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B U I L D I N G O U R F U T U R E

# Multi-Outcome Construction Policies: Literature Review on Stakeholder Theory

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## ***Introduction***

Construction 2020 (Hampson and Brandon 2004) outlines a series of visions for securing the long term success of the construction industry in Australia. In particular, Vision 2 proposes a future in which “the design, construction and operation of facilities truly reflect the present and future needs of the project initiator, future owners and tenants, and aspirations of stakeholders...it will develop better systems for capturing client requirements (Hampson and Brandon 2004: 14). Understanding and meeting the disparate needs of clients and other stakeholders is critical to the success of construction projects and for the construction industry overall (Seaden and Manseau 2000).

In Australia, government is a significant client as the level of government-initiated construction projects approaches 30-40% of total industry turnover in the commercial building and engineering sectors. It is thereby in a position to strongly influence the market due to its procurement policy for capital works and its role as regulator of the construction industry (Hampson and Brandon 2004). Until recent decades this role of designer, principal and project manager was universally undertaken in-house by public works departments, but in some jurisdictions, this function has been devolved to other government agencies, some of which have little or no experience in construction (APCC 2002), and are then reliant on pre-qualified consultants to provide expertise in the procurement of built assets. Each jurisdiction in Australia has developed capital works procurement policies that regulate the way in which government agencies procure built assets (see Furneaux, Brown, Allan, McConville, McFallan, London & Burgess 2006 for an overview); including various approaches to the way these agencies engage with the various stakeholders involved in construction projects. Capital works procurement policies establish the role that individual government agencies can have in the construction process, and, depending on the policy stance adopted, may involve a number of additional government agencies in the planning, tendering and delivery of built assets.

This project extends previous research on government procurement of capital works, by explicitly exploring the multiple policy outcomes that are leveraged from public works. Such policies include ‘Buy local’, ‘apprenticeship training’ and ‘Percent for Public Art’. While these policies are technically owned and championed by various agencies, due to their incorporation into capital works procurement, they are effectively implemented by public works departments (eg Department of Housing and Works in Western Australia, and Department of Public Works in Queensland). Effectively public works department have additional government agencies, who are not necessarily

clients, but who are, none-the-less, stakeholders in the procurement of public works, together with the intended beneficiaries of the policies: artists, local communities, and apprentices.

A theoretical framework that appears useful in examining these multiple actors in multi-outcome procurement processes is stakeholder theory. This paper outlines this theoretical approach and examines its applicability to understanding and elaborating the concept of multi-outcome construction procurement. Stakeholder theory is an alternative to agency theory, and one which is specifically argued as being capable of elucidating the multiple actors in government capital works projects (Newcombe 2003). Newcombe (2003) has argued strongly that research should focus on the multiple stakeholders involved in construction projects, as opposed to other approaches which tend to focus on just a singular client, agent or principal.

### ***Stakeholder Theory***

Interest in stakeholders has grown considerably since Freeman's (1984) seminal work *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* was published. Over 100 articles were published on 'stakeholder theory' by 1995 (Donaldson and Preston 1995, p. 65), with many more published since. Increasingly the notion of stakeholder has gained purchase in academic texts, media and government publications (Friedman and Miles 2002).

As interest in stakeholder concepts has increased, so too has the number of views on the subject (Friedman and Miles 2002). Some attempts at harmonisation of disparate views has been made (eg. Stoney and Winstanley 2001), with Jones' (1995) summary the most widely accepted. Jones (1995) argues that stakeholder theory can be divided into three main approaches: *descriptive approaches*, which depict "what happens", *instrumental approaches* which outline "what happens if", and *normative approaches* which suggest "what should happen". Unfortunately, fruitful discussion of various notions of stakeholder theory have at times been eclipsed by fervent, and sometimes personal, exchanges from proponents of the various views (see for example the exchange between Freeman 1999; Frooman 1999; Gioia 1999a; Gioia 1999b; Jones and Wicks 1999a; Jones and Wicks 1999b; Trevino and Weaver 1999a; Trevino and Weaver 1999b).

While having its' origins in strategic management, stakeholder theory has been applied to a number of fields of enquiry including corporate social responsibility (Clarkson 1995; Hillman and Keim 2001), education (McDaniel and Miskel 2002), environmental management (Jonker and Foster

2002; Starik and Rands 1995), ethics (Agle, Mitchell and Sonnenfeld 1999), health (Lim, Ahn and Lee 2005), information technology (de Bussy, Watson, Pitt and Ewing 2000; Pouloudi 1999), management (Donaldson and Preston 1995; Greenwood 2001; Ramirez 1998), marketing (de Bussy, Ewing and Pitt 2003), public policy (Brugha and Zsuzsa 2000; Martin 2003), research management (Bunn, Savage and Holloway 2002; Elias, Cavana and Jackson 2002), water utilities (Ogden and Watson 1999), and more recently construction project management (Bourne and Walker 2005; Crawford 2000; Elias, Jackson and Cavana 2004; Newcombe 2003). This review will focus on the utility of stakeholder theory for examining multiple stakeholders in the implementation of public works procurement.

In response, Freeman and McVea (2001) called for future stakeholder research to eschew theoretical debate, and instead use stakeholder theory's insights to examine real world problems:

“the time is right to switch attention to a more pragmatic approach that connects a stakeholder approach to management practice” (Freeman and McVea 2001, p. 204) .

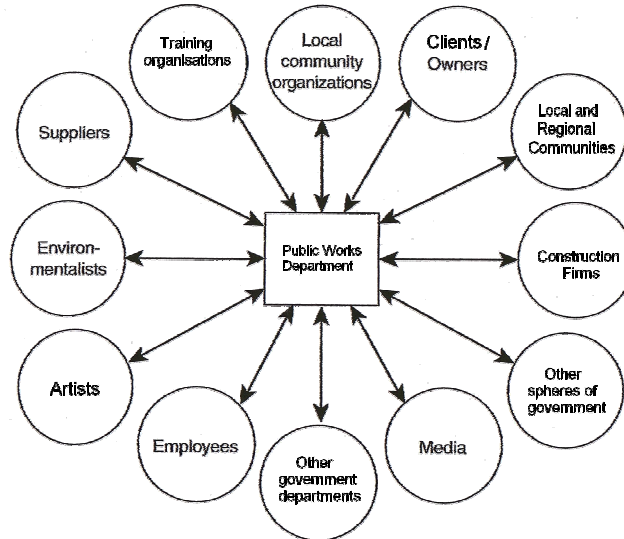
This research proposal follows this call by using stakeholder theory to examine the multiple stakeholders involved in the implementation of capital works projects.

### **Applying stakeholder theory to construction projects and policies**

Construction management, as a field of research, has tended to focus on planning and managing the complex array of activities required to deliver a construction project, such as a road or building (Morris 1994). Being able to manage construction stakeholders expectations and concerns is a crucial skill for managers of construction projects (Vinten 2000), as failure to address these has resulted in countless project failures (Bourne and Walker 2005), primarily because construction stakeholders tend to have the resources and capability to stop construction projects (Lim et al. 2005). Successful completion of construction projects is therefore dependant on meeting the expectation of stakeholders (Cleland 1995). Stakeholders, include clients, project managers, designers, subcontractors, suppliers, funding bodies, users, owners, employees and local communities (Newcombe 2003, pp. 842, 847). As a consequence a robust construction management literature has developed on how to identify and manage stakeholder interests and relationships. An

adaptation of Freeman's (1984) original conceptualization of stakeholders to public works procurement is provided below.

**Figure 1 - Depiction of construction stakeholders (adapted from Freeman 1984)**

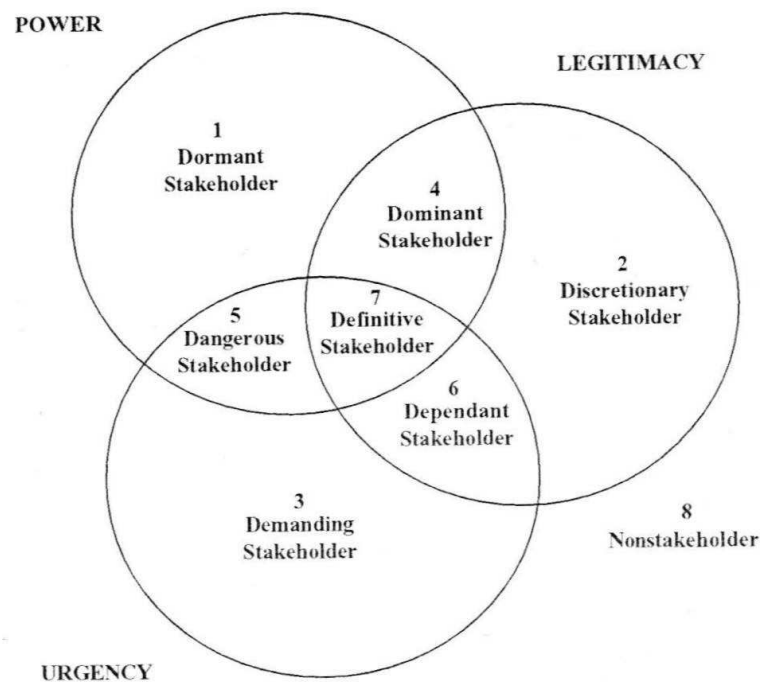


Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) argue that a number of factors can affect the importance a certain stakeholder has in a particular project:

- *Legitimacy* - the moral or legal claim a stakeholder has to influence a particular project;
- *Power* - their capacity to influence the outcome of a given project; and
- *Urgency* - the degree to which their claims are urgent or compelling (Mitchell, Agle and Wood 1997).



**Figure 2 – Typology of stakeholders (Mitchell, Agle and Wood 1997, p. 874)**



Newcombe (2003, p. 844), argues that effective stakeholder management begins “with the identification of key stakeholders... establishing the strategic importance of stakeholder groups then helps organisations determine what the nature of their stakeholder management strategies should be”. Various authors have attempted to operationalise this imperative through deployment of various static grids and matrices which assess the salience of various stakeholders on project outcomes based on their power, legitimacy and urgency.

Jonker and Foster (2002, p. 194) provide a version of this by discussing rationality, criticality, and power as a way forward by operationalise the categorisation of Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997).

Figure 3 – (Jonker and Foster 2002, p. 194)

COMPONENTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP					
ELEMENTS INFLUENCING THE OUTCOMES OF THE	Stake [What are the key issues in the relationship?]	Parties [Who or what are involved?]	Process [What processes are involved in managing the relationship?]	Connections [What form do the connections between the organisation and the stakeholders take?]	
	Power	Does the nature of the claim or stake have implications for the type of power involved?	What type of power do the parties involve use [if required] to obtain a result?	Do some processes result in the exercise of different types of power?	What effects does the form of connections have on the form of power used? OR Is power exercised directly or indirectly?
	Criticality	Why is the interest or stake worth investing time and effort on?	What is it about the attributes, behaviour, attitudes or beliefs of the parties that makes the issue critical [i.e. important enough to engage]?	Are the processes important to the on-going life [operations] of the parties? Is it central to the decision-making process?	How critical or important do each party regard the connections?
	Rationality	How is the interest or stake expressed [cognitive, social or personal]?	What are the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the parties and how do they influence their view of the issue or interest?	Do the processes and procedures affect the opportunity for the understanding based on a broad or narrow conceptualisation of rationality?	Does the form of the connection encourage or discourage dialogue rather than egocentric claims?

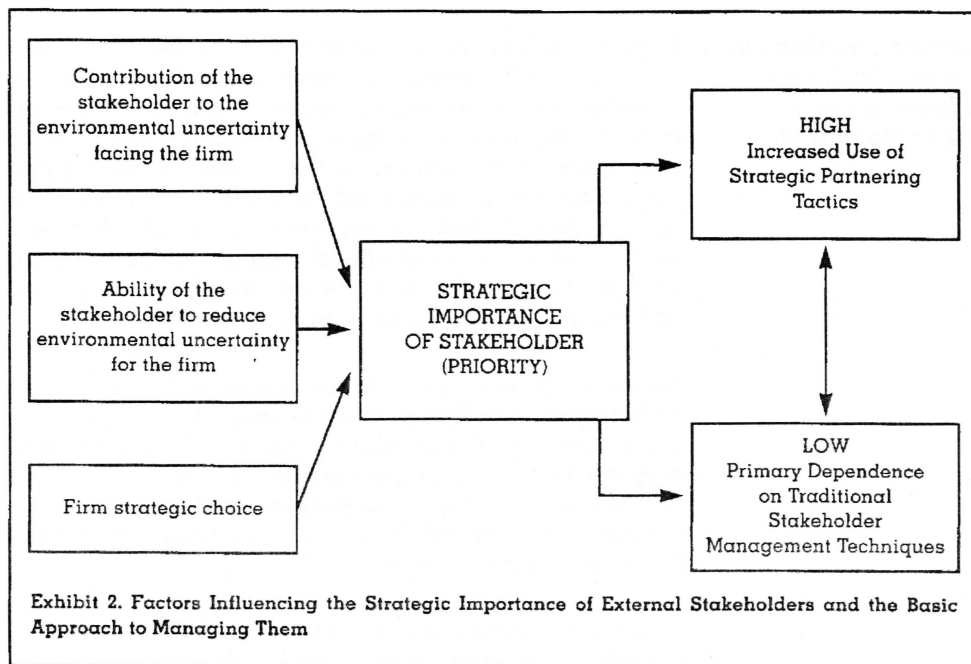
Other authors argue that a tri-dimensional grid is difficult to operationalise and suggest that urgency and legitimacy can be collapsed into a single dimension of ‘interest’:

Figure 3 - Stakeholder analysis – power interest grid (Eden and Ackermann 1998, p. 122)

Interest in the strategy making organisation  ↑	Stakeholders	Subjects	Players
	Unaffected	Crowd	Strategy Context Setters
		Bystanders	Actors
	Power in relation to strategy realisation →		

Harrison and St John (1996) provide a very useful summation of approaches and strategies for managing the various stakeholders involved in procuring capital works

**Figure 4 – (Harrison and St. John 1996)**



A wide variety of approaches have been advanced which approach managing stakeholder relationships as a linear process. The following process has been compiled from a representative sample in the literature (Bunn et al. 2002; Cleland 1999; 1995, p. 151; Preble 2005, p. 415).

1. Identify stakeholder groups
2. Identify stakeholder legitimacy, interests, urgency, resources and power
3. Examine the dynamic relationship between stakeholders
4. Evaluate their likely impact on a project
5. Identify ways of managing stakeholder expectations and influencing stakeholders
6. Prioritise stakeholder demands
7. Develop organizational responses to manage stakeholders
8. Monitor and control stakeholder engagement strategy

### **Managing stakeholders in construction projects and policies**

There are two main approaches to managing relationships with stakeholders (Freeman and McVea 2001) – buffering and bridging. *Buffering* involves establishing barriers between an organization and its stakeholders, in an attempt to limit the effect and influence of stakeholders (Harrison and St.

John 1996). In contrast *bridging* seeks to forge a partnership with a stakeholder by establishing common ground and action (Elias et al. 2004). Hillman and Keim (2001) argue that the latter approach to stakeholder management can build competitive advantage and provide additional resources to the firm. These responses have been ably summarised by (Harrison and St. John 1996) building on the notions of interest and power:

**Figure 5 – Stakeholder interest and power matrix (Harrison and St John 1996)**

		LEVEL OF STAKEHOLDER INTEREST	
		Low	High
STAKEHOLDER POWER	Low	A Expend minimal effort	B Keep stakeholder informed
	High	C Keep stakeholder satisfied	D Stakeholder is a key player

This approach may be somewhat utilitarian in its approach and more ethically, rather than pragmatically, grounded theories of stakeholder management need to be developed (Newcombe 2003).

Another dimension to managing stakeholder relationships was added by Mendelow (1991), who argued that in addition to power and interest, the behavioural predictability of a stakeholder can influence the stakeholder management strategy.

**Figure 6 - Predictability and Power matrix (Mendelow 1991, cited in Johnson and Scholes 2002, p. 208)**

		PREDICTABILITY	
		Low variation	High variation
POWER	Low	A Few problems	B Unpredictable by manageable
	High	C Powerful but predictable	D Greatest danger and opportunity

As noted above, stakeholder interests and expectations can be in conflict with each other (Frooman 1999), and various ways are suggested for managing these competing relationships and interests (Jonker and Foster 2002, p. 194). However, in construction projects, the interests of stakeholders can vary over the life of a project, as can alliances between stakeholders (Friedman and Miles 2002). The rationale for these changes include organizational learning, changing values, and specific experiences (Elias et al. 2004). External reasons have also been cited as causing changes in the objectives of stakeholders, such as a modification of community preferences which in turn influences political, environmental and community stakeholders, government policy, and the position of other stakeholders (Frooman and Murrell 2005).

An ongoing state of flux in stakeholder interests and alliances in construction projects means that static models are inadequate for enabling project managers to manage stakeholder relationships. The most appropriate way for firms to manage these changing stakeholder relationships in changing environments remains to be developed (Hillman and Keim 2001, p. 136).

The processes by which stakeholder relations are managed and the balancing of diverse demands of stakeholder groups is a ripe area for further inquiry. Understanding how stakeholder demands may differ and how managers prioritize each would be a valuable area of future research (Agle et al. 1999).

The literature thus suggests a number of ways of managing stakeholder relationships in construction projects. However, these frameworks tend to under estimate the number of government departments and agencies involved in the planning, procurement and delivery of a building for government. Recent studies have also demonstrated that stakeholder interests can vary over the life of a construction project. Additionally, public works authorities are expected to manage the multiple outcomes which are embedded in public works projects, together with the expectations, goals and values of multiple stakeholders. The area of multi-outcome construction policies is an interesting and under researched field.

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