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**APPROVED**

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# Living downwind from corporate social responsibility: a community perspective on corporate practice

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*This paper critiques dominant corporate social responsibility (CSR) theory, which claims that commercial and social goals overlap and coincide. It is suggested that this uncritical portrayal and treatment of complex industry–community relations risks neglecting the potential tensions that may arise should these goals diverge or be in conflict. In this context, the experiences of residents in a small Western Australian town are presented to describe a long-running conflict between community members and their corporate neighbour. The data point to a range of community impacts as a result of corporate activities and unearth strong differences between ‘local’ and ‘corporate’ understandings of CSR. Based on the perceived shortcomings of an economically underpinned CSR approach, we question the possibility of meeting local needs by means of economic efficiency. Calls are made for critical reflection on the key assumptions underlying dominant CSR theory and consideration is given to questions of guidance for CSR practitioners.*

## Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a widely accepted concept (Blyth 2005, Pedersen 2006) and is traded today as the panacea for many ethical dilemmas faced by the business community (World Business Council for Sustainable Development 2000, Berman & Webb 2003, van Marrewijk 2003, Kemp *et al.* 2005, Costantinos 2006). An expanding body of CSR literature emphasises the direct and indirect economic benefits that can result from the recognition of social and economic interdependencies (McWilliams & Siegel 2001, Vershoor 2001, Brammer & Pavelin 2004, Sparkes & Cowton 2004, Orlitzky 2005) and the possible synergies of contributing positively to social cohesion and community well-being (Burke & Logsdon 1996, Windsor

2001, Hopkins 2003). It also seems as if the message that ‘ethics pays’ (Roberts 2003) has started to resonate with the business sector, evidenced by growing investments in CSR activities across OECD countries (Paton & Siegel 2005).

Nonetheless, in spite of the newly found interest in responsible business conduct, there continue to be limitations to both CSR theory and practice. The business realm remains in the spotlight for immoral business conduct (Cohan 2002, Zalewski 2003, Sarre *et al.* 2001), and terms such as ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘business ethics’ continue to be seen as paradoxical and oxymoronic (Marsden 2000, Frankental 2001, McKenna & Tsahuridu 2001). In this context, it is the aim of this paper to offer empirical insights into two inter-related ‘failings’ of the dominant strand of CSR theory (after Blowfield



2005a). A case study of a long-running industry–community dispute in the South-West of Western Australia (WA) is used to describe the stark differences between ‘local’ and ‘corporate’ understandings of good CSR practice and to highlight the problematic of balancing corporate, economic goals with social expectations at the community level. The ‘failings’ addressed here relate to the economic capture of social issues and the question of CSR effectiveness in terms of whose ends CSR meets and by whom CSR effectiveness is determined.

Firstly, dominant capitalist strands of the CSR literature are premised on an assumed compatibility between companies’ profit motive and broader social and environmental imperatives (Korhonen 2002, Amaeshi & Adi 2007). Paradoxically, this instrumental approach to CSR serves to legitimise a corporate status quo, which arguably gave rise to the CSR debate in the first place. Thus, one ought to question the extent to which the pursuit of corporate self-interest can help address those social and environmental concerns that lie beyond the business case for CSR (Banerjee 2007).

Secondly, we raise the issue of gauging CSR effectiveness based on questions surrounding the judgement of CSR performance (Ryan 2003), the legitimacy of CSR stakeholders (O’Rourke 2003) and the social acceptability of CSR practices (Mikkilä 2003, Gunningham *et al.* 2004). Critical in this regard is the issue of power and the way in which CSR serves the interests of powerful actors in business–society relationships (Blowfield 2005a). This also relates to the measurement of CSR effectiveness, which rarely involves affected minorities at the ‘receiving end of CSR’. These are the communities living under corporatised skies who arguably have the highest moral claim (Gibson 2000) within the CSR debate and perhaps a more suitable vantage point from which to define CSR obligations and to judge the degree to which they have been fulfilled.

In sum, this paper critiques what we perceive as the uncritical and non-reflexive adoption of the CSR rhetoric and the narrow and self-serving framing of the CSR agenda. It will be shown that a blinkered and selective approach to CSR serves to exclude local voices and dissenting, non-economic rationalities, raising doubt over the social acceptability of

the CSR enterprise. These issues will be addressed in more detail below as part of an overview of, and critique on, dominant CSR theory before a presentation of the methods and the case-study data.

## A critique of dominant CSR theory

While ridiculed as a joke by the investment and business community in the 1970s, today, CSR is almost universally endorsed across all spheres of society (Lydenberg 2005). This change in sentiment can be explained in light of the growing need to harmonise the increasingly visible tensions between companies and their changing socio-political contexts (Idowu & Towler 2004). Dominant CSR theory has been able to respond to these challenges, articulating and promoting a business case for CSR that proved instrumental for the widespread adoption of CSR observable across the business realm. The limitations and narrow framing of the business case, however, also set limits to CSR practice.

Early interest in CSR was rooted in critiques of orthodox economics (e.g. Clark 1916). However, the capitalist brand of CSR theory, which currently dominates the CSR field (Korhonen 2002, Amaeshi & Adi 2007), is underpinned by neoclassical economic theory (Blowfield 2005a), today’s prevailing social paradigm (Schafer 1994, Lazear 2000, Korhonen 2002). This brand of CSR is married with the corporate profit motive and sees business’ key social welfare contribution in its ability to maximise shareholder value (Friedman 1970). Although the hard-nosed shareholder-based approach postulated in the 1970s has since lost its stronghold in light of changed expectations on company conduct, the ‘leitmotif of wealth creation’ has remained the cornerstone of dominant CSR discourses (Windsor 2001).

The language of wealth creation gels with managerial thought (Amaeshi & Adi 2007) for it seemingly overcomes the separation of corporate self-interest and social responsibility as even socio-economic objectives can be turned into economic concerns under the banner of ‘enlightened value maximisation’ (Jensen 2002). The concept’s underlying economic rationality provides the business case for CSR, which has been strongly advocated in

1 recent years (World Business Council for Sustainable  
2 Development 2000, Berman & Webb 2003) in  
3 attempts to maximise company buy-in and to  
4 mainstream CSR practices (Lee 2008). These efforts  
5 are also supported by research that seeks to link  
6 good company conduct to various direct and  
7 indirect business benefits (e.g. Turban & Greening  
8 1997, Hillman & Keim 2001, Hopkins 2003, Lewis  
9 2003, Gunningham *et al.* 2004, Sparkes & Cowton  
10 2004, Kotler & Lee 2005, Orlitzky 2005, Porter &  
11 Kramer 2006). To this day, however, many of these  
12 'links' have remained tenuous (Griffin & Mahon  
13 1997, Griffin 2000, McWilliams & Siegel 2001,  
14 Margolis & Walsh 2003, Orlitzky *et al.* 2003).

15 The business case for CSR rests on the inter-  
16 dependencies that are said to exist between business  
17 and society for the creation of jobs, wealth and the  
18 improvement of living standards and social condi-  
19 tions (Hoque 1985). The mutual dependence be-  
20 tween business and society gives rise to the principle  
21 of shared value (Porter & Kramer 2006), which  
22 translates community well-being into companies'  
23 long-term interest and is thus perceived to overcome  
24 entrenched perceptions of an incompatibility be-  
25 tween economic and social goals. The strategic  
26 integration of CSR into a framework of total social  
27 responsibility of business (Lee 2008) is believed to  
28 enable firms to link their capabilities with the  
29 opportunities their social environment presents for  
30 the attainment of both societal benefit and compe-  
31 titive advantage (Collis & Montgomery 1995, Miles  
32 & Covin 2000, Munilla & Miles 2005, Porter &  
33 Kramer 2006). It therefore appears that dominant  
34 CSR theory has been able to shake its image of  
35 being a 'subversive doctrine' that threatens the very  
36 foundation of free enterprise (Friedman 1962 cited  
37 in Lee 2008) and to evolve into what Wallich &  
38 McGowan (1970) call a 'new rationale' that  
39 reconciles social responsibility with shareholder  
40 interests.

41 It is suggested here, however, that the self-  
42 interested pursuit and strategic selection of social  
43 problems are inherently limited and do not represent  
44 a departure from the contractarian, 'Friedmanite'  
45 position (after Galbreath 2006). In expounding,  
46 dominant CSR theory effectively seeks to balance  
47 what Banerjee (2006) calls the efficiency–legitimacy  
48 dichotomy. This dichotomy bespeaks the corporate<sup>1</sup>

situation of being legally obliged to engage in rent-  
seeking behaviour while needing to maintain a social  
license to operate by demonstrating 'civic virtue'  
(Regan 1998). In this regard, CSR allows for  
business as usual with a social twist. CSR beyond  
the business case continues to strike as illusory for it  
remains irreconcilable with company interests and  
legal obligations where the interests of business do  
not merge with the interests of society (Newell 2001,  
Banerjee 2007). While altruistic or humanitarian  
orientations of CSR call for corporate contributions  
to social welfare beyond arguments of economic  
efficiency (Carroll 1991, Kok *et al.* 2001), these calls  
are dismissed frequently, for they are considered to  
fall outside the 'firm's proper scope of activities'  
(Lantos 2001: 605). Arguably, there lies the tension;  
the protection of social interests that economic  
orthodoxy does not cater for and laws at times fail  
to protect. Social interests seem to remain outside  
the corporate mindset, which essentially is an  
economic mindset that CSR attempts to 'socialise'  
(after Banerjee 2006), but without challenging its  
fundamental values (Blowfield 2005a).

The economic rationality that dominates the CSR  
field also tends to dominate other rationalities in  
public debates behind a façade of purported  
objectivity (Nevile 1997, Handmer *et al.* 2001, van  
Bavel & Gaskell 2004). Within the CSR field, this  
has led to the legitimising of exclusive ways of  
thinking about CSR and the prevention of a critical  
debate (Blowfield 2005a) as dissenting viewpoints  
are discredited and rejected. The closedness of  
economic rationality (Dryzek 1996, Hamilton  
2002, Özel 2002, Fergus & Rowney 2005) potentially  
renders an economically underpinned CSR theory  
ineffective to address the very social dilemmas it is  
meant to solve because its underlying reductionism  
only lends itself poorly to a complete understanding  
of the CSR problematic. As a result, critical  
structural and procedural aspects of industry–  
community conflicts as they relate to issues such as  
power and stakeholder dissent tend to be overlooked  
and to fall outside the realm of critical analysis. It is  
argued in this paper in light of the case study  
presented below that an openness is required to  
dissent as well as an awareness of power differentials  
as only then can business–society tensions be  
addressed meaningfully.

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1 With regard to the measurement of CSR effec-  
 2 tiveness, which is chiefly part of the managerial  
 3 domain (Mikkilä 2003), a similar degree of openness  
 4 may be required. This may entail the use of  
 5 stakeholder-informed performance appraisals to  
 6 qualify and indeed challenge in-house assumptions  
 7 about the nature and virtues of CSR practice  
 8 without the risk of economic capture and to help  
 9 foster what Pater & van Lierop (2006) call ‘shared  
 10 sensemaking’ of CSR issues. In this way, systemic  
 11 blind spots can be identified and critical reflection  
 12 can occur. In contrast, a closed, blinkered or  
 13 selective approach to the management of companies’  
 14 social environments will only serve to maintain the  
 15 status quo. Herein lies the challenge for CSR theory:  
 16 needing to provide guidance for the corporate  
 17 navigation through messy business–community dis-  
 18 putes and enabling connections with the world  
 19 beyond the boundaries of cost–benefit analysis. An  
 20 open and reflective CSR can help companies deal  
 21 with the issues that fall into the discretionary grey  
 22 area of ethical CSR (Carroll 1991, Lantos 2001) that  
 23 have fuelled the CSR debate for many years. The  
 24 case study and subsequent discussion will show why

calls for more debate on these shades of grey are  
 justified and necessary but also why any optimism  
 about the corporate embrace of CSR beyond the  
 business case may be misplaced.

### Case study: The Yarloop experience

The small town of Yarloop is located approximately  
 125 km south of Perth, WA’s state capital (see  
 Figure 1). Since white settlement in Yarloop in 1849,  
 the town gained in regional significance due to  
 agriculture as well as timber and steam engine  
 production. Over the years, as traditional industries  
 started to wane, metropolitan ‘lifestylers’ moved to  
 the area, seeking the peace and tranquillity of rural  
 living and taking advantage of Yarloop’s geographic  
 location nestled between the Indian Ocean and  
 native forest. In the mid 1990s, Yarloop had a  
 population of approximately 620 residents, who,  
 compared with the regional average, enjoyed high  
 levels of household income, high levels of home  
 ownership (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996a, b)  
 and prided themselves, as the case study will attest,

Figure 1: Locality of Yarloop in Western Australia



Sources: Google (2007), Shire of Harvey (2007), Hopper (1992), Beard (1982).

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1 with a strong sense of place and community  
2 cohesion. In short, Yarloop was seen by residents  
3 as a 'piece of paradise'.

4 Today, Yarloop is described by long-term local  
5 residents as 'a depressing place', and media coverage  
6 speaks of living 'at death's door' (Bruce 2008),  
7 painting a picture of a 'dying town'. Over the last 10  
8 years, Yarloop experienced sharp economic decline,  
9 losing most of its local businesses, including two  
10 petrol stations, the local shop and the hospital  
11 (Hepburn 2007). Local statistics attest to a 45%  
12 decline in the region's population, a decline in  
13 property values and a shift from private home  
14 ownership to rental accommodation (Australian  
15 Bureau of Statistics 1996b, 2002, 2006; Walker  
16 2002, Chartres & Rowland 2004). Overall, around  
17 80% of residents who were living in Yarloop in 1997  
18 are believed to have left the area, signalling dramatic  
19 social changes in the town. Many long-term  
20 residents, who were interviewed during the research  
21 reported on in this paper, attributed this change to  
22 the presence of Alcoa's Wagerup alumina refinery,  
23 which is located just north of the town's boundary.

24 Alcoa is a US-based company and one of the  
25 world's largest producers of aluminium. In WA,  
26 trading under the name of Alcoa World Alumina,  
27 the company operates two bauxite mines and three  
28 alumina refineries, from where it produces around 7  
29 million tonnes of alumina each year. This accounts  
30 for 13% of the total world demand and delivers  
31 export earnings of around A\$2.8 billion (Alcoa  
32 2006a, 2007a). Alcoa prides itself as a significant  
33 contributor to the WA economy and sees itself as  
34 being axiomatic for sustainable development in the  
35 region (Alcoa 2005a, c, g). The company also claims  
36 to be a socially minded and environmentally  
37 responsible business (Alcoa 2005a, 2007b), also  
38 having its achievements in these areas recognised  
39 both nationally and internationally (Reputex 2003,  
40 Australian Mining 2007, Innovest Strategic Value  
41 Advisors 2008). Alcoa promotes itself as a socially  
42 responsible industry leader, claiming that CSR 'is  
43 ingrained and part of the company's DNA' (Alcoa  
44 2009: 5) and to be operating in an open and honest  
45 way, being accountable to its host communities  
46 (Benson 2008).

47 As will be shown, the company denies claims of  
48 adversely impacting on the health and well-being of

local residents, pointing to a wealth of scientific  
studies (e.g. Mercer 2001, Cullen 2002, Cook 2003,  
Donoghue & Cullen 2007), which purportedly show  
no toxicological link between residents' health  
complaints and the company's operations. In fact,  
Alcoa considers the health and safety of its staff and  
local communities in which it operates a top priority  
and as integral to its business (Alcoa 2008a).

Alcoa began operations on its present site at  
Wagerup in 1984 after having purchased surrepti-  
tiously farming properties in the area in the 1970s  
(Kelly 1976, Murray 1976). Despite a series of  
environmental protests largely organised by envi-  
ronmental groups from Perth (Hughes 1980) and  
concerns expressed by some local residents about the  
presence of an alumina refinery on their doorstep  
(Langley 1976), the arrival of the industry was  
generally welcomed, promising local employment  
and income amidst a decline in traditional industries  
in the area (Anon 1976, Dames & Moore Con-  
sultancy 1978).

Industry–community relations changed in the mid  
1990s when Alcoa installed a liquor burner<sup>2</sup> at its  
Wagerup refinery, which triggered complaints by  
refinery workers and local residents about noise,  
odour and health problems. Similar problems arose  
at Alcoa's Kwinana refinery following the installa-  
tion of a smaller liquor burner unit in 1989  
(Southwell 2001). Alcoa attempted to fix technical  
problems with the liquor burner at Wagerup and yet  
denied any responsibility for adverse health impacts  
on the local community, merely making allowances  
for impacts in the form of noise and odour (e.g.  
Alcoa 2005f, 2006f). While company-internal docu-  
ments acknowledge potential health impacts from  
refinery emissions (Southwell 2002), Alcoa claimed  
repeatedly that the concentrations of harmful  
substances were within health and safety guidelines  
(evidence given to the Standing Committee on  
Environment and Public Affairs 2004, Alcoa 2005f).

Community agitation continued and peaked in  
terms of media coverage between 2001 and 2002  
(e.g. Utting 2001, 2002) amidst attempts by Alcoa to  
introduce a land management plan (Alcoa 2001,  
2002), which effectively divided the town of Yarloop  
into two different management areas, fuelling  
anxiety among community members. This was not  
only because a planned buffer zone was seen as an

1 admission of something being wrong with the  
2 refinery but also because residents within the  
3 two land management areas were being treated  
4 differently, which served to split the community  
5 (Ross 2003).

6 Alcoa sought to own the land closest to the  
7 refinery so as to have an effective noise buffer and to  
8 avoid ongoing complaints from local residents  
9 (Miraudo 2001b). This area became known as Area  
10 A, and residents in that area were made offers by the  
11 company to sell their land and properties. Residents  
12 outside Area A initially did not receive buyout  
13 offers, even though they believed they were also  
14 affected by noise and health impacts from the  
15 refinery. While Alcoa eventually also agreed to buy  
16 properties in what became Area B, the properties  
17 purchased were bought at lower prices than proper-  
18 ties in Area A, leading to further community  
19 disquiet. The nature of the conflict changed, no  
20 longer being driven exclusively by fears of impacts  
21 but also equity and financial concerns.

22 The conflict reached a new height around 2005  
23 and 2006 when the company proposed to expand its  
24 Wagerup operation with a view to almost double its  
25 output capacity (Alcoa 2005b), triggering fears of  
26 larger emissions and community impacts (Flint  
27 2006b). In the face of considerable public opposition  
28 to the proposal (Yarloop and Districts Concerned  
29 Residents' Group 2005, Community Alliance for  
30 Positive Solutions Inc 2006) and concerns raised by  
31 medical practitioners about unresolved health issues  
32 (Holman *et al.* 2005, Flint 2006a), the WA state  
33 government approved Alcoa's expansion plan in  
34 2006 (McGowan 2006). Notwithstanding Alcoa's  
35 seeming success in having obtained expansion ap-  
36 proval, community agitation continued. While  
37 Alcoa announced recently that it has put its  
38 expansion plans on hold citing the global financial  
39 downturn (Alcoa 2008b), a multi-million dollar class  
40 action is currently being mounted against the  
41 company by local residents (ABC News 2008). The  
42 writ accuses Alcoa of 'knowingly, negligently and  
43 recklessly operating its factory and poisoning  
44 surrounding communities with toxic emissions'  
45 (Business WA Today 2009). Concurrently, Alcoa  
46 faces court in WA charged by the Department of  
47 Environment and Conservation for alleged pollution  
48 with criminal negligence at the Wagerup refinery

(Australian Associated Press 2009). At the time of  
writing, both court cases were ongoing.

In sum, the long-running conflict surrounding the  
Wagerup alumina refinery has not been resolved to  
date. The case study below will shed light on the  
nature and the reasons underlying the persistence of  
the conflict.

## Method

The data presented below are derived from a series  
of interviews conducted as part of a broader inves-  
tigation into the Wagerup conflict. The research was  
carried out by Brueckner between September 2006  
and October 2007, which was initiated in response to  
growing community concerns about the proposed  
expansion of the Wagerup refinery at the time. The  
aim was to document and analyse the long-running  
conflict between members of the Yarloop commu-  
nity and Alcoa with a view to identifying possible  
pathways for a resolution of the Wagerup contro-  
versy and to distil lessons for the prevention of  
similar industry–community conflicts.

## Sampling

Based on snowball sampling (Goodman 1961,  
Babbie 1992), data were collected from a broad  
cross-section of stakeholders involved in the Wager-  
up conflict (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup> The snowballing process  
commenced with targeted sampling (Watters &  
Biernacki 1989) through the identification of a small  
group of research participants whose selection was  
based on their centrality within the debate but also  
their willingness and ability to participate. The  
centrality criterion required individuals to have been  
'recognised actors' in public records such as media  
reports (e.g. Manton & Dortch 2003), corporate  
communications (e.g. Alcoa 2005d) and parliamen-  
tary proceedings (e.g. WA Parliamentary Debates –  
Hansard 2006).

A 'snowball' of participants emerged as initial  
interviews led to further interviews and a successive  
widening of the circle of research participants.  
Saturation was reached as fewer new names were  
being suggested and, most importantly, no addi-  
tional insights were gained through the interview  
process. The adequacy of the sample size was

**Table 1: Groups of participants**

Participant grouping	Sampling technique	Number of interviews
Local residents	Target sampling	4
	Snowball sampling	51
	Volunteer sampling	5
Company staff	Target sampling	2
	Snowball sampling	3
	Volunteer sampling	2
Media	Snowball sampling	2
External consultants	Target sampling	2
	Snowball sampling	3
Public servants	Snowball sampling	4
State politicians	Snowball sampling	2
	Volunteer sampling	1
Total		81

determined by the degree to which divergent views were covered through the sampling process (Heckathorn 1997).

A volunteer sample complemented the snowball sample described above. A volunteer sample evolves through the self-nomination of participants following the public announcement of a study (Yin 2003). In this case, the research was advertised in the local newspaper and on local radio, inviting respective readers and listeners to register their interest in participating. The research was announced publicly to create awareness of the study as well as to cast a wide net for the capture of different perspectives. Based on the two sampling methods used, data were collected from a total of 81 interviews (Table 1).

### Data collection

Because of the exploratory nature of the research, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005). This form of in-depth interviewing is conversational in style, facilitating the exploration of complexities and different subjective interpretations and meanings (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). It encourages participants to share their views on and experiences with the issues discussed (Wengraf 2001), making it a suitable data-collection vehicle for the purposes of this study. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and then imported into QSR NVivo 7.0 (QSR NVivo 2006) for data analysis.

### Data analysis

As this study sought to analyse the nature and dynamics of the Wagerup conflict based on the perceptions of different research participants, a thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the interview data (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis involves the encoding qualitative data in the search for patterns and themes that help explain social phenomena (Aronson 1994, Boyatzis 1998, Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Themes are developed through the careful iterative and reflexive examination and re-examination of the raw interview data (Rice & Ezzy 1999). The data analysis began with the inductive coding of important moments, which capture the richness of social phenomena (Boyatzis 1998). 'Emerging themes' were counted as themes in this study when interview data addressed the guiding research questions.

- What gave rise to the conflict?
- How have you (family, friends, community) been impacted?
- What continues to drive the conflict?
- How can the conflict be solved?

A subsequent search for commonalities and differences among the individual accounts of the Wagerup conflict led to the clustering of themes (Platt 1981). The use of clusters was based on assumptions about the homogeneity of conflict stakeholders' views of the events at Wagerup. The validity of these assumptions was tested throughout the study via constant reference to the interview data and the triangulation of the interview data with information derived from other Wagerup-related data sources such as corporate communications and media reports as well as public inquiries and research reports.

The themes that emerged from the interviews were pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of research participants' experiences of the events at Wagerup. Each theme contained selected interview fragments, which were left intact as much as possible so as to minimise author intervention. Select interview data shown in this paper are presented parenthetically to enable participants to tell their story. For confidentiality reasons, however, individual participants cannot be identified.

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## Rigour and validity

Statistical representativeness was not a prime requirement for this study as its key objective was to understand a complex social process. Nonetheless, as the majority of interviews conducted involved community members, 'informant representativeness' ought to be addressed here (Miles & Huberman 1993). It is understood that the sampling techniques used proved to be prone to selection bias. However, through the use of different sampling techniques, an attempt was made to exhaust the discourse variety to a point where no new data could be obtained from further interviews. The representativeness of opinions, events and activities (Miles & Huberman 1993) was ascertained through the detailed description of the history of the conflict and of other pertinent, contextual information using different data sources. Therefore, strong sentiments expressed during interviews could be interpreted in light of rich external data. Furthermore, much time was spent to establish an indepth understanding of the research setting during the data-collection process. Over a period of 12 months, regular visits to Yarloop and extended stays helped develop an enhanced familiarity with, and sensitivity to, the specifics of the local setting (Mays & Pope 1995), facilitating learning and context-bound extrapolation (Patton 1990). Overall, data robustness was ascertained through the corroboration of interview data with information derived from other sources and close attention to context.

Also, in terms of validity, member checks were used to ensure that both the interview transcripts and the research findings yielded a 'faithful' depiction of participants' experiences (Miles & Huberman 1993). During the data analysis, feedback was also sought from colleagues who were asked to 'play devil's advocate' (Marshall & Rossman 1995) to critically question the approach adopted in this study and the conclusions reached. To this end, select findings of this study were also presented at a university research seminar (Brueckner 2009) and at an international conference (Brueckner 2008). The feedback provided at these events helped us remain theory-minded (Patton 1990) and aided critical reflection on assumptions and inferences made.

This study intended to capture multiple experiences with, and perceptions of, the same social phenomenon. We sought to arrive at a coherent, stakeholder-informed account of the events at Wagerup, identifying commonalities and points of difference in an opaque, emotionally charged and very complex, politicised conflict. Consequently, multiple, highly subjective and conflicting readings of this conflict were to be expected (Burr 2003). In this regard, at issue here is not the objectivity of the results but their trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1986). Therefore, the results presented below, the limited generalisability of which we recognise, ought not to be judged in terms of their truthfulness but their usefulness to research and their contribution (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, Burr 2003) to the CSR debate.

## Research paradigm

Following the critical research's agenda of social critique (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994), we side with the least powerful participants in this conflict; these are the community members who claim to be adversely affected by the presence and activities of their corporate neighbour. These community members are considered 'vulnerable', a social construction broadly understood here in terms of individuals lacking choice and control over their own destiny and being affected by the actions of others (Armstrong 1997). More specifically, vulnerability relates to both experienced status inequality (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005) and experiences of real and perceived harm (Moore & Miller 1999). Status inequality refers to small communities frequently lacking autonomy and the resources to defend their rights and quality of life or to gain access to decision makers to improve their situation (Adams & Hess 2001, Dovers 2002, Ross 2007). The experience of real or perceived harm relates to the exposure to risks to community welfare, the lack of access to safeguards for community protection and to having experiences of harm recognised (Wakefield 1996, Hewitt 1997).

We intend to foreground the voices of so-called 'hidden' or 'invisible' community members (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005), individuals who are often unable to be heard in the spheres where politics and

1 economics meet and where their lives are affected by  
2 decisions made about regional development. By  
3 championing and promoting subordinate commu-  
4 nity discourses, we hope to shed light on the impact  
5 of power and politics at work in industry–commu-  
6 nity conflicts and in this context problematise the  
7 dominant CSR discourse (Burman & Parke 1993),  
8 which was shown earlier to be uncritical in its  
9 portrayal of industry–community relations and  
10 existing power dynamics (Blowfield 2005a).

## 11 Findings: intangible issues of conflict

12 Because of its complex nature, the Wagerup conflict  
13 cannot be dealt with here in its entirety. Therefore,  
14 attention is focused on a selection of key issues only.  
15 Much of the Wagerup conflict was driven by con-  
16 cerns about health and financial compensation.  
17 However, issues such as these will need to be deter-  
18 mined by the courts and are not the subject of this  
19 paper. The issues presented below are related but far  
20 less intangible social issues, which were identified by  
21 Yarloop residents and were also captured by pre-  
22 vious community-based inquiries (Croft 2005, Walk-  
23 er 2005). As will become apparent, these issues were  
24 integral to the community<sup>4</sup> disquiet about Alcoa's  
25 Wagerup operation and included perceived impacts  
26 on:

- 27 • families and friends;
- 28 • historical connections;
- 29 • future dreams and plans; and
- 30 • quality of life.

31 The above issues were selected because they are at  
32 risk of being overlooked in CSR debates, which are  
33 often centred on issues that can be measured,  
34 quantified and, if the need arises, monetised. Intan-  
35 gible values, however, such as people's connection to  
36 place, are often not articulated, inherently difficult  
37 to measure and therefore likely not to be registered  
38 by a quantitatively driven, rational CSR mindset.  
39 Yet, the case study highlights that values such as  
40 these are deep-rooted and their overriding can serve  
41 to aggravate conflict despite rational attempts at  
42 problem resolution.

43 As indicated earlier, in the eyes of long-term  
44 residents, Yarloop was a place with 'a very close knit

community', strong social cohesion and good  
quality of life.

It was an absolutely wonderful little town. Every-  
body looked after everybody.

The community at that point . . . was very close  
knit. People would help one another, if someone  
was in need or needed financial help or had prob-  
lems, someone would come along and give you a  
hand.

By comparison, Yarloop today was described by the  
same residents as being 'totally different now,  
because . . . a good 80% . . . of the original residents  
have sold up and left the town.' These days, life in  
Yarloop was considered 'scary' and 'horrible'. The  
place was seen as a 'ghost town' where 'the quality  
of life . . . ha[d] just disintegrated'.

Dead! It just doesn't seem to have any life any  
more.

A shit-hole! Honestly, I could not live there . . . the  
atmosphere, what you can see in Yarloop, it has  
deteriorated that much.

These changes were attributed to Alcoa's operation  
and the impacts it was having on the community.

One impact most local residents cited in connec-  
tion with the enduring Wagerup conflict was the toll  
it took on families. Health problems or the fear of  
being affected by pollution from the refinery have  
led to much family-internal friction, the up-rooting  
or the separation of close family units.

The families have all broken up. It was a very  
family community and everyone knew each other  
and that's not there any more, it's all broken off.  
People have split up and gone to different towns,  
different places due to the threat of pollution from  
Alcoa and future expansion from it and people  
have moved on.

My grandchildren no longer come here because  
they get sore eyes, itchy skin, blood noses and all  
the classic symptoms of the effects of Alcoa, so my  
grandchildren won't come here.

Well, it was either [move] or get a divorce . . . In the  
end, [my partner] said we either sell up or I'm out of  
here, and I couldn't blame her. She'd had enough.

The effects on families were also felt more widely  
because of an exodus of many long-term residents,

1 which meant that not only were family relationships  
2 being affected but also friendships across town,  
3 disrupting a large part of the community.

4 So my loss is the friendship, the connection I've  
5 had with all the friends and people I grew up with.  
6 Now there's probably only a handful left at this  
7 point.

8 The social connection, the friendship, the people  
9 looking after each other, the way this town was  
10 close and worked together. That part of it there is  
11 gone and that's what I miss the most . . . the part of  
12 the friends that I had. Yeah, it isn't the same town  
13 I used to know.

14 As a result of the local upheaval, many residents  
15 expressed a sense of depression and resentment  
16 towards Alcoa.

17 I don't like living in Yarloop any more because of  
18 the negative attitude portrayed about the town and  
19 just the negativity of living here.

20 I have lost a great deal of my enjoyment of life. I  
21 have only got one considered friend left in town  
22 and he's stranded here because he can't get out.

23 It's a very bitter town. People are very angry

24 Impacts were also felt in other areas of residents'  
25 lives, impacts that went beyond people and prop-  
26 erty. There was a widespread sense of emotional loss  
27 as it relates to local history as well as residents'  
28 future plans and quality of life. With regard to  
29 people's historical connection to Yarloop, locals  
30 were grieving the loss of long-standing family ties to  
31 the area, and as residents moved away from the  
32 area, local family histories became fractured.

33 I was third generation Yarloopian and [my  
34 children were the] fourth generation . . . in  
35 Yarloop. There will never ever be a fifth generation  
36 . . . in Yarloop. That's my history gone . . .

37 . . . there is an emotional thing in moving from  
38 somewhere where you've been – you've had  
39 generations of family that have established what  
40 you've got, that's hard to replace, it can never be  
41 replaced.

42 Many residents, especially farmers, had long-term  
43 plans for their retirement and the hope of being  
44 able to hand over family farms to their children,  
45 which were seen to have been disrupted by impacts

the refinery was believed to be having on the  
community.

I always intended to stay there for ever and a day  
because my son was going to take on the farm, and  
we had about four acres there and we built a new  
home and we had it going pretty good and  
everything was going pretty good until the kids  
came along and they were getting crook.

It's just disappointing how it's turned out. Well,  
for me, I thought I had my life mapped out. And  
now I've had the rug pulled from underneath me.

The statements illustrate the impact felt by local  
residents from having Alcoa as their corporate  
neighbour. It will be shown below that local expe-  
riences such as these, however, were marginalised by  
Alcoa and not recognised as legitimate CSR issues  
because the company denied having adverse impacts  
on the community.

### Alcoa's interpretation of the conflict

Alcoa staff agreed that the installation of the liquor  
burner in the mid 1990s gave rise to the conflict.  
Staff conceded that 'Alcoa had a great deal of  
difficulty in getting the plant to operate effectively  
and operate the way it was designed'. Yet, opera-  
tional problems on site were not seen to be related to  
community complaints about poor health. Instead,  
health symptoms were largely considered psychoso-  
matic manifestations.

I think around this whole issue from a health  
perspective and particularly a public health per-  
spective it's a very fragile thing and if people think  
that they're unwell they will be unwell. . . . as issues  
were raised others realised that they've been  
affected and so you ended up with a lot of people  
believing that they've been affected.

Alcoa staff seemed convinced that the Wagerup site  
was 'the most measured piece of atmosphere in the  
world'. Thus, there was a view that '[Alcoa] had all  
[its] bases covered, [the company] had all [its]  
measurements. [Alcoa] had all of the health guide-  
lines and so forth and there wasn't an issue . . . since  
[the company] ha[d]n't really been able to find  
anything that would create a conventional health  
risk'. This meant that community concerns were

1 countered with science, which also served to harden  
2 the company's conviction that it was 'doing no  
3 harm'. However, local residents questioned Alcoa's  
4 certainty and challenged corporate science.

5 I just don't think they know what they're doing.

6 They're not going to do anything about the  
7 emissions because quite simply they don't know  
8 where a lot of them are coming from, and they  
9 don't know how to control them.

10 ... the pure and simple fact is that the science of  
11 chemicals is still in its infancy and certainly the  
12 medical aspect of that is even further in its infancy

13 Alcoa recognised that local residents 'felt like the  
14 refinery was intruding on their lives but they  
15 couldn't get out'. In response to this, Alcoa  
16 developed its land management plan with the aim  
17 that 'people could leave gracefully if they wanted to'.

18 [We] issued a land management strategy and the  
19 idea was that it identified a line around the refinery  
20 ... and what it said was Alcoa would like to own  
21 the land within that area and so it would put an  
22 offer on the table for anyone who lived in that  
23 area. ... The idea was that if people closest to the  
24 refinery really wanted to leave then Alcoa would  
25 help them do that.

26 The creation of Area A resulted in community  
27 outrage because 'there was a perceived inequity  
28 there', which is why Alcoa expanded its land  
29 management plan, and 'Area B was put in place to  
30 address some of the inequity'. 'The consequences of  
31 that ... [however] were fairly dramatic' as different  
32 buyout offers to local residents served to divide the  
33 town and intensify perceptions of inequity. None-  
34 theless, the price differential was considered justified  
35 '[b]ecause Alcoa [could} not find a bit of science that  
36 says it's having an impact out there [Area B] ...'.

### 37 Local expectations of CSR

38 For many community members, process was a  
39 decisive aspect of the Wagerup conflict as percep-  
40 tions of poor treatment were believed to have fuelled  
41 the conflict. In this context, local residents expressed  
42 the expectations they had of Alcoa for dealing with

the conflict. Broadly, these expectations can be  
captured under the four headings listed below:

- fix your problems;
- be open and honest;
- be accountable; and
- be respectful and compassionate.

First and foremost, many residents did not seek  
compensation nor did they wish to be bought out by  
Alcoa. Primarily, there was a desire for the company  
to improve its operations so as not to impact on the  
community.

It was never an issue of selling up and moving out  
of town; it was for Alcoa to fix up the problem on  
their side of the fence. And we stated that very  
publicly ... that we want you to fix it; we don't  
want to move away; we want you to fix the  
problem.

The majority, or all the people I know of, actually  
said 'Fix your problem. Leave the town alone'.

There was also a sense that the company should  
have been more open and honest in the way it was  
dealing with the community when problems first  
started to emerge.

If they had of been straight out, open and honest  
and ... even just a little bit generous, people  
wouldn't have been worried. They would have  
even sat down at the table to work out how to stay  
in Yarloop rather than move out of Yarloop.

In this regard, Alcoa also stood accused of not being  
accountable in the eyes of residents for the damage  
the company caused, denying that problems existed.  
This also served to highlight the power differentials  
at play, as there was a sense that ultimately the  
company determined the process.

Number one ... is to acknowledge the problem  
exists rather than just flatly deny and continue to  
claim 'We operate the world's best practice, we are  
a benchmark'.

Alcoa ain't gonna move. Nobody wants Alcoa to  
stop production. We want them to be accountable.

We're just little nothings to them.

It was always what Alcoa wanted, how they  
wanted and when they wanted [it] regardless of

1 what anybody else thought, wanted, desired or  
2 anything else, and that's how the process has been.

3 Importantly, the question of how the company  
4 engaged with the community was seen as critical. A  
5 missing aspect, according to residents, was an  
6 element of respect and compassion that purportedly  
7 would have helped diffuse the situation.

8 Well, they shouldn't have come in and treated the  
9 locals originally like hillbillies, country hicks.

10 They didn't care less; they didn't care because they  
11 didn't believe us. They actually sat there and  
12 mocked me.

13 Show a bit of compassion. That's right, that's what  
14 you want.

15 You've got a company that doesn't have any  
16 scruples morally vs. people with feelings.

17 In summary, the statements provide an indication  
18 about the degree to which community members felt  
19 affected by what they perceived as the deterioration  
20 of the social relationships within their community as  
21 well as those between the company and Yarloop  
22 residents. In what follows, local sentiments are  
23 compared with responses from Alcoa staff, which  
24 combined will inform an ensuing analysis and  
25 discussion.

### 26 Alcoa's responses to the conflict

27 This section details some of Alcoa's response's to the  
28 Wagerup conflict as they relate to matters of  
29 process. It will be shown that the company seem-  
30 ingly focused rigidly on 'good' consultation princi-  
31 ples such as openness and transparency. However,  
32 the social acceptability and suitability of these  
33 measures were seemingly not considered. Also, it  
34 bears note at this stage that the processes used by  
35 Alcoa and their respective community impacts were  
36 judged differently by managers within the company  
37 ('there are lots of different views within Alcoa in  
38 terms of how it was handled'). An analysis of the  
39 heterogeneity of views held within the company,  
40 however, is beyond the scope of this paper (for a  
41 detailed analysis of company-internal dynamics, see  
42 Brueckner & Ross, forthcoming). The selected  
43 comments below lend expression to the dominant

company response that is also mirrored in corporate  
communications and ultimately determined the  
nature of the conflict.

Alcoa managers believed that the company  
engaged with the community in good faith, giving  
people ample opportunity to voice their opinions  
and having input into the company's decision  
making with regard to land management and other  
operational issues. Over the years, many forums and  
working groups were established that were open for  
anybody to attend.

The people who went on the working groups self-  
elected; they self-selected. As I said to you there  
were litigants on those groups.

We advertise it in the paper and if there's a  
particular agenda item they're interested in they  
can come; they can come for one meeting or they  
can come for as long as they like.

Yet, many of these forums were not being attended  
by local residents critical of Alcoa because it was felt  
that the meetings were '[b]iased completely towards  
Alcoa'. As suggested by local residents:

They would select who could be on it and then they  
would boost these people up and give them big ego  
boosts by saying that you are representing your  
community, well done fellows. Then they would  
walk into the committee meeting and say 'This is  
what we are going to achieve today. . . . to me that  
is not what I consider community consultation.

With regard to corporate communications, staff  
believed that Alcoa kept the community adequately  
informed, confirmed by the positive feedback the  
company received from the community.

. . . we had a lot of different facets to the  
engagement framework one of which was these  
newsletters and we've had some really interesting  
feedback from them. . . . we've had feedback . . .  
and the majority reckoned that the amount of  
communication is about right. People want to  
know a lot; they want to know in a form that's  
very digestible for them and for their families.

Alcoa's media campaign was focused heavily on the  
local and regional economic benefits the refinery and  
its future expansion would bring to the region,  
citing, inter alia, increases in local employment, tax  
revenue and infrastructure developments (Alcoa

2006b, c). Emphasis was also placed on the support the company received from local residents, businesses and company employees (Alcoa 2006b, d). Dissenting voices were also targeted by company advertising in local newspapers, accusing what was called a 'small minority' of making 'false allegations' and 'exaggerated claims' based on 'personal agendas' (Alcoa 2006e). The 'attacks' against Alcoa were labelled 'counter-productive and based on misinformation', adversely 'impact[ing] community morale' (Alcoa 2006e). Overall, there was a strong belief among Alcoa management that dissidents constituted only a small section of the community, which did not represent the wishes and aspirations of the wider community.<sup>5</sup>

What we see is the vast majority of people want to stay there. They're happy. They want the town to prosper. . . . We're pretty confident that that's what people want to do and that's the truth. . . . We hope very much [the expansion goes ahead] because there will be a lot of disappointed people if it doesn't; people who want to see the jobs.

The majority of people are pretty comfortable and happy to stay there and want the town to go ahead.

Between 2002 and 2006, the number of community complaints to the company had declined, which was attributed, among other factors, to changes in the way the company responded to community concerns. This in turn was seen as a gauge for success.

There were changes made to the land management policy. There were some very big changes made to engaging people and listening to people, like the community, and there were also some emission changes made during that time including further noise reductions but . . . the thing for Alcoa is . . . that the number of complaints has decreased greatly.

Overall, Alcoa staff conceded that mistakes had been made over the last 10 years in terms of preventing and managing the Wagerup conflict. At the same time, there was a belief that the company had learnt from its mistakes and started to engage more effectively with the local community (Osborn 2004).

## Discussion and concluding comments

The case study gave voice to local perceptions of real or perceived harm resulting from Alcoa's Wagerup refinery, which were shown to be at the core of this industry–community dispute. Alcoa's former managing director Wayne Osborne issued an unreserved apology to the community on behalf of the company. However, the issues driving this conflict have not disappeared. The ongoing controversy is indicative of high levels of continued community unease and resistance, reflecting poorly on past attempts to solve the conflict. As suggested by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (2004: 370), which conducted a 3-year investigation into the events at Wagerup, 'Alcoa failed to adequately recognise and respond to the complaints it received from . . . the local community', lacking to offer a comprehensive response to the range of serious and complex issues developing at the Wagerup refinery, which resulted in a breakdown of trust between the company and the local community.

Alcoa seemingly adopted a single rationality for dealing with the Wagerup conflict, which we regard as an economically underpinned closed system approach that arguably fuelled community outrage and ultimately led to the derailment of industry–community relations. The Wagerup conflict evolved initially through what can be described as a sequence of inappropriate responses by Alcoa to community concerns, with the company dissociating itself from the problem by denying wrong-doing and impact. By its own admission, Alcoa took 'a very strong-armed view', using legalistic and scientific arguments as a means of countering community complaints (see Donoghue & Cullen 2007). The science surrounding Wagerup, however, was contested as health impacts were shrouded with uncertainty in the face of knowledge gaps and imperfect science (Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs 2004).

Community members have long been suspicious of the scientific certainty postulated by Alcoa and the company's claims about the safety of its refinery emissions. From the community's perspective, there needed to be 'something in the air' (Anon 2005) to explain local health problems (Mirauda 2001a),

1 community agitation (Holker 2005) and the mass  
2 exodus from Yarloop (Ferguson 2006, Pemble  
3 2008). Emerging findings from ongoing research  
4 and monitoring in the Wagerup area (e.g. Calhoun  
5 *et al.* 2008, Holmes 2008), which only recently led to  
6 a tightening of Alcoa's licensing conditions and  
7 more stringent air quality controls, arguably vindicated  
8 community concerns (Flint 2008). Alcoa  
9 seemingly relied on what Giddens (1990) describes  
10 as public trust in the expert system and the inability  
11 of laypeople to deal with, or counter complex  
12 science (Ophuls & Boyan 1992). However, Alcoa's  
13 attempt to use science to legitimate its claims merely  
14 gave rise to local perceptions of the 'untrustworthi-  
15 ness of science' (after Wynne 1995) because of a  
16 mismatch between the scientific claims and residents'  
17 lived experiences. The recent release of findings from  
18 ongoing research only hardened these perceptions.  
19 However, the community's 'Pyrrhic victory' does  
20 not undo the social changes experienced locally and  
21 highlights the problems associated with scientific  
22 dogmatism in the face of risk and uncertainty.

23 As the Wagerup conflict continued and intensified  
24 over the years, inappropriate so-called second-order  
25 responses (see Crombie 1997, Emery 1997) by the  
26 company seemed to follow. These responses relate to  
27 Alcoa's initial attempts at solving local problems  
28 and subsequent hostility towards local dissent.  
29 Alcoa's approach to dealing with continued com-  
30 munity agitation was the development and release of  
31 a land management plan. However, the company's  
32 attempt to buy out affected community members,  
33 which Alcoa considered a sign of good will,  
34 manifested as a stereotypical Type III error (Mitroff  
35 1998), offering the perfect solution to the wrong  
36 problem. It seems as if the company trusted that by  
37 enabling residents 'to sell and leave the town with  
38 dignity' locals would be willing to accept financial  
39 compensation when offered a way out. Yet, the case-  
40 study data suggest that affected participants had no  
41 desire to relocate but instead wanted 'Alcoa to fix its  
42 problems' with the refinery. The differential treat-  
43 ment of residents in areas A and B only seemed  
44 to add insult to injury.

45 In terms of dealing with community dissent, the  
46 case study indicates that Alcoa company built on its  
47 support from allies, focusing on the positive feed-  
48 back it received from select community members,

employees and local, mining-dependent businesses.  
At the same time, dissenting voices were being  
attacked and discredited through company news-  
letters and newspaper advertisements. This polarisa-  
tion ultimately resulted in a stalemate with the  
company becoming increasingly cocooned amidst  
spiralling community unrest. Consequently, learning  
opportunities were being missed by the company as  
attention was focused largely on what was deemed a  
majority viewpoint. The resultant systemic blind  
spots prevented a meaningful and empathetic  
engagement with marginalised viewpoints, the re-  
presentativeness of which remains hotly contested  
(compare Community Alliance for Positive Solu-  
tions Inc 2005, Alcoa 2006e).

The company's selectivity raises questions about  
stakeholder legitimacy and the validity of stake-  
holder grievances. It appears that views that were  
well aligned with Alcoa's business and long-term  
perspective for the region were used strategically to  
bolster the company's media campaign. In contrast,  
dissent that ran counter to the company's objectives  
was seen as unrepresentative and illegitimate. Alcoa  
seemingly understood its approach to CSR in terms  
of the company's social contributions such as  
employment, tax revenue and philanthropic expendi-  
tures, which an expansion of the refinery promised  
to increase even further. Arguably, as evidenced by  
corporate communications, this is also how Alcoa  
understood its role in the regional sustainable  
development context (e.g. Alcoa 2005e). While this  
economic rationale resonated with Alcoa's support  
base in the community, social issues that mattered to  
marginalised residents such as impacts on family ties  
and social connections were seemingly overlooked.  
This is why the rational, economic mindset is  
considered bounded (Kasper 1997) or blinkered  
(Daly & Cobb 1989) for it is prone to dismiss the  
value of different perspectives and to be insensitive  
to social complexities. Thus, we join the chorus of  
other authors (Blowfield 2005a, b, Banerjee 2006)  
questioning its suitability as a foundation for CSR  
theory.

With regard to the question of CSR effectiveness,  
it comes as no surprise that Alcoa and members of  
the Yarloop community arrived at diametrically  
opposed conclusions. While from the company's  
point of view the situation improved in light of

1 reduced complaint figures, local residents saw their  
2 lives and their community change dramatically. To  
3 contextualise the decline in community complaints,  
4 it warrants note that by 2006, Alcoa owned most of  
5 the land in Area A and numerous properties in Area  
6 B. These properties are rented out to tenants, who  
7 signed lease agreements in which they agree not to  
8 take action against the company (see an excerpt  
9 from a lease agreement below).

10  
11 The tenant agrees that it will not make any claim  
12 or lodge any formal complaint against Alcoa for  
13 loss of quiet enjoyment of the premises as a result  
14 of any damage or nuisance arising from or in  
15 connection with any noise, odour, dust or pollu-  
16 tion, or disturbance generated as a consequence of  
17 the business activities of Alcoa.

18 The company denies suggestions, however, of  
19 gagging its tenants, stating that the lease agreements  
20 do not stop them from making a complaint (Flint  
21 2006c). Nonetheless, Alcoa's dominance on the local  
22 property market may in part explain the decline in  
23 the complaint figures and the lack of local trust in  
24 any claims that issues on the ground have been  
25 resolved. In fact, the relocation of Yarloop police  
26 officers to the nearby town of Harvey due to health  
27 concerns (Buggins *et al.* 2006) and health warnings  
28 issued to public housing tenants by the Department  
29 of Housing and Works (Flint 2006c) heightened  
30 local perceptions of being misled about the safety of  
31 refinery emissions.

32 The case-study data indicate that in determining  
33 the company's social responsibility Alcoa seemingly  
34 sought to match the organisation's values with those  
35 of powerful outside stakeholders, yet arguably at the  
36 expense of less powerful actors. Problem definition,  
37 issue selection and directions for conflict resolution  
38 were defined by like-minded people sharing similar  
39 values. The same 'group think' problem also seems  
40 to apply to the measurement of success. Conse-  
41 quently, Alcoa was never likely to arrive at CSR  
42 outcomes it could trust to be effective or reliable as  
43 they were not tested by 'fringe stakeholders' (Pater  
44 & van Lierop 2006) with high personal stakes and  
45 also relevant knowledge about local issues. There is  
46 a risk that companies focus exclusively on stake-  
47 holders who can help improve their financial  
48 situation or competitive advantage (Banerjee 2006),

leaving little room for the interests of marginalised  
stakeholders. Yet, as the case study illustrates, fringe  
perspectives demand attention, a shared under-  
standing of conflict issues and empathetic responses  
by companies before local problems and issues of  
conflict can be resolved. This, however, is contingent  
on the willingness of powerful conflict stakeholders  
to acknowledge that problems exist and that  
processes for conflict resolution are used that are  
acceptable especially to marginalised stakeholders.  
As pointed out by Frankental (2001), this critical  
faculty on the part of companies is often found to be  
missing.

The importance of meaningful company stake-  
holder engagement is widely recognised (e.g. Miles  
*et al.* 2006). At the same time, it is commonly held  
that companies are torn in various directions by a  
multitude of stakeholders and therefore need to be  
pragmatic and strategic in determining the legiti-  
macy of stakeholders and CSR issues (Orlitzky *et al.*  
2003). In the end, decisions such as these are made  
based on managerial values and discretion. Unsur-  
prisingly, in this regard, stakeholders with legiti-  
macy and urgency but limited power ('dependent'  
stakeholders) continue to find themselves over-  
looked and kept outside the circle of so-called  
'definitive' stakeholders (e.g. shareholders, custo-  
mers, employees) (Mitchell *et al.* 1997, Agle *et al.*  
1999). Benn & Dunphy (2007) make the point that  
traditional stakeholder management approaches –  
premised on market fundamentalism and individu-  
alism – lack inclusiveness and do not meaningfully  
inform good governance especially as it relates to the  
management of power differences and risk. This  
may also explain calls to end the search for  
stakeholder priority and to move towards new laws  
and social contracts that spell out social and envi-  
ronmental criteria for companies' licences to operate  
(Elkington & Fennell 1998, Banerjee 2001). This  
would help eliminate the problem of stakeholder ex-  
clusion based on managerial judgement and values.

Business at all cost is no longer socially acceptable  
(Welford 2008), and yet old ways of doing business  
are still alive and well. While companies like Alcoa  
have adopted successfully the language of enlight-  
ened self-interest and are recognised for their CSR  
performance (e.g. Reputex 2003), they continue to  
be in the spotlight for adverse community impacts



(e.g. Flint 2007). In the face of growing pressure for changes to corporate law (Cavanagh & Mander 2004) and calls for a seemingly forgotten honesty that companies cannot be expected to be socially responsible (Reich 2008), proponents of dominant CSR theory continue to invest faith in their ability to change. Yet, we challenge this ability and willingness of companies to go beyond the parameters of economic efficiency and call for rigorous review and empirical testing of the assumptions underlying the dominant school of thought within the CSR field.

In Australia, future industry–community conflicts almost strike as a certainty. The industrialisation of rural areas in WA is intensifying in regions where human settlements coincide with areas of great resource richness, high biodiversity as well as social and cultural values (compare Beard *et al.* 2000, Sleeman Consulting & Goodall and Business and Resource Management 2004), providing much ammunition for friction between industries and their host communities. In this context, open public debate and the negotiation of new social contracts for industry–community relations may help determine the social acceptability of industry and the trade-offs associated with industrialisation and development.

While communities have the right not to be harmed by industry (Raffensperger & Tickner 1999), the onus of proof often rests with affected individuals. In this regard, shifting the onus of proof onto companies, especially in industries where much scientific uncertainty about impacts still remains, may help protect communities affected by industrial activities. This may also need to be accompanied by a stronger push for scientific competency in decision-making processes on the policing, governance and control of potentially harmful industries (Tickner 2003). In the end, however, despite recent amendments to corporate and environmental laws in Australia (Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services 2006, Frost 2007), far-reaching policy changes in the near future seem unlikely. This means that companies will need to continue navigating ‘discretionary’ ethical grey areas without needed legislative guidance. Unfortunately, it is our view that within this regulatory void dominant CSR theory is currently ill-equipped to provide a reliable moral compass.

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## Notes

1. Implicated here are corporations in countries such as Australia and the United States, where shareholder interests are given first priority (Francis 1997 cited in Madsen & Ulhøi 2001, Farrar 2008). In Australia, the Corporations Act (2001) compels directors to have regard for the interests of stakeholders other than shareholders. Yet, the extent to which this fosters corporate practice beyond strategic, relational CSR is contentious.
2. A liquor burner is designed to remove organic matter from the caustic soda used in the production process of alumina, improving both the quality and the quantity of the product. However, the burning of organic material releases volatile organic compounds as well as carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. Only four liquor burners are known to be in operation in the industry world-wide, three of which are operated in WA.
3. The study underlying this paper involved participants from a variety of different stakeholder groups. However, due to space limitations, this paper draws primarily on data derived from interviews with community members and company staff.
4. The Yarloop community was deeply divided because it was not universally believed that Alcoa’s operation was impacting on the town or the health of local residents. In particular, more recent arrivals in town who were interviewed did not share the concerns of long-term residents and considered Alcoa unfairly targeted. However, an analysis of the variance between views held on the level of community and the contributing factors lies beyond the scope of this paper.
5. The community group ‘Community Alliance for Positive Solutions Inc.’ (CAPS), which has been campaigning against Alcoa for a number of years

on grounds of health and community impacts, counts over 150 paid members (Community Alliance for Positive Solutions Inc. 2008). Moreover, even though this study does not lend itself to statistical analysis, it should be acknowledged that by mid June 2007, over 400 properties were registered under the WA state government's supplementary property purchase programme (WA Legislative Council 2007). This programme enables residents who live outside Alcoa's land management areas A and B to sell their properties to Alcoa under the administration of the Western Australian state government. For a community the size of Yarloop, this figure can be considered significant. Finally, the earlier mentioned class action underway involving over 140 claimants is also indicative of the level of community disquiet.

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# Author Query Form

Journal **BEER**

Article **1597**

Dear Author,

During the copy-editing of your paper, the following queries arose. Please respond to these by marking up your proofs with the necessary changes/additions. Please write your answers clearly on the query sheet if there is insufficient space on the page proofs. If returning the proof by fax do not write too close to the paper's edge. Please remember that illegible mark-ups may delay publication.

Query No.	Description	Author Response
Q1	AUTHOR: Cohan (2002), Zalewski (2003), Sarre et al. (2001) have not been included in the Reference List, please supply full publication details.	
Q2	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Alcoa (2007a).	
Q3	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Alcoa (2008a).	
Q4	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Alcoa (2008b).	
Q5	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Australian Mining (2007).	
Q6	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Benson (2008).	
Q7	AUTHOR: If this is not an one-page article, please provide first and last page for Reference Blyth (2005).	
Q8	AUTHOR: Papers that have not yet been accepted for publication should not be included in the Reference List; they should be cited in the text as 'Brueckner and Ross, unpublished data'. Please update Reference Brueckner and Ross if it has now been published, use 'in press' (with journal title details, if appropriate) if it has been accepted for publication, or remove it from Reference List and change to 'Brueckner and Ross, unpublished data' in the text if it has not yet been accepted.	
Q9	AUTHOR: Please provide accessed year in Reference Business WA Today (2009).	
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Q13	AUTHOR: If this is not an one-page article, please provide first and last page for Reference Ortizky (2005).	
Q14	AUTHOR: Please provide volume and page range for Reference Ross (2007).	
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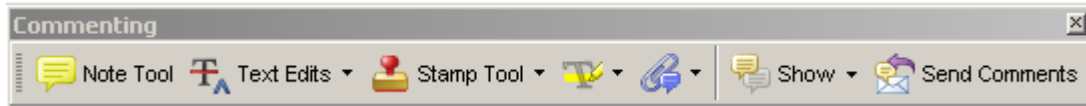


## USING E-ANNOTATION TOOLS FOR ELECTRONIC PROOF CORRECTION

### Required Software

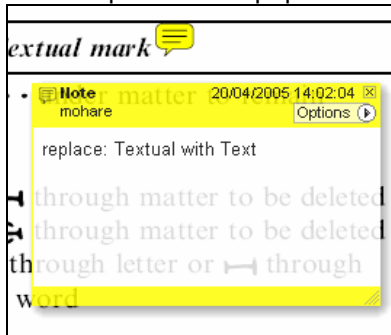
Adobe Acrobat Professional or Acrobat Reader (version 7.0 or above) is required to e-annotate PDFs. Acrobat 8 Reader is a free download: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Once you have Acrobat Reader 8 on your PC and open the proof, you will see the Commenting Toolbar (if it does not appear automatically go to Tools>Commenting>Commenting Toolbar). The Commenting Toolbar looks like this:



### Note Tool — For making notes at specific points in the text

Marks a point on the paper where a note or question needs to be addressed.

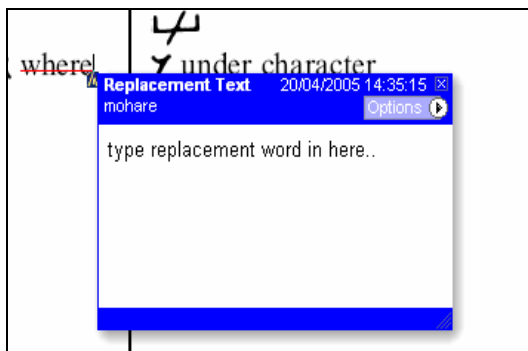


#### How to use it:

1. Right click into area of either inserted text or relevance to note
2. Select Add Note and a yellow speech bubble symbol and text box will appear
3. Type comment into the text box
4. Click the X in the top right hand corner of the note box to close.

### Replacement text tool — For deleting one word/section of text and replacing it

Strikes red line through text and opens up a replacement text box.

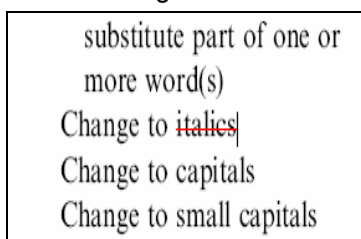


#### How to use it:

1. Select cursor from toolbar
2. Highlight word or sentence
3. Right click
4. Select Replace Text (Comment) option
5. Type replacement text in blue box
6. Click outside of the blue box to close

### Cross out text tool — For deleting text when there is nothing to replace selection

Strikes through text in a red line.



#### How to use it:

1. Select cursor from toolbar
2. Highlight word or sentence
3. Right click
4. Select Cross Out Text

### Approved tool — For approving a proof and that no corrections at all are required.

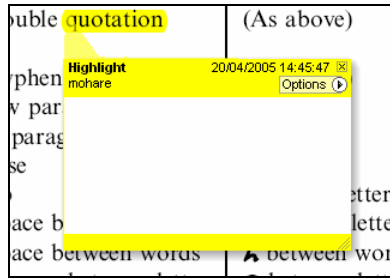


#### How to use it:

1. Click on the Stamp Tool in the toolbar
2. Select the Approved rubber stamp from the 'standard business' selection
3. Click on the text where you want to rubber stamp to appear (usually first page)

**Highlight tool — For highlighting selection that should be changed to bold or italic.**

Highlights text in yellow and opens up a text box.

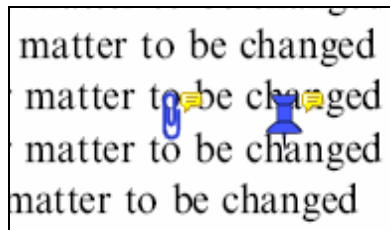


**How to use it:**

1. Select Highlighter Tool from the commenting toolbar
2. Highlight the desired text
3. Add a note detailing the required change

**Attach File Tool — For inserting large amounts of text or replacement figures as a files.**

Inserts symbol and speech bubble where a file has been inserted.

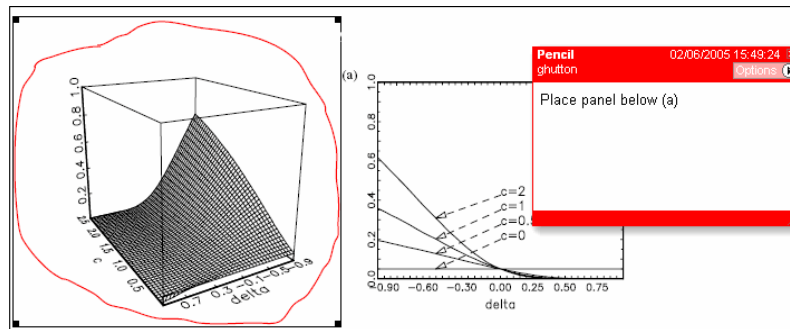


**How to use it:**

1. Click on paperclip icon in the commenting toolbar
2. Click where you want to insert the attachment
3. Select the saved file from your PC/network
4. Select appearance of icon (paperclip, graph, attachment or tag) and close

**Pencil tool — For circling parts of figures or making freeform marks**

Creates freeform shapes with a pencil tool. Particularly with graphics within the proof it may be useful to use the Drawing Markups toolbar. These tools allow you to draw circles, lines and comment on these marks.



**How to use it:**

1. Select Tools > Drawing Markups > Pencil Tool
2. Draw with the cursor
3. Multiple pieces of pencil annotation can be grouped together
4. Once finished, move the cursor over the shape until an arrowhead appears and right click
5. Select Open Pop-Up Note and type in a details of required change
6. Click the X in the top right hand corner of the note box to close.

**Help**

For further information on how to annotate proofs click on the Help button to activate a list of instructions:

