t expect respect for it. We deserve proper consultation and none has been given. Your governments approach has been akin to holding a gun to our head and saying ‘let’s talk’. I am glad you are here, Anna, to understand some of the pain and anguish that your government is responsible for perpetrating on these people because of your callous arrogant behaviour. [There was no response from Anna Bligh.]

(Ian Watt, recorded at Gympie, 4 November 2006)

These comments are testimony to the ongoing emotional impact of the dam approval process and the link to undemocratic processes as claimed by the protesters.

So far in this chapter, I have argued that the theory of political performativity helps to explain how socially excluded individuals and groups are able to challenge and be empowered by participation in public sphere processes. Based on my findings presented thus far, the process of emotional enactment of public sphere action that attempted to resist the life world imposed by the state government was effective in the local region. Fundamental to the resistance process was the emotional enactment of action based on resisting the imposed life world and social attention being drawn to the action of resistance, with the public nature of those actions facilitating that process.

In these diverse ways, the people of the local region came together in sufficient numbers to gain the attention of the local media. The sheer number of articles in the local media testifies to the marketability of the Save the Mary River issue. I have
collected more 1,000 articles from local to national media related to the Traveston Crossing Dam. By far the majority have come from the *Gympie Times* and the *Sunshine Coast Daily*.

The critical mass of people resisting the proposal was also sufficient to gain media coverage in Brisbane. In the first year of the controversy, I collected more than 50 articles in which the main focus was the issue of the proposed dam. This media coverage reflected the lesser amount of collective public sphere action in Brisbane when compared with the Mary River region. Media coverage in Brisbane was not part of the process of facilitating critical mass. People in Brisbane may have been sympathetic to the issue but the political performativity dimension for the people of Brisbane lacked other critical aspects. The emotional attention was lacking and thus social attention failed to materialise from within a democracy theme. Given the apparent failure of such a large-scale protest movement to materialise, I asked the then leader of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee in late 2008 what he thought of the effect of the campaign on the power relations between the resistance and the government. Kevin Ingersoll’s response is presented below:

*Interviewer:* The next question I’d like you to consider is how effective do you think the Save the Mary campaign has been in terms of not actually trying to win but changing the dynamics of power? Beattie has said people power will not stop this dam.

*Kevin:* He will live to regret that because I firmly believe the dam will be stopped. It’s people power that will stop it. I don’t just mean people power as a stand-alone thing. I mean the fact that in a bit over two years later on, we have got more people now working on the technical and scientific aspects of this proposal than we had eighteen months ago or twelve months ago, six months ago. There are more people
now working on the technical arguments and doing the research and analysis than was ever the case before. People power has actually increased the amounts of facts and data and analysis that have been applied against the proposal. (Ingersoll, 2008)

Ingersoll acknowledged the importance of knowledge and its relationship with people power. The knowledge that refutes the government’s claims about the dam has been published in the media. This gives more force to the arguments in the documents. However the publication of the documents and the claims made within them would not be newsworthy if it were not for the large-scale social attention that the issue has created. In this way the political performativity of democracy is necessarily linked to the themes of certainty and public good – to be dealt with in the following chapters.

In terms of democracy, the public sphere campaign has had some direct impacts. The actions have brought changes to the initial proposal as announced in April 2007. Peter Beattie acknowledged, in August 2006, that stage 2 of the dam would not be needed if recycling of waste water was introduced to South-East Queensland. The delay in the proposal was announced in late 2008. The public sphere action of resistance has also had a significant effect on the communities involved. Those people left in the impact area feel a stronger sense of belonging and purpose.

4.13 Chapter summary

The way individuals were able to challenge and become empowered to effect a change in decisions of the Queensland Government was through citizen action in the public sphere. The announcement of the dam was a threat. The final decision was to be made after an approval process. Public participation in the approval process, and the
fact that the public were not involved in the initial dam decision, were downplayed by the government. Citizens’ emotional responses can be seen as a reaction to speech acts of politicians and at the same time as a concern for their life world as they knew it in the Mary River region.

The lack of democratic process in the announcement was no accident. It was the inevitable flipside of the politically expedient decision to build a dam at Traveston Crossing. These two aspects are inextricably linked to the intent and style of the initial announcement. For example, ‘the manner in which the decision was made’ was commonly cited as causing emotional distress. The historical-political context was also crucial in the response to the initial announcement. The people who resisted the proposal, irrespective of their own personal political preferences, knew that the Labor government had targeted a staunchly conservative seat. Although the residents did not know about the comment, ‘The National Party voters have never voted for us so stuff them’, they certainly felt the intent of those words through the initial announcement. Thus the wounding power of the actions and words of the initial announcement relate to the historical and political context. The fact that local people who were directly affected did not have a say in the decision demonstrated that they were not important. Their subsequent emotional responses relate to their perceived and real loss of democratic rights and the ramifications of this in their life world.

The initial speech acts were statements of intention. The initial speech acts of the government were attempts at bringing into being the reality of the dam before it had passed the hurdles in the approval process. They did not consult the people. The government portrayed the announcement as a decision to proceed with the project. They did this through the media. Indeed, the media were the main forms of communication used by the government to inform affected residents about the dam. In my opinion, the use of the media in this way also set up the form and style of the
resistance. The use of the media by the government set the scene for a battle in the media. Democracy was the main battle theme in the early stages of the resistance.

Initially, people reacted emotionally to the announcement of the dam. Shock, anxiety, anger and grief were strong emotions felt by the people in the impact area. The emotions enacted their intentions to ensure their life world was not destroyed or disrupted. In the very beginning, these feelings were expressed privately; however, within days – and in some cases hours – people began to share these emotions in more public ways. This was the start of the mediatisation of the issue. The first stage of mediatisation, as proposed by Stromback (2008), is evident when the media take over the function of communication of important public information for individuals. The second stage is when media portray actual events as they occur without influence from other – including political – agendas. This happened in the local area. Through this process, the emotions of the marginalised people of the Mary River Valley were deemed worthy of presentation in the public sphere.

The response was to bring into being the very thing that was missing from the announcement. The particular action was chosen by individuals with the sole purpose of creating a life world that was more democratic than the one imposed on them by the state government. The resignification process was based on how individuals’ emotional attention was directed towards either changing or maintaining their life world.

Participants engaged in the resistance process without any certainty that the activity would necessarily change the final political outcome. The act of simply being involved was equal to, and sometimes more important than, the end-purpose of changing or reversing the decision.
Democracy was resignified in many different ways by the people resisting the proposal. These actions attempted to show that the announcement made by the government was undemocratic. The point of resignification was not directed at the lack of evidence in planning, for example, but rather at the way in which announcements were made. The emotional response and the resignification process targeted the position of the government that deemed it unnecessary to be democratic in the first place. Subsequent efforts by the government to implement democratic processes (as part of the approval process and environmental impact assessment) were met with the same hostility as the initial announcement.

Social attention was created through participants’ engagement in the public sphere, and this was heightened when the action was more widely published. As result of this public sphere action, a critical mass emerged from a growing awareness of mutual interest by people in the region. In the cases presented in this chapter, individuals affected the political sphere by their very actions in ‘becoming public’. Seemingly non-political activity became political through this form of public sphere engagement.

The media helped this process by promoting the concerns of affected residents. Iteration of the political action in various forms of media helped build social attention and thus collective action. Local mediatisation was important to create social attention, and thus sustain a critical mass. From a political performativity perspective, people from outside the region were not prompted by emotional engagement to share the mutual focus of attention caused by the impact of the proposal on the people of the Mary River Valley.

I suggest that the political performativity of democracy in this case was emotionally driven by the people who were directly affected. The critical mass contributing to the resignification of democracy waned as an increasing number of people left the dam
area through so-called voluntary purchase agreements. While this aspect of political
performativity dissipated during the period of the case study, other elements remained
influential in helping to empower people in their resistance to the state. These aspects
can be categorised under the themes of certainty and the public good, and I will now
move to explore them in greater detail.
5
The political performativity of certainty

Administrative ineptitude has allowed the level of emotion to build – Traveston has become a new symbol of the lack of Government infrastructure planning. (Voters need to see reports, 2006)

5.1 Introduction

The second theme that I will outline in the Traveston Crossing Dam issue concerns the political performativity of certainty. This theme emerged from my analysis as a result of a contentious public battle over how the communities of the Mary River would be affected by the dam. The desire for the continuity of the people’s life world was a major feature of people resisting the proposal. Equally, government announcements were meant to convey, through words and actions, a sense of certainty for affected residents. This theme relates to Beck’s theory of risk society (1992) and Bauman’s (2006) ideas pertaining to liquid modernity. They claim that we now experience a world
in which individuals have given up on institutions that give certainty in the pursuit of individual gratification. The world is more ‘liquid’ in that individuals need to adapt and react to ever-changing structures and priorities in the modern world (Bauman, 2006). Indeed, uncertainty manifests itself politically, economically and individually. It has grown as a political, sociological and economic phenomenon in recent times. From Beck’s (1992) perspective, the risk has been privatised and dumped on individuals to deal with, but the institutions that they once relied upon have been transformed or overtaken (Stevenson, 2007). Uncertainty was a major feature of life for many people in the rural region of the Mary River Valley as a result of the dam announcement in 2006. How they collectively and individually responded to the uncertainty of the announcement has been shaped by these shifts in society.

How the people involved attempted to create certainty through resisting the proposal is the focus of this chapter. The theme of certainty is perhaps an obvious one in the sense that all people in the region have experienced a sense of uncertainty and all affected people have attempted to reinstate more certainty into their life worlds through various actions in both the public and private spheres. The focus of this chapter is to describe the ways in which people have resignified the speech acts of the state government in the public sphere. On the one hand, this form of resignification attempts to create a more certain future by exposing the uncertainty created by the proposal, and at the same time it shows the need for the government to respond to this. This process brings to light the significant impact that the announcements have had on the life worlds of the participants. I would like to make it clear at the start that I am not trying to universalise the theory of political performativity to explain all responses to the announcements made by the states representatives. What I am doing is to show that how people resist attempts at changing their lifeworld can be understood in part through observing their reactionary speech and other performative acts that counter the imposition of an unacceptable future life world.
Uncertainty surrounding the proposal has been a prominent feature of the public sphere debate from the time of the initial announcement on 27 April 2006 to the most recent announcement of a delay in the proposal in November 2008. I have identified the four key announcements made by the Queensland Government over this period that have created significant uncertainty for local communities. They include: the initial announcement on 27 April 2006; changes to the proposal made by Premier Peter Beattie on 5 July 2006 as well as changes made by then Water Minister Anna Bligh in November 2006; the events surrounding the consultation by the Community Futures Taskforce leader, Major General Arnison in the summer of 2006–07; and the delay in starting the project announced by Anna Bligh on 25 November 2008. In each section below, I have detailed the speech acts and then offered examples of how the affected people have resignified these as certainty. I have used a similar framework in the analysis to that applied in the previous chapter on democracy. I will explore the process of resignification in the public sphere using the examples involving emotions and social attention, and examine how these were part of collective action.

5.2 The initial announcement

Uncertainty was present from day one of the announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal. Peter Beattie attempted to portray it as a ‘done deal’. This was the perception of many of the affected residents. The Queensland Government claimed that it provided certainty for residents. Consider the following excerpts from two local newspaper reports:

Cooloola Shire mayor Mick Venardos, who toured the proposed site in a helicopter with Premier Peter Beattie and Water Minister Henry Palaszczuk yesterday, backed the dam despite the disruption to potentially hundreds of
residents … There certainly will be people who will be disrupted from their homes and certainly they want certainty in what is going to happen, he said. The government has assured me that once they have made a firm decision on the site they’re going to make sure that proper compensation is paid to them so they can get on with their lives. (New dam, 2006)

Ms Bligh says once the site has been selected there will be consultations with the community to ensure impact on properties is minimised. It's not known how many owners, or residents will be affected but the government has promised to make compensation payments. (Qld Govt proposes Mary River dam, 2006)

Despite the Queensland Government saying it was attempting to create certainty through the announcement, the reality was that it created a climate of uncertainty. The lack of information about the impact of the project, the uncertainty over compensation to be provided, and the fact that the government was to initiate an approval process involving public input that could halt the dam were the main sources of the uncertainty. Misinformation provided by the government added to this mix.

The uncertainty started with the initial announcement of the dam. Here is Mary River Valley resident Dawn Gill’s account of the confusing way she realised the dam was going to flood her property:

The 6.00 p.m. news came on and I was cooking tea and I happened to hear something about Traveston. I came out and I was watching the TV and it said that Traveston was getting a dam, a mega dam. I thought that’s close. But because it was Traveston it didn’t click that it was so close. Barry got home and he said, ‘See we’re losing everything’. I said, ‘What do you
mean? It was Traveston – it’s not near us’. He said, ‘Well Traveston is about 20 kilometres away’. I said to him, ‘But that was Traveston’. He said, ‘Dawn, where does the Mary run? They are damming the Mary!’ As for him [Beattie] saying, he didn’t even know the night that he announced it after he had his helicopter ride; he didn’t even have the decency to know that we were actually Traveston Crossing, that’s where he was putting the dam. He announced it as Traveston. It’s not Traveston. It’s Traveston Crossing. (Gill, 2006)

The lack of planning behind the announcement has meant that processes and plans that would normally be implemented at the time of the announcement were not unveiled. It took some time before the details of compensation strategies were known by the affected residents of the Mary River Valley. The compensation package in the form of the voluntary land purchasing scheme was put in place on 8 May, some two weeks after the announcement. People in the project area stated getting letters on 10 May and more letters arrived a week later. However, not all affected residents were notified at that time. For example, a resident of Kandanga relates her story of notification. Notification also means that compensation applies to the affected resident:

And that’s where I found out that all this side of the road was going to be flooded. I said, but that can’t be right, I didn’t get a letter. I’m assuming I’m all right because I didn’t get a letter from the government. Because when the government first put out letters, they put them out registered post so we all assumed in Kandanga, because I know that no one in town got one … Yeah, this is still the case, even from the beginning the first announcement, right up until now, no, I haven’t, no one has received a letter in town regarding them being affected by the proposed dam.
... when I found that out, I went up there and spoke to that one-stop shop and my name was on the computer. Funny, I own two properties in Kandanga, one on this side of the street and one on that side of the street. This side of the street is on the computer but that side of the street’s not. I didn’t get a letter so I’m only assuming that the dam’s going up to here somewhere. (Jane, 2006)

I also talked to a number of people who were not formally part of the interviews I conducted. They too claimed that they did not receive letters from the Queensland Government but later found out that they were to be inundated. Uncertainty was facilitated by the haphazard approach to informing affected residents. Residents also claimed that the information about the project differed from that published by the government earlier through the media. In many cases, residents were offered back their land after more detailed research revealed that the government did not need it. These types of actions have been part of the reason for the high degree of mistrust that has existed between the affected residents and the Queensland Government.

From the outset, the notion of certainty was a major focus in the public relations (mis)management of the project. Premier Peter Beattie made it clear that the announcement of the dam was an announcement to proceed with the project. In short, it was an announcement of an approved project and not one of a project proposal. However, specific project design and procedural details for the dam wall were still to be finalised long after the initial announcement. Beattie continued to claim that the government’s actions were attempting to provide certainty.

It cannot be known for sure whether the initial misinformation was a deliberate tactic or a consequence of the lack of planning prior to the announcement of the project. The processes of governmentality, as Kidd (1997) has observed, has been known to
oscillate between benign neglect and congenital failure. In any case, the result of the uncertainty has had a debilitating effect on the psychology of individuals and the social capital of the community.

The emotions caused by the initial announcement and the uncertainty it caused were considerable. Glenda Pickersgill, who became one of the stalwarts of the Save the Mary River campaign, revealed the emotional impact of the event – still with her six months after the initial announcement:

I can remember trying to … we had a radio … talkback radio interview down at John Cochran’s dairy. Would have only been a couple of weeks after the announcement where I just felt too emotional to even give a coherent interview. I could not get my head, my mouth to … and yet I have got lots of environmental information but to put it into words … it’s very emotionally trying for those first few weeks. Really, just knots in the stomach. I was just amazed at what they’re proposing and the lack of information. This was really hard to live through. (Pickersgill, 2006)

During the interview, it was clear how much emotional stress that the dam proposal was causing. The uncertain future it had created had a huge emotional effect on practically all residents. I interviewed another and asked how she was affected by the announcement:

Disbelief. I didn’t think it would affect us where we are. We weren’t exactly sure where the wall was going to be but we were told roughly Traveston Crossing and we said at that stage we didn’t understand it was a mega dam for a start. So it was disbelief. When we found out that we would be partially affected with the buffer zone, we started to get a bit more of an
understanding. From the disbelief you went into just total anger, the whole grieving syndrome, if you’ve ever read the ten steps of grieving and at this stage now, we’ve gone through the tears, the rage, the disbelief, and now we’re just talking good days, bad days and you have to physically say it’s a no dam day for me, I’m not talking about the dam because it has taken over our lives. (Parker Price, 2006)

The uncertainty took a huge emotional toll on the communities in the impact zone and surrounding areas. Fundamental to the development of uncertainty was the way the project was implemented and the differential effect it had on the rural communities. Early on in the proposal, there were few reliable sources of information, as this resident relates:

Yeah for sure, everyone’s sort of like, with this decision it’s so big, and then the whole level of government management of it, there’s just massive amounts of uncertainly and the lack of communication. You can’t communicate with anyone who can actually give you any advice. You can ring up the hotline number and you talk to a call centre, who knows where they are and they say that someone will ring you back so you can’t actually get answers to your questions and that just transfers, so I notice there’s a lot of anger, frustration, anxiety in the adults and the children are starting to display most probably the best emotion would be called anxiety. (Standish, 2006)

The uncertainty was not because of a lack of willingness or capacity to obtain or understand information relating to the project. For example, the newly elected opposition member for Gympie, David Gibson, recalls how he was frustrated by the lack of information in the months after the announcement:
We had two good months there where you were running off really nothing more than a media release and that’s pretty hard. Since then obviously, everything that’s come out about the dam I’ve got my hands on and tried to get my head around, so that I can understand the issue. I don’t think I’m totally across it, because the hard thing about this whole issue with regard to Traveston Crossing Dam is that it continues to change. We are now on our fourth version of the map of the inundation area. Just when you think really you know where the government is coming from, they go and change the goalposts once again. (Gibson, 2006)

These comments were made in an interview after he was elected in September 2006. The effect of continued changes to the proposal and publication of them through media was that it forced interested people to focus on the media as their main source of information. It was not just original mainstream print and television sources that were sought after: the online forum called TravestonSwamp.info reproduced the media articles from major newspapers and the transcripts of television news interviews. Regular users of the sites and forums ensured that all media articles that were published online were reproduced on the site. Online alert systems that emailed the internet addresses of links were also used by protesters. This section was the most popular of all the forums on TravestonSwamp.info. Online redistribution – or reiteration – of local and regional mainstream media stories thus became the way people kept abreast of developments. It was also a way of resignifying the life worlds they were attempting to bring into being through their public sphere actions.

Not all people used online communication. A high-speed broadband internet service at that time was not available across the whole region. A slower ‘dial-up’ service only was provided by telephone companies. Additionally, not all people were computer literate.
This still meant that more traditional information networks were still important as a way of disseminating information.

The interesting contradiction over the perception of the politics of the residents of the Mary River Valley is that many of the protesters in the Save the Mary River campaign can be considered to be part of the ‘tree change’ movement. There are a large number of people living in the region who do not fit the stereotypical redneck, conservative, gun-toting resident that is supposed to dwell in Gympie. This stereotype is often used by media outside the region to portray people from the town and the region. This stereotype is objectionable to the people of Gympie not only because of its language, but also because demographics in the region have changed significantly.

There are a significant number of ‘tree changers’ who have resisted the proposal alongside people who could be considered more politically conservative. In many respects, the newcomers have combined with the longer term residents to mount an effective campaign. Local campaigners are proud to declare that the state government has under-estimated the influence of these people in the resistance to the proposal. This feature is one of the reasons why the politics of the issue cuts across the green–conservative divide.

Irrespective of whether those affected were tree changers or a long-term residents, they all experienced intense shock, surprise, fear, anger, grief and sorrow in the first few months following the dam announcement. I did not conduct formal interviews with healthcare professionals in the area, but through informal conversations they indicated that the impact of the proposal followed a grief and loss cycle. However, this was exacerbated by the various changes to the project design, which shifted the extent and scope of the impact for various residents. This had the effect of restarting the grief and
loss cycle for many of the affected residents. This pattern of change led to the development of anxiety and depression in many people from the area.

I documented the impact of the Queensland Government’s social impact management of the first nine months of the proposal (Hales, 2006). In this report, I rated the performance of the Queensland Government against international principles of social impact management. I concluded that the changes to project design, the type of consultation (including misinformation) and the strategies implemented to manage the impact did not meet international standards of social impact assessment. It was noted at the time that improvements in their performance would occur once the project was formally started (Hales, 2006). However, as of early 2009 the start date of the project was still unclear. A four- to five-year timeframe for commencement of the project was mooted by politicians in late 2008. The political performativity of certainty regarding the delay will be explored in the last section of this chapter.

Using Collins’ (2001) framework, I have examined how the political performativity of certainty of the life world has been influential in the direction and maintenance of emotional energy in order for a critical mass to develop. I have also examined how this has helped to gain social attention space. The conscious, mutual focus of attention is as important in the development of social movements as is a critical mass of people. This was shown to be true in the early stages of the Save the Mary River campaign as outlined in the previous chapter. The political performativity of certainty has also led to collective action.

Both the political performativity of democracy and the political performativity of certainty coalesced to form a potent mix of mobilising forces in the first year of the campaign to stop the dam. The actions of people as outlined in the previous chapter have also contributed to the certainty of the life world of the people living in the Mary River Valley.
However, I think that the political performativity of certainty not only reveals how collective action developed, but also explains how and why collective action decreased gradually over time. This is different to the democracy theme that was prominent during the initial announcement and again during the election campaign in late 2006.22

Resignification of uncertainty has occurred in a number of ways. Many affected residents have demonstrated that their life world is uncertain and the very actions of the Queensland Government have created that uncertainty. In the public sphere, people have admitted to the impact of the Queensland Government’s action. By doing so, this brings certainty in the form of assistance and compensation as provided by the state government. For example, John Cochrane, the largest dairy farmer in the Mary River Valley, admitted publicly that he needed to fight the government in order to achieve an appropriate compensation package.

Resignification of certainty also focused on actions that give certainty to the life world of the affected people. The very act of protest is one of these actions. In the first few months of the protest, the collective action of local people has provided a sense of certainty. Here are two responses from Rick and Carol Elliot that were aired on ABC TV’s Stateline program. They indicate that uncertainty of the project implementation was countered by the collective action of residents:

RICK ELLIOT, TRAVESTON CROSSING RESIDENT: Nobody knows if their property is going to be flooded, what’s going to happen to them, where they’re going to go. And nobody will come and talk to us, nobody will come and do anything in terms of trying to help us at least cope with a

22 The performativity was also prominent in the lead-up to the 2009 election. However, I have included these events in the performativity of certainty because the delay in the project announced by the Premier Ann Bligh was a major event that impacted on the uncertainty of the proposal.
decision which seems to have come from left field. (Berkman, 2006, Para. 3)

CAROL ELLIOT, TRAVESTON CROSSING RESIDENT: It's not funny actually. It's just not funny. People are feeling sick. My next-door neighbour has two little children and they just don't know why mummy cries all the time. There was a feeling of powerlessness but since Tuesday night when nearly 2,000 people rallied together at the Kandanga recreational ground, there's been much more confidence that at least now we've spoken out and they're now turning anger into energy. (Berkman, 2006, Para. 5)

This is central to the argument I make in this thesis for two reasons. First, it indicates the importance of social attention and emotional energy in the process of collective action. The public account of uncertainty caused by the initial announcement, and the way collective action can decrease the sense of uncertainty, are explicit in the statements and the actions of the people. The emotions resulting from the initial announcements are transformed through a sharing of social attention through collective action. This sharing of social attention through collective action directs the emotional energy into the desire for further political and collective action. Second, the very act of being quoted on the ABC current affairs program brings into being the uncertainty felt by affected residents, but at the same time brings into being certainty through the collective response to the issue. Through publicly revealing that emotion, it becomes part of a process that enacts an alternate life world that is about bringing about more certainty. The life world is a subjective orientation of the individual. Subsequently, the affect and reaction in the public sphere was diverse. However, there was one common thing that bound together those resisting the proposal. All individuals adopted a life world that was counter to the one signified by the state government.
So far in this analysis, I have made the following observations about the political performativity of certainty. It led to collective action through people reacting emotionally to the uncertainty of the initial announcement. There was power in the public expression of anger and grief and other emotions associated with people’s reaction to the proposed dam. Hariman and Lucaites (2001) suggest that if emotional displays in public are suppressed then they can be used as a mode of dissent. The actions by the Queensland Government in its attempt to create certainty in the initial dam announcements had the intent of the suppressing emotional reaction. When emotions were eventually aired in public, the power of the state was destabilised.

At the beginning of the conflict, people had little choice other than to seek certainty through their public sphere actions. They could not gain compensation until months after the announcement. This led to increased action in the public sphere. Emotional energy was directed towards collective action as a way of enacting/creating certainty. Actions in the public sphere that directly related to bringing certainty into being had the dual purpose of facilitating collective action through increasing mutual awareness of social attention. People realised they were not alone in the dispute. Individuals played a key role in the political performativity of certainty. The political performativity of uncertainty was coupled with the political performativity of democracy to facilitate a large-scale collective action in the early stages of the protest.

Next, I will examine the processes of the political performativity of certainty surrounding changes to the project. The largest changes to the project occurred in July 2006 and other changes to the project were announced in November 2006.
5.3 Project changes: Premier Peter Beattie and Minister Anna Bligh

The initial speech act of the announcement was not the only time where the speech acts of politicians affected residents. On 5 July 2004, Premier Peter Beattie, visited Gympie and revealed major changes to the proposal. This was the first, and arguably the largest, change to the project. For the people resisting the dam, the lead-up to the meeting was charged with emotion. One month prior to his visit, Beattie was quoted as saying, ‘This dam will be built whether it’s feasible or not’ (Feasible or not, 2006, para. 1). I asked one of the leaders of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee about the comment:

Interviewer: So the comment ‘This dam is going ahead whether it is feasible or not’ struck a chord with you, then?

Kevin: It struck a chord with everybody. Now Beattie claims he never said it, but it was recorded right, left and centre. I understand that it didn’t appear in Hansard. That it was removed from Hansard. You know, folklore – I didn’t hear it spoken but I mean it went round the place like wildfire. As it’s been quoted right, left and centre ever since.

(Ingersoll, 2008)

Like Kevin Ingersoll, I have searched for the source of the statement. From what I could uncover, the comment does indeed appear to have been removed from Hansard. Despite this, the ‘feasibility’ comment was quoted in a number of local newspapers. This and other comments about the inevitability of the dam made the political performativity of certainty a significant public sphere contest between the protesters and the government.

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23 Hansard is not an official record of the parliament in Queensland. The daily record of proceedings of the parliament can be altered by Members with the permission of the speaker prior to the publication of Hansard.
In conversations I have had with many people from the Mary River area, I have mentioned ‘the feasibility statement’ by Peter Beattie. When I did this, I noticed that this incited anger and hatred as well as other negative emotions towards both him and the Queensland Government. These words had a wounding power that seemed greater than the simple meaning of the text. These types of statements made by the government signify the certainty of the proposal, and thus the certainty of a future life world of affected people. It is an attempt to ensure the certainty of the proposal despite the dam not being approved. This was emotionally devastating for the people directly affected. From this perspective, the emotional responses of affected people are based on the impact on the future life world of people in the dam area. The resignification of ‘feasibility’ by affected people was, and still is, a way of bringing certainty to their life world.

This was the very phenomenon that sparked my interest in the idea that performativity might explain protest movement formation and development. The phenomenon of a speech act inciting strong emotions in others seemed to be a dominant feature of the Save the Mary River case study. This phenomenon was particularly evident at the public meeting where Premier Beattie addressed the residents of the Mary River Valley.

The public meeting was the first time a politician from the Queensland Government had directly addressed the people of the Mary River district affected by the dam proposal. The news of the visit was first posted on the online forum, TravestonSwamp.com. More than 3,000 hits on the site were made before and after the visit. Information signs were also quickly erected on roadside verges in the region to inform people that Beattie was to visit the next day. By July 2006, there was an efficient communication network in place to convey such information about the dam in the community.
As mentioned in the last chapter, Beattie gave less than 24 hours’ notice of the meeting. In the Mary River Dam campaign, even public meetings designed to inform affected people had an air of uncertainty about them. Despite the short notice, there was a large turnout at the meeting. Facing an angry crowd of more than 3,000 people in the Gympie Showgrounds, the Premier told the crowd that the dam would be built in stages with stage one to start as soon as possible with stage two in 2035, if it was needed. This meant that only half of the properties would be needed by the construction start date of 2011. The other half would be offered a compensation lease-back agreement. This meant they could lease back their property for a very favourable price after they sold it to the Queensland Government. In terms of size, stage one would need 2,900 hectares instead of the 7,600 hectares needed for the original dam. Stage two would see the original dam proposal being implemented. This announcement contradicted the initial announcements of the proposal that indicated the whole project was a done deal. At the meeting in Gympie, Beattie made these comments on the topic of certainty:

However, our decision to proceed with this site has caused considerable anger and grief in the communities that will be affected by its construction. We are aware of this and we have listened. We have endeavoured to develop a plan that delivers greater certainty and accommodates some of the major concerns that been raised by affected communities. (Beattie, 2006b)

The plan that was presented did not provide more certainty to the project. If anything, it created more uncertainty. The *Sunshine Coast Daily* reported on the residents’ reactions:

The State Government’s plan to downsize the Traveston dam has only fuelled local fury, with half the landowners originally affected told they will learn their fate in 30 years. The Premier unveiled a revised dam proposal
before 2000 hostile residents in Gympie yesterday, saying the Government had tried to find a compassionate solution to the water crisis. But it was too little, too late for locals furious about the Government’s attitude towards their community. They quickly labelled the plan for a staged construction of the Traveston dam as unacceptable and vowed to continue the fight. The message needs to go out to the people of Brisbane that when they turn on those taps, it will be the tears of the people of the Mary Valley that they see, said leading dam opponent Rick Elliott. (Tucker, 2006c)

The so-called plan to deliver greater certainty did not alleviate the emotional impact on residents. Scott Alderson was the executive officer of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council when he made these comments in a local newspaper:

Scott Alderson from the Sunshine Coast Environment Council dismissed the public meeting and the Premier’s announcement as a stage-managed PR event designed to soften the blow. Everything is exactly the same, it just applies over a longer period, he said. It puts those people whose properties may be needed for the next stage under a cloud for the next two or three decades, which is quite unacceptable. They’re stuck in limbo. Who would want to raise a family or build a home in this region under those circumstances? (Tucker, 2006d)

I interviewed Alderson in late 2006, and he said he was appalled at the way the Queensland Government was handling the issue in the Mary River Valley. These sentiments were also expressed in the Brisbane newspaper the Courier-Mail.

People … just don’t want to be involved with this crap the Government is putting on us. ‘This is our home and we’d like to own our home, not be
subjected to a lease arrangement until the Government comes along and says, “bye, bye”.' That's the uncertainty for the next 20 years. (McCarthy & Miles, 2006)

This comment is verified by further evidence from my interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted towards the end of 2006, and at this time there was still considerable uncertainty over the project details and the approval process of the dam. For some people, it was difficult to determine whether the dam was a good for their personal and business life. The uncertainty was a key factor in making decisions about their future. Murray Stewart’s situation sheds light on how the context of each individual determines how he or she deals with uncertainty:

We don’t know … it’s as simple as that. We don’t have the information to decide whether we’re anti-dam or pro-dam. It could be fantastic for us being an outdoor education facility sitting on the dam. It could be great. We just don’t know. That’s been the big drama. That’s been very much right from the start. (Stewart, 2006)

Despite Stewart hoping there would be a positive outcome for his business, in late 2008 he sold to QWI Pty Ltd. It took more than two years to determine whether his business could benefit from the dam. He decided the costs were greater than the benefits.

There were further changes to the proposal after the state election in September 2006. In November 2006, Anna Bligh, the then Water Minister, visited Gympie to host another public meeting. At the meeting, she announced that there were more changes to the proposed dam. The size of stage one of the dam was reduced and some properties were offered back to residents who had sold to the government. This started the cycle
of anger and grief again for many people in the area. As mentioned previously, with each announced change to the project there was an increase in mental health issues reported by local medical services. This was reported in the media (Robson, 2006) after the announcement by Anna Bligh.

During the meeting with Anna Bligh, the people vented their anger. However, the difference between this meeting and the meeting with Peter Beattie was that the residents were more prepared for a war of words. I have provided an excerpt from the meeting below. The aim of this is to show how the state government attempted to cover up the uncertainty surrounding the dam announcement:

_Citizen_: This document was sent to me two days ago. Signed by you and it says: ‘Following the Government’s announcement in July that it planned to build the dam.’ However, I saw Peter Beattie on the news in a helicopter on 27 April say he was going to build the dam. But this letter says July. So who has proof read this letter … Give me an answer.

_Anna Bligh_: I don’t think we’re at loggerheads about this. You’re right – there was an announcement that the Premier was looking at this area in April. But it was July when he was able to issue a map for all people in the area to give some detail about the boundaries so I think you know what I mean by that.

_Citizen_: But it reads ‘Following the government’s announcement in July’. It was not true. It was 27 April. So we’ve got people who are writing letters who can’t even get dates right.

_Anna_: I think we are getting into semantics here. Sorry, we did announce in July and we did announce in April. I did read the letter. Next time I’ll give all the dates. But I was trying to finding a way of giving the information that people need without writing a three page letter. I was giving it specifically
and as straightforwardly as I could because I knew there was so much information.

Citizen: You could have just put April.

(Public Meeting, 3 November 2006)

This was not an isolated account of different understandings of the announcements between citizens and the state government. I also witnessed a number of other instances where the official text from the government discounted the time between 27 April and 5 July (when Peter Beattie announced changes to the dam).

The importance of this from a political performativity perspective is that the state government was attempting to bring into being the certainty around the announcement. The government was attempting to cement its credibility in presenting a firm proposal to the people by saying that the project was announced on 5 July.

Certainty was very much on the agenda for the government. It was referred to in ministerial statements when giving reasons for the property acquisitions. The following conversation was between Anna Bligh and the same citizen during the public meeting in November 2006:

Citizen: The reason why people are selling their properties is because Peter Beattie got up and said ‘It’s a done deal, it’s a foregone conclusion. He did not say ‘Look we are investigating this site’. We don’t know for sure he did not tell the truth. He bullied people into selling their properties. He bullied this community. He is a bully. And it’s a total disgrace. I cannot believe how you answered David Gibson [the local opposition member in parliament]. I have it in writing here: ‘To give landholders certainty land required for all stages of Traveston Crossing will be acquired now’. Now
we all know about compulsory acquisition. [The] Ministerial Media Statement from two days ago from your office. Is that a mistake – is it a typo? Or did you mean to say that? Because that is bullying people. People believe that you are going to take their property away from them. [Repeats above question to Anna Bligh]. Did you mean to say that? [Crowd yells out ‘bully’ repeatedly]

Anna Bligh: I did intend to say those words, but to be honest with you until I came here this morning I was unaware of the way that many people may have interpreted them. (Much yelling from crowd and inaudible back chat from citizen.) I have listened to you for a long time, if you'll just let me respond. The intention in those words was to give some certainty. If they [the property owners] had land affected in stage one and land affected in stage two – we would do all of it now. We wouldn’t say we would do a bit now then wait 30 years and give you compensation for the other bit. And if that hasn’t been clear, I am glad I have had an opportunity to come and clarify it. I think I have answered a number of questions on this, and frankly the answers do make it clearer and the reason why I decided to come is because I don’t think and if any of you just stop and think about your own lives, a letter, one letter no matter how good the letter is never gets to the heart of all the issues. And it is important for me to come and hear the way that people have understood or interpreted the words and for me to have a chance to say well actually there a bit more.

(Public Meeting, 3 November 2006)

My interpretation of these events is that the government was caught between the politically important action of compensating the affected people and a political intent to decrease resistance to removing them from the inundation zone. The residents were keenly aware of this contradiction from the early stages of the dispute. Many of the
residents understood the intentions of the Queensland Government, as this resident relates:

The important thing for me is that Beattie says he’s going to do it, and when Beattie says he’s going to do it, he seems as though nothing will stop him unless something happens and he really is stopped. That is, I find extremely worrying. The whole idea of the dam sounds totally ridiculous as you know, but that doesn’t seem to matter to Beattie at all. Almost unbelievable to me, that something could be so stupid and still be going to go ahead. (Dillon, 2006)

From a political performativity perspective, the changes to the dam announced by Beattie in July and Bligh in November, were attempts to superficially bring certainty to residents but at the same time they brought uncertainty. The uncertainty surrounding the announcement made by Beattie helped to direct the emotional energy of people resisting the proposal. Their energy was focused towards collective action in the public sphere. In many cases, the private sphere action of selling their property was the result of the uncertainty and the private loss that these people experienced. Although many people were suffering on a private/individual/family level, the changes to the proposal helped consolidate collective action responses. Many people who sold to the government were still very much involved with the campaign to stop the dam.

After the 2006 election, legislation was changed that would have an impact on the power of the people in the Mary River Valley. This legislation will be detailed in the section below. As a result of these two factors, the political performativity of uncertainty surrounding the changes Anna Bligh announced was different from that stemming from Peter Beattie’s proposal. The political performativity of uncertainty surrounding the changes outlined by Beattie involved greater collective action. The political
performativity surrounding Bligh’s visit led to more private sphere action. This will be
detailed below.

5.4 The inevitability of the proposal

In this section, I will examine two matters on the topic of certainty. The first is the
change to legislation that took away citizens’ rights of appeal against developments
such as the Traveston Crossing Dam. This legislation had a huge impact on the power
of people to resist the state. For example, the number of properties acquired by the
government reflects changes in the perceptions of residents to the inevitability of the
dam. The inevitability of the proposal became one step closer as a result of this
legislation, decreasing the scale of resistance in the region. Speech acts relate to this
change in that the language used enacts the change in the way power is exercised by
the state. The power of the government’s speech acts was increased as a result of this
new legislation.

In late 2006, the State Development and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 was
passed. It added significant power to the Queensland Government under the
’significant infrastructure project’ amendments. This received little media coverage
despite having a large effect on democratic rights in Queensland. The effect of the
change is as follows. If a project is deemed a significant infrastructure project, as is the
case for the Traveston Crossing Dam, a property owner whose land will be
compulsorily acquired if they do not wish to move has limited rights of appeal to dispute
the valuation by the lands court. The property owner can lodge an appeal, but because
of the amendment to the Act the Coordinator-General can take over any decision-
making process, including land acquisition processes. Also problematic for democracy
are two more features of the amendment. First, there is no right of review of the
Coordinator-General’s decision to register a significant infrastructure project, and
second, the process for judicial reviews into government process has been extinguished if a project is registered as a significant infrastructure project.

The changes were noted by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee of the Queensland Government. This is an independent committee that makes comments to parliament concerning the implementation and impact of legislation in Queensland. It questioned the government over the *State Development and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006*. The Committee raised ‘the question of whether the provisions of proposed ss. 76P and 76W have sufficient regard to the rights of persons deprived by these sections of appeal and review rights’ (Scrutiny of Legislation Committee Queensland Government, 2006, p. 25). In a more direct fashion, the Local Government Association of Queensland also commented on the impact of the legislation:

The Local Government Association has also slammed the proposed amendments, saying they will allow the state to direct councils on projects regardless of the cost or community opposition. ‘The powers proposed are unprecedented in Australia,’ LGAQ president Paul Bell said. ‘Giving these no-legal-redress powers to the Coordinator-General, as the Bill proposes, breaches fundamental legislative principles. (Tucker, 2006e)

Legal advisers to the people in the dam footprint knew about this change. They knew that once the federal government gave approval, the process of land acquisition would not favour the property owners. To ensure a more acceptable settlement price, many property owners entered into negotiation with the Queensland Government company, QWI Pty Ltd. This helps explain the large number of property acquisitions after this legislation was passed. I have collated the rate of property acquisitions from QWI Pty
Ltd sources. These are detailed in Appendix E. This trend is the result of the experience of people in the dam footprint. Towards the end of 2006, I interviewed Dawn Gill, whose property will be inundated by the dam. I asked her about the uncertainty and private sphere actions:

> It's been more noticeable the last month. There's a lot more talk of people moving and people selling and I think the longer they don't give us viable maps, the longer that they don't give us viable roads. The plans of the road, people have just had enough. They can't hang on. They'd rather go and start their lives somewhere else. I think that is playing into Mr Beattie’s hands. I think that the longer he can give us nothing, desperation on people they've just had nothing and give up. (Gill, 2006)

The government only offered ‘compensation’ to landholders in the dam footprint in the form of property acquisition. If a landholder wanted to stay to wait for the federal government approval, there was little assistance that the government or QWI Pty Ltd would offer. This policy dissipated collective action. It encouraged people to consider private actions over collective actions. Butler (1997) also notes the nature of legislation in the power of performativity. In her analysis of power, gender and identity, she identifies that legislation is used to give force to speech acts. The Save the Mary River case follows the script of Butler’s theory of performativity in this regard.

In late 2008, I asked the then leader of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee to reflect on the events of the past two years. I proposed the statement that I thought the state government had created a level of uncertainty to force the people to consider their personal situation at the expense of a public or community response. This was Kevin Ingersoll’s response:
Oh absolutely. I think the little things that have jumped to mind like the offer to buy … which the government stated they actually undertook to buy properties from people that wanted to sell because you know, that was what the community wanted. Utter crap! That wasn’t part of the game plan. The game plan for the State Labor Government was basically to try and eliminate as much resistance as was possible by basically getting rid of people through the process. So that was all about breaking down the will to resist. I have to say they did it quite effectively. The way they pulled that off was they put the fear of God into people. In their public briefing meetings, the people from DNR that came to tell the community, they called it consultation – we called it being lectured to. They told people in every single meeting that you know, the government was ‘standing in the market’ and that if you sold now there would be opportunities to negotiate both on price and on whether all or some of the property would be acquired, however, if you didn’t do that sooner or later they would come and acquire the property under the compulsory acquisition. There would be no discussion whatsoever on price, you would basically take what they told you they were going to give you or if you didn’t like that you could take them to the land court and there would be no negotiation in respect of whether they wanted to take all or some part of your property. (Ingersoll, 2008)

From my interactions with the people from the dam impact area, I believe his comments reflect the general community perspective on the issue. There are many posts on the online forum from a diverse range of people indicating that power imbalances were and still are a significant issue in the negotiations with QWI Pty Ltd.
For a local perspective, see the online forum regarding people resisting the dam and QWI Pty Ltd (QWIP/L Watch and Local support, 2009)

I have concluded that the fear of economic loss resulting from valuations and settlements from the Land Court/Coordinator-General has encouraged the high rate of property acquisitions. The Queensland Government routinely publishes the number of property acquisitions, as though these are testimony to local community acceptance of the project. However, I believe the number of property acquisitions is more of an indication of the legislative – and possibly the coercive – power of the state government.

The controversy surrounding the inevitability of the proposal is also evidenced in another public sphere event. The event involved the comments made by the leader of the State Government Community Futures Task Force. These comments and the subsequent public debate characterise a change in power relations. The Task Force was set up to help with the management and mitigation of impacts of the dam. This was implemented prior to its formal approval. Once formal approval was given for the dam, various social impact management strategies would be implemented. In the meantime, the Community Futures Task Force was briefed to help to mitigate social impacts. However, its jurisdiction did not include the dam footprint. This task was allocated to QWI Pty Ltd. As previously mentioned, the only formal compensation mechanism for people in the footprint was to sell their property.

The Task Force was led by Major General Arnison. He was a retired army officer who had previously directed cyclone disaster relief efforts in North Queensland. He was put in charge of a team drawn from local and state government departments. He has responsibility for managing the government works and representing the people in the impact area of the dam.
It must be noted that the management and mitigation of impacts are normally initiated though the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process when a project receives formal approval. However, because of the large-scale impact and the announcement of the proposal as a *fait accompli*, this meant that addressing the immediate effect of the proposal was paramount. This need was brought to the attention of the Task Force as a result of community outrage expressed through the media.

A key factor in this was that the announcements made by Queensland Government politicians assumed the approval process was redundant. The compensation provided by the Queensland Government was based on the assumption that the dam was going ahead. Thus, the leader of the Task Force was placed in a difficult situation where he engaged, and continues to engage, with the democratic process which entails the right to protest as well as managing the impacts as though the dam will inevitably be constructed. His actions and words have had an impact on the affected people of the Mary River region because his action tacitly implies the inevitability of the dam. He was met with considerable resistance by local residents after confirming the certainty of the project.

I will give one example of how people resisted the signification of certainty by Major General Arnison. The online forum documents the political performativity of resistance in the public sphere regarding the certainty of the project. The excerpts in Figure 10 are taken from the media watch section of the TravestonSwamp.info forum.
Figure 10. Posts from media watch in TravestonSwamp.info online forum

As a response to the comments made by Arnison in the media, there were a number of local media articles that documented the anger of local residents. The \textit{Gympie Times} reported:

Participants in the meetings at Kandanga, Imbil, and Carter’s Ridge were stunned by the comments and have collected more than 200 signatures on a letter asking the Major General to publicly withdraw them. The valley residents say the general mood at the meetings was hardly conclusive of the Major General’s summation.

Dagun resident Darren Edward said: ‘When we heard Major General Arnison’s comments on the radio this morning, it made our blood boil.'
Shirley was at the Kandanga meeting with the Task Force, and there was certainly no “acceptance” there. ‘We wondered for a moment whether some momentous change of heart had occurred at Carter’s Ridge – but a few quick phone calls put that to rest’.

The letter to Major General Arnison reads: ‘We the undersigned wish to advise that, whether we are ‘affected’ or ‘unaffected’ by the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing by your ‘inundated’ definition, we DO NOT accept the dam as ‘inevitable’ (as you have stated on ABC radio 08/12/06). Many of us have recently attended the Office of Urban Management planning sessions and are extremely surprised that you have been left with the impression that we are ‘accepting’ this ill-conceived, scientifically unsupported, yet to be approved swampland puddle. We see no ‘potential’ in being left adjacent to the proposed wasteland. Please publicly withdraw your comments.’ (Dam busters call on Arnison, 2006)

Arnison did respond to the requests by the residents, but he did not withdraw his comments either. The citizen response as documented in the media section of the TravestonSwamp.com online forum indicates that this issue was the largest one in the media section of the site. This indicates that, although this issue may appear unimportant to the person outside the community, it felt real for the people in the region. The number of views was in excess of 2,500 (see Appendix F). This indicates the high level of emotional impact of Arnison’s words about inevitability of the project. It also indicates that the role of the online site in facilitating citizen responses to speech acts reported in mainstream media.

It appeared that his response did not satisfy the local people. I believe this signified a change in the power relations over the certainty of the dam. From the November
announcement of changes to the dam by Anna Bligh until late 2008, there was more certainty that the dam would be approved. This was reflected in the nature of the power relations that led to the level of certainty in Arnison’s comments, which impacted on community perceptions.

However, this did not stop people resisting. Emotional responses to statements of inevitability made by government officials indicate the desired alternate life world of people resisting the proposal. Similar to previous documentation of uncertainty, social attention was enabled through exposure of people’s concerns in the media. The difference is that the collective action was less because of the private sphere actions of selling and moving negated collective responses. Towards the end of 2006, the movement of people leaving the valley began. Thus the speech act of certainty by the government, backed by legislation and a mandate from the recent election win, began to impact on collective action. This is not to say collective action was not significant after this time.

5.5 The ‘delay’ of the project

In this section, I will describe how the announcement of the delay in the project on 25 November 2008 heightened the uncertainty plaguing the local community. It indicated a change in the power relations that favoured the people resisting the project. Like other announcements, it had further social and political impacts on the community.

The purpose of exploring this event is to show how the event has caused further uncertainty for the people of the Mary River Valley. The political performativity of the uncertainty continues as a result of the announcement of the delay. The Hansard over two days of the Queensland parliament is provided below to show that both the
announcement of the delay and mixed messages from the Queensland Government were the cause of uncertainty.

On 25 November, Premier Anna Bligh announced a delay in the approval process and construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam. The construction would be pushed back several years after necessary mitigation strategies were put in place to ensure threatened and endangered species would not be adversely affected. This was a decision forced upon the Queensland Government after the federal government pre-assessed the project and found that the proposal would not pass standards set by the federal EPBC Act. This was an informal assessment process that preceded the impending formal assessment when the Queensland Government would submit the EIS for assessment.

The fact that the assessment was made informally prior to the Queensland Government formally submitting the EIS meant that it appears that the politics of the issue had impacted on the approval process. In other words, the scientific/administrative decision was being influenced by politics. The reason for this was that there was an election due in 2009, and not gaining federal government approval prior to this event would be politically damaging to the Queensland Government. However, the federal Minister for the Environment could not approve a project with major environmental impacts on matters of national environmental significance under the legislation. The point here is that even the approval process of the EPBC Act involves the consideration of people power.

The delay had a significant impact not only on those people who opposed the dam but also on businesses planning to capitalise on the project. Uncertainty was the major outcome of the announcement, despite the Premier attempting to provide certainty through an announced timeline for the approval process. Premier Anna Bligh made the
following statement in the Queensland parliament on 25 November (quoted in the *Sunshine Coast Daily*):

> It is expected that developing and improving the effectiveness of the [mitigation] measures will result in a delay in construction of at least several years. (Butler, 2008)

In the same statement, she said that the construction work would be delayed between four and five years. I spoke to many local and national activists in the days following the ‘delay announcement’, and their assessment was that the dam was not going to be approved. They indicated that the delay was a face-saving exercise prior to an election and activists thought that plans for the dam would be dropped after the election.

However, a few days after her delay announcement, Anna Bligh revealed a different picture. The section below is the statement that pertains to the certainty of the project and the impact on residents in the impact area of the Traveston Crossing Dam:

> There is no doubt that they are paying a high price but a price that we believe must be paid to ensure water security for everyone in South-East Queensland. I have noted concerns from people in this valley today that they will have to wait another four years for some certainty on the approval processes in relation to this dam. I stress to the people in the Mary Valley: they will not have to wait three years or four years for this approval process to be finished. It will be completed in 2009, as it was always going to be. They will know in early 2009 the decision of the state Coordinator-General, and I expect that within two to three months of that they will know the decision of the federal government. I think they are entitled to certainty as soon as it can be reasonably provided through the legal mechanisms that
require the approvals to be given, and that is what they will get. Nothing has changed in relation to the timing of those decisions. (Bligh Denies, 2008)

This announcement in parliament was reported in the media the same day on online news sites and the next day in print media (see Table 4).

Table 4. Headlines in local and Brisbane newspapers after the delay announcement in the Queensland parliament

| Steamrolling people off properties unforgivable | Brisbane Times | 25/11/2008 |
| Traveston Dam delay causes confusion for residents | Courier-Mail | 26/11/2008 |
| Traveston delay leaves residents in Limbo | ABC Online | 26/11/2008 |
| Bligh’s dam a major business let down | Gympie Times | 26/11/2008 |
| Dam bogged in Traveston swamp | Gympie Times | 26/11/2008 |
| Bligh denies locals in 'limbo' with Traveston Dam delay | ABC Online | 26/11/2008 |
| Bligh clarifies dam confusion, MP ejected from parliament | ABC | 26/11/2008 |

The focus of media attention was on the reasons for the delay and its continuing impact of uncertainty on residents. John Cochrane was interviewed by ABC Online after the announcement. I had interviewed John in 2006 before he sold his farm to the Queensland Government. He still supports the Save the Mary River campaign. In this transcript, he underlines the level of uncertainty amongst residents of the Mary River Valley:
The State Government bought John Cochrane's dairy farm in the picturesque Mary Valley to make way for the dam. Mr Cochrane says he is now optimistic the project will be scrapped. ‘I'm starting to feel my farm could be mine again – it's an emotional roller-coaster all right,’ he said. ‘The uncertainty is still there, they haven't said that it's not going ahead.’ But Ms Bligh is adamant the project will go ahead after environmental work is done to ensure it gets Commonwealth approval. (Traveston delay, 2008)

Mr and Mrs Cochrane were also quoted in The Australian. The article sums up the sentiments of the people who did not want the dam to proceed:

Ms Cochrane said she had jumped around and cried tears of joy when she heard the announcement on Tuesday. ‘I feel like this is the first crack in the dam wall,’ she said. ‘But when I went to bed, I thought: 'What does this mean? Several years of still not knowing?’ Mr Cochrane said Premier Anna Bligh should be upfront with the residents about the future of the dam proposal. 'She just doesn't have the intestinal fortitude to say it hasn't worked,' he said. 'We're smart enough to know people need water, but why consider putting water on the best growing country in the state? 'I want to buy the property back, but I need the Government to say it's over.' (Elks, 2008)

Despite the positive elements of the announcement for the protesters, considerable uncertainty remained. The online forum also had a number of posts that indicated the mixed feelings as a consequence of the announcement. Figure 11 shows one of the many posts that typified the feelings of the remaining residents:
The people sympathetic to the Save the Mary River cause interpreted the announcement as proof of failure to comply with environmental assessment procedures at the federal government level. In terms of the political performativity of uncertainty, there was a mobilising element to this resignification from the people resisting the project. This was the first time since the initial announcement that there had been an indication of doubt about the inevitability of the proposal. For the entire duration of the proposal, the state government has relentlessly signified that the proposal was a ‘done deal’. With the delay announcement, there was elation and jubilation. This was channelled into the resignification of future life worlds of the people in the impact area. Figure 12 shows an excerpt from TravestonSwamp.info that exemplifies this action. This was a post on the site of an article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily*. 

**Figure 11. Post on TravestonSwamp.info site**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stormy</td>
<td>Is it? But they are still holding us in limbo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter beattie (big hat no cattle) A Bligh (big arse no $100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>westholme</td>
<td>I rang my neighbours earlier to tell them the news. They are directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>affected by the dam and associated infrastructure. These bastards (the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gov) have messed everyone around so much, that these neighbours are too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scared to be happy. And I mean genuine fear and trepidation. Is this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>just more of the Governments twisted games? They sold their place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because the Gov &amp; QWI psychological warfare got to them and they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>couldn’t help but believe that nothing could stop the dam. They were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>also lead to believe that if they didn’t sell in the early times, then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they wouldn’t get as much if the dam got approved. This is the only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reason they sold, because they couldn’t afford not to be paid the most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they could get for their farm. Right now, I’m going to enjoy this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>victory. Tomorrow I’ll deal with the fact that the Gov has put everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in limbo again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 12. Posts regarding the delay from media watch section of TravestonSwamp.info

This post is one of many examples of political performativity facilitating social attention and thus encouraging a collective response to the announcement of a delay. These statements, when aired in the media, facilitate the social attention of people who have similar emotional experiences and similar life worlds. The certainty of the dam is called into question through the resignifying acts of prominent individuals who are resisting the dam. Political performativity of certainty helps explain how the link between emotions, life worlds, social attention and collective action is facilitated through mass media and new media.

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of how the political performativity of certainty developed. For the people resisting the proposed dam, certainty was a feature
of their life world that was severely eroded by the series of announcements made by the government. In the first few months of the public sphere issue, the battle over certainty fuelled social attention because of the large number of similarly affected residents. The emotional and social impact of the decisions was extreme. As a result of this, the people resisting the dam gained media attention and this in turn fuelled more social attention towards the issue, particularly outside the region.

In many respects, an individual's quest for certainty directly influenced the choices between private and public action. The theory of resource mobilisation (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) is linked to certainty. In a quest for certainty, many people have sold their properties to the government and thus are not part of the mobilisation because they are no longer financially affected and/or have left the area. The have gained certainty as a result of agreeing to the voluntary purchase of their property. This is not to say that all people who have sold to the government have stopped resisting the state government's proposal. The point I am making here is that their personal financial situation does not play a role in their willingness – or indeed need – to continue to engage in political action based on certainty. The newsworthiness of the issue was such that, despite the decrease in local protests over time, the issue still dominated media attention in 2009.

In the beginning, the government attempted to provide certainty through compensation packages. However, not long into the process, citizens realised the government had an agenda to remove resistance. The government then used legislative power to gain the upper hand in negotiations for voluntary acquisitions. This resulted in a decrease in the number of people living in the inundation zone, particularly after the legislation was implemented. Thus, with each preceding announcement there were fewer people affected by the dam process. This in turn led to the decrease of certainty as a major influence on collective action.
Certainty was instrumental in facilitating a large degree of collective action in the beginning, through shared actions (protests, online discussions, reading media articles). This, however, reduced with the rising number of people taking the private sphere action of selling their properties. The people not living in the inundation zone who resided in the area were still experiencing uncertainty with each announcement. However, these people and the people who were leasing their land back from the government continued to resignify certainty through their political actions.

The resignification by citizens aimed to, firstly show the impact of the announcement and secondly to resist the proposal by targeting the uncertainty inherent in the process of decision-making that the government had to follow. The specific words of ‘This dam will be built whether it’s feasible or not’ (Feasible or not, 2006, para. 1) was one of the key statements that underpinned people’s resignification surrounding the notion of certainty. By attempting to resignify a more certain life world, the citizens maintained a degree of certainty in their life world through resisting the dam.
6

The political performativity of public good

We’re asking them, and I know this won’t be easy for them, we’re asking them to make a sacrifice in the interest of the common good. (Beattie 2006c)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the political performativity of the public good. The thematic analysis revealed that this was a major theme that emerged from the public sphere dispute. The Queensland Government has placed considerable emphasis on the public good benefits that the dam will bring. In doing so, I believe it has also downplayed the costs to the greater community and environment. Many people within and outside of the Mary River Valley have attempted to resignify the public good that the state government says will occur as a result of the dam.

In the previous chapter on the political performativity of certainty, the majority of people resisting were from the Mary River Valley. These people were directly affected in terms of loss of property and their livelihood. In this chapter, I will examine two individuals who attempted to resignify the meaning of the public good. One is from the Mary River Valley and the other is from outside. The theme of public good is enacted by many people in the valley, but it is this theme that has the greatest number of people involved in public sphere action from outside the proposed dam zone.

The public good is a term more easily defined in theory than practice. In this chapter, public good is defined as the use of a resource by an individual or group without
excluding further use by others of that resource (Cornes & Sandler, 1991), and as something that pertains to individuals in groups who act to maximise common or group interests (Olsen, 1971). This is not to say these people do not invest significant personal effort and seek personal reward. The point is that these people prioritise self-interest at a lower level in their life world.

The public good theme helps with an understanding of resistance that is concerned with the ‘other’. That is, citizens act in order to bring benefit to their life world in ways that are not equated in individual terms. Resistance to the Queensland Government is also amplified because the actions of the state government are perceived to be based on the private interests of the parliamentary Labor Party. For example, the people resisting the dam believe that the public good that the dam provides is not greater than the benefit of protecting the river as it is. The potential loss of threatened and endangered species, the economic loss of agricultural land, and social and other economic costs are claimed to be greater than the benefits of the water potentially supplied by the dam. From their perspective, the public good aspects of the existing environment warrant protection. This is especially so when the alternatives have been shown to be more cost effective if costing frameworks examining all alternatives are used (see Turner, 2007).

In this chapter, I have adopted a different approach to presenting the findings compared to previous chapters. Here, I present the political performativity of public good through an analysis of the actions of two individuals. I have done this because I want to focus on how individuals are specifically involved in the process of political performativity of the public good. This presentation style is particularly suited to this analysis because I want to explore how an individual can influence power relations through individual action in the public sphere. I will focus on two individuals. Glenda Pickersgill is from Traveston Crossing and Steve Posselt now lives in Northern New
South Wales. He was a resident of Brisbane at the time of his political actions. Both individuals have influenced the public sphere debate around the dam, and thus have influenced the politics of the environmental assessment process.

Before presenting the involvement of these two individuals in the political performativity of public good, other actions and individuals should be acknowledged. A small but active group called the Save the Mary River Brisbane Chapter was formed in 2008. It focused on increasing awareness of the issue in Brisbane. In addition, the people who published the book *Love Mary* (Save the Mary River, 2008) aimed to ‘focus on the Mary River’s priceless environmental heritage alongside the value of its human communities’ (Save the Mary River, 2008, para. 1). This book used a photo essay publication style aimed to bring greater awareness of the issue to people outside the region. It documented the plight of the people in their struggle to stop the dam. It also used many quotes from the reports and media statements from politicians, community leaders and academics who questioned the appropriateness of the dam and the process of approval. I was quoted in the book as a result of my public comments on the social impact assessment process. A third and significant protest can be included as a public good action. A student protest was held outside parliament house in Brisbane in 2006. In this protest students were arrested for disobeying police directions (McCarthu & Miles, 2006). These are just a few of the many other people who were part of the performativity of public good.

In this chapter, I will first consider the initial announcement and subsequent announcements by the state government that relate to the public good before exploring how Pickersgill (2006) reacted to the initial announcement and the ways in which she resignified public good through public sphere. Pickersgill (2006) has featured prominently in the media, talking about a range of issues. The analysis below will focus on her role in the Senate Inquiry into Alternative Water Supplies for South-East
Queensland in April 2007. Subsequent to this event, the next major public sphere action is the EIS process. These issues and events were chosen over other issues in which Pickersgill (2006) has been involved because they directly and indirectly relate to the environmental assessment process at the federal level. When I consider Steve Posselt, I will focus on both kayak trips that he undertook in 2008. His actions relate to the public sphere issues surrounding the lead-up to the federal assessment of the Queensland Government proposal. But first I will examine the Queensland Government announcements that relate to the public good.

6.2 Initial announcement: The public good

The public good theme has been present since day one of the dam dispute. In the initial announcement made by Peter Beattie, he was quoted as saying people in the Mary River Valley needed to make a sacrifice for the greater good. Beattie said: ‘We are asking them to make a sacrifice for the common good.’ (Politicians cast doubt, 2006) This was reiterated by other politicians. Local Mayor Mic Vernados, who toured the proposed site in a helicopter with Beattie and the then Water Minister Henry Palaszczuk, said that he:

…backed the dam despite the disruption to potentially hundreds of residents. He said the dam would serve the greater good … ‘There are over two million people in south-east Queensland and people in the urban and agricultural areas must be given a guaranteed water supply,’ he said. (New dam, 2006)

The day after the initial announcement, Vernados changed his position on the dam after he sensed a public backlash from the community. During the interview I conducted with Vernados, I also became aware that he did not seek advice from his
council staff over the matter before endorsing the dam. However, within a day of the announcement, he supported the resistance to the proposed dam for the rest of his term as the mayor of the Gympie region. He supported the protest in terms of his political intentions and financial capacity through the shire council. Whilst his change of heart could be seen as personal interest, the representative nature of his position meant that it was a public good decision to support the protest:

Once I realised the magnitude and the impact on the people, on our economy and on the environment … What I’ve said was that if the dam proceeds it would be Gympie that saves Queensland back then … That was a statement I made without realising how significantly bad it was for the people of the Shire. That lasted 24 hours. (Vernados, 2006)

This identifies a problem with the notion of public good. For whom do we assign the good to? Who benefits and who loses? Are the potential losses greater than the benefits to the wider community in this instance? These issues lie at the heart of the debate over the public good stemming from the proposed dam. This issue was debated in parliament when Anna Bligh became the Water Minister in late 2006. Below are the comments made by Anna Bligh just before her visit to Gympie public meeting in November to outline changes to the project. Her comment in parliament infuriated many people of the Mary River region. The comment was quoted in media and on protest websites.

In anybody’s terms, the outcome announced today is good news for the Mary Valley, good news for the people of Gympie and good news for south-east Queensland, because south-east Queensland gets the dam that will provide the water it needs, the people of Gympie get a safer community despite the interference of their local member [David Gibson],
and the people of the Mary Valley. (Queensland Parliament, 31 October 2006, p. 253)

This excerpt from the Queensland parliamentary *Hansard* was quoted in local and state newspapers. The statement hit a raw nerve for many people resisting the dam proposal. I have repeated this statement back to many of the people who have resisted the dam, and each time I did so it evoked feelings of anger and other negative emotions. The wounding power of the actual words – ‘good news’ and ‘the sacrifice’ – elicited a strong emotional responses from residents in the Mary River Valley.

### 6.3 Glenda Pickersgill

![Glenda dressed as one of the Sisters of Mary outside the Senate Inquiry](image)

Figure 13. Glenda dressed as one of the Sisters of Mary outside the Senate Inquiry

Glenda Pickersgill has lived in the Mary Valley for most of her life. She has also worked as an environmental consultant for the mining industry. This has allowed her to buy a property on the banks of the Mary River that is not far from where she was raised. She has a deep attachment to the place, stemming from a connection to the fauna and flora.
located in and around the river as well as the land where she grew up. She revealed this during the course of interviews and other conversations. Since the first announcement, she has been an active campaigner against the dam. Towards the end of 2008, she took over as the Chair of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee. In late 2006, I asked her how she had heard of the announcement and what her reaction had been:

It was a Thursday night. I actually had … I'm doing a Diploma in Business Management and I had my course in town. The night before there'd been something about an announcement going to be made about a dam. That night I came in and I looked on the news and there was Beattie announcing the Traveston Dam proposal. That was the first time, even though my Dad who had been listening … he listens a lot to the radio. He lives out in a caravan when he’s not tripping around. He said, oh, they had started to talk about a dam and that everyone was guessing, where, what … Borumba Dam? We sort of knew that something was in the wind, but didn’t have a clue. Then [came] the announcement. I reckon for at least six to eight weeks after that, I had a knot in my stomach. It’s really … emotionally. It was really, really hard. (Pickersgill, 2006)

Like other residents in the area, Pickersgill was emotionally affected by the announcement. She experienced a similar cycle of grief and loss in response to the uncertainty and the feelings of powerlessness in the face of the power of the state government. The emotional effect was debilitating for her daily life:

Glenda: Emotionally? I’ve found it demotivating. Thoughts have often focused on the dam.
Interviewer: So you have a blinkering thing going? Is that what you mean by focusing on the dam? You exclude other things?

Glenda: Yes. Every day. You go through so many thousands of thoughts every hour, minute whatever you have. There would be a majority of my thinking would be about the dam, whether it be who, what, where, situations that you could count that you have got to process and understand. Accept other people’s [the state government] behaviour that is irrational. It’s all those sorts of things.

(Pickersgill, 2006)

Like many others, the way she saw to overcome the demotivating effect of the announcement was to become politically active. From the outset, she became active in organising the citizen response to the proposal. Her actions were in direct response to the emotional impact of the announcement:

Glenda: Within that announcement … within a day we had … I went up the road and talked with Rick and Carol, they’re my neighbours. That night I rang Carol. When did we have our first rally? We just said … we’ll all just ring around … We’ll try to get people together and try to get the information as soon as we can. People were very much in crisis mode. So then we had the rally at Rick and Carol’s place. Within a day they had a rally down at Kandanga. Trying to get people together to form a group, to try and get some information and get people’s support.

Interviewer: So this is how you coped with the initial reaction? Get involved?

Glenda: Yes. I couldn’t sit. I could not have gone in and out and do the normal things. (Pickersgill, 2006)
For many people in the impact area, their response stemmed from a desire to exercise their democratic rights and action to provide more certainty in their world. This was also the case for Pickersgill (2006). However, in addition to these actions, she has focused on the potential impacts on the environment caused by the proposed dam. There have been a number of people from the Mary River Valley who have similarly focused their action in the public sphere. I do not wish to elevate her efforts over those of others, but rather use her individual actions as a way of understanding the political performativity of public good. This will shed light on its role in collective action processes. Thus it also is indicative of the changes in power relations between the government and the people resisting the proposal. She outlines the passion for her involvement here:

*Interviewer*: In terms of things that have been affected, you mentioned a lot about the environmental effects. Do you personally feel for the things that are affected?

*Glenda*: Yeah, I've spent all of my working life trying to protect the environment. You sit here and you think, just all your wildlife and your yield suddenly has to … Every day there's something out there where you see an animal or plant. You do when you work on the land, you just identify with what's around you. A lot of people out there have got their pet platypus or they've got their wallabies that come in. It might only seem an insignificant thing to a lot of people but in actual fact when you work on your own, those little things do play a big part in my life. (Pickersgill, 2006)

I noticed that on the front gate of her property she displayed a sign about the river conservation efforts in which she has been involved. These predated the government’s proposal to dam the Mary River. The signs indicated her involvement with the
conservation programs concerned with the Queensland lungfish and the Mary River Cod:

The lungfish one is probably easier to explain. By putting this dam in here, it floods a lot of those types of riffle and pool sections of the river which has got the right plants and the right flow conditions for the spawning to happen. That combined, with what Jean Joss [lungfish expert] has said … with what they did at Paradise Dam, they flooded a lot of the spawning grounds, combined with this it would take it up to about 80 per cent of the known spawning ground areas. They will be inundated and they will lose their spawning ground. (Pickersgill, 2006)

What she is referring to here is the cumulative effect of the Paradise Dam, built on the Burnett River, and the proposed Mary River Dam on the breeding potential of the lungfish. Climate change was also mentioned by Glenda as an issue that would impact on this species. Her long-standing concern for the environment was a major factor in her becoming politically active:

[By late 2006 I had] been involved in organising rallies, protests, providing information, providing support. Some people I know have been going through some pretty rough patches, so I make sure I ring them and talk to them and keep them informed. It lifts up their spirits. I guess email stuff, I could spend hours on email stuff – providing information, commenting, reviewing information. I’m not enrolled in particular political party. I’ve kept an open mind about that. I think you have to be … I’ve never been actively involved in politics but if you asked me before the announcement, who is Minister for Water Resources? I wouldn’t have had a clue. You could say I was pretty apathetic about the political side of things. An action I’ve taken
is to be more informed on politics. I’ve tried to keep some balance in my life. I’m always aware of that. Can’t say that it does happen every day but I do try. I tend to be an introvert but I’ve tried to be more extrovert in some ways, as in getting to know more people and taking the time to get to know them. So probably actively engage with more of local community. Collected environmental information and help disseminate. (Pickersgill, 2006)

Since 2006, her involvement in the issue has not decreased – if anything, it has increased. In early 2007, she was one of the people who campaigned and lobbied for a Senate inquiry into the proposal. At the time, the conservative coalition party was in power at the federal level and, in my opinion, they saw an opportunity to hold the inquiry to gain political mileage out of the event. Its main purpose was to examine the alternatives to the proposed dam. It was also important because the dam would need federal approval. On this account, there were two other aims associated with the Senate inquiry that were not obvious to the casual observer. The other major aim was to seek documents that the state government was withholding. A Senate inquiry would legally necessitate the tabling of known documents that were hidden from public view. The wholly owned Queensland Government company Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd was exempt from Freedom of Information laws. This meant that citizens could not access the information through normal democratic means. These documents pertained to the potential impacts on threatened aquatic fauna. The other aim was the application of political pressure on the federal government approval process. Although the approval process is about assessing the scientific data under the EPBC Act, the ultimately decision would be a political decision made by the federal Minister for the Environment.24. At the time of the Senate inquiry, Malcolm Turnbull was the Minister for

24 Before Peter Garrett took over the Environment Department in late 2007, approximately 149 development proposals were approved under the EPBC Act and four were refused between July 2000 and July 2006. One of these refusals was a politically motivated action to placate wind farm protesters in a key electorate (Macintosh, 2006). The chances of the EPBC Act being used on environmental grounds was low. From the Save the Mary River perspective, there were slightly better odds that the Act would be used
the Environment. Pickersgill was aware that public sphere action was important in influencing future decisions. The media reports below indicate her intentions towards evidence she would present at the inquiry:

‘I’ll also be talking about climate change and the importance of dam issues to people everywhere, not just in the Mary Valley,’ she said as she prepared for the forum late yesterday. ‘The greenhouse gas emissions of a major dam are important and so is the upcoming Senate Inquiry, which will sit in Brisbane and Gympie.’ ‘We want to build bridges,’ she said. ‘We want people to realise that there are alternatives that do not have the same sort of impact.’ (Bid to get Brisbane on-side, 2007)

Ms Pickersgill wants the Queensland Government to release all studies undertaken on the Co-ordinator General’s environmental programs on the Burnett River for public scrutiny. She said the information could then be properly assessed by the scientific community as to the success of these mitigation efforts. ‘The public has the right to review these reports. If the government has nothing to hide, then why aren’t they releasing them?’ (Dambusters call, 2006)

The inquiry received more than 200 submissions, and it was reported that there was only one in favour of the dam – from the Queensland Government. Although the purpose of the inquiry was to examine alternatives to the dam, information on the impact of the dam on threatened species was a major focus. This information would be used by the federal Minister for the Environment to make a decision under the EPBC

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for political reasons. The prediction of how the federal Labor government would assess a state Labor government proposal was uncharted territory in 2008–09.
Serious environmental hurdles identified in a Senate report pose the greatest threat to the State Government’s proposed Traveston Dam. Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday said the future of the controversial project would be dictated by the dam's impact on threatened species and protected areas such as Fraser Island. A string of other criticisms highlighted in the report – including concerns about leakage and the stability of the dam floor – would have no bearing on the Minister’s decision, expected later this year. ‘The Act does … not give me the right to block the dam because I think it is a hopeless investment, or I think it is too shallow or I think it is hydraulically a bad idea,’ Mr Turnbull said yesterday. ‘My jurisdiction is to consider whether it will have a significant (environmental) impact.’ (Heywood, Lion & Green, 2007)

This is why Pickersgill is attempting to bring into being the life world of the public good. The threat to endangered species is the target of resignification of public good because there is a legal opportunity to halt the dam. The political opportunity is that the decision can be influenced by public sphere action. She is quoted in the same Courier-Mail article as Malcolm Turnbull above:

Glenda Pickersgill, whose 52ha property fronting the Mary River and Kandanga Creek is to be flooded in stage one, said the inquiry had ‘given us an opportunity to get information out there – especially the depth of the
social impact and the plight of precious species.' (Heywood, Lion & Green, 2007)

There were other media reports that indicated the impact of the Senate Inquiry on the decision-making process under the EPBC Act. This one was again in the Courier-Mail:

The Federal Opposition has backed a damaging Senate report that will put pressure on the State Labor Government to scrap its controversial Traveston Dam. In a major blow to the $1.7 billion project, three Labor senators sided with the Coalition in raising ‘serious concerns’ about the controversial dam, near Gympie. The Federal Opposition’s endorsement of the report could give Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull added justification to cancel the Traveston Dam project, after an assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, which is underway. (Heywood, 2007)

After the federal election of 2007, Peter Garrett became the Minister for the Environment. The Save the Mary River protest groups continued to apply pressure on him to stop the dam prior to his receiving the EIS report. The complicating factor was that the Queensland state Labor government was making a controversial environmental decision to build the dam in the first place and that the federal Labor government would find it difficult to embarrass its state Labor government if it decided not to approve the dam because the impact on threatened species was too great. This meant that more public sphere pressure would need to be applied by people resisting the dam so that the forthcoming decision by the federal minister Peter Garrett would be publicly accountable.
Pickersgill has been active in the media, especially since her elevation to the chair of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee. She has attempted to bring into being a public good that is counter to one proposed by the Queensland Government. Her emotional response to the initial announcement has guided her reactions that seek to promote the public good by ensuring the river is not dammed. She has been involved not only in seeking knowledge about the potential impacts but also, importantly, has embarked on a campaign of putting herself in the media spotlight to ensure that the world she cares for is maintained. By engaging with the media in ways that portray her personal life, she also helps to focus social attention on the issues of public good. As seen in previous chapters, the media forum had the largest patronage of all sites on TravestonSwamp.com. Additionally, the continued presence of the Traveston Crossing Dam issue in newspapers is testimony to the interest of the public in the issue.

From a commercial perspective, the presence of particular issues in media can be seen as collective action in that media do not run articles on particular issues over long periods of time if the readership and sales are not sufficient or if news agenda determine otherwise. Her involvement, as with many others who are resisting the proposal, has helped to shape the politics of the assessment process. The delay in the proposal announced by Premier Anna Bligh in November 2008 is testimony in part to the impact of growing pressure from people power. The level of public and scientific support has increased media scrutiny of the impending decision by federal Environment Minister Peter Garret. The state government election of early 2009, and the fact that the issue is not receding in the public sphere, in my opinion has forced the Queensland Government to reconsider its position of power associated with the dam.

I asked Pickersgill to read this section before I published the thesis. She said she could relate to what I had stated in this section and responded:
It was a conscious effort on our part to carefully consider what words we choose to use everyday in the campaign and why we particularly objected to all the glossy brochure propaganda we kept getting bombarded with. Have you noticed that there have hardly been any glossy brochures after we burnt them in the bull fire at the last [2008] anniversary flotilla? Examples of wording included: Instead of using ‘Traveston Dam’ we used ‘the proposal to dam the Mary River’ whenever we could. We always used the ‘proposed’ Traveston Crossing Dam; and we always pointed out that this proposal does not have state or federal approval. (Pickersgill, 2006)

Glenda has been one of the many people who have been instrumental in resignifying the public good aspects of the issue. Her emotional involvement was a source for action and her personal involvement in the public sphere actions drew social attention to the issue. She was not just a representative: she was a person whose life world featured a strong orientation towards public good with her protest actions attempting to maintain those aspects of her life world she valued deeply. Glenda reacted to the words used by the politicians who promoted the proposed dam. She resignified the terms used by the State Government to broaden the scope of the issue. The impact on her life world was not just about what would happen to her property but rather by repetitiously resignifying the issue as a Mary River issue and an issue that had national and international significance meant that the public good aspects were subsequently challenged in the public sphere.

This leads to the next individual in my exploration of public good: Steve Posselt. He has made an impact on the politics of the assessment but is modest when he talks about this. However, as an individual he has significantly influenced the politics and public opinion surrounding the Mary River Dam debate.
Steve Posselt is a water engineer who joined the campaign in 2008. He made two long-distance kayak trips in 2008 to publicise the problems with the proposed dam on the Mary River. His purpose was sharply focused. He wanted to use the media to draw attention to the alleged false claims made by the Queensland Government that the dam was serving the public good. He claimed that the proposed dam would lead to the Mary River having a similar fate to the heavily degraded Murray River system. I interviewed him in the middle of 2008 and then again in early 2009. I wanted to know what life world he was bringing into being through his actions in the media, and whether and how his life world ultimately changed the relations of power between the people resisting the dam and the state government.

Posselt’s reaction to the announcement of the proposed dam was based on his recently reshaped life world. The announcement of the proposed dam struck a chord with his changed future outlook. That outlook was based on a growing awareness of
his and the rest of humanity’s place in the world. I asked him what drove him to be involved in environmental actions such as the Traveston Crossing Dam issue:

I nearly killed myself on 1 July 2006. I cart wheeled my motorbike in sand on the Plenty Highway out near Alice Springs. I decided that my life was going to be about making a difference, a significant difference in future. So, my first trip was about raising awareness on what we have to do about global warming. That’s what my life is about but when I looked at the Traveston Crossing Dam situation, I had to, I felt I had to drop what I was doing and do the trip and get involved in it because it’s so important. The people of Brisbane don’t realise that it is just so important. I’ve tried to explain to people in the Australian Water Association who are not interested in some key factors to do with how our life is going to change. (Posselt, 2008)

In terms of the impact of the announcements of the proposed dam, Posselt’s orientation towards sustainability and his responsibility to his children were major reasons for action. This is expressed as a sense of loss and a growing and despairing understanding of the issues of sustainability. He says there was more to the link between the Traveston Crossing dam proposal and his involvement with the issue:

When I was preparing for my first trip, on the website I said that it was about climate change. Then it gradually just dawns on you, when you look at it, that this isn’t … none of this is about climate change. Climate change is just one of the things that are going to blow us. This is about our inability to live sustainably, about destruction of everything around us and thinking that our economy is all we need. So I guess it wasn’t what you’d call an epiphany, it’s been a slow building of understanding. Unfortunately, it’s
been a depressing building of understanding. I can’t look at my children or their children when they have them and not be able to say I didn’t try. (Posselt, 2008)

During this interview, Steve talked about the link between his emotions and his actions. His actions concerning the dam have been a way of reconciling his emotional outlook. I asked him whether any of the announcements made by politicians had had an emotional impact on him. He said that he felt emotional after:

Paul Lucas [deputy premier] attacked David Gibson [opposition Member for Gympie] who was emotional about the way the dam is affecting his constituents. This was typical of the government bullying. I don’t like bullies and will fight them as best I can. (Posselt, 2008)

So were his actions directly related to those feelings and his vision of what how he might feel in the future?

If I have this knowledge, I have to try and do something about it. I have understood over the years that I tend to be ahead of people in grasping knowledge like that. I was on radio in 1994, 6124QR in the afternoon and I said that in ten years’ time Brisbane people would be drinking recycled water. Now that was pretty obvious to me and just a couple of others, and they were at the time that the Goss government had got rid of the Wolffdene Dam, people didn’t want dams. Where are you going to get your water from? Desal was too expensive at the time, so it was quite feasible to reuse water and so I said that would happen. People thought I was a nutcase and I was wrong by four years. It’s taken fourteen years purely because the government got run over by a tortoise. So I see myself as
somebody who takes the time to think through some of the issues. You get plenty of time sitting in a kayak. (Posselt, 2008)

The important aspect that Posselt has learnt is that knowledge is useful and necessary but that action involving media and local communities is the way to change power relations and ultimately reverse the decisions with respect to the Mary River dam. Despite his rational scientific approach to communicative action that is part of a water engineer perspective, he quickly realised that a non-rational approach was the best way to effect change:

Steve: An academic said in relation to the Traveston Crossing Dam, the government’s actions are not logical, therefore if you want to do something about it, the logical argument will not work. I accept that, therefore, we'll have to make a noise and create a fuss.

Interviewer: Through media events?

Steve: Through action which is … one of the actions is me to just paddle a kayak, but unfortunately that didn’t get the hearing in certain parts of Brisbane that it deserved. (Posselt, 2008)

Steve Posselt’s kayak trip was unusual in that it involved many kilometres of dragging his kayak overland. However, it was not as gruelling as his Murray River expedition where he dragged his kayak 1080 kilometres of the 3250 kilometre trip, which was from Brisbane, over the Great Dividing Range, down the rivers to the end of a drying Murray and around to Adelaide. Figure 15 shows an excerpt from his website that publicised his trip along the length of the Mary River.

Collective action surrounding Posselt’s media-oriented activities included gatherings at the start of his journeys, during the course of his journeys and at the end. The media
consumption is also part of collective action. His actions were deemed newsworthy not only for print and online media but also TV news.

His journey received considerable media attention. The media reported the launch of the trip, the journey itself and his arrival back in Brisbane. I asked him some months after the trip (in August 2008) whether his actions had changed the power relations between the Queensland Government and the protest movement. In other words, did his actions sway public opinion to the point where the Queensland Government was reconsidering its decision to dam the Mary River?

Figure 15. The route of Steve Posselt’s Mary River walk and kayak trip
They haven’t changed yet, but you’re seeing a major shift in dynamics now. The process has taken two years, it’s had thousands of submissions against the EIS, it’s had a Senate inquiry, it’s had a Council of Mayors Report, all of which show that this is not a logical thing to do. So I would suggest some of the protestors or some of the anti-dam people are coming to the end of their tether and then you will see different actions which will allow other people in government to question the logicality of this because they see it out there in front of them. Right now it’s covered up. (Posselt, 2008)

Despite his conclusion that he has had little influence, his actions were part of a series of media events that continued to raise the profile of the Mary River Dam issue in the media. The fact that the dam continued to be present in news whenever there was a development in the proposal is testimony to the efforts of the people resisting the dam. The extent to which these efforts have influenced the state government decision to delay construction is difficult to ascertain:

I have no idea. Channel 7 has been the only media that gave us decent support except for one article in the Sunday Mail. Media coverage has been abysmal given that what I did would normally be covered by all media. (Posselt, 2008)

In October 2008, Posselt embarked on a 945 kilometre paddle from West End in Brisbane to the Sydney Opera House. His mission was to deliver letters of protest to Peter Garrett. At this stage, the final environmental impact statement had not yet been completed by the Queensland Government. Therefore, the federal government had not officially received that document to review in its EPBC Act legislation. However,
Garrett's department had adopted an unofficial policy of pre-assessing projects and providing feedback to proponents to enable a more efficient approval process.

The actions of Steve Posselt in presenting the letters to Peter Garrett were carried out at a time where the pre-approval process was occurring. This action was about publicising the issue through media and, importantly, ensuring the accountability of the federal government in its forthcoming assessment of the dam. These actions brought into being the public good aspects of the proposed dam through the use of the media to convey this message. Figure 16 presents a picture from The Australian that shows Steve giving the letters to Peter Garrett. Despite the intent of the action to put pressure on the federal government, Steve took the opportunity to make a statement about the common good.

Figure 16. Water courier ... Steve Posselt hands 3,000 protest letters to Environment Minister Peter Garrett (Source: The Australian)

Kayaker protesting Queensland dam reaches Sydney

He is protesting against the proposed Queensland Traveston Crossing Dam, which he said risked the local waterways. 'We are treating our rivers as drains and they are responding as drains,' Mr Posselt said. 'If we don't
fix this, we are threatening our very existence.’ Mr Garrett met Mr Posselt at the Sydney Opera House, along with a small crowd of conservationists, and said he was happy to accept the bag of letters. (Cranston, 2008)

After the event, I asked Posselt why Garrett had accepted his letters in person:

It took ages for him to agree. I spoke to his adviser and asked him [the advisor] to tell me what to say to the media when they asked why Mr Garrett was not there. I said I needed a good answer to protect him. The adviser said that it was not yet decided and Mr Garrett may well attend. In other words I blackmailed him. (Steve Posselt, 2008)

To blackmail someone is to use a threat in an attempt to influence someone’s action. The threat needs to be perceived as real for the influence to take effect. The need for politicians to be seen as listening to the public means that any potential media event needs to be framed in a positive way. Even if Garrett were to approve the dam, at least his actions show that he did consider the protesters’ claims. Garrett accepting the letters under the media gaze facilitated social attention on the issue at a national scale. Even though Garrett may not have been influenced in a positive way, in terms of influencing his imminent decision, the political performativity of the event created social attention through the very fact of the event being portrayed in the media. This action received wide media coverage and maintained the collective presences of people protesting the dam on the Mary River. Posselt thinks his creative actions in the public sphere are having an effect:

There is no doubt that the [Queensland] Government hates the ‘Don’t Murray the Mary’ slogan. My role pushed them into more
controlling, more spin and more bullying such that more people saw
them for what they are. (Posselt, 2008)

As a result of the actions of Steve Posselt, the government attempted to counter the
‘Don’t Murray the Mary River’ message. For example, I went to Securing Our Water
Futures Conference in Brisbane in late 2008 and one of the presenters was Graham
Newton, the CEO of QWI. Graham Newton not only had an important role to play in
managing the construction of the dam but also was part of the Queensland
Government’s public relations campaign that promoted the benefits of the proposal. He
was also involved the construction of another controversial dam on the Burnett River
just north of the Mary River. During the presentation at the conference he specifically
counterred the claims of Steve Posselt in his presentation. In particular, he focused on
the ‘Don’t Murray the Mary’ slogan.

In terms of political performativity of the public good, Posselt resignified the public good
as protecting the Mary River from becoming similar to the degraded Murray River. His
motivation stemmed from an emotional reaction to seeing the people and the place
unfairly dominated by the actions of the Queensland Government. His intentions were
also enacted by his emotional understanding of the global significance of the local Mary
River issue. His life world merged with a desire to keep the Mary River flowing free, and
was achieved through public sphere action. The ‘Don’t Murray the Mary’ slogan was
not just ‘spin’, to use the words of Steve. After his experience of paddling the length of
the Darling-Murray river system his life world was intimately linked to promoting the
public good aspects of healthy rivers and sustainability in general. By exposing his life
world through actions in the public sphere, he attempted to resignify a life world
imposed by the Queensland Government. A combination of mass and new media
enabled him to signify an alternate life world to that proposed by the Queensland
Government. Posselt's efforts, like those of many others who received media attention, served to facilitate social interest in the public good aspect of the issue. In 2008 a news poll revealed that there were over 85 per cent of Brisbane residents in favour of alternatives to the proposed dam (Australian Conservation Foundation, 2008). However, in late 2008 political analysts were correct in predicting that the proposed dam would not be a decisive issue in the outcome of the looming state election (see Kellett, 2008).

Posselt read this section and gave feedback on the claims I have made. He agreed with the analysis and commented that the only change needed was regarding how far he had travelled on the Murray River expedition. I had under-estimated the distance.

6.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I examined how the public sphere actions of two people have been contingent on their emotional and life world orientation to the announcement of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. Both Posselt and Pickersgill were emotionally affected in different ways. How the emotions of each enacted their consciousness and their intentions had more commonality. Firstly, Pickersgill's experience was not only the personal loss of potentially being submerged but also the concern for the potential loss of things that were of great value to herself and others. For Posselt, his emotional orientation was towards the greater good through a personal awakening. Additionally, his deep concern for the loss of the Mary River Valley and what that symbolised in Australian society was important in his actions. In both cases, their intentions were based on an emotional understanding of the situation that was threatening the Mary River environment. That threatening situation was brought about by the speech acts and other acts of politicians in the Queensland Government. A focus on the greater good was sourced in the emotional understanding of that threat.
For both individuals, the life world that they brought into being was one which was enacted through the media. Significant social attention was facilitated through the actions of these two individuals because their actions were staged in the media. The combination of coverage in mainstream media and reiteration in online media was important in increasing social attention (Collins, 2001). The actions of both individuals resulted in considerable media attention nationally. This was purposeful. As Posselt points out in his interview, the Mary River issue is not one that will be decided through a rational decision-making process. This is despite the appearance of a rational process through the federal government’s future assessment of the project under the EPBC Act. Although Posselt does not use the term to describe his actions, the political performativity of his actions played a part in the changing relations of power between the state government and the people resisting the dam.

These two individuals gained power through presenting their preferred life world in and through the media. These actions gained considerable media attention, given that they were individuals among the many competing news stories. In my opinion they were given voice because they embodied the public good aspects of the issue through their actions of resistance and their status in the community. Their emotions portrayed in the media also gave them power because of their public nature and consequent potential to destabilise the relations of power through this public sphere process. Resignification of their life world, featuring the public good, aimed at resisting the very essence of the government’s meaning of public good.
Discussion

In this chapter, the discussion is guided by the central research question: *How can individuals be empowered to effect change in the environmental decision-making processes of the state through citizen action in the public sphere?* The discussion about political performativity will be framed by using the three sub-research questions

Before proceeding with this discussion, I am reminded of the overall effectiveness of the environmental movement to effect change in recent times. Castells’ (2004) conclusion about the capacity of the environmental movement to effect change is relevant to the Save the Mary River case study. He notes that the environmental movement, ‘of all the social movements is able to best adapt to the conditions of communication and mobilisation in the new technological paradigm’ (Castells, 2004, p. 186). Castells argues that the ability to engage with the media, along with the ability of activists to adapt to technological change, has led to this outcome. The actions of protesters as documented in the Save the Mary River case study lend weight to this conclusion. Their effective use of the power of political action in the public sphere has resulted in mixed success. The Save the Mary River case study identifies the problems that were faced by activists, the solutions they used, and explanations to the problems as yet unsolved by activists in their quest for the outcomes they desire.

7.1 Relationships between the announcements and resistance

The phenomenon that sparked my interest in the concept of political performativity was the observation that the words and actions of politicians were a significant factor in the
emotional reaction to the dam announcement. In the Save the Mary River case, the features of the announcement were in some way directly related to the degree of resistance. Words and their associated actions seemed to have a wounding power that incited strong negative emotions. Technically, in terms of the approval process, the dam has always been a proposal. However, the force of the initial and subsequent announcements was such that the government’s intentions seemed concrete and real. Butler (1997) notes that the force of speech acts is increased if they are uttered and reiterated in the public sphere. In the Save the Mary River case, the major announcements were made in the media prior to formal notification via mail or other forms of communication. The force was legitimised through the political, administrative and legislative power of the elected government. As the issue progressed throughout 2006, the force in the initial announcement was backed up with legislation and post hoc planning processes. The force in the announcements grew in unison with the power that the Labor government gained through two successive elections.

The emotions felt by people were linked to personal action. The longevity of these emotions followed the trajectory outlined by Goodwin et al. (2001). Grief, shock and sorrow were evident in the short term. Not long after this, moral outrage followed. These emotions have been similarly identified in other protest actions by other researchers (see Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper; 1997; Collins, 2001). However, the recurring nature of project changes meant that citizens repeatedly experienced these emotions. Many of the activists carefully ensured that anger, when expressed through various public sphere activities, was staged to benefit the protest movement. They were clearly mindful of the power of emotions. In the words of Elliot (2006), emotions lay behind the protest action of the first rallies in Kandanga and Gympie. This characteristic of emotional reflexivity has been noted in other studies (King, 2006). The emotions of anger, grief, sorrow and moral outrage were more associated with the political performativity of certainty and democracy.
Care for ‘the other’ (including the non-human environment) appeared to be a longer lasting emotion. Care was associated with the political performativity of public good. It was associated with people from outside the impact area as well as those within it. Underpinning the ethic of care are the lived principles of mutuality and interdependence that enhance well being (Lawson 2007). Through caring people attempt to personally reconfigure the power imbalances in the geographically diverse and multiple public spheres. In the face of powerful state interests this emotion appeared to sustain a number of key people in the campaign.

In some cases, such as the Steve Posselt’s kayak journeys, his action could be conceived as communicative suffering (Biggs, 2004) where the honest and costly activity of kayaking large distances to physically convey a message became a source of power in the public sphere.

The link between the actions and emotions of a participant in the Save the Mary River case cannot be used in any predictive sense. This is despite my finding that the present life world historically orientates an individual’s future action. Each individual’s action in the public sphere was guided by his or her subjective past-present-future life world orientation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This concept was very useful in understanding the basis of individual political actions. The diversity of protest activity is testimony to the diversity of the life worlds of people who were affected. This allowed for creativity in the process of political performativity.

One of the implications of this project is that activists should pay attention to the words and actions of the authorities making announcements. The actual words the politicians use are important in enacting emotional responses from people who may resist a project, particularly if there are announcements that result in significant changes to
people’s lives. Using these words and statements in communicative strategies would be advantageous in initial formations of protest movement. The exact trajectories of action that stem from the emotional enactment are difficult to predict. However, the diversity of potential action may more than compensate for uncertainty in the control of the formation strategies of protest groups.

This project also has some important contributions to make in the development of the theory of performativity. The life world used as the object of research analysis is a way of overcoming the lack of history in Butler’s conception. For example, Boucher (2006) claims that speech acts are simply linguistic intentions, and thus the notion of resistance in this framework is not concrete. However, when performativity is expanded to include the emotional basis of an individual’s action, their past, present and future orientation becomes an integral part of the action. Contemporary ideas on the role and function of emotions (see Ellis, 2005) offer an explanation of how attention towards imposed speech acts and subsequent action develops. Whilst these ideas are written here as abstract notions, a citizen in the Mary River Valley who is resisting authority feels the reality of the force of the words and actions of that authority. The life world imposed upon them feels real.

This discussion about the relationships between the announcements of the Mary River dam and resistance to the project helps to reveal the process of protest formation. This area of research was noted by Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005) and Gould (2003) as a continuing knowledge gap in social movement theorising. In particular, a focus on emotions and their interaction with other factors will strengthen insights into protest movement formation and development. In the discussion here, I hope to illuminate some of the aspects that contribute to protest development. These aspects may be useful in helping activists to formulate future campaigns. I offer some tentative lessons in Chapter 8. I also clarify further research needs.
7.2 Citizen resignification of the announcements as resistance to the dam

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I outlined the different ways in which people resisted the dam by examining the processes involved through ‘the lens’ of political performativity. As noted in these chapters, many of these actions have previously been viewed as collective representations of the will of the people. In this thesis, I argue that these actions are part of a process of political performativity. By adopting this perspective, I seek to better understand the effects of the production of citizen action in the public sphere. In simple terms, I am interested the creative cultural elements of citizen action that influence the relations of power between the state and the citizen. How do citizens challenge an authority that is imposing a radically different life world to the one they currently experience? And subsequently, how can citizens create an alternative world that resists the life world imposed by that authority? In this section, I explore the relationship between my findings and the literature in relation to the announcements and citizen resistance. Before proceeding, I would like to emphasise that Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) notion of the life world is perceptual. It is not an object that is defined in a purely material form. However, it is nonetheless real for the person concerned.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I identified particular ways citizens resignified the announcements through the themes of democracy, certainty and public good. The emotional attention of protest is described by Collins (2001), who notes that emotional energy needs to be directed and maintained in order for social attention and critical mass to develop. Emotional responses, as I have already noted, help in our understanding of the process of resignification. The role of emotions is important in directing social attention, and thus is an important part of resignification. It is also important in facilitating collective action – as discussed below.
As previously stated, the short-term expressions of emotion in the case study were grief, sorrow, moral outrage, anger, and so on. The emotional energy resulting from this was directed towards political performativity of democracy and certainty. Care was directed more towards the political performativity of public good.

Actions that channelled emotional energy and repudiated the very notion of the proposed dam were public protests, letters to the editor, website construction, sign writing, music and the arts. These actions are traditionally seen as symbolic or ritualistic actions of protest (Healy, 2003). While not claiming that all activities within this array were part of the political performativity process, a substantial proportion of them were.

Of particular interest with regard to the process of political performativity are the actions of online activism, sign writing and the arts as activism. Actions such as these do represent a particular political position of the person engaged in the activity, and if they involve people in great numbers can be defined as collective. However, the actions also have an effect by virtue of the very act of undertaking the protest. They create resistance through the actual engagement of the protest act. Thus, the knitted scarf represents resistance because the purpose of undertaking the activity is to engage in an emotional commitment with the people who are attempting to save the Mary River. The purpose of the scarf is not to knit a scarf to wear. The action of creating the scarf blends with the life world of the people resisting the dam, and the ‘publication’ of the scarf through public sphere activities reiterates their purpose. A culture of care and support for the people attempting to save the Mary River is thus created – publicly.

This action was more associated with the political performativity of public good than democracy or certainty. But it demonstrates the creative cultural potential of actions that are considered to be part of the process of political performativity. Understanding
these types of actions from a political performativity perspective is important because it illuminates how seemingly trivial protest actions may be integral to the diversity and creativity that are part of protest formation and growth.

One of the key insights from my analysis of citizen resistance is that resignification of the announcements appeared to have more force when carried out in the media. The way the initial announcement was made in the mass media had significant implications. It was important in the enactment of emotions and subsequent reaction in the public sphere. The use of media to inform people that their life was about to dramatically change insulted many citizens and set the stage for the ensuing public sphere debate. The people resisting knew they needed to utilise the public sphere as quickly as possible to start the protest. For example, Burgess (2006) chose to create a website and not use mainstream media as a way to initiate public sphere action. Online media helped to provide information about the protest, and thus has an important networking function. Later, the online sites became part of the process of gaining and sharing knowledge about protest events and activities. Importantly, from a political performativity perspective, the online sites began to either reiterate the direct action of individuals in the public sphere or to publicise the reiteration of individual action as reported by mass media. The function of online media was not just about networking and knowledge-sharing, but represented a ‘cultural creation’ of protest in the public sphere that highlighted previous individual actions in this space. The sheer number of views of the online sites is testimony to the importance of the resignification by online sites of the imposed life world in the public sphere.

An example of the importance of multi-platform media can be seen in the phenomenon of the use of roadside protest signs. The number of signs has not diminished, even after three years of protest action. The social significance of roadside protest signs has been such that they have received significant local and regional print and online media
attention. In addition, they continue to act as a reminder to all who see them – particularly local residents – of the resignification process in which they remain very much engaged. Thus, the creation of roadside signs represents not only the protesters’ position on the proposed dam but also, through the very action itself, becomes part of the ‘cultural creation’ of protest formation. Gall (2006) points out that the roadside protest signs and their reiteration in mass media and online sites are important in emotionally sustaining protest action in the longer term.

The sheer number of ‘hits’ on the websites dedicated to the Save the Mary River protest is testimony to the overall importance of reiteration of both direct public sphere action and individual action as reported in mass media articles. The Save the Mary River activists were conscious of the media portrayal of their cause. To use their words, they actively targeted Queensland Government ‘propaganda’. For example, they carefully and continually scripted their statements in the media to emphasise that the project was not a fait accompli, and thus resignified their preferred life world in terms of the dimensions of democracy and certainty.

This discussion on citizen resignification of the announcements as resistance to the dam helps to reveal the process of protest development. These actions (and the others noted in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) enlist power through the culture of emotions (Ahmed, 2004). The power present in the above actions is not something possessed by individuals or groups. Rather, resignification helps to create power through public sphere expression and reiteration of the imbalances in the relative power positions that citizens and authorities occupy (Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005). Much of the resignification in all three themes attempted to use emotions to disrupt the social order. This then had power to disrupt the political sphere – at least in the immediate impacted area. This could occur because emotions are the means through which power
imbalances can be experienced and expressed (Hariman, 2006). Equally, resignification is the means through which alternative life worlds are created.

### 7.3 The role of resignification in the collective resistance

This thesis is about how an adapted version of performativity might be useful in exploring the processes of protest formation and development that resist decisions made by the state. How resignification might lead to collective action was identified early on in the study as one of the key elements of the process. Protest movement theory and the empirical findings presented thus far point towards resignification as an important part of protest formation and development. In this section, I explore the successes and failures of citizen action in the public sphere in order to facilitate collective action. The geographical features of resignification will be used as a guide in the following discussion.

The links between collective action and political performativity can be understood from a geographical perspective. There were different characteristics of public sphere action in local, regional and Brisbane-based areas. In the local public sphere, there was substantial collective action. Citizen protest was predominantly directed towards bringing into being a life world with more democracy and certainty than the one imposed by the state government through its various public sphere activities. A common story in the mass media in 2006 was the human-interest impact of the proposed dam, often detailing the resulting emotional hardship. Such emotional or ‘human-interest’ stories had a general appeal to the readership, and thus the media organisations – particularly at the local level.

Local media coverage was extensive, and has continued throughout the case study. The reason for the continued high level of coverage, particularly by local media, was
because many of the people who read the newspapers and other media forms are still part of the resignification of a life world that is challenging the state government proposal. Despite the fact that more than 85 per cent of the residents in the dam footprint have sold their properties, a disproportionately large protest action is still occurring.

The publication of media articles on the subject of the resistance is testimony to local public interest in the issue. The focus of activists on what was reported in the mass media verifies this claim. To the activists, media were not just a way of getting the message out to more people to facilitate collective action. Increased social attention was further facilitated though cross-platform media displaying other media articles through online sites. This process had a twofold outcome. The very act of publicising mass media articles through websites managed by the Save the Mary River groups verified that the resistance was indeed collective. The newsworthiness of the Save the Mary River campaign was testimony to readership interest and marketability of the issue. Under Melucci's (1996) definition of collective action, the posting of mainstream media articles on the protest websites was a collective act in itself. The websites were viewed by large numbers of people having a similar purpose in their resistance. This was evident in the comments and posts, particularly in 2006 and 2007. Thus mainstream media became part of the process of collective action. Media were not just recording events – they were integral to the process of collective action as well as verifying its extent.

Second, publicising the protest articles that resignified the initial announcements acted as an emotional catalyst for more citizens to become involved. These types of emotions are what Jasper (2001) calls ‘shared emotions’ in that they are fostered by the group and target objects outside the movement. The publication of emotional
stories drew attention to people directly affected or people sympathetic to the plight of others.

Mainstream media (newspapers and local radio, in particular) and activists’ online media further focused social attention and thus facilitated a collective response. In the space of two months, local online sites were just as important as mass media in providing information about the issues. The decrease in online visits in late 2006 shows the decreased importance of the issue to many people. This trend also matches a decrease in public sphere action concerning democracy and certainty in the local area.

A similar situation occurred in nearby regions. There was substantial support for the anti-dam campaign in the Sunshine Coast region. Local regional media coverage was extensive but slightly lower than in Gympie – the heart of the activity. Residents from the nearby Sunshine Coast were not directly experiencing the impacts and were in a different geographical space, yet they sympathised with those who were directly being affected by the dam proposal in the Mary River Valley. The fact that water would be taken from the Sunshine Coast did ensure that the people of the Mary River Valley were included in the greater regional community. The logic of mediatisation was similar to that operating in local media, but there were fewer people directly affected by the proposal. In short, in this region the life worlds of the people were different.

From Stromback’s (2008) perspective on mediatisation, the local media were the dominant sources of information as opposed to personal communication. This was facilitated by the communication strategy adopted by the state government. In the first few months after the announcement, the only information provided by the government was through the media.
Media coverage and portrayal also appeared to be aligned with political institutions in the local area. The interests of the protesters, local media and dominant local government and opposition state political representatives were all in alignment. I do not claim that all consumers of media and political in the local area agreed unilaterally with the protesters, but the logic of media coverage has favoured an anti-dam position and has aligned with local political interests. These are the first two stages of Stromberg’s (2008) mediatisation theory.

In both the Sunshine Coast and the Mary River Valley areas, the media position and local government position were aligned. I am not claiming that the media outlets had close relations with local government in that the authorities deliberately guided their actions, but in many ways they did not need to do so. The interests of both parties were similarly aligned. From very start of the issue, local and regional media, as well as local government, supported the anti-dam cause. From this perspective, the Save the Mary River case is instructive in how marginalised people can utilise the public sphere for their purposes. If the resistance is aligned with both media logic and political logic, then political performativity aids in realising political opportunities (Stromback, 2008).

The nature of public sphere activity around the dam protest in Brisbane was different. The collective action there was considerably less than that on the Sunshine Coast. This is despite considerable media coverage in 2006 and 2007 that accompanied each announcement by the state government. From Stromback’s (2008) perspective, there was a domination of media logic at the beginning of the issue in that people used the media to learn about the proposed dam on the Mary River. However, a political logic inherent in the state government’s actions began to dominate as time progressed. The complexity of the political issues facing Brisbane residents, along with the complexity of the environmental assessment process, led to the state government’s political position becoming more prevalent in the portrayal of the issue. These complexities are worth
discussing to show the failure of political performativity processes in Brisbane. This is the place where the Save the Mary River activists needed to gain support.

The Greens and other environmental groups presented the people resisting the dam with an opportunity to build support outside the region. However, this was problematic because the local impact area and surrounding regions supported the conservative political parties. In both elections, The Greens did not join forces with the Liberal-National Party (LNP) to oppose the dam because there were other points of difference on environmental matters that precluded any allegiances. The Greens had more in common with the Labor Party despite its commitment to build the Traveston Crossing Dam. The aspect of support stemming from The Greens was identified by one of my interview participants. Quite early, Juanita Wheeler personally identified the complexity and difficulties of the public good issues of the case. At the time she was The Greens’ national campaign manager. As noted in Chapter 6, she:

…wanted to make sure that the people in the Mary realised that this is not a fight of them against everybody else in Queensland. They really sounded to me like they felt outside and they felt Brisbane was against them. I wanted to let them know that, hey, there are people in Brisbane who are totally opposed to this for a whole range of reasons and you’re not on your own.

(Wheeler, 2006)

Despite her sentiments, she found it difficult to voice this opinion in the public protest meeting she attended in Gympie a few days after the initial announcement. The emotional impact was high and the crowd was looking for people to blame. The people from the Mary River Valley who had been affected by the proposal found it difficult not to blame the people of Brisbane for their predicament. The LNP was the party that would use this opportunity to its electoral advantage in the regions to the north of
Brisbane. It did so with great success in both the 2006 and 2009 elections. However, from the point of view of the Save the Mary River protesters, this amounted to indirectly asking the Brisbane people to vote for the LNP to halt the dam. The problem was that other issues, including environmental issues, were of major concern for the people of Brisbane and these conflicted with their support for the LNP. Thus the anti-dam vote in Brisbane did not materialise. This was a feature that Pickersgill and Posselt also confronted in their efforts to expand the influence of the issue to a wider population.

One of the lessons learnt from the Franklin River Dam dispute was that a local issue of the potential damming of a remote Tasmanian river could be transformed into a national event. Indeed, it was also seen as a global issue with the involvement of world heritage listing. It was opportunistically co-opted by the federal Labor Party during an election campaign. Similarly, the Save the Mary River is seeking to influence the federal government in its decision to approve the dam based on environmental considerations. However, the complexity of a ‘green’ public good issue occurring in a conservative seat has produced a problematic process of political performativity that does not favour the anti-dam cause. Having said this, Cottle’s (2007) observation about the mediatisation of the ‘other’ is worthy of mention at this point. The very notion that citizens in the Mary River Valley have become marginalised means that their voice of emotional impact is legitimised in the public sphere. Their voice has continued to have a potentially destabilising effect on the social order: emotions are clearly powerful. This helps to explain how mainstream media outside the impact area have repeatedly reported on the plight of the citizens of the Mary River Valley alongside details of the dam project at every announcement milestone.

The emotional attention of the announcements by the Queensland Government may have been significant enough to mobilise support in the local area. However, social attention in the Brisbane region has not been facilitated by resignification by the Save
the Mary River group to the extent that it has significantly impacted on voter behaviour. As to whether the protesters can influence the federal government decision is beyond the timeframe of this project.

8

Conclusions and future research

Meanings and feelings must be seen as parts of strategic engagements in structured arenas, not floating mysteriously on their own. People have both passions and purposes. And when we figure out how these interact, we will be much closer to understanding social movements.

(Jasper, 2007, p. 101)

8.1 Overview

In this thesis, I set out to examine how the people resisting the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal challenged and created power to stop the dam. To understand this, I adapted Butler’s (1997) theory of performativity to examine how individuals resisted the dam proposal and how they attempted to reinstate their desired future life world. I used a case study approach to collect a wide range of data in order to explain the phenomenon of political performativity. The case study was also useful in learning from this with the hope of applying lessons to future situations. I have also engaged with the research process from an insiders perspective. I was not planning to engage in the research process in this way but it was as though the performativity of the issue drew my attention to the cause of the protest. I have acknowledged this engagement in the methods and in the findings chapters. In my opinion this engagement has enable a heightened awareness of the issues raised by participants in the study. Care has been
taken cultivate a reflexive understanding of how personal emotion has driven attention, awareness. This has led to an intentional ‘use’ of emotional engagement in the research process.

Individuals involved in the anti-dam protest resisted through actions that were emotionally enacted in rejecting the life world imposed through political announcements. From a political performativity perspective, these individuals sought to resignify a different life world from that imposed upon them through a variety of actions in the public sphere. They undertook this through various protest actions. Traditionally, these actions could be seen as representational. However, the political performativity perspective I adopted to explore the actions involved the suggestion that this created resistance. By this, I mean that the actions brought into being the life world that the people desired. The protest was a repudiation of the imposed life world.

In relation to democracy, the statement made by the Queensland Premier Peter Beattie in announcing the dam enacted considerable political action. The words ‘People power will not stop this dam’ were made known to many people through the media. Large numbers of people were emotionally affected by these words. Because they represented to many a diminishing of the processes of democracy, there was a reaction in the form of a resignification of democracy.

As previously stated, these words uttered by Beattie were repeated by the mainstream media. Media reports were then re-published on internet sites. Also of interest was the continued importance of word of mouth in rural communities in sharing the news about what politicians actually said. The words were also repeated in the protest signs placed along roadside verges in the local area and were evident in the signs and speeches by citizens at protest rallies and public meetings. The resignification of democracy by individuals increased social attention, particularly through the mediatisation of these
aspects of democracy. This led to collective action, which attempted to resignify the very notion that people power was very much a part of the life world of the affected people.

In relation to certainty, one statement stands out above the others. The statement ‘This dam will be built whether it’s feasible or not’ (Feasible or not, 2006, para. 1), made by Peter Beattie, had a wounding effect on many of the people who were affected by the proposal. Through these types of statements, the government attempted to bring into being certainty in the new life world imposed by the project. However, this appeared to have the opposite effect. The people attempted to resignify certainty in their life world despite the actions of the government. Public sphere actions were a way of seeking to reinstate a more certain life world. The role of the media in this process was to draw attention to the mutual experience of, and resistance to, the uncertainty created by each of the announcements. Repeating the political statements that attempted to create certainty had the effect of galvanising resistance. However, as time passed, private sphere actions of individuals (like selling their property to the government) eroded the potential of these types of speech acts to incite action from local people.

In terms of public good, the words of Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh enacted emotion and reactions to the imposed life world they were attempting to create. Beattie’s comment, ‘We are asking them to make a sacrifice for the common good’ was met with considerable resistance early on in the case study period. Later in 2006, Bligh’s comment about further changes to the project design also provoked considerable anger. Her public good statement, ‘In anybody’s terms, the outcome announced today is good news for the Mary Valley, good news for the people of Gympie and good news for South-East Queensland’ was a catalyst for the resistance expressed by many of the affected people.
In terms of public good, the emotional enactment of resignification appeared to be less strong than democracy and certainty. However, the resignification process undertaken by protesters lasted much longer. This is related to longer lasting emotions and also is reflective of the context of the drawn-out dam approval process. The EIS report that assessed impacts on threatened species was developed in late 2007 and 2008. As of early 2009, it is still to be submitted to the federal government for assessment under the relevant Act. The reason for the delay was because of the difficulty in formulating mitigation measures for the proposed dam. The drawn-out process of approval was accompanied by an equally drawn-out process of political performativity that was played out in the media.

From a theoretical perspective, I suggest that political performativity is a useful concept in understanding how resistance is created in the public sphere. I tentatively offer my modified version of this idea as a way of overcoming the extensive theoretical critique of Butler’s conception of performativity. Adopting the concept of life world rather than identity as the active element that the person resisting is attempting to (re)create, allows the incorporation of a broader scope of actions that might be considered in the performativity continuum. This makes practical sense, as people in the Mary River Valley are not bringing a new identity into being. They are attempting to reinstate a world that is radically different from the one bound up in the dam proposal. From a political performativity approach, emotions enact the process of resistance. A protester directs attention towards those things that are emotionally relevant. Emotions are then expressed in public ways that are part of an attempt to re(create) a threatened life world. The use of emotions is a way of enlisting power in the various public spheres involved.

The protesters did this in three ways. Of interest to future activists, there is certain political performativity associated with particular political ends. Elections and holding
the government accountable were opportunities from a democratic perspective. Social impacts and administrative procedures of the approval process were associated with certainty. Political opportunities associated with federal and state government processes were related to public good aspects. In my judgment, the presence of these three themes indicates the existence of an unconscious process of political performativity by activists. Based on the findings of this thesis, I argue that this process can consciously be used by activists to increase their power in public sphere debates.

Activists involved in the Save the Mary River case study were well aware of the role of the media in getting their message out. Their understanding of the role of mass media and new media clearly aided their cause. The large number of registered postings and views relating to media articles on online protest sites is testimony to this. They have proved to be adept at playing a critical role in the mediatisation of the Mary River issue. This was quite effective in the local area. But what has not been so effective is the extension of the process of political performativity to people outside the region. Political opportunities were difficult to realise because the dam is being proposed by a government that has traditionally enlisted the support of the environmental groups and The Greens. The dam is a ‘green issue’ in a conservative seat. Thus the political performativity of public good has been inherently problematic as a way of facilitating collective action resisting the dam. The life worlds of people from outside the Mary River Valley and surrounding regions have not been affected to the same degree. The social attention brought about by extensive media coverage depicting a marginalised and emotional ‘other’ did not facilitate collective action to the same degree as within the impacted area. The social attention directed towards public good aspects of performativity that relate to Brisbane and other regions outside the impact area are still unfolding at the time of writing. The citizens in the Save the Mary River case study continue to find solutions to these issues.
For future activists, a more conscious understanding of political performativity that is integrated with political opportunities and networking may be useful in resolving such complex issues. The contradictory nature of the public sphere may also be useful. I say contradictory in the sense that the diversification of the public sphere and the limitations of operations within it simultaneously occur to create previously unknown opportunities for action. New media represent one such area of unfolding potential. As seen in this case, however, this is not a panacea.

8.2 Future research

This thesis was born out of my own curiosity to know more about the processes of public sphere action. I canvassed a wide range of literature on the theories of protest movement formation and the growing depth of research into the processes involved. My background in multidisciplinary environmental science and environmental education guided me towards understanding the process of political action in the public sphere. The gaps in research knowledge are considerable. As Jasper (2007, p. 99) concludes, 'little is known about the first stirrings of social movements. How does the limited attention of individuals become focussed on one set of issues rather than others?' This project is a step in the process of filling that gap – but, of course, there is still much work to be done.

There are a number of areas of further research potential which have arisen during the course of this project. The nature of public sphere action is dynamic, making any attempt at understanding its contemporary cultural features and processes problematic. This is because of the changes in new media and the nature of public engagement in political and government processes. Care needs to be exercised in the choice of research questions.
Another aspect to consider is the limitation of the case study approach I have used. While it was useful in understanding the processes of public sphere action, practical application of the more speculative lessons learnt may be risky for activists. Therefore, further investigation of the applicability of these lessons is warranted. I suggest four general research directions with specific examples of possible research questions.

The first area of research potential is a closer examination of the relationship between emotions and resignification. In this thesis, I identified that emotions were linked to the actions of individuals in the public sphere. For example, the link between the longer lasting emotions and the political performativity of public good may be a useful feature for future protest action. This feature could be used to facilitate greater social attention over longer periods of time. However, I did not examine the relative importance of emotions with other aspects of the life of the citizen. How emotions guide attention and action in relation to other aspects of a citizen’s life is a question that needs further attention.

The second area of research that beckons relates to the media and resignification. I identified a number of relationships between mainstream and online media which were also linked to resignification. How important is the publication of speech acts in mass media articles and on online sites in facilitating resignification? Of particular significance is the way this process develops over the various stages of protest movements. In other words, can citizens be emotionally provoked into action in the public sphere after their life world has been affected negatively by the actions of an authority? How does this change over time?

The third area of future research interest concerns the extent to which resignification that occurs through new media actually influences further political action. There appears to be a need to determine the various forms of action that result from
resignification in new media. There may be certain forms of political action that are more commonly associated with resignification than in other media forms.

The fourth possible direction suggests a need to pursue how resignification, through new media, influences media and political logic in the mediatisation process as outlined by Cottle (2008) and Stromback (2008).

The fifth practical recommendation is the importance of identifying leadership, learning and strategies as part of a resignification process during a campaign. In the last chapter, I revealed how Save the Mary River activists were countering the ‘propaganda’ from QWI Pty Ltd in creative ways that repudiated the very nature of the proposal. The careful scripting of Save the Mary River protest information was a strategy that emerged from the beginning of the protest but seemed more consciously strategic as time progressed. Given that grassroots activists may not have all the knowledge, skills and capacities needed for leading public sphere campaigns, particularly at the beginning of the protest actions, the need to develop these aspects quickly is important for such groups. How the concept of political performativity can be introduced to activists early in campaigns for use in the ‘cultural creation’ of protest also needs to be examined. The gaps in the content of activist education are testimony to the need for a greater understanding of the processes of protest formation and development in the public sphere.

8.3 Afterword

The fate of the Mary River was decided by the Federal Government minister for the environment, Peter Garret. He decided that the dam should not proceed. This decision occurred after this thesis was submitted for examination. His decision was based on the impact the proposed dam would have on matters of national significance under the
EPBC act. The federal government decision also questioned the validity of the social and economic impact assessment made by the Queensland Government. Although this assessment was deemed to be a non political judgement, the influence of the public sphere campaign cannot be eliminated as a factor that contributed to the way the decision making process occurred. The influence of public sphere action on the Federal Government decision making process is not the subject of this thesis. However, the lessons learnt from the case study will be useful for future citizens who find themselves resisting developments imposed by authorities where the merits of the proposal are scrutinised by authorities using the principles of sustainability.

As a researcher interested in the public sphere process of marginalised groups, the Save the Mary River case study has been an interesting and notable issue to explore. It has been one of the most significant environmental public sphere issues in recent history in Queensland. The issue is controversial because of the inherent ideological conflict rising from a Labor government, which in recent times has courted the green vote, proposing a development that was claimed to be environmentally destructive. This has led to problems for activists. This was amplified by the proposed dam being situated in an electorate that has traditionally been held by the conservative National party. This is no coincidence. The political tactics of the Labor government raised problems for green groups in how to design a campaign with local grassroots activists who are placed in the heartland of a dominant politically conservative seat.

Further actions based the style of the campaign may be instrumental in tipping the balance of power in favour of the people resisting such projects in the future. Some practical lessons from the resistance are already being realised by activists elsewhere concerned with other issues. A greater theoretical understanding coupled with practical wisdom may be beneficial for future campaigns. There are a number of specific public
sphere issues that are learning from the protest against the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal.

The first example is a post on the Save the Mary River online forum (see Figure 17). It suggests that lessons are already being learnt and applied to other protests in Queensland.

**Figure 17. TravestonSwampinfo.com online forum, 5 April 2009**

This post refers to a central Queensland community (Mt Larcom) that has adopted strategies of public sphere protest similar to those in the Save the Mary River campaign.

The second example is from a public sphere issue arising in May 2009. A proposed dam in the Otway Ranges in Southern Victoria was the topic of a developing furore that centred on the environmental impacts of the proposal. In response to a proposed dam, a Liberal Party local government member was reported as saying (Murphy, 2009): 'We know that in Queensland with the Traveston Crossing Dam, which the government was pushing really hard, there was a massive Franklin-like backlash.' It seems that, even though the outcome of the proposed dam on the Mary River at the time of this statement was yet to be decided, it was already being referred to in a similar way to the Franklin Dam issue. The Save the Mary River issue has become an Australian showcase of large-scale resistance to a government land use decision. Citizens’ voices and their creative elements will be an important part of a wider sustainability debate over increasingly scarce and contentious resources.
References


Gall, K. (2006). There aint gonna be a dam at all. From the album entitled *For the love of Mary*. Electric Bedland Studio.


Green, G. (2006, May 6). We'll be dammed if we move. *Courier-Mail*, p. 32.


# Appendix A

## Chronology of events in the Save the Mary River case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 April 2006</td>
<td>Dam announcement through media and press releases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 April 2006</td>
<td>Further dam announcement and Beattie flies over dam site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April 2006</td>
<td>First save the Mary River websites appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 May 2006</td>
<td>Public rally at Kandanga – 2000 people reportedly in attendance. Save the Mary River Coordinating Committee formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May 2006</td>
<td>Land acquisition announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May 2006</td>
<td>Start of petitions tabled in Queensland Parliament. The Traveston Crossing Dam became the second largest petition in recent Queensland history, second only to forced council amalgamations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May 2006</td>
<td>Bob Brown leads a protest paddle at the site of the dam on the Mary River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 June 2006</td>
<td>Street march targets ALP state conference in Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 June 2006</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources community forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 June 2006</td>
<td>Queensland Water Infrastructure (QWI Pty Ltd) registered. This company is wholly owned by the Queensland Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July 2006</td>
<td>Peter Beattie Public Meeting Gympie, Major changes to proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 July 2006</td>
<td>Community Futures Taskforce formed. Major General Arnison to lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 September 2006</td>
<td>State election. Peter Beattie re-elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September 2006</td>
<td>Kandanga 1000 Horse Ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 2006</td>
<td>Queensland Government announcement. Dam maps finalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 November 2006</td>
<td>Anna Bligh public meeting at Gympie, Further changes to proposal. (final change.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 November 2006</td>
<td><em>State Development Act</em> Changes – decreases the rights of individuals to negotiate land acquisition processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 December 2006</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement Terms of Reference released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2007</td>
<td>Drought Declaration for South-East Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 March 2007</td>
<td>Senate Inquiry into alternative water supplies for South-East Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 August 2007</td>
<td>Senate Report released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 September 2007</td>
<td>Premier Peter Beattie resigns – Anna Bligh becomes Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 October 2007</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released – start of EIS process that ends with the supplementary report as the final statement of environmental assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 January 2008</td>
<td>EPBC act Audit of Paradise Dam – the partial compliance of conditions of this dam major has implications for the construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April–10 May 2006</td>
<td>Steve Posselt kayaks the length of the Mary River, starting and finishing in Brisbane to raise awareness of the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 October–1 November 2006</td>
<td>Steve Posselt kayaks from Brisbane to the Sydney Opera House to deliver a bag containing thousands of letters to Minister Peter Garrett, asking him to stop the Traveston Crossing Dam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 October 2008</td>
<td>Court case proceedings launched against the Burnet water,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owners of the Paradise Dam</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>25 October 2008</strong> Delay in construction announced by Anna Bligh. Press reports this as a way to take this issue out of the public sphere in the lead-up to the election.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>21 March 2009</strong> Queensland election. Anna Bligh re-elected</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7 May 2009</strong> EIS supplementary report released – final statement of environmental assessment. This report is sent to the federal government to be assessed under the <em>EPBC Act</em>.</td>
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Appendix B

Information sheets and consent forms

Information Sheet

Title of the Project
People’s responses to the Traveston Dam proposal on the Mary River in South East QLD: How can a theory of performative politics help chart people’s resistance to the proposed dam on the Mary River?

The Study
This study hopes to explore the way people engage with Traveston Dam proposal on the Mary River in South East QLD. The study in the future will inform communities how they can better engage with governmental participatory process over social and environmental disputes. This study forms the basis of a PhD undertaken by Rob Hales. After reading this information sheet you may wish to participate in this study. As a participant in this study you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time, without prejudice. Please read the following information carefully and then if you wish to participate please fill out the consent form attached.

The Interview and Questionnaire
In this study you will be required to answer some interview questions and then complete a questionnaire. The purpose for the interview is to understanding how people give meaning to their environment. You have been chosen for this research so that your views on the environment can be compared to other people’s views. All the viewpoints of participants are treated equally and highly valued as the purpose is not to
find preferred environmental meanings but rather the exploration of difference between meanings. In all, the interview and questionnaire will take about 40 minutes of your time. Your comments will be recorded on audiotape. This recording will be destroyed once a transcript of the discussion has been made. If English is not your first or preferred language, a translator will be present to help you understand any questions and to translate your answers into English. The questionnaire requires you to answer some questions relating to your personal details and then asks you about how you relate to the environment at in your leisure time and at work.

Consent to participate
Your participation in this research project is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate if you do not wish to. If you do choose to take part, you may cease participation at any time without penalty or without providing an explanation.

Risk
Participation in this research involves no risk to you. All you are asked to do is to talk about your views on the environment and your responses to the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing.

Confidentiality
The face-to face-interviews do not require you to give your name unless you specifically agree to be identified (see Consent Form Part A). If you do not wish to be identified, the information collected by this project will be reported in general terms and will not use any words that might identify you in any way. The information collected in all surveys and interviews will be completely confidential. Your names are needed only for identification purposes within the study. Access to individual survey results will be confined to the researchers and supervisors named above. Group results will be written up in a final report and will eventually be published. Published results will not include
individual names. As a participant, you can request that you be provided with a copy of
the final project report.

You may contact any of the Chief Investigators listed at any time if you have any
concerns regarding the research. If you wish to contact an independent person, you
may contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Griffith
University, Nathan, QLD 4111, telephone 07-3875 5585 or email research-
ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Griffith University asks you for your consent and participation in this research.
Consent Form

Title of the Project

People’s responses to the Traveston Dam proposal on the Mary River in South East QLD: How can a theory of performative politics help chart people’s resistance to the proposed dam on the Mary River?

I have read or have heard someone read the Information Sheet to me and I understand that:

This research is to investigate my perceptions of and action in the environment

I am being asked to take part in a face-to-face interview to speak about my views about the environment as well as complete a questionnaire

If I agree to take part in these activities this will take about 1 hour to complete and will be recorded on audiotape.

If I agree to take part in a face-to-face interview, it will take about 40 minutes to complete and will be recorded on audiotape

Where English is not my first language an interpreter will be used to translate any questions asked into my language and to translate my answers into English

My participation is voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or explanation

Any reports or publications that come out of this study will be written in general terms and will not use any words that identify me unless I specifically agree (see Part A)

The information gathered will be kept confidential and in a locked filing cabinet at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed

If I indicate, a copy of the final report will be provided for me (If Yes please tick □)

I have read the information on the consent form or someone has read it to me. I agree to take part in this study and give my consent freely. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information statement, a copy of which I have kept. I
understand that whether or not I decide to participate is my decision. I understand that I
can withdraw from the study at any time and that I do not have to give any reasons for
doing this. All questions I have asked about this research have been answered to my
satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<th>Investigator</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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Appendix C

Ethics approval from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

GRiffith University Human Research Ethics Committee
15-Aug-2005

Dear Mr Hales

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project ‘PhD on Environmentalism, the Public Sphere and Leisure: Understanding of the possibilities for changing peoples', meanings of their environment in leisure contexts. – Qualitative study’ (GU Ref No: THM/05/05/HREC).

The additional information was considered by Office for Research.

This is to confirm that this response has largely addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

This decision is subject to:

Further clarification of the recruitment procedure. Please refer to Booklet 21 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual for assistance in responding to this
condition. To clarify – how will potential participants be identified and initially contacted so they can receive the provided informed consent package. The type of information being sought is outlined in Booklet 21.

The informed consent package being updated to include the required features outlined in section 14.0 of Booklet 22 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual (eg the correct reference to the handling of concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, a legal privacy statement). Please note the provided revised material does not include the correct reference to the handling of complaints or a legal privacy statement.

The contact person signing section F1 of the Checklist.

The supervisor signing section F1A of the Checklist.

An appropriate authorising officer completing and signing section F2 of the Checklist.

The informed consent materials listing Mr Hale as the student investigator and indicating that this research is being conducted as part of a PhD.

However, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on the strict understanding that these matters are addressed and that you provide details of how they were addressed.

Please note that failure to provide a timely response to these matters may result in this authorisation being suspended or withdrawn. The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.
It would be appreciated if you could give your urgent attention to the issues raised by the Committee so that we can finalise the ethical clearance for your protocol promptly.

Regards

Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3875 5585
fax: 3875 7994
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

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Appendix D

Premier visits possible new dam site

Thursday April 27, 2006 Peter Beattie

Joint Statement:

Premier of Queensland

The Honourable Peter Beattie

Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water

The Honourable Henry Palaszczuk

Thursday, April 27, 2006


The Queensland Government has nominated an area near Gympie as the likely site it is investigating to build the new Mary River dam.

Premier Peter Beattie and Water Minister Henry Palaszczuk visited the site in the Traveston district today.

‘A dam on the Mary River catchment is essential for the south east corner of our State – especially the Cooloola region as well as the burgeoning Sunshine Coast,’ Mr Beattie said.

‘Traveston has been identified by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water as a promising site for the dam through its work developing the South-East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy.

‘We will now completely assess this site so a final decision can be made on the positioning of the Mary River dam and work can start to have it built and operating by the end of 2011.’

Mr Beattie said a dam at the Traveston site could potentially provide an additional 100,000 megalitres of water each year to boost Queensland’s water supply system.

A dam at Traveston is estimated to have a storage area of 7,600 hectares.
Its storage capacity is projected at 660,000 megalitres – more than double the capacity of the 300,000-megalitre Paradise Dam commissioned by the State Government on the Burnett River near Bundaberg late last year.

Depending upon its design, a dam at Traveston could also provide significant flood mitigation for Gympie and Maryborough.

Mr Palaszczuk said the potential for the Traveston site on the Mary River would be thoroughly investigated.

‘There a number of issues that we will need to look at closely including the properties that will be affected by the potential new dam,’ Mr Palaszczuk said.

‘We will obviously work closely with the local community throughout any process.’

Mr Palaszczuk said the Government had ruled out constructing a dam at Cambroon, on Obi Obi Creek or Moy Pocket that have been previously suggested as possible dam or weir sites in the region.

‘Building a dam at the Cambroon site would have meant relocating the town of Connondale,’ Mr Palaszczuk said.

‘I would like to acknowledge the strong representations made to me by the Member for Glasshouse Carolyn Male and the Member for Nicklin Peter Wellington on these sites. The Government is acting accordingly by ruling out any water storages on these three sites.’

Mr Beattie said water was liquid gold and ensuring we had adequate supplies to support population growth and development was one of the great challenges the State faced.

‘Our Government is working hard to meet this challenge in a number of ways,’ Mr Beattie said.

‘We are establishing the Water Commission in South-East Queensland to help ensure a coordinated regional approach to water planning instead of ad hoc planning based on the decisions of individuals, councils and infrastructure owners.'
‘We have also committed to hundreds of millions of dollars in new infrastructure.

‘Just this month we announced another $127 million for a raft of new projects including water pipes, desalination and addressing water main breaks and leaks.

‘And as part of our new Queensland Future Growth Fund announced yesterday we will help fund two new dams and two new weir projects.

‘This includes the dam in the Mary River catchment and bringing forward the construction of the promised new dam on the upper reaches of the Logan River.

‘In addition on the Fitzroy River in Central Queensland we will raise the Eden Bann weir and build a new weir at Rookwood.’
Appendix E

Rate of property acquisitions by Queensland Government (QWI)

(Note: discontinuous data obtained from QWI website and media reports.)
Appendix F

Media section of TravestonSwampinfo.com indicating most viewed topics